

‘Difficult Forms of Knowing’
—Enquiry, Injury, and Translocated
Relations of Postcolonial Responsibility

DIANA BRYDON

Where does the subject of global enquiry and injury stand or speak from? To what does it bear relation, from where does it claim responsibility?¹

There is a hush to difficult forms of knowing, an abashment, a sorrow, an inclination towards silence.²

THESE TWO EPIGRAPHS POSE QUESTIONS about translocated relations within postcolonial imaginaries that compel me to ask: what has changed since postcolonial studies first emerged as a field of study and what remains the same? What does it mean to work in the postcolonial field today?³ If decolonization was one of the major projects of the twentieth

¹ Homi K. Bhabha, “Unpacking My Library...Again,” in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers & Lidia Curti (New York: Routledge, 1996): 200. See also Bhabha, “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” in *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, ed. Laura Garcia-Morena & Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia SC: Camden House, 1996): 193.

² Gail Jones, *Sorry* (Sydney: Vintage, 2007): 3.

³ The research for this essay has benefitted from several standard research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada, and was funded, in part, through the Canada Research Chairs programme. I am grateful to Frank Schulze-Engler and to the GNEL/ASNEL conference organizers, especially Mark Stein, for the invitation to think more deeply about Postcolonial Translocations, the theme for their twentieth annual conference, held 21–24 May 2009, in Münster,

century, how has the urgency of that project been re-shaped by the globalizing processes that emerged since the 1980s? In response to Homi Bhabha's question and Gail Jones's caution, this essay reads textual and visual forms of expression to stress the challenges they pose to routine or easy forms of knowing and the assumptions on which they rest.⁴ Postcolonial translocations invites us to think about the postcolonial as a disciplinary practice within educational institutional structures and as a subject of study attempting to make sense of colonialism (especially but no longer exclusively European colonialism) and the practices and discourses of Empire in search of better futures.

This is an exciting time for postcolonial studies but also a time for asking whether the postcolonial moment has passed. Breakthroughs seem possible, within global circuits of exchange at the level of geopolitical and economic relations and within educational and research institutions. The ways in which we know and understand the world are being challenged by neoliberal initiatives and by formerly subjugated forms of knowledge construction within revised circuits of power. Bhabha's question, repeated by him in at least two of his essays, asks: "Where does the subject of global enquiry and injury stand or speak from?"⁵ This subject is not easily defined. Who is this person, the knower or the known, and what are the conditions giving access to speech? These have been postcolonial questions for some time, but they have changed their shape over the years. How we frame these questions shapes our answers. Postcolonial scholars have no monopoly on the positionality of this potentially global subject but our perspectives are important. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos et al., "there is no global social justice without global

Germany. The research for this essay also benefitted from a workshop session with graduate students at McMaster University in 2009 and a sojourn in early 2010 as a visiting fellow at the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra. I am grateful to Sandy Annett, my research assistant, for her keen editorial eye and help with the research for this essay.

⁴ A limit case for considering Bhabha's question might be the current attempts to rehabilitate torture as a legitimate form of enquiry in certain cases post-9/11. In my view, torture is always wrong, is never acceptable, and is an illegitimate form of enquiry that falls outside the limits I have set myself in this essay.

⁵ I address this question from a different angle in "Earth, World, Planet: Where Does the Postcolonial Critic Stand?," in *Cultural Transformations: Perspectives on Translocation in a Global Age*, ed. Chris Prentice, Vijay Devadas & Henry Johnson (Cross/Cultures 125; Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2010): 3–29.

cognitive justice.”⁶ This is where injury and enquiry come together and it is important to think the two together. But how?

The epigraph from the Australian Gail Jones’s novel *Sorry* advises caution: “There is a hush to difficult forms of knowing.”⁷ That hush requires respect and understanding. Sometimes that speech will be a stutter or a speaking slant and sometimes it will be silenced altogether. Bhabha’s second sentence raises the question of responsibility in a different way: “To what does it [the subject of global enquiry and injury] bear relation, from where does it claim responsibility?”⁸ This is a question about location and the potential for accountability in global contexts. For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the task was to decolonize the mind. For Ulrich Beck, contemplating the risk society of current times, Ngũgĩ’s cognitive certainty has yielded to “cognitive uncertainty.”⁹

⁶ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, João Arriscado Nunes & Maria Paula Meneses, “Introduction: Opening up the Canon of Difference,” in *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Reinventing Social Emancipation 3; London: Verso, 2007): xix.

