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Creating Place out of Space: James Cook's Travel Writing

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"National identity" claims Richard White "is an invention," it is an "intellectual construct" (Inventing Australia), and Brennan adds that its component elements are race, geography, tradition, history, language, size, and place ("The National Longing for From"); and place, explains Ashcroft in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* "in post-colonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment." It is precisely place that Cook formulates in his journals as he considers the vast, mystical space of the globe, seeing it, as he does all the lands he visited, in terms of Western European rhetoric, thus enabling them to enter history (worlding, Spivak). Therefore, his journals are an important building block in the architecture of both, Australian and North American identity. Namely, before the lands were even settled, Cook's writings contributed to the formulation of what it meant to be Australian or North American. This paper is an attempt to analyse Cook's discourse in the context of the Western European civilising mission resulting from the Enlightenment, a project which erased earlier knowledges of those lands and overlaid them with those of eighteenth-century Europe.

Construction of Place: Processes Involved

Already in 1984 in his book *Inventing Australia* Richard White discussed national identity as "an invention," an "intellectual construct" (White 1984: vii), one of its key elements being place, which in post-colonial societies Ashcroft defines as "a complex interaction of language, history and environment" (Ashcroft at al. 2006: 345). In order for space to emerge as place, we need a human context; place gives human personality to the embodiment of human will (Houston in Grgas 2000: 159-160). That is

precisely what Cook did: from space, from the huge misty and mystical spaces of the globe he created place. And thus constructed, place shaped all living in it, to the same extent that they had shaped the landscape. As Larson claims, place is a symbolic construct which supports human identity, and its positive function is to create identity in the sense of belonging to a place, identity rooted in individual or collective memory (Larson 1998: 95).

Because they describe the history of Cook's journeys, and thereby map and record space which thus becomes place, Cook's journals are an important building block in the architecture of both North American and Australian identities. In the map and the comments accompanying it, through discussion of environment, language and history Cook created place by rhetorically asserting it – naming and describing it – in his journals. These created a cultural space in which places might eventually be found (Carter 1988: 32). Only as such, could the above discussed place enter Western history.

In this paper I propose to look at the way in which Cook applied the Enlightenment project to turn space into place. My contention is that even before the lands were settled by Europeans, Cook's writings contributed to the formulation of what it means to be Australian or North American, which reflects the authority of the written word since Enlightenment.

The journals will be discussed in the context of European Enlightenment. It is in the light of this that Cook as the "mapmaker had to 'forget' or erase earlier knowledges of the structure of the world, and he overlaid these erased knowledges with different ways of knowing the world in the commentary accompanying the map itself" (Ashcroft 2001b: 132).

Thus both, Australia and North America, are brought into script, and consequently into existence through Cook's journals. However, place emerging from them in a "complex relationship of language, history and environment" was othered (Spivak) in the process. Now much as it is true that travel writing inevitably creates the binary opposition of *us* and *them* being rooted in the logic of describing the unknown based on comparison with the known, and hence creating the other of the discourse, what is paramount here is that the semantic load assigned to the other is in Cook's journals deeply rooted in Eurocentric, Orientalist practices.

Said defines Orientalism, which was eventually expanded to refer to discursive modes covering "a wide range of institutional constructions of the colonial other" (Ashcroft 1999: 168), as "a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient (colonial other) 'dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it.'" Therefore, "as a mode of *knowing* the other it was a supreme example of the *construction* of the other" (Ashcroft 1999: 167-168), which calls in structuralist interpretation of identity as a (human) construct, constructed primarily through text, through writing. Thus the Orient, or the colonial other, "is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes" (Ashcroft 1999: 168). As such Orientalist discourse is more a sign of power exerted by the West over the colonial other than a true discourse about it (Ashcroft 1999: 168). Hence it played a prominent role in the construction of the colonial other.

Spivak defines othering as "various ways in which colonial discourse produced its subjects" (Ashcroft 1999: 171). According to Spivak the "existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (Ashcroft 1999: 169). Orientalist discourse creates a binary opposition colonizer/colonized wherein, according to Derrida, the first term is privileged, thus asserting the naturalness of the colonizer's primacy. The terms O/other, as introduced by Lacan,¹ reveal the ambivalence of colonial discourse. Namely, "both these processes of 'othering' occur at the same time, the colonial subject being both a 'child' of empire and a primitive and degraded subject of imperial discourse. Yet, even more importantly, the construction of the dominant imperial

¹ In Lacan's theory the other «designates the other who resembles the self, which the child discovers when it looks in the mirror and becomes aware of itself as a separate being.» The Other is the «great Other, in whose gaze the subject gains identity. ... the Other can refer to the mother whose separation from the subject locates her as the first focus of desire; it can refer to the father whose Otherness locates the subject in the Symbolic order.» The Other can be compared to the imperial centre in whose gaze the colonized subject gains a sense of identity (Ashcroft 1999: 170).



Other occurs in the same process by which the colonial *others* come into being" (Ashcroft 1999: 171).

Spivak describes a number of instances in which the process of othering can be detected in a text. She gives three examples in a reading of Colonial Office dispatches, two of which occur in Cook's writing as well. The first is the process of "worlding" whereby an English captain riding across the Indian countryside can be seen "'consolidating the self of Europe,' that is representing Europe as the Other in terms of which colonial subjectivity of the inhabitants will be produced." The second "is an example of debasement whereby the ... tribes are described ... in terms of 'depravity', 'treachery', 'brutality' and 'perfidy', and the surrender of their land an 'obligation.' It can be observed, says Spivak, in the act of creating the colonized 'other(s)' by making them the 'object(s) of imperialism'"² (Ashcroft 1999: 172).

Place as a "Complex Interaction of Language, History and Environment" as Revealed in Cook's Journals

Cook's journals follow the conventional form of the genre, as elaborated by Dean Duda in *Priča i putovanje*.³ According to Duda the elements of travel writing are exposition or framework, itinerary, subject of travel writing, lexicon or catalogue, thematic expansion, story, and addressee. Cook, however, does not employ thematic expansion (types of knowledge or information adding to the basic train of thought in a piece of travel writing) which suggests he may not display the literary virtuosity found in some other journals, although to be fair, mostly in those written by professional writers. Each of the above elements contributes to the construction of place from the space of the unknown continents employing Orientalist discourse in the process of othering, as defined by Spivak.

