

Interpretation of the Political and Ideological Utopia in Caryl Churchill's "Bright Light in Buckinghamshire"

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Abstract:

This study seeks to interpret the political and ideological forms in Caryl Churchill's play "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire" in light of the concept of Utopia with reference to the socialist theories of utopianism, which she recognises as providing a significant component to her political point of view. The politics of utopia embraces most of Caryl Churchill plays, and "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire" (1976) is no exception.

Utopia, a term widely used by the politicians and historians since the time of the Greeks, has been moved as one of the ideas connected with literary works, where the texts that deal with the description of an ideal and imaginary society called utopian literature. However, the primary motives behind utopian drama were social, political, and philosophical. Plato's "Republic" and Augustine's "The City of God" have been viewed as the world's most influential works of utopia in history.

The objective of the study is to interpret the potentially relationship between political and artistic discourses, which form one richly multi-layered language in Churchill's "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire" thus, the study is divided into two sections. The first one discusses the complex but dynamic field of utopianism as well as examines the rare area of the relationship between utopia and theatre, while the second section goes to open up Churchill's play "Light Shining in

Buckinghamshire" theoretically through focusing on the representation of utopian considerations as well as the political and ideological perspectives. The study is rounded up with concluding verdicts.

Key Words

Utopianism, Utopian literature, dystopia, postmodernism drama, Caryl Churchill.

I: The Conceptual Aspect of the Utopia and its Interconnecting with Theatre

There is an inevitable issue in the investigation of literary works that are dealing with the term Utopia, an issue which obstructs most basic examination. It is, basically, an issue of characterising utopia a term that has implied a scholarly sort, a financial framework, and a political worldview. Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor introduce their study of utopia with the following statement:

The essentially contested nature of the concept of utopia and the chequered history of utopian thought can be traced back to the paradox at the heart of the pun which More coined: is the good place (eutopia) by definition no place (utopia)? Differently put, is utopia necessarily unrealisable because of its ideal nature? According to the answer given, utopianism signifies either the birth or the death of political optimism (1982:15).

Here is the predominant difficulty in reaching a consensus over defining utopia. Is it a metaphorical object of idealism that grows out of a non-materialist aspect and which gestures towards the unattainable posting immediate transcendence and/or escapism as the solution to the oppressed and alienated, or indeed to the bourgeois, aristocratic or classical subject? Or is it the desired objectification of principled hope that drives (sections of) society forward and offers a rigorous critique of the existing ideological formation by way of envisioning alternatives? It could also be "not necessarily a goal, but a hypothesis, a possibility,

which clarifies the present by denaturalising its practices."(Belsey,1994:195). Is it necessarily Left-wing, liberationist or even progressive? And is it an object situated in time (the golden age of the past espoused by classical myth or a future society), place (a utopian space or an existing intentional community) or process (the free movement of capital advocated by Adam Smith or class struggle espoused by Karl Marx)?

The teasing enigma of the perfect place' that is no other place parallels its contentious status in terms of its political application as a theory of social transformation. We are not concerned with the neoliberal association of it with totalitarianism, but rather with its significance within a broadly anti-counter-capitalist location. It has been both celebrated and rejected from within these quarters because of its transcendent capacity, the former (feminism, anarchism, radical environmental movements) exulting over its decisive break with the dominant order including the dominant oppositional order represented by mainstream Left culture, and the latter (traditional Marxism and the labour movement) dreading its powerlessness to undermine the predominant request accurately in view of its escape from it, and posting instead, a critique of the social formation from within that same formation. Jennifer Burwell formulates this problematic as the relationship between the utopian and critical impulses, where "in itself, each impulse is burdened by a limitation" which is "the extent that utopian constructions posit a self-contained and inaccessible ideal 'elsewhere' where social contradiction has always already been resolved" leads them to "abandon a critical connection to contemporary conditions" but at the same time, "the extent that internal critiques confine themselves to a negative hermeneutics of exposure" results in them failing "to present a positive alternative." She concludes therefore that, "internal critique must confront its inability to escape the social structures of oppression or do more than merely describe existing conditions" and simultaneously "utopia must confront its disengagement as a mere escape from these conditions". This challenging dynamic will be revisited later in this section as it forms primary critical concern particularly in relation to engagements with utopianism since the late 1960s (Burwell,1997: XI).