⁷ My thanks to Janet Wilson, who alerted me, at the ASNEL conference where this essay was delivered as a keynote address, to the echo here of the opening words of the film *The Piano*, and to Gail Jones’s commentary on it. This is an insight into further translocations worth pursuing.

⁸ Bhabha, “Unpacking My Library... Again,” 1996.

⁹ Beck writes:

What qualifies as causal evidence and as ‘proof’ under conditions of cognitive uncertainty? Which norms of accountability apply? Who is responsible? Who must carry the costs? As we begin to examine these cognitive power bases of the relations of definition, we gain a deeper insight into the connection between risk and power; we also get some indication of how changes in the power relations of definition – such as redistribution of the burden of proof, or product liability regulations – can influence the political dynamic of risk conflicts.

—Ulrich Beck, *Power in the Global Age: A New Global Political Economy*, tr. Kathleen Cross (*Macht und Gegenmacht im globalen Zeitalter: Neue weltpolitische Ökonomie*, 2002; tr. Cambridge: Polity, 2005): 106.

Such questions are enabling critics to see that “the modern fact” itself has “a history”; Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998). I am grateful to William D. Coleman for alerting me to Beck’s critique of the national outlook as elaborated in *Power in the Global Age*.

We know the damage that has been done but we do not know how to repair it. We are no longer even certain of the identity of this subject, whether it refers to colonized or colonizer or, more likely, to the differentiated responsibilities of both. Changes in what Beck calls “the power relations of definition”¹⁰ are encouraging states and other actors to engage in public acts of apology and remembrance, but in ways that are quickly coming to seem not only routine but also substitutes for more substantive forms of restitution.

Where does postcolonial work stand in relation to the current interest in reconciliation commissions and memorials to the suffering and atrocities of the past? This trend clearly meets some deeply felt needs. Where do postcolonial revaluations of subjugated lives, communities, and knowledges fit within the current ethical and memorializing turns? If the goal is to establish a reciprocal relation of shared enquiry that seeks at minimum to do no harm, to what extent is this direction in the discipline proving helpful? We know that colonialism is not the only disabling inheritance contemporary scholars must confront. How does postcolonial critique connect to other modes of scholarship committed to social justice? How is it relocating itself within the global?

In the title of an earlier essay, I posed the translocational question this way: “Earth, World, Planet: Where Does the Postcolonial Critic Stand?” These resonant nouns conjure up respectively the ecocritical, socio-political, and planetary directions in which postcolonial scholarship is moving. I think it is important to recognize that global theories and theorizations of the global are not identical, nor are all attempts to theorize on this scale necessarily homogenizing or colonizing in their development, although some certainly are.¹¹ The harder part of thinking on this scale is to rethink the old colonial categories of particular vs universal in new ways, ways that can re-articulate shared values in a language of universality that is not the old, colonizing universality, and that can pay due regard to particularities and differences without subsuming them under blanketing generalities. In this essay, I continue to invoke Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Paul Gilroy’s alternatively

¹⁰ Ulrich Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, 106.

¹¹ I am responding here to Malini Johar Schueller’s article “Decolonizing Global Theories Today,” *Interventions* 11.2 (July 2009): 235–54, which makes many excellent points about the need for vigilance in reading some of the new master-narratives offered to make sense of globalization. In identifying problems in some influential theories of globality, she charts a course that requires much closer attention than I can offer here.

based models of planetarity as complementary ways of theorizing postcolonial responsibility, but with some unease. Spivak's turn to the "precapitalist cultures of the world"¹² and Gilroy's to a renewed focus on suffering itself as bases for transforming globality into planetarity may be helpful examples of how to reframe the debates.¹³ These theories, too, require, further nuancing and explanation to avoid the traps of falling into frameworks they seek to challenge, such as exotification and compassion fatigue respectively. In crafting this essay, I follow Spivak in modelling interruptions of the logic of one disciplinary imaginary through another, reconstellating each, in an effort to rethink postcolonial translocations in dialogue with revisioned framings of community and suffering.¹⁴ In particular, I ask how Bhabha's question might be read through Ulrich Beck's notion of "zombie categories."¹⁵

¹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003): 101.