² "The third is an example of the separation of native states and 'our (colonial) governments' in the reprimand given the general ... for allowing half-pay subalterns to serve with the regular troops in Native governments» (Ashcroft 1999: 172).

³ Duda, Dean. 1998. *Priča i putovanje* [*Story and Travel*], Zagreb: Matica hrvatska.



Environment

In the Exposition or the Framework of the journal Cook planted information about his travel writing competence where his modesty as a writer is often foregrounded, a common feature of travel writing. For example, awed by the great variety of plants and animals of the Australian continent Cook admits that “these things are wholly (*sic*) out of my way to describe,” but this will not be “of any loss sence (*sic*) not only Plants but everything that can be of use to the Learn’d (*sic*) World will be very accurately described by Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander” (Price 1971: 66). The same kind of help was extended to him by Mr. King and Mr. Anderson on his voyage to North America where, after attempting to describe Nootka Sound (or King George’s Sound),⁴ he stated that the “chart or sketch of the Sound, here annexed, though it has no pretensions of accuracy, will, with all its imperfections, convey a better idea of these islands, and of the figure, and the extent of the sound, than any written description” (Cook 1784: 71).

Much information was added to the Exposition of Cook’s journals once the Admiralty’s letters of instruction were published which, however, did not happen until 1928, when “they were discovered and published by the Navy Records Society” (Price 1971: 18). The letters are a standard addition to the recent editions and contribute significantly to the understanding of the journals. The comparison of the secret instructions Cook received for his voyage to the Southern Pacific with those for Northern America reflect the change in global power relations and scientific advance that occurred between 1770 and 1780. In 1770, when Cook embarked on the voyage to the Southern Pacific he had not yet been warned about encroaching upon the territory of other European empires on the other continents. Whereas when travelling to North America he was

⁴ Cook writes: “On my arrival in this inlet, I had honoured it with the name of King George’s Sound; but I afterward found that it is called Nootka by the natives” (1784: 71). This, however, is an example of naming through misunderstanding as “nootka” in the language of the islanders means “go around” as the natives advised Cook to go around the island and thus enter the sound.

(source: <http://www.captaincooksociety.com/ccsu4126.htm>).

strictly enjoined not to touch upon any part of the Spanish dominions (...) unless driven thither by some unavoidable accident; in which case you are to stay no longer there than shall be absolutely necessary, and to be very careful not to give any umbrage or offence to any of the inhabitants or subjects of his Catholic Majesty. And if you farther progress to the Northward, as hereafter directed, you find any subjects of any European Prince of State upon any part of the coast you may think proper to visit, you are not to disturb them, or give them any just cause of offence, but on the contrary, to treat them with civility and friendship (Price 1971: 202).

For his journey to North America Cook was given maps and journals by a number of his predecessors who had explored different parts of the continent with great accuracy, but this was not the case when he was embarking on the voyage to the Southern Pacific. This time he had a Vocabulary of the "Esquimaux language" which was already in existence in 1778, compiled in encounters with the Eskimos of Hudson Bay.

What the two letters, and consequently two expeditions, share is the clearing away of the misty and foggy spaces of the globe and giving it shape in geography and cartography, worlding its space. Namely, according to the instructions for the Southern Pacific Cook was "to proceed to the southward in order to make discovery of the Continent (...) until you arrive in the Latitude of 40°, unless you sooner fall in with it. If you discover the Continent above-mentioned (...) you are to employ yourself diligently in exploring as great an Extent of the Coast as you can (...)” (Price 1971: 18). As is well known, Cook produced a detailed chart and description of the Australian Coast, which led his fellow voyagers on board *Resolution* in North America to suspect he had secret instructions since while there he did not take time to investigate the coast in detail. And indeed, he did have them. Once in New Albion⁵ his instructions were "to proceed Northward along the coast, as far as the latitude of 65°, or farther, if (...) not obstructed by lands or ice, taking care not to lose any time in exploring rivers or inlets" in search of "North East, or North West

⁵ That part of the West side of North America was so named by Sir Francis Drake (Cook 1784:40).



passage, from the Pacific Ocean into the Atlantic Ocean, or the North Sea” (Price 1971: 202-203).

He did discover the land mass in the South, but its appearance was miles away from “islands of gold” as Marco Polo had termed islands south of Java, which showed some of the places they had visited “with their elephants and gold in incredible quantities.”⁶ On the contrary, as Cook’s journal will reveal, it had very few riches the Europeans found useful, so now that they were certain the continent existed, there was no reason to go there. Returning to England Cook sent a copy of his Journal to the Admiralty from Batavia (now Jakarta), with a letter where he apologetically wrote:

Altho’ the discoverys (*sic*) made in this Voyage are not great; yet I flatter myself they are such as may Merit the Attention of their Lordships; and altho’ (*sic*) I have failed in discovering the so much talked of Southern Continent (which perhaps does not exist), and which I myself had much at heart, yet I am confident that no part of the failure of such discovery can be laid to my charge. (...) The plans I have drawn of the places I have been at were made with all the Care and accuracy that time and Circumstance would admit of. Thus far I am certain that the Latitude and Longitude of few parts of the World are better settled than these (Price 1971: 89-90).

The Northwest Passage, on the other hand, would prove to be a myth entirely. Despite Cook’s formal modesty, his considerable actual talent and experience in travel writing was of extreme importance in both cases, in spite of a degree of disappointment attached to “his discoveries,” making his journals very interesting.

In both letters Cook is ordered to collect as much information about the soil, vegetation, animals, people and their customs, and to “very carefully observe the true situation of such places, both in latitude and longitude; the variation of the needle; bearings of head-lands; height, direction, and

⁶ <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/religion/Mythoz/The%20Great%20South%20Land.pfd>



course of the tides and currents, depths and sounding of the sea, shoals, rocks, &td" (Price 1971: 203), and if he should discover any new lands he was to take possession of them "with the consent of the natives" for "His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Incriptions, as first discoverers and possessors" (Price 1971: 19).