In order to provide some background from which an informed discussion of the politics of utopia of an ideal world can occur, it is valuable to follow a setting that highlights the centrality of utopianism at variously recorded minutes. While there is an abundance of contending renditions of idealistic mediations, there is some accord over the authentic improvement of ideal world which has a tendency to agree over its initial instructional and dreamer qualities, which can be found in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), with references to substantially prior cases, for example, Plato's "Republic" (c. 375 BC) and the scriptural Garden of Eden.

Tom Moylan (1986:5) claims that before the heyday of British industrial capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century, utopian visions of alternatives to the prevailing economic or national structures all too often served to absorb the oppositional impulse by removing it to the plane of an interesting but unattainable other. He includes the Digger Gerrard Winstanley and the early nineteenth-century utopian socialists Robert Owen, Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier among those whose utopian visions have been neutralised in this way.

Utopian speculation is considered as somehow supporting the elevation of the individual a-historical will at the expense of (or at least in the pre-emption of) the unalienated desire of post-revolutionary democratically organised workers' collectives. Vincent Geoghegan makes reference to the appreciation that Marx and Engels show to "the necessary element of unpredictability in the future," explaining that "some of their most negative comments occur in this context." He concludes, "since socialism entails autonomy, the socialist behaviour will be characterised by its diversity and spontaneity (1987: 31). The more pragmatic rejection of utopian speculation is based upon its perceived challenge to an incisive class-focused political strategy. In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx appraises what he perceives as the utopianism of the Lasalleans and insists:

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect,

economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges

(Marx,1971:16).

Burwell (1997:5) considers the development of the feminist utopia since the 1970s as predominantly preoccupied with the reconstruction of an active agency in the context of the postmodern fragmentation of the subject, and with confronting the problem of locating a stable space from which a critique can be launched. She thinks that in contrast to traditional utopias, "contemporary feminist 'critical utopias' typically introduce conflict and transgression into the utopian space, " and exhibit a "heightened emphasis on individual agency that is manifested in the protagonists' movement both within and across utopia's border. Confronted with the stasis of older utopian models, recent critical utopias have thus explored ways of engaging with current political and theoretical concerns, whilst retaining the demonstrable and aspirational features of the genre.

The popularity of utopian models for feminist writing can be elucidated by the fact that the utopian form privileges non-traditional practices (both in terms of Left politics and literary form) such as the process of remembering, the projection of fantasy and desire, and the elevation of the imagination, all of which have been associated with the oppressed subject's struggle to assert themselves and communicate within a hostile and exclusive signifying system. Utopianism relates to women's specific association with domestic and private spaces, isolated from each other and from the public; the utopian elevation of desire and the imagination facilitates what Frigga Haug has argued is an overlooked form of utopian resistance, that of daydreams (Haug,1987:51-66). According to Frances Bartkowski, "feminist fiction and feminist theory are fundamentally utopian in that they declare that which is not-yet as the basis for a feminist practice, textual, political, or otherwise" (1989:12).

Utopianism thus considered can be seen as informing the very basis of the struggle to begin to articulate an emancipatory politics which necessarily depends

upon the prefiguring of the oppressed subject as already essentially equal (and partly on this basis, as one who should be (and will be) socially equal).

Taking into consideration the utopian capability of the theatrical zone, there has been shockingly little effort spent on the research of the connection amongst utopianism and theater hermeneutics, with a few exceptional unique instances including Gray (1993) and Klai (1991). Remembering theater's inclination to make visit usage of sorts of utopian articulation, at any rate at the extent of "pretending" and "playing," it's far perceptible how now and again the two fields are united within the form of criticism.