¹³ In "Storying Home," I write:

Spivak proposes 'the planet to overwrite the globe' (*Death* 72) as a way of bypassing globalization's claims to the tropes and territory of inevitable progress through positing conquering as the only mode of inhabiting the earth. For this reason, she claims that planetarity 'is perhaps best imagined from the precapitalist cultures of the planet' (101), not in a spirit of nostalgia for what has been lost (as in Benjamin's "Storyteller"), but as a way of keeping 'responsibility alive in the reading and teaching of the textual' and a way of inscribing what she cryptically terms 'responsibility as right' (101–102). Spivak seeks a mode of reading that can counter globalization as 'a time and place that has privatized the imagination and pitted it against the political' (*Death* 37–38).

—Diana Brydon, "Storying Home: Power and Truth," in *Tropes and Territories: Short Fiction, Postcolonial Readings, Canadian Writing in Context*, ed. Marta Dvořák & William H. New (Montreal & Kingston, Ontario: McGill–Queen's UP, 2007): 35.

¹⁴ I have approached these questions in different ways in "Metamorphoses of a Discipline: Rethinking Canadian Literature within Institutional Contexts," in *Trans.Can.-Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature*, ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007): 14–16. See also *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, ed. Diana Brydon & William D. Coleman (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2008).

¹⁵ Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, xi. Ben Fine's invocation of the zombie metaphor to define orthodox economics and its malign influence on development economics and other disciplinary modes of thinking, which he terms "zombieconomics," seems compatible with Beck's analysis. See Fine, "Development as Zombieconomics in the Age of Neoliberalism," *Third World Quarterly* 30.5 (2009): 885–904. Like Beck, Fine

Graham Huggan has addressed a tendency in postcolonial thinking to exoticize, fear or romanticize ‘Others’ seen as divergent from an assumed European norm. Here I follow Jones in asking how such forms of exotification operate within what Jones calls “a kind of terminological Gothicism that has invaded the theorizing of loss and injustice.”¹⁶ Whether deliberately or not, Beck’s use of “zombie categories” seems a kind of terminological gothicism. In *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Bonnie Honig asks: “What if we read democratic theory gothically instead of romantically?” She favours this shift because gothic modes of reading press us “to attend to the people’s perpetual uncertainty about the law and their relation to it.”¹⁷ In her view, this uncertainty is better suited than romantic certainties for negotiating democratic politics today. Honig’s argument seems potentially comparable to the more fully articulated discussion of related themes in Pheng Cheah’s *Spectral Nationality*, but Honig’s work stresses the usefulness of “dilemmatic spaces”¹⁸ in contrast to Cheah’s investment in the postcolonial nation when read in dialogue with Derridean hauntology.

Cheah begins his book by asking:

uses the zombie to suggest something at once enormously powerful and “intellectually dead” (888). While his description of its “increasing appetite for the flesh of other disciplines that it both infects and converts to its own nature” (888) borrows from the vampire, technically a creature distinct from the zombie, the use of this hybrid metaphor is interesting for the insight it provides into the anxieties and conflicts of our present times. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry elaborate this conflation of metaphors as the zombie moves from Haitian folk mythology into American cinema and posthuman theorizing in ways that range far more widely than I do here. See Sarah Juliet Lauro & Karen Embry, “A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism,” *boundary 2* 35.1 (Spring 2008): 85–108. It is interesting to speculate, however, to what extent the zombie category, as Beck employs it, might be seen as continuous with their inspired analysis.

¹⁶ Gail Jones, “Sorry-in-the-Sky: Empathetic Unsettling, Mourning, and the Stolen Generations,” in *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New New World*, ed. Judith Ryan & Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2004): 160.

¹⁷ Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 2001): 9.

¹⁸ Bonnie Honig, “Difference, Dilemmas, and the Politics of Home,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1996): 259.

is organic vitalism an adequate framework for understanding postcolonial nationalism's persistence in the contemporary global order and its future as an emancipatory project? If not, how should we rethink the ideas of freedom and emancipation?¹⁹

Cheah's re-thinking leads him to conclude that "the most apposite metaphor for freedom today is not the organism but the haunted nation."²⁰ Cheah sees the postcolonial nation as a "creature of life-death," but this zombie-like ghost figures not obsolescence, as in Beck, but a refusal to be exorcised that promises freedom. The difference may lie in Honig's interest in re-thinking democracy versus Cheah's concern with freedom, particularly in the contexts of Africa and Asia. Honig's feminism also marks an important difference in their approaches. Cheah's analysis remains thought-provoking. Nonetheless, this essay works through some of my uneasiness with Cheah's endorsement of this particular form of gothic terminology. My emphasis here on the relations between injury, enquiry, and responsibility, rather than on national-liberation agendas, reflects my divergence from Cheah's project.