Following the elements of travel writing – Cook's Itinerary, provides "information about the choice and sequence of stops on the voyage, time and manner of travelling," as "it does make a difference when, where, how, why or by which means of transport you are travelling" (Duda 1998: 101) and reveals much about his task and the way he set about fulfilling it. Thus Cook discussed his general plan of going as far North as possible in the summer months before the ocean freezes over, and of spending winter on the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) instead of on Kamchatka as the Admiralty had suggested (Cook 1784: 309). He also discusses his everyday decisions as he writes that he "lost no time in endeavouring to find a commodious harbour where we might station ourselves during our continuance in the Sound.⁷ Accordingly, I sent three armed boats, under the command of Mr. King, upon this service (...)" (Cook 1784: 52), or referring to the problems he had when intending to leave Nootka Sound "but both wind and tide being against us, was obliged to wait till noon" (Cook 1784: 67). The ship in which he travelled to North America, the *Resolution*, was damaged in the storm off the coast of present-day Oregon, a place Cook named, and is still called, Cape Foulweather. In the Nootka Sound they stopped to repair the ship – the fore-mast was replaced, and when he learned that one of the cheeks of the head-mast was rotten, he angrily wrote that "It was evident, that one of the cheeks had been defective at first, and that the unfound part had been cut out, and a piece put in" (Cook 1784: 57). This observation is corroborated by Price who wrote that the "*Resolution* (...) should have been replaced by a new vessel. This was particularly the case, because, (...) corruption and incompetence which then occurred at times in the navy led to the *Resolution's* being so badly refitted at Deptfort, that she gave, on the voyage, constant trouble" (Price 1971: 199).

⁷ Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island



This in turn reveals important information about Cook as the subject of the travel writing and how that subject is transformed through the experience of travel. There are two types of subjects in travel writing (Duda 1998:111) and Cook positions himself as a subject interpreting from a position of the Other. Thus, having to choose between a subject whose travel writing resembles a report, or one which mediates information about his narration (Duda 1998: 111), we would define Cook's discourse as leaning more toward a report. Cook withdraws into the background, leaving the events described in the foreground. However, the repertory of his behaviour described in the text reveals his personal characteristics (cf. Duda 1998: 111-112). It is interesting to notice, for example, that the first thing Cook notices at each stop during his voyage is the shape of the coast, coves and inlets he is charting as he is looking for a safe harbour once he disembarks, then he notices the people – the way they look, the way they are dressed and how they behave; the people that he does not know and might pose a danger for the ship's crew; descriptions othering both, the land and the people, formulating them as Europe's other to which Europe stands in opposition as the great Other.

This is especially evident in relation to landscape where Cook, in the spirit of 18th century travel writing, wishes to modify the scene to fit his own experience. Thus the land is othered through descriptions of landscape where trees resemble, but are not quite *our* pines (Price 1971: 82) and animal's skin is something like the hare's but does not resemble any *European* animal (Price 1971: 74 *my emphasis*).

Comparison of the unknown with the known is, indeed, inherent in travel writing, however, in Cook's journals the people are othered through the specific choice of pronouns, and through Orientalist tropes of debasement used in later descriptions of the encounter:

A great many canoes, filled with the natives, were about the ships all day; and a trade commenced between *us* and *them* ... The *articles which they offered* for sale were skins of various animals ... sort of clothing made of a bark of a tree ... bows, arrows and spears...But the most extraordinary of all the articles which *they* brought onto the ships for sale, were human skulls, and hands not quite stripped of the human flesh, which they made



our people plainly understand they had eaten ... For the various articles which they brought, *they took in exchange* knives, chisels, pieces of iron and tin, nails, looking-glasses, buttons, or any kind of metal (Cook 1784: 52-53 *my emphasis*).

The above order of Cook's observation is a tactics of survival; however, it also proves that Cook was following orders. This reveals him as a loyal subject of His Majesty which would prove to be important in the interpretation of his travel writing, primarily because of the concurrence of the imperialist project and the internalization of its proponent ideas. Also, being an experienced sailor, a world traveller (as is especially evident in his North American journals) he often compares the already described in his previous journals with the newly discovered. Thus he noticed that the women of Nootka Sound were "making dresses of the plant or bark (...), which they executed exactly in the same manner that the New Zealanders (*sic*) manufacture their cloth" (Cook 1784: 62). He also remarked that the "climate here was infinitely milder than at the East Coast of America" (Cook 1784: 73). The process of recognizing place is at work here: through the cartographic language of his journals, space becomes place in the mapped system of great imperial history.

Cook prepared well for his trip; he studied maps and read journals of his predecessors, and was not surprised to see indigenous people throwing handfuls of feathers toward them when they appeared on the coast of Vancouver Island, since he knew that Sir Francis Drake had experienced the same (Cook 1784: 48). He was aware of many maps that his predecessors had made, but thought most highly of Bering's maps: having arrived at the bay in which Bering was recorded to have anchored, Cook named it "Beering's Bay," "in honour of its discoverer" (Cook 1784: 129).

However, Cook remained open to new experience. In the examples of his relationship with his crew we see him as the colonizer changed by landscape and people encountered on his journeys and by the experience of colonization. Cook was generally courteous and respectful of his crew. He often praised them reporting that after a mistake that caused a leak "they redoubled their Vigour in so much that before 8 oClock (*sic*) in the