In fact, theater especially as a piece of art can be viewed as typifying a severe logical inconsistency of utopian and dystopian (anti-utopian) elements. It's far utopian, within the inventiveness of a common execution among theater experts and accumulating of humans that occurs in an aggregate area (or "no-area"), but anti-utopian inside the methods of progression, eliteness and educate which are recorded in the financial matters, social structures, and institutions of middle class theater.

Theatrical space is responsive to the use of utopian speculations on various levels. It has no spatial perpetual quality, for instance. The execution of theater is brief and fleeting, and consequently, the utopian 'perfect place' which is "nowhere to assets" or "no-place" has a rich reverberation in the transient generation of theater. Theatrical spaces, even as the conventional theater building, have plays briefly at various circumstances and on various days, and the plays may visit an assortment of theaters, moving from space to space, the nation over or nations, which additionally upholds theater's smoothness as far as the spatial. The space of theater is additionally a liminal space that places the group of onlookers in a liminal part. Baz Kershaw alludes to the anthropologist Victor Turner who looks at the position of the theater gathering of people with the part of the members in custom. Kershaw portrays theater as "the participant 'betwixt and between' more permanent social roles and modes of awareness." He considers theatre's "chief characteristic" to be its

inducement of the audience "to accept that the events of the production are both real and not real" (199٩:138).

Michel Foucault, in his article "Of Other Spaces" (1986:21–27), theorises what he calls 'heterotopias' as "places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society," and that resemble "counter–sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." These spaces are situated outside of all other spaces but still contain an identifiable locality. He proposes that "between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror." Indeed, "the mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place." He elaborates further:

In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy (Ibid).

Theater, with its portrayal of varying and opposing destinations, and the stage's reflectional qualities, obviously fits the criteria of a heterotopia. The theatrical space creates a merging and communication of many spaces, which commonly are totally unrelated. The theatrical space along these lines floats between the genuine and not genuine in that it is an identifiable site, if just briefly, however in its short life as well as in its reference to other anecdotal destinations, it signals towards the fanciful and the utopian.

II: Representation of Political and Ideological Utopia in Churchill's "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire"

This section brings together specific applications of the utopian in relation to Churchill's play "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire". It will take at the ways in which her theater relates to the imaging of alternative possibilities, and how it negotiates the critical/utopian complex. The issues of subjectivity and agency will be examined in the light of the utopian theory discussed, and we will also consider the play's handling of the 'degenerate' utopias of consumption, as well as its relationship to dystopia. Less traditional forms of resistance such as dreaming, wishing, fantasising, remembering, as well as piercing through the aestheticisation of the 'every day', will comprise the primary utopian modes engaged with.

Caryl Churchill, the playwright of "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire ", was born in 1938 and spent the greater part of her adolescence years in London and Montreal. In 1957 she entered the esteemed Oxford University, she studied English Literature, and it was there that she initially built up her solid enthusiasm in drama. Churchill's work is frequently introduced as a cutting edge case of the post-modern literature made at the time of Foucault, political dissent, and execution craftsmanship, the paper recommends a more adjusted view and expect a more established way to deal with her perfect historical and political drama "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire ".

Churchill play "Light Shining Buckinghamshire" (written and performed in 1976, and then published in 1978) is dealing with the destabilization of determined history and the Utopian capability of the historical and political spaces, in its portrayal of English progressive action with respect to the Ranters, Levelers, and Diggers amid the English Civil War and unrest of the 1640s. The actors were part of the socialist theatre collective Joint Stock, and the play was directed by Max Stafford-Clark. A three week full- time workshop including Churchill, Stafford-Clark and the on-screen characters was trailed by a nine-week content composition period where Churchill worked alone. In fact that was the ever first time, except for her work on Vinegar Toni in the same year, that Churchill worked with performing artists aside from in rehearsal and the rejoice induced by this kind of collaborative

working practice is represented by the following statement by her "I was constantly amazed by their skills, and fascinated by the idea of working in this way... There was a lot of reading history, and then finding similar things in our own lives" (Churchill,1988:6).