Cheah and Beck each see the nation-state continuing in haunted fashion but place different valuations on what that means for analysis. Like Honig, each stresses the cognitive uncertainties of the current moment. Beck uses the idea of zombie categories to describe how "the categories of state-centred power, domination and politics, taken as given in the neo-realism of the social sciences" have survived beyond their usefulness into the global era.²¹ In the postcolonial context, Cheah argues, the categories remain relevant. What is interesting to me here is the ways in which gothicized metaphor survives in each, perhaps a legacy from "Hegel's characterization of the state as a spiritual individual," as Cheah suggests.²² Thought-provoking as it is, I am wondering if it is time to move beyond this terminology.

Like the re-animated corpse of the zombie, these categories, Beck suggests, have become mindless in the sense that they no longer enable questioning. Like the zombie, they continue to live beyond their death, wreaking havoc. It's a metaphor that implies the colonial history of these concepts con-

¹⁹ Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003): 6–7.

²⁰ Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 12.

²¹ Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, 63.

²² Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 237.

tinues to haunt them even as conditions of the “second modernity”²³ or globalization are hollowing them out. This is a view that resonates with Sandra Harding’s call for an exorcism. “Western sciences and politics, and their philosophies,” she argues, “need an exorcism if they are to contribute at all to social progress for the vast majority of the globe’s citizens.”²⁴ These are the very views, in Cheah’s analysis, that seek to exorcise the postcolonial nation. These gothic metaphors, through which Beck sees a haunted structure deprived of its spirit and Cheah sees an unquenchable spirit capable of transcending organicism, raise further questions: in particular that of “the genre of postcoloniality” (explored in an article of that title by Peter Hitchcock) and of whether or not there could be “a postcolonial aesthetic” and, if there were, how to describe it (questions raised by Elleke Boehmer).²⁵ These are questions about the framing of the discipline that require further thinking. I am not offering the gothic as a postcolonial mode, although I am questioning its utility for postcolonial analysis, and I think it useful to look more closely at Beck’s candidates for the zombie category and the work they do within the postcolonial imaginary.

Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry’s essay, “A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism,” proposes that “reading the zombie as an ontic/hauntic object reveals much about the crisis of human embodiment, the way power works, and the history of man’s subjugation and oppression of its ‘Others’.”²⁶ In their discussion of the varied and widespread appearances of zombies in current times, most salient for my purposes is the fact that it is “a boundary figure” that “creates a dilemma for power relations.”²⁷ If the post-Westphalian state has always depended on clearly delineated boundaries, then to describe it as a zombie category is to

²³ Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, xvii, 257.

²⁴ Sandra Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* (Durham NC & London: Duke UP, 2008): 3.

²⁵ Peter Hitchcock, “The Genre of Postcoloniality,” *New Literary History* 34.2 (Spring 2003): 299–330; Elleke Boehmer, “A Postcolonial Aesthetic: Repeating upon the Present,” in *Rerouting the Postcolonial*, ed. Cristina Şandru & Janet Wilson (London: Routledge, 2009): 170–81.

²⁶ Sarah Juliet Lauro & Karen Embry, “A Zombie Manifesto,” 87.

²⁷ Lauro & Embry, “A Zombie Manifesto,” 90.

suggest not only that it has lost its *raison d'être* but also, perhaps, that it contains the seeds of its own dissolution.²⁸

To what extent are state-centred power, domination, and politics (Beck's zombie categories) under-theorized in postcolonial literary and cultural criticism and what alternative views of these categories might we derive from examining the metaphors and genres through which they are engaged in other disciplines? In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay offers a theory of photography "founded on a new ontological-political understanding of photography"²⁹ that seeks to shift the assumed power-relations involved in the taking and interpreting of the photograph by exploring "The conceptual valences between photography and citizenship."³⁰ She describes her book as "an attempt to rethink the political space of governed populations and to reformulate the boundaries of citizenship as distinct from the nation and the market whose dual rationale constantly threatens to subjugate it."³¹ The project of her book seems congruent with that advanced by Joseph R. Slaughter, in *Human Rights, Inc.*. Slaughter considers "how norms of legal obviousness manifest in literary forms."³² He "elaborates the conceptual vocabulary, deep narrative grammar, and humanist social vision that human rights law shares with the *Bildungsroman*."³³ These books exemplify a translocated postcolonialism, which recasts postcolonial problematics as in dialogue with the categories shaping understandings within multiple forms of representation.³⁴