Morning they gain'd (*sic*) considerably upon the leak" (Price 1971: 72). He also commended the "Master in the Pinnacle (*sic*)" who went before the ship to check if the latter could follow and thus got them out of the area of the Great Coral Reef Price 1971: 76). In the same manner he applauded the carpenters on *Resolution* for working at the mast "without loss of time" from early in the morning. (Cook 1784: 57). As they were getting ready to sail out from Nootka Sound, Cook complimented the entire crew, although through the impersonal passive, when he said that "the sails were bent, the observatories and instruments, brewing vessels, and other things were moved from the shore (...) both ships were cleared, and put into a sailing condition" (Cook 1784: 67). The first and only time⁸ he spoke disparagingly of them was in the Arctic when they were "clearly suffering from their hardships" (Price 1971: 148) in hard weather. Some of Cook's critics have considered this criticism "unduly harsh and that he was in a state of mind which produced tactlessness and lack of judgement that contributed to his death" (Price 1971: 248). When, for example, he distributed the last ounces of tobacco among his crew, and they did not bargain well for it with the natives he writes: "so improvident a creature is an English sailor, that they were as profuse in making their bargains, as if we had now arrived at the port in Virginia" (Cook 1784: 277). Having brewed beer from the sugar cane to save spirits for an even colder climate, he is disappointed "when not even one of [his] crew would not so much as taste it" (Cook 1784: 318). He commented: "Every innovation whatever, on board of ship, though ever so much to the advantage of seamen, is sure to meet with their highest disapprobation" (Cook 1784: 319). He also complained that they have started trading with the natives at their own terms, and in their own time, despite his ban. He had appointed himself and Captain Clarke for the task. He also forbade women to be "admitted to the ships", but soon complained that "The evil I was meant to prevent, by this regulation (...) had already got amongst them" (Cook 1784: 314). This continued for the rest of the trip – to the Sandwich Islands, and caused some critics such as Rev. S. Dibble to attack Cook on grounds of immorality. Price, on the

⁸ According to Price p. 248



other hand, claims that there is substantial evidence that “Cook himself set a high standard of morality and that when he was unable to prevent his crew from mingling with the islanders he made every possible effort to prevent them from introducing disease. It is true that his instructions did result in the King’s people shooting the unfortunate Kareemo,⁹ a tragedy which cost Cook his life” (Price 1971: 254).

The Lexicon of Cook’s journals shows him complying with the instructions of the Admiralty when he is giving the readers information about the world of nature, and information about the people and their everyday lives. Information that makes up the lexicon can thematically be defined based on different figures of speech in the description of space and Cook employs them all thus creating place for European consciousness: topography (description of place), chronography (description of weather conditions), prosopography (description of physical characteristics, posture), and ethopoeia (description of moral characteristics, habits, behaviour) (Duda 1998: 6).

All this information is provided bearing in mind the Addressee, the readership at home. In order for his readers to be able to follow the discourse, Cook adjusts the discourse to their knowledge of the world. In the process:

metaphor is rooted in the reader’s home landscape, thus bringing closer the knowledge acquired through travelling experience. The unknown is interpreted through the known, homeland makes understanding easier. Orientation in the foreign or unknown space unfolds by way of comparison and recognition (...) Obvious and familiar is used for the reader’s acquisition of knowledge about the unknown and the inaccessible (Duda 1998: 149).

As mentioned before, Cook first gives topographic information. Having anchored in Botany Bay he describes how “capacious, safe and

⁹ Kareemo was the leading and friendly Chief on Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) slain by Cook’s men under the command of King (Price 1971: 256).



commodious" the Bay is. He also found "a very fine stream of fresh water on the north shore (...) also wood is here in great plenty" (Price 1971: 66). He then describes the crew's first encounter with the natives which ended in the flight of the Aboriginal women and children, while the men threw rocks at the *Endeavour's* crew. Cook fired a few shots in the air to calm things down. Upon disembarkation there were a number of Aborigines who were in their canoes gathering shell fish, and a few more in the woods who threw darts at them (Price 1971: 65). Mr. Banks was afraid that these might be poisonous, which turned out to be an Orientalist assumption and prejudice. They were naked, and the consternation with which Cook wrote that "even the woman had nothing to cover her nuditie" (*sic*) (Price 1971: 66) reveals Eurocentric discourse. However, in spite of initial misunderstanding, friendly intercourse was soon established between the Aborigines and the crew.

Only after he had carefully assessed the situation and was confident that neither the land nor the people posed any immediate danger, did Cook move onto the description of soil, plants and animals, as required by the Admiralty. "The soil is in general sandy," and the description of plants and animals is based on the comparison with the known: "the largest trees are as large or larger than our oaks in England and grow a good deal like them and yield a redish (*sic*) gum," some "resemble our pines" and there are "several sorts of the Palm kind" (Price 1971: 82). There are also "birds such as Cocaktoo's, Lorryquets (*sic*), Parrots & Crows [are] exactly like those we have in England" (Price 1971: 66). Cook gives the first ever description of the kangaroo that reveals the same underlying process:

The head neck and shoulders of this Animal was very small in proportion to the other parts; the tail was nearly as long as the body, thick next the rump and tapering towards the end; the fore legs were 8 Inch long and the hind 22, its progression is by hoping or jumping 7 or 8 feet at each hop upon its hind legs only, for in this it makes no use of the fore, which seem to be only design'd (*sic*) for scratching in the ground &c. The skin is cover'd (*sic*) with short hairy fur of a dark Mouse or Grey Colour. Excepting the head and ears which *I thought was something like the Hare's*, it bears no sort of resemblance to any European animal I ever saw



(...) the Animal which I have before mentioned called by the natives Kangooroo or Kanguru (...) The Kangura (*sic*) are in the greatest number for we seldom went into the Country without seeing some (Price 1971: 74-75 *my emphasis*).

In North America Cook follows the same pattern and provides information in the same order. Firstly, he describes the general appearance of the country (topography) and its weather (chronography) which

differed much from that of the parts which we had before seen; being now full of high mountains, whole summits were covered with snow. But the valleys between them, and the grounds on the sea coast, high as well as low, were covered to a considerable breath with high, straight trees, that formed a beautiful prospect, as one vast forest. The South East extreme of the land formed a low point, off which are many breakers, occasioned by sunken rocks (Cook 1784: 46).

The natives arrived in their canoes throwing "handfuls of feathers toward us" (Cook 1784: 48). "Their hair was strewed over with small white feathers," or "large ones stuck in the different parts of the head." They created "tumultuous noise" (Cook 1784: 48). These natives, however, were not surprised to see the newcomers, nor were they hostile to them, but rather invited them to come ashore (Cook 1784: 48). Following the established pattern, Cook lists information about geography, plants and animals. When he writes that mountains are rocky and that these rocks when broken "appeared to be of a bluish grey colour, like that universal sort which were found at Kerguelen's Land" (Cook 1784: 72) Cook reveals his dependence on readers' knowledge of his previous journal (the islands were discovered by Kerguelen but explored by Cook) since he treats names introduced in his previous journals as common knowledge.