The history Churchill read was material such as A. L. Morton's "The World of the Ranters" which published in (1970) and Christopher Hill's "The World Turned Upside Down" which published in (1972). Her contract with communist and New Left historiography goes about as a safeguard and support of the kind of regular workers history 'from underneath' created by History Workshop and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), in the form of right-wing defies to it, especially directed at Hill, from historians such as J. C. Davis in his "Fear, Myth and History" which written in (19٨6) and Hugh Trevor-Roper in "Catholics, Anglicans and Pitritans" (1987). Churchill's intervention is additionally one that spots woman and gender relationships at the focal point of the portrayal of communist history.

The play is consists of two acts that are originated by short scenes, as all working together were in Churchill's words "each scene can be taken as a separate event rather than part of a story" (1985:184). Six actors play twenty-five parts, which are not played by the same actors each time they appear. Churchill says:

This seems to reflect better the reality of large events like war and revolution where many people share the same kind of experience ... When different actors play the parts what comes over is a large event involving many people, whose characters resonate in a way they wouldn't if they were more clearly defined (ibid,184-185).

It is likewise significance that "Light Shining Buckinghamshire" was composed and performed at the political intersection of good faith and the development of skepticism, soon after the upsurge in average workers and understudy activism, and on the eve of the dissatisfaction and negativity that set in with a more protective

militancy notwithstanding the Social Contract, Healey's capitulation to the IMF and a quickening monetarism. According to Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Koenig in their "Interviews with Contemporary Women Playwrights" (1987:119), Churchill states that the progressive desires for the late sixties and mid-seventies were sufficiently close that we could even now share them, however we could relate too to the baffle of the reclamation and the possibility of an upheaval that hadn't happened.

Churchill's introduction to the play ensnares the duality of the two verifiable intentions. For a brief span when the ruler had been vanquished anything appeared to be conceivable, and the play demonstrates the stunned fervor of individuals grabbing hold of their own lives, and their steady double-crossing as the individuals who drove them understood that flexibility couldn't be had without the property being crushed.

The earnest re-creation of a freeing space by segments of society in its all historical periods is obviously made reference to in Churchill's first lines of the play as she finished it with reference to the last scene wherein the Ranters, "whose ecstatic and anarchic belief in economic and sexual freedom was the last desperate burst of revolutionary feeling before the restoration" (ibid:183).

There are contending renditions of utopia in the play. Star, who initiates for Cromwell's armed force, utilizes a Fifth Monarchist talk to urge troopers to join. Jerusalem is engaged as the place where there is opportunity and bounty which will be set up on earth with the happening to Christ as King, once the present King has been arranged:

Life is hard, brothers, and how will it get better? I tell you, life in Babylon is hard and Babylon must be destroyed. In Babylon you are slaves. Babylon is the kingdom of Antichrist. The kingdom of popery. The kingdom of the king ... When Christ came, did he come to the rich? No. He came to the poor ... You will rule with Jesus a thousand years. We have just had another bad harvest. But it is written, when

Jesus comes 'the floors shall be full of wheat and the vats overflow with wine (Churchill, 1976:194–195).

The military and political need of the Parliamentary armed force to select the poor in huge numbers causes a Christian liberationist dialect that interests to equity and opportunity, anticipating poor people as Christ's Saints. Millenarian idealistic projection is spoken to again in Cobbe's vision (a character in light of the Ranter Abiezer Coppe). The vision is a disastrous ordeal brimming with whole-world destroying symbolism that finishes in Christ's mandate of "Go to London, to London, that incredible city, and reveal to them I am coming" (ibid, 1976:206).

In fact, there are diverse spatial methods of utopianism working in this drama. The first of all is grounded materially and represents a basic intervention, critical intercession, and political praxis originates from the Diggers who recover the land at Saint George's Hill, Surrey for normal use. Gerrard Winstanley declares (his words taken from an altered form of "The True Levelers Standard Advanced", or the condition of the Community opened, and displayed to the Sons of Men", written in (1649):

A declaration to the powers of England and to all the powers of the world, showing the cause why the common people of England have begun to dig up, manure and sow come upon George Hill in Surrey. Take notice that England is not a free people till the poor that have no land have a free allowance to dig and labor the Commons. It is the sword that brought in property and holds it up, and everyone upon recovery of the conquest ought to return to freedom again, or what benefit have the common people got by the victory over the king? (Churchill, 1976:219).