²⁸ Not everyone accepts this view of the state under globalization. See Jean-François Bayart, *Global Subjects: A Political Critique of Globalization*, tr. Andrew Brown (*Le Gouvernement du Monde*, 2004; tr. Cambridge: Polity, 2007), for an alternative view. Bayart writes: "The favourite theorem of global studies thus turns out to be erroneous. Not only does globalization neither threaten nor erode the state, it actually produces it, and the transnational aspect is leaven in the dough" (72). My interest here, however, is in pursuing some of the implications of Beck's influential thesis and its metaphors rather than in testing the accuracy of his views.

²⁹ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone, 2008): 23.

³⁰ Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 25.

³¹ *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 24.

³² Joseph R. Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham UP, 2007): 3.

³³ Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.*, 4.

³⁴ See Slaughter's lengthy discussion of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* on 216–56, especially his point that "The tension between the nationalist, instrumentalist

With Cheah, they ask how categories of governance, citizenship, and human rights shape postcolonial questions and the goals of decolonization. Questions I add to their analysis include: Does every nation automatically require its own state? Are national liberation struggles always to be endorsed? According to what criteria? These are questions that have become urgent for our global era, as indigenous and minority rights gain greater recognition in the international sphere.³⁵ In accordance with the work of many social scientists, I suggest that autonomy and sovereignty are being reshaped in our global era, yet there is little sustained rethinking of these concepts in the postcolonial field.³⁶ It may be my Canadian inheritance of values of peace, order, and good government but, from my perspective, these categories are more central to answering Bhabha's question than is the transcendental freedom endorsed by Cheah. There is a tendency in some postcolonial theory to romanticize resistance and liberation struggles and the men who led them.³⁷ Tsitsi

discourse of development and the idealist, transcendental vision of *Bildung* creates some of the conflict that sustains the plot of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*" (216).

³⁵ See Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), for a thought-provoking elaboration of this argument, which nonetheless relies on assumptions of West-to-East transfer that postcolonial theorists need to address, and see Brydon, "Competing Autonomy Claims and the Changing Grammar of Global Politics," *Globalizations* 6.3 (September 2009): 339–52, for a partial critique of his position.

³⁶ For exceptions, see Doug Ivison, *Postcolonial Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History; Princeton NJ & Chichester: Princeton UP, 1999), and David Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). There is a wider range of texts rethinking the political by putting international relations and development studies in dialogue with the postcolonial. For examples, see April Biccum, *Global Citizenship and the Legacy of Empire: Marketing Development* (London: Routledge, 2009), *Postcolonizing the International: Working to Change the Way We Are*, ed. Philip Darby (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2006), and *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry & Sheila Nair (London: Routledge, 2004). I am also grateful to the ASNEL conference participant who alerted me to Jean-François Bayart's *Global Subjects: A Political Critique of Globalization*, which offers an alternative view of the nation-state under globalization to that provided by Beck.

³⁷ I am thinking of Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) here, which includes a full page photo of Fanon and ends with

Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* provides an important interruption of such narratives. In her unflinching witnessing to the psychic and physical damages of war, presented without indulging, however, in the usual moves performed by the trauma narrative, she succeeds in disturbing easy ways of knowing both resistance and trauma. In this, she finds her philosophical counterpart in the late Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's *On Reason: Rationality in a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism*. He refuses what he calls "the revolutionarily or spectacularly moral" because of "a principled reservation against the revolutionary and spectacular as a social or political ideal."³⁸ Countries suffering from the legacies of colonialism, he argues, have lived through the damages created by such ideals. What they require instead are "the ordinary ideals of citizenship and equality for all."³⁹ These latter ideals, he implies, may be achieved through continuing to value autonomy, as re-conceived through the expanded understanding of the scope of the rational, as *On Reason*, describes it.