"The trees which chiefly compose woods, are the Canadian pine, white cypress, *cypressus thyoides*, the wild pine, with two or three other sorts of pine less common. (...) There are a species of sow-thistle; goose grass; some crow's-foot; which has a very fine crimson flower; and two sorts of *anthericum*" (Cook 1784: 73). Most common animals were "bears, deer,





foxes and wolves." Deer seemed to belong "to a sort called the fallow-deer by the historians of Carolina; though Mr. Pennant thinks it quite a different species from ours, and distinguishes it by the name of Virginian deer" (Cook 1784: 75). There were also "humming-birds; which yet seem to differ from the numerous sorts of this delicate animal already known, unless they be a mere variety of the *throchilus colubris* of Linneaus" (Cook 1784: 79).

Language

Descriptions of the environment – the landscape of the newly encountered lands, reveal difficulties with language. As is evident from above, English language fails Cook, it breaks down before these radically different lands.

The frequently used expressions "something like ... but not quite" or "a sort of" in addition to being representative of the logic of presenting the unknown through the known, reveals a serious underlying problem – that of the impossibility of language: the inadequacy of European languages to describe the New World. A lack of fit occurs between language and place, between place described in English and place actually experienced by the colonized subject. "It comes about firstly because the words derived to describe the place originated in an alien European environment, and secondly because many of the words used by the colonizers described empty space or empty time, and had thrown off any connection to a particular locale" (Ashcroft 2001b: 153). In structuralist terms, the language floats free, meaning we as system users are free to attach any signifier to any signified, yet, when naming occurs with no relation to the local discrepancy occurs, a discrepancy which then triggers anxiety in native population.

English is, in the words of Homi Bhabha, unable to "bear the burden," in this case, of the travellers' experience, but, soon english is, inevitably, brought into being, examples of which we have in Cook's writings already: "If I were I to affix a name to the people of Nootka, as a distinct nation, I would call them *Wakashians*, from the word *wakash*, which was



frequently in their mouths. It seemed to express applause, approbation and friendship" (Cook 1784: 119). A new language begins to be created, because, as Kamau Brathwaite put it writing about Caribbean Creole: mystically and magically connecting language with landscape, and the human experience in it:

The hurricane does not roar in pentameters. And that's the problem; how do you get a rhythm which approximates the natural experience ... Nation language ... is the submerged idea of a dialect which is much more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean. It may be English: but often it is an English which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or the wave. It is also like the blues (Brathwaite 2006: 283).

History

This is when history, as the third element of place in postcolonial societies, in addition to the descriptions of environment and language, has to be taken into account. The above descriptions support the claim that the main purpose of travel writing is the bringing of news, in the process relying on comparison of the unknown with the known, but they also promote Linné's classification that had deep implications for the European knowledge base and philosophy of life on Earth. Namely, a few decades earlier (1750s), in his works *Philosophia Botanica* and *Species Planetarum* Carl Linné introduced the classification of plants and animals that has forever changed natural sciences and European understanding of the new world, and consequently also of exploration and journal writing. Soon exploration ships of different trading companies were swarming with scientists, Linné's followers, collecting plants and insects, measuring, recording, pressing, drawing and "trying desperately to get it all home intact" (Pratt 1997: 25). Back in Britain, this new knowledge was presented in books, exhibited in museums or in botanical gardens. Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* concludes that such a classificatory system "created the task of locating every species on the planet, extracting it from its particular, arbitrary surroundings

(the chaos), and placing it in its appropriate spot in the system (the order – book, collection, or garden) with its new written, secular European name” (31).

To properly contextualise the above process we need to go back to certain facts about the nature of human perception, and its characteristics constructed in the centuries of discourse of Western metaphysics.

Kant formulated in his writings a characteristic of human perception saying that in order to orient ourselves on the earth's surface that space has to be asymmetrical to its objects (Carter 1988: 52). Carter gives a vivid example: “Blindfold a man and place him in a room filled with symmetrically placed round tables: he might be able to feel his way ‘forward’, but he would have no idea where he was, nor what direction he walked in. The glare of the uninterruptedly symmetrical horizon blindfolded the explorer quite as effectively” (1988: 52). Thus Frederic Jameson, even though discussing a phenomenon occurring across contemporary cities, stressed the need to have distinctive points in space to orient oneself in that space. He says that Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* “taught us that the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves: grids such as those of Jersey City, in which none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) obtain” (Jameson 1991: 51). And making this “cognitive map” is important because it enables “a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole” (51). Lynch himself stressed the importance of cartography in the process and applied the above theory to travel writing of the early explorers in the sense that they need the marked features in the landscape, on the horizon – they needed the “oases, mountain ranges, rivers, monuments and the like” (Jameson 1991: 52) to be able to form a cognitive map. The introduction of new instruments – the compass, the sextant and the theodolite, introduced a whole new coordinate – the relationship to the geographic totality of the Earth (52).

So we need distinctive features in space to be able to orient ourselves, and those are primarily established through naming. “It was the names

themselves that brought history into being, that invented the spatial and conceptual coordinates within which history could occur. For how, without place names, without agreed points of reference, could directions be given, information exchanged, 'here' and 'there' defined?" (Carter 2006: 353). Place names "embody the existential necessity the traveller feels to invent a place he can inhabit" (Carter 2006: 353).

As much as the above is inherent to human perception, an equally important idea, though socially formulated, needs to be brought into the equation here – the idea that in Western metaphysics seeing equals knowing. Ashcroft points out in *Post-Colonial Transformation*, and based on Aristotle's allegory of the cave in Book VI of *The Republic*, where the knowledge of higher truth depends on whether or not the people see things in the light of day or they see them as mere shadows, that there is a primacy of sight in Western thought (8). The role of cartography became extremely important both, as a prerequisite and a result of the above equation. It formulated and shaped our picture of the world. Ashcroft thus claims that "geography, maps and mapping have arguably had a greater effect on our ways of imagining the world than any other discourse. They represented an ability to see the world as a whole, an ability which amounted to an ability to know the world" (Ashcroft 2001b: 128). This idea is exemplified in Cook calling an island encountered a New Island "because it is not laid down in any chart" (Carter 1988: 8). As the map was, "despite its *tabula rasa* appearance (...) from the beginning, designed to record particular information" (1988: 23), names inscribed in it had a crucial role in the creation of place for Europeans out of the unexplored space of the Earth.