The Diggers' proto-comrade utopian hypothesis is incorporated. Utopia is situated in the free and basic access to, and utilization of the land, which appears differently in relation to the past scene, the Putney Debates wherein responsibility

for property is embraced as an essential common right, and suffrage offered just to those with an intrigue (i.e. Property) on the off chance that the larger part without an intrigue cancel intrigues through and through. It is important that the movement of the Diggers', an action that undermines the very premise of private enterprise – happens off-organize, which is, obviously, another sort of 'no-put'. Once more, the semantic essentialness of 'the great place' which is 'no place' reverberates as the gathering of people encounters the Diggers' recovery of land by implication, through its announcing, and along these lines creatively.

The Utopian or the idealistic space is likewise developed by means of the destabilization of appealing personalities, which illuminates the expanding strengthening of a number of the characters in the main demonstration. In the scene entitled 'Two ladies look in a mirror', the group of onlookers sees two ladies, encountering surprisingly, the impression of their entire bodies in an expansive mirror, plundered from a colossal house having a place with a Royalist. Frances Gray cleverly indicates the solid proposal in this scene of the Lacanian 'reflect arrange' hypothesis which is drastically subverted by Churchill who pictures female solidarity in the mirror instead of an individual and estranged other (1993:47–59).

The absence of a steady spatiality of the mirror's appearance additionally suggests Foucault's heterotopia with its picture of the perfect lacking spatial establishing. The encompassing exchange, for example, the main lady's remark that: "he'll never come back. We're burning his papers, that's the Norman papers that give him his lands. That's like him burnt. There's no one over us. There are pictures of him and his grandfather and his great great –a long row of pictures..." (Churchill, 1976:207).

Additionally proposes a picture of the probability of what Marx named 'a class for itself: the possibility that a class in itself builds up a politicized awareness of its position opposite generation relations and in this way changes into a class for itself, which goads progressive movement. Regularly of Churchill, she subverts the customary masculinist arrangement of class governmental issues for the most part

upheld by the patriarchal vein of Marxism by foregrounding ladies as focal specialists of class battle.

Reading through the text shows that clearly act one is loaded with utopian drive, containing a few spaces of probability where dynamic offices are found and performed. Hoskins, a female minister starts to recover the book of scriptures as she challenges the male evangelist's reference to Saint Paul in his endeavor to hush her. She reports:

Joel. Chapter two. Verse twenty-eight. "And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (ibid, 1976:201)

Briggs, who is selected by Star into the armed force, turns out to be immediately politicized, joining the Levelers and is chosen as an instigator by his regiment. He progressively endeavors to secularize the talk of upset and perceives that the war in Ireland serves just pioneer interests. Claxton's voyage towards the Ranters is coterminous with his developing knowledge into the constraint of belief system. He states "But my body is given to other women now for I have come to see that there is no sin but what man thinks is sin. So we can't be free from sin till we can commit it purely, as if it were no sin" (ibid, 1976:221). We can see that a considerable lot of the characters renounce their subordinate subject positions, and find themselves continuously more as dynamic operators, grabbing hold of dialect and political talk in a positive and innovative way.

The spaces of probability start to close as the second act continues. In the penultimate scene, Hoskins, Cobbe, Brotherton, Briggs, and Claxton meet in a bar and talk about what has occurred after the disloyalty at the Putney Debates. There is sure tenderness as the happening to Jesus is now and again frenziedly and happily engaged by all aside from Briggs, who is the solitary mainstream voice. The

utopian battle is moved and consigned to methods of rebelliousness, the 'strategies', 'ploys', "deceit" and "trickiness" delineated by Michel de Certeau. Cobbe more than once swears and asks, if is it only a lifetime of false words, little amusements, fallen angel's traps, approaches to get by on the planet and be careful? (ibid, 1976:230). The last scene entitled "After" clarifies their conditions after the Restoration, where the addresses have turned out to be brief, level and monologic. The last lines of the play are Claxton's:

There's an end of outward preaching now. And an end of perfection.
There may be a time. I went to the Barbados. I sometimes hear from
the world that I have forsaken. I see it fraught with tidings of the same
clamour, strife, and contention that abounded when I left it. I give it the
hearing and that's all. My great desire is to see and say nothing (ibid,
1976:241).