Given this position and pushing Beck's analysis further, I wonder whether there are categories, more specific to the postcolonial field, which function as zombie categories blocking fuller engagement with postcolonial futures. The strength of a zombie category is its invocation of powerful undercurrents of feeling surviving atavistically within supposedly rational constructs. As a coinage, it embodies the challenges postcolonial imaginings continue to pose to European concepts of reason and universality and the ways they have entered postcolonial imaginaries. In her brief but illuminating account of the origin of the term 'zombie' in African and West Indian beliefs subsequently

a paean to his "impassioned example" (147) among other accounts of great men and some communal movements. This seems to be an effect of trying to reach a more popular audience, since none of Young's other work employs this strategy. Cheah is far too complex an analyst to adopt this position so baldly, yet his analysis, like Young's, tends implicitly to support it. Equally, I find a dangerous romanticizing of heroic and confrontational posturing in Edward Said's injunction to "speak truth to power." Perhaps it is time to consider other, less heroic, but possibly more effective strategies, such as negotiation across differences, finding some common ground, exploring non-traditional alliances, and generally seeking strategies that can win some gains on an incremental basis.

³⁸ Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *On Reason: Rationality in a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism* (Durham NC: Duke UP, 2008): 252.

³⁹ Eze, *On Reason*, 252.

disseminated “through the geography of empire,”⁴⁰ Marina Warner suggests that as “a living body without a soul” (122), the zombie finds currency today in exemplifying “an anxiety that is not being allayed in this new era” (123). As such, it becomes an appropriate symbol for thinking about relations of enquiry and injury in the global era. Zombies “are annulled; another works their will through them” (124), Warner writes. They are images of servitude who also exert a strange power (159). As unsettling images of metamorphosis, the zombie enfolds “ghosts and spectres of all kinds in its grasp” (128). Along with Cheah’s embrace of the ghost, the zombie is part of the lexicon of the current interest in hauntology, which reads capitalism as a haunted world system and advocates “thinking the ghost,”⁴¹ following Marx and Derrida, as a strategy for reanimating materialist critique.⁴² Is this one model for what the Australian writer Gail Jones calls “difficult forms of knowing”⁴³ or is it an example of what she means by the turn to a seductive gothicized vocabulary that does insufficient justice to loss and suffering? I remain undecided, given its potential for both.

Jones’s novel *Sorry* begins with these words: “A whisper: ssshh. The thinnest vehicle of breath. / This is a story that can only be told in a whisper. / There is a hush to difficult forms of knowing, an abashment, a sorrow, an inclination toward silence.”⁴⁴ Decolonization seems an inadequate word to address such difficult forms of knowing, which include remembering much that a society has forgotten – and remembering differently. ‘Sorry’ as a title when invoked throughout the book defamiliarizes normative understandings of the term by invoking the Australian aboriginal usage of sorry to indicate ‘sorry business’ or the culturally specific work of mourning associated with cere-

⁴⁰ Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002): 124. Further page references are in the main text.

⁴¹ Peter Hitchcock, *Oscillate Wildly: Space, Body, and Spirit of Millennial Materialism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999): 146.

⁴² Cheah’s *Spectral Nationality*, for example, concludes by arguing that “The post-colonial nation must be seen as a spectre of global capital [...] But it is also a spectre that haunts global capital and awaits reincarnation, the undecidable neuralgic point that refuses to be exorcised. That is why it is the most apposite figure for freedom today” (395). Such an argument finds hope in the liberating potential of the ghostly post-colonial nation for re-animating the zombie category of the capitalist nation-state, in which the living ghostly nation inhabits the dead body of the capitalist state.

⁴³ Jones, *Sorry*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Sorry*, 3.

monies for the dead. Similarly, elaborating the challenges of remembering differently, Chris Healy's *Forgetting Aborigines* shows the political potential of continued engagement with the field of representation – a cultural exercise the value of which has been questioned in recent years.⁴⁵ As an accessible point of entry into difficult forms of knowing, Healy's book may be read in counterpoint to Jones's *Sorry*. These two books translocate decolonizing imperatives into the realm of the everyday.

I have long preferred the language of decolonizing agendas for describing the goals of postcolonial work, given the difficulties the postcolonial causes for so many readers, both lay and academic, but I am now wondering whether decolonization itself as a concept assumes certain frames of understanding that in the changed contexts of the twenty-first century may itself be becoming a zombie category, incapable of addressing what is at stake in changing relations of enquiry, injury, and responsibility. In response to my abstract for the conference presentation of this essay, posted on Facebook, Souroja Moll writes (privately):

The prefix of (de)colonization has always struck me as impossible: how do I go about reversing that which I am bound to linguistically and historically, and that which is always present even in its absence? How do I undo the familiar? Is the prefix (de) perhaps, a 'zombie category,' a methodology that must engage a ghost, a haunting, a spectre, a trace...