Cook employed four types of naming in his journals (Carter 1988: 2). There are names that are straightforwardly descriptive, such as Point Breakers:

The south east extreme of the land formulated a low point, off which are many breakers, occasioned by sunken rocks. On this account it was called *Point Breakers* (North America, Cook 1784: 46),

names that refer to distinctive qualities or incidents associated with a place, such as Cape Suckling:



A point shoots out from the main toward the north east end of the island (...) This point I named Cape Suckling (North America, Cook 1784: 131),

names that allude to the history of the voyage itself, such as Hope Bay:

... the shore forms a large bay, which I called Hope Bay; hoping from the appearance of the land, to find in it a good harbour. The event proved, that we were not mistaken (North America, Cook 1784: 46).

And then there are personal names, because "Cook commemorated some of his crew members, but perhaps a third of the hundred and fifty names he scattered along Australia's east coast celebrate nautical or aristocratic figures of the day" (Carter 1988: 2). The same can be said of North America:

... I enclosed two silver twopenny pieces of His Majesty's coin, of the date 1772. These, with many others, were furnished me by the Reverend Dr. Kaye; and as a mark of my esteem and regard for that gentleman, I named the island, after him, *Kaye's Island* (Cook 1784: 132).

Behind the bay (which I shall distinguish by the name of Beering's Bay (*sic*), in honour of its discoverer) ... (Cook 1784: 129).

There are instances of naming through misunderstanding, as well (kangaroo – "I do not understand" or Nootka Sound, "go around").¹⁰

It should be stressed that Cook took particular care in naming. There is evidence that he left numerous blank spaces in his journals that he filled later after careful consideration. And that is because "For Cook, knowing and naming were identical" (Carter 1988: 8), the reason being that Cook moved in a world of language, meaning that "for him words created

¹⁰ <http://www.captaincooksociety.com/ccsu4126.htm>



conceptual space" (Carter 1988: 7), which is consistent with Saussure's claim that language is constitutive, that it constitutes our understanding of the world and ourselves. Cook understood that naming is not "a peculiar whim of the namer: it represents an authentic mode of knowing, a travelling epistemology that recognizes that the translation of experience into texts is necessary a process of symbolizing, a process of bringing invisible things into focus in the horizontal lines on the written page" (Carter 1988: 31). Thus, to name those places, "meant to invent them, to bring them into cultural circulation" (Carter 1988: 27-28). By doing that Cook allowed "the uncluttered space of the journey to emerge in its own right and speak" (Carter 1988: 25). Thus Cook's travel writing became an example of worlding, (Spivak) since it is through his writing that the "colonized space is brought into the 'world', that is, made to exist as part of a world essentially constructed by Euro-centrism." Spivak described the process as the "'worlding of the world on uninscribed earth' ... This kind of inscription is most obviously carried out by activities such as mapping, both by putting the colony on the map of the world and by mapping it internally so as to name it, and by naming it to know it, and hence, to control it" (Ashcroft et al 1999: 241). Therefore, with his maps and accompanying descriptions of places, Cook was rhetorically asserting the place by way of names (Carter 2006: 354), creating prerequisites for it to enter history.

In order to properly discuss debasement, the second aspect of othering, we need to refer back to history, more precisely, to Linné. Namely, once plants and animals were classified, Linné included people in his classification. Initially he drew a distinction between *homo sapiens* and *homo monstrosus*, however by 1758 *homo sapiens* had been divided into six varieties: wild man, American, European, Asiatic, African and a final category of the "monster" which included dwarfs and giants (the giants of Patagonia were still a firm reality), as well as man-made "monsters" like eunuchs (cf. Pratt 1997: 32).

The American is copper-coloured, choleric and erect; with black, straight, thick hair; wide nostrils, harsh face, scanty beard. He is obstinate, content, free. He paints himself with fine red lines, and is regulated by customs (cf. Pratt 1997: 32). Now if we refer to Cook's description of North



American native population we will find that it is perhaps as much based on Linné's as it is on what Cook observed himself:

The persons of the natives are (...) pretty full or plump, though not muscular. (...) The visage of most of them is round and full (...) with high prominent cheeks (...) the nose also flattening at its base, with pretty wide nostrils, and a rounded point. (...) the mouth round, with large thick lips. They have either no bears at all, which was most commonly the case, or a small thin one upon the point of the chin (...). Their colour we could never positively determine, as their bodies were incrustated with paint and dirt, when these were well rubbed off, the whiteness of the skin appeared almost to equal that of Europeans. Upon the whole, a very remarkable sameness seems to characterize the countenances of the whole nation; a dull phlegmatic want of expression, with very little variation, being strongly marked in all of them (Cook 1784: 83-85).

In the description of Australian Aborigines, a race hitherto unknown, characteristics of Americans and Africans (black, phlegmatic, relaxed; with black, frizzled hair, silky skin; flat nose, tumid lips; crafty, indolent, negligent; anoint themselves with grease and are governed by caprice; cf. Pratt 1997: 32) as set out and categorised by Linné are blended:

The Natives of this Country are of middle Stature straight bodied and slender-limbed, their skins the Colour of Wood soot or o (*sic*) dark Chocolate, their hair mostly black, some lank and others curled, they all wear it crop'd (*sic*) short, their Beards which are generally black they like wise crop short or singe off. Their features are far from disagreeable and their Voices are soft and tunable (*sic*). They go quite naked both Men and women ... (Price 1971: 83).

On the opposite side of the scale of civilisation stood the European: fair, sanguine, brawny; with yellow, brown, flowing hair, blue eyes; gentle, and inventive; covered with close vestments, and governed by laws (cf. Pratt 1997: 32). This was, claims Pratt, example *par excellence* of naturalization of the myth of European superiority (cf. Pratt 1997: 32).