Utopia is scattered and the enabling and liberationist constraint of dialect is reduced by political annihilation and restriction. Seeing (something) and saying "nothing" turns into the common movement (or dormancy). There is, in any case, an uncertainty over Claxton's significance. The group of onlookers is given a look at another utopian (idealistic) space Barbados, a utopia ready for the amassing of benefit that business people can build into another and lucrative industry. Inquiries of whether Claxton is in a state of banishment, or has been retained into the framework, and whether his hush is because of suppression or complicity with the overwhelming request, are left basically unanswered toward the finish of the play.

"Light Shining Buckinghamshire" is dealing with contending renditions of utopia, utopian processes, and utopian spaces. The overt connections with political practice in the 1970s are underlined by its reception. Donald Campbell in "Plays and Players" (1976:20–21) noted that "parallels with our own time exist in plenty – the scene depicting the Putney debates reminded me very much of the squabbles of the British Labour Party", and Irving Wardle wrote in "The Times" (1976:30)

"numerous points of contact with the modern world, such as the treatment of vagrants and squatters, crop up naturally".

The Diggers' routine with regards to recovering the land, standing out from the Levelers' transaction with the parliamentarians is comparably full of the contending speculations of techniques and strategies that commanded the Left in the 1970s. Churchill investigates a scope of contrasting types of the utopian, speaking to shortcomings and also the qualities of utopian methods of political movement, and in this way moreover, imply the significance of connecting with both the basic and utopian driving forces in the activity of political hypothesis and practice.

The stimulating field of utopian studies, and in particular, left appropriations of the utopian theory have shown to be inspiringly relevant to the interpretation of Churchill's play "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire". The application of utopian theory to the theatrical space, the social relations of the production, and to the politics of performance, such an enormously unexplored area, has been a fruitful prelude to responding to Churchill specifically. Churchill's play reflects significant advancements in the authentic and Political written work of the second half of the twentieth century. Notwithstanding, in the piece of the play and in addition in singular scenes and exchanges, one can see a strain in tolerating and dismissing traditions of sensational Utopian as philosophical frameworks. Churchill's "Light Shining Buckinghamshire" has been fittingly celebrated as innovative, rich and diverse, both in relation to her pioneering approach to theatrical form, that consistently breaks down barriers in its discovery of new dramatic structures, and equally to content, which gives full expression to the limitless experiences of individuals and groups of people struggling to make sense of themselves and their social contexts.

The limitations of the performativity of immediate liberation, for example, the Ranters' last upheaval of millenarianism are stressed, however, so the prohibitive scope of the basic motivation of the Levelers: is correspondingly appeared to be

defenseless against retention by the framework. Churchill embraces what Ernst Bloch's Principle of Hope proposes in the way that "Light Shining Buckinghamshire" prisms open the past, both keeping in mind the end goal to help the recreation of quieted histories, yet in addition with a view to mediating in the present, in the expectation of changing what's to come in the future.

The study sheds light on the aim and particular nature of Utopian Literature. As a rule, the authors of these utopian sights utilize the glitches of their contemporary social orders as a reason for their composition. The topical issues of the present-day shape what writers see as important to the foundation of an immaculate societal request which can be considered by all measures "consummate of the best." We noticeably observe this in "Light Shining in Buckinghamshire" by Caryl Churchill, in which she takes note of that the views anticipated in Utopian works are the vehicles by which change technological, economic, social, and so forth is ordered. The utopian literary works center its consideration around the issues of the present time and, in doing as such, moves the world to take measures to cure these glitches.

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