These are the questions Jones addresses indirectly in *Sorry*, a novel that only fitfully engages with conventions of realism in its search for a form adequate to the difficult forms of knowing with which Australians need to engage, once the state has officially apologized for colonialism and recognized some of its injuries. The melodramatic, psychic, and intertextual violences of Jones's novel invoke the various forms of violence enacted and still in force in Australia today.

In addition to physical violence, Couze Venn identifies various forms of violence at the symbolic heart of colonialism, each connecting injury and enquiry in some way:

epistemic violence, that is, the denial of the authority and validity of the knowledge of the colonized; ontological violence, namely, the refusal to recog-

⁴⁵ I am thinking here particularly of David Scott's *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton NJ & Chichester: Princeton UP, 1999).

nize the (non-assimilated) colonized subject as a fellow human being; and symbolic and psychic violence, the silencing of the voice of the colonized, the denial of the latter's ability to tell his or her story.⁴⁶

Each of these forms of violence is present in the novels discussed in this essay, and each is linked to the depictions in these texts of scenes of reading, learning, unlearning, and education.

Fictional imaginings, stories, and poems remain some of the most powerful modes we have for entering and engaging with difficult ways of knowing and thus stretching our imagination in the ways that will be necessary for addressing the challenges now facing our interconnected world with globalization. But they cannot stand alone. They need to be placed in dialogue with other modes of enquiry such as those developed in the civil, social, market, and physical spheres once confined for analysis to the social and natural sciences. Texts once studied within the confines of a national literature need to be read as involved in an emerging global dialogue, but in a manner that beware of assumptions of easy translatability across different cultural situations. Never must we be more cautious than when the language or genre of expression suggests an "apparent mutual transparency."⁴⁷

So the trilogy of concern I derive from Bhabha's question involves unravelling the tangles of injury, enquiry, and agency formed through colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism to find better ways of collectively imagining how to co-create a collective future on this planet. To begin that process, I interpret two contrasting visual images of charged postcolonial encounters that recently circulated through the global public sphere, reading them through Beck's suggestive genre of the zombie category and then setting them in dialogue with fictions produced by the Australian Gail Jones, the Cree-Canadian Tomson Highway, and the Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga. These particular fictional texts both embody and thematize difficult forms of knowing in colonial situations.

Beck argues that accepting zombie categories, without understanding their new identity as zombies, can cause analysts to fall into the "nationality trap"⁴⁸ through which "methodological nationalism" functions as a source of many

⁴⁶ Couze Venn, *The Postcolonial Challenge: Towards Alternative Worlds* (Thousand Oaks CA & London: Sage, 2006): 11.

⁴⁷ Lorraine Code, "How To think Globally: Stretching the Limits of Imagination," *Hypatia* 13.2 (Spring 1998): 82.

⁴⁸ Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, 85.

types of error (43). He suggests that "The old concepts of the First, Second and Third World are also turning into zombie categories" (107). Instead, Beck suggests that "the context of globality is now everybody's starting point" (107).

In the version of this essay delivered at the ASNEL/GNEL conference in May 2009, I interpreted an image of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez offering US President Barack Obama the gift of a Spanish-language book, Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America*, first published in 1971, which documented the history of the Americas from a postcolonial perspective. The exchange took place during the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad, 18 April 2009.⁴⁹ I argued that in this incident the world saw a visual image of continuity and change. I now have in press a lengthier analysis of this photograph, in which I stress the role of the book, the ambiguity of the gift, the re-routed circuits of exchange, and the visual iconography of power-relations marked by this moment between two brown men on the world stage.⁵⁰ My reading sees Obama and Chávez as icons of power, representatives of states but also of North and South, Empire and its assumed periphery or backyard. In this exchange, I see the global vocabulary of North and South replacing the postcolonial orientations around West and East and shifting the racialized associations that once underpinned them.