A description of their ornaments, weapons, houses, implements, canoes and food follows. Coming from the European civilization, it is culturally important for Cook to establish whether or not the natives of the continents visited have the knowledge of metal, because their familiarity with the matter places them higher on the scale of civilization. Australian Aborigines do not know iron, whereas one of the first things Cook notices about natives of North America is that they appear to be "perfectly acquainted with the use of metal" (Cook 1784: 49) being more interested in iron than in trading trifles with the *Resolution's* crew.

Indicative difference between Cook's description of the natives of Australia and North America is that Banks¹¹ and Cook viewed Australian Aborigines with something that almost bordered on envy.¹² "It was as if ... people had grown bored with the civilised life of Europe. Intellectuals had begun to idealise man in what they regarded as his 'natural' state, in which he knew nothing of the burdensome demands of the civilisation" (White 1984: 10). Cook left the Australian coast idealising the life of the Aborigines saying that

... they may appear to be some of the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being

¹¹ Joseph Banks was a naturalist, a member of Cook's party at *Endeavour*; he later became the president of the Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge (1778-1820).

¹² The concept of the noble savage does not originate with Rousseau; "Montaigne's essay 'On Cannibals' (...) suggested that the cannibals live in an Edenic state of purity and simplicity 'still governed by natural laws and very little corrupted by our own'" (Ashcroft 2001a: 40); but it was Rousseau who first made a clear connection between the innocence of the noble savage and the child which later contributed to the perception of the colonial as of a child with all the consequences of the belief. In the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* Rousseau writes: "It appears, at first view, that men in a state of nature, having no moral relations or determinate obligations one with another, could not be either good or bad, virtuous or vicious; unless we take these terms in a physical sense, and call, in an individual, those qualities vices which may be injurious to his preservation, and those virtues which contribute to it; in which case, *he would have to be accounted most virtuous, who put least check on the pure impulses of nature.*" (my emphasis) <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq 03.htm>



wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them (White 1984: 10).

So they were people who appeared uncivilised, without agriculture, without permanent homes, completely naked, yet it seemed they had all they desired. Thus for Australia, Cook painted “an idealised picture of the noble savage and the simple life, which in Europe had been destroyed by civilisation” (White 1984: 11). Cook’s voyages generally stimulated this tradition, though to a lesser degree in North America, where the natives had adopted some of the ways of the Europeans, since this was not the case of initial encounter and parts of the continent had already been divided among European imperial powers. Natives of North America do not go naked (they make clothes from tree bark, Cook 1784: 62), they have a form of agriculture (fishing, killing land animals, fur trade) and permanent homes (though very primitive and dirty; Cook 1784: 96-99), they paint their bodies and dress themselves in bark-made clothes, animal skins and hoofs, and though they cannot thus be

... viewed without a kind of horror, yet ... they have not the least appearance of ferocity in their countenances ... and seem to be of quiet, phlegmatic and inactive disposition; destitute in some measure, of that degree of animation and vivacity that would render them agreeable as social beings (Cook 1784: 90).

Even though not quite in the perfect state of innocence, even though not complete wild flowers, the North American native tribes described in Cook’s journals still share some characteristics with those of the noble savages – those that refer not so much to their happiness, because unacquainted with superfluous products of civilisation, but rather those that relate them to children.

Connected with the myth of the noble savage in Cook’s writing¹³ is the association of the native population with children; the colonial other

¹³ And of his numerous contemporaries as well.



is perceived as a “child” of the empire, to refer back to Lacan (see page 3 above). That is a link deduced from Rousseau’s statement that “he would have to be accounted most virtuous, who puts least check on the pure impulses of nature” (Rousseau 1754). Like a child, a noble savage is guided by instinct, his mind does not hold any philosophy; his heart does not wish anything. He satisfies his modest needs in his immediate environment, and “his soul, which nothing disturbs, is wholly wrapped up in the feeling of its present existence, without any idea of the future, however near at hand; while his projects, as limited as his views, hardly extend to the close of day” (Rousseau 1769). The following paragraph from Cook’s journal describing the natives of Nootka Sound resounds with the words of Rousseau:

...notwithstanding the predominant phlegm of their tempers, [they are] quick in resenting what they think upon as injury; and ... as soon forgetting it. I never found that these fits of passion went farther than the parties immediately concerned... For, even with respect to us, they never appeared to be under the least apprehension of our superiority; but when any difference happened, they were just as ready to avenge the wrong, as amongst themselves” (Cook 1784: 91-92).

The polar opposite of this view was that of Locke, expressed in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where he argued that human mind is a *tabula rasa* at birth, which made both, the native population and the newly discovered lands “the perfect surface for the inscription of imperial adventure and maturity” (Ashcroft 2001a: 40).¹⁴ Both views “justified the paternal actions of imperial formation, because the blank slate of colonial space, like the *tabula rasa* of the unformed child, or the innocence of nature, is an absence of meaning itself.” Thus “until

¹⁴ Thus in 1898 Benjamin Kidd writes in his *Control of the Tropics* “...there never has been, and there never will be, within any time with which we are practically concerned, such a thing as good government, in the European sense, of the tropics by the natives of these regions.” And “if he has any right there at all, he is there in the name of civilization; if our civilization has any right there at all, it is because it represents higher ideals of humanity, a higher type of social order.” <http://www.2.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/topic 4/kidd.htm>



they are 'inscribed' by being brought into inscription, (...) they cannot be 'read' in any meaningful way" (Ashcroft 2001a: 41).

Both of the above myths justify the debasement of the native population which is reflected in Cook's writing as well, where the Australian and North American native population share features detected as tropes of Orientalist discourse. Those are treacherousness:

We soon discovered, by this nearer intercourse, that they were as light-fingered as any of our friends in the islands, we had visited in the course of the voyage. And they were far more dangerous thieves; for possessing sharp iron instruments, they could cut a hook from a tackle, or any piece of iron from a rope, the instant that our backs were turned (North America; Cook 1784: 54),

cannibalism:

But the most extraordinary of all the articles which they brought onto the ships for sale, were human skulls, and hands not quite stripped of the human flesh, which they made our people plainly understand they had eaten; and, indeed, some of them had evident marks that they had been upon the fire. We had but too much reason to suspect, from this circumstance, that the horrid practice of feeding on their enemies is prevalent here, as we have found it to be at New Zealand and other South Sea islands (North America; Cook 1784: 53),

ugliness:

... they possess no natural delicacies sufficient to render a person agreeable; and hardly any one was seen, even amongst those who were in the prime of life, who had the least pretension to be called handsome (North America; Cook 1784: 85),

dirtiness:

... as they rub their bodies constantly over with a red paint, of a clayey or coarse ochry substance, mixed with oil, their garments, by this means,





contract a rancid offensive smell, and a greasy nastiness. So they make a very wretched, dirty appearance; and what is still worse, their heads and their garments swarm with vermin, which, so depraved is their taste for cleanliness, we used to see them pick off with great composure, and eat (North America; Cook 1784: 87),

and primitivism:

Though there be but too much reason, from their bringing to sale human skulls and bones, to infer that they treat their enemies with a degree of brutal cruelty, this circumstance rather marks a general agreement of character with that of almost every tribe of uncivilized man, in every age, and in every part of the globe, than they are to be reproached with any charge of peculiar inhumanity (North America; Cook 1784: 91).

Finally, as explained by Spivak, so debased, the natives had an obligation to surrender their land to the European colonizers. Thus Cook mentions signs of formal possession taking as directed by the Admiralty:

During our stay in this Harbour I caused the English colours to be display'd (*sic*) ashore every day and an inscription to be cut out upon one of the trees near the watering place setting forth the Ship's name, date &tc (*sic*)" (Price 1971: 69). Sailing northward he had "once more hoisted English Coulers (*sic*) and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast [of Australia] (...) after which we fired three Volleys of small Arms which were Answered by the like number from the Ship (Australia; Price 1971: 80).

At the foot of a tree, on a little eminence not far from the shore, I left a bottle, with a paper in it, on which were inscribed the names of the ships, and the date of our discovery. Along with it I inclosed (*sic*), two silver twopenny pieces of his Majesty's coin, of the date 1772 (North America; Cook 1784: 132).



This leads us to the issue of ownership of land as understood by 18th-century Europeans. In *Post-Colonial Transformation* Bill Ashcroft claims that enclosure underlies the Western concept of property, thus if land is not enclosed and worked it is not owned, it is “empty” space, waiting to be inscribed by Europeans, who found justification of the imperialist impulse in this theory (163). It is exemplified in Cook’s impulse to spot and classify which was at first purely scientific, but eventually turned his eye into, in the words of Pratt, “the improving eye” (Pratt 1997: 144), when he stresses that natives “know nothing of Cultivation” (Price 1971: 82). The connection between working of land and ownership over it stems from “John Locke’s discussion of property in the Second Treatise of Government (Book II, Chapter 5)” where he

outlines the rationale for the expropriation of lands by the ‘advanced’ agrarian communities from hunter-gatherer societies. For Locke, the very mark of property is the enclosure: the defining, or bounding of a place that signals its settlement or cultivation, and consequently, marks the frontier between the savage and the civilized. Although nobody has an exclusive dominion over nature, says Locke, since the ‘Fruits’ of the Earth and the ‘Beasts’ were given for the use of men, there must be a way to appropriate them before they can be of any use to a particular man. Such usefulness is achieved and regulated by enclosure (Locke 1690: 330). Because it is man’s labour which removes the products from nature and makes them his, ‘As much land as a Man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates and can use the Product of, so much is his Property. He by his labour does, as it were, inclose (*sic*) it from the Common. For God gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational’ (Ashcroft 2001b: 163).

Since place in post-colonial society subsumes landscape, history (people), and language, it is a “discursive formation” (Foucault),¹⁵ and its representation gains importance. Australia and western coast of North

¹⁵ Foucault refuses to examine statements outside of their role in the discursive formation; he is only interested in analysing statements in their historical context, as the whole of the system and its discursive rules determine the identity of the statement.

America emerged into history as distinctive places, from the undefined, imagined spaces on the map through Cook's journals. But the space created was, partly because of the nature of travel writing but also because of the then prevalent social ideology, created as Europe's other. In the process the indigenous voice was silent.

The issue of modernization and transformation versus closing the society to external influence and developing internally continues to concern societies to this day, where we negotiate and employ degrees of both. However, since Enlightenment modernization means entering the "Art" (Ashcroft) of Western civilisation through written discourse exclusively, which the native populations were denied in early travel writing. Thus denied self-representation a construct of national place discordant with self-perception was formulated. Yet, to paraphrase Ashcroft, the future of the colonies is in their transformation. By appropriating the imperial centre's language, its books, the whole technological edifice of its 'Art,' the colony may determine not only its own future, but that of the imperial centre as well (Ashcroft 2001a: 101).

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PRETVARANJE PROSTORA U MJESTO: PUTOPISI JAMESA COOKA

Richard White tvrdi da je "nacionalni identitet izmišljen," da je on "intelektualni konstrukt" (*Inventing Australia*), a Brennan dodaje da su mu sastavnice rasa, geografija, tradicija, povijest, jezik, veličina i mjesto ("The National Longing for Form"); a mjesto, kako objašnjava Ashcroft u *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, "u postkolonijalnim društvima određuje složeno međudjelovanje jezika, povijesti i okoline." Cook u svojim dnevnicima formulira upravo mjesto, odgrćući ogroman mistični prostor zemaljske kugle, potvrđujući novootkrivene zemlje zapadnoeuropskom retorikom, time im omogućujući da uđu u povijest (orječivanje, Spivak). Stoga su njegovi dnevnički važan element i australskog i sjevernoameričkog identiteta. Rad analizira Cookov diskurs u kontekstu zapadnoeuropske civilizacijske misije kao jednim od rezultata prosvjetiteljstva, a koja je izbrisala skupove znanja koji su prethodno postojali u gore spomenutim zemljama i prekrila ih onima osamnaestostoljetne Europe.

Key words: national identity, Australia, North America, Cook's journals

Ključne riječi: nacionalni identitet, Australija, Sjeverna Amerika, Cookovi dnevnički

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