At the time, I was unsure how to interpret the significance of Obama's racial breakthrough and what it might mean for reconstituted racial relations within the USA and globally. Susan Koshy is helpful here, in arguing that scholars in the USA "have no adequate lexicon for dealing with the transformation of racial orders"⁵¹ taking place today. The new conjuncture she sees emerging with the new millennium might be defined, she suggests, "as a shift from *strategic essentialism* to *strategic interracialism*."⁵² In her view, Obama's composite identity, in conjoining "blackness, whiteness, and Asianness, immigrant and heartland identities, and mainland and transpacific topographies"

⁴⁹ For an account of Galeano's work and its importance, see Daniel Fischlin & Martha Nandorfy, *Eduardo Galeano: Through the Looking Glass* (Montreal: Black Rose, 2002).

⁵⁰ See Brydon, "Metaphors that Disturb and Inspire."

⁵¹ Susan Koshy, "Why the Humanities Matter for Race Studies Today," *PMLA* 123.5 (October 2008): 1542.

⁵² Koshy, "Why the Humanities Matter," 1547.

works to “recast the referentiality of blackness while amplifying the transfigurative political power signified by blackness.”⁵³

The photo of Obama and Chávez together graphically illustrated such racialized dynamics in a very public scene of postcolonial encounter between two brown men. The second, contrasting photo discussed was taken a few days later, on 29 April 2009. This photo functions as much through absence as through presence. It shows the Canadian First Nations National Chief at the time, Phil Fontaine, in St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City just before his invited private audience with Pope Benedict XVI. No cameras or recorders were allowed in this meeting. The Vatican requested the meeting, but what the photo cannot show is the long history of collective activism behind the scenes on the global stage to get the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples drafted and passed. This history is recorded in *Indigenous Diplomacy and the Rights of Peoples: Achieving UN Recognition* by James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson.

In requesting the meeting, Vatican imperialism is changing its techniques, and, in responding with grace, indigenous politicians employ the stage provided them to get their own message across. While the word ‘apology’ was not used, the Pope apparently expressed “sorrow” for the abuse and deplorable treatment that indigenous students suffered at residential schools run by the Roman Catholic Church. A shift is happening. In early 2009, Fontaine, himself a residential-school survivor, expressed hope that this meeting would now “close the book” on the issue of apologies. Now it is time for seeking legal redress and healing, he said. Fontaine and the Pope are two leaders without states. Indigenous peoples and religion, once relegated to a receding past within modernity, are assuming an increased importance with globalization. They have new roles to play within what Beck terms the “second modernity.”

These two photos suggest to me that identities still matter politically but the ways in which they function may be changing. My comments so far have linked the recent ethical turn in postcolonial studies to the hemispheric turn, which is reshaping how my own country, Canada, understands its place in the Americas. Revised understandings of how subjectivity and place are co-constructed become translocated when glocalization becomes the new common sense. How local and global, once opposed, now cross-pollinate and fuse to produce the glocal is a complicated process that works differently in different contexts. When the transnational turn mutates into translocation, the spatial

⁵³ Koshy, “Why the Humanities Matter,” 1548.

turn is invoked, creating an intensified awareness of how place and space are produced and renewing attention to the situatedness of enquiry, within multiple identity-constructing forces and their identificatory possibilities.

Unpicking those rhizomatically woven connections can be painful as well as challenging. Postcolonial translocations are recalibrating relations of power and shifting understandings of cultural, linguistic, historical, and spatial relations. They direct consideration towards the ways in which postcolonial thinking continues to enter many different locales, changing their modes of endeavour, from the academic to the public sphere beyond the academy. Bhabha's injury and enquiry, Chávez's gift, and Fontaine's reaction to his audience with the Pope each reminds us that postcolonial work always performs its critique in alliance with hope, its history in dialogue with imagining a better future.

Building on my work with the "Globalization and Autonomy" team project, I have become fascinated by the current plethora of nation-based autonomy claims made by collectivities that consider themselves nations but have no nation-state. Canadian First Nations are one such group, but there are many others globally. Their demands are changing the grammar of politics, redefining nation-state autonomy and the meaning of sovereignty.⁵⁴ With globalization, as Nancy Fraser argues, "it is not only the substance of justice, but also the frame, which is in dispute."⁵⁵ I have joined an international pro-

⁵⁴ In literary studies, Smaro Kamboureli's TransCanada project combines critical multiculturalism with postcolonial critique in an effort to re-invent Canadian literary studies for global times. Her recent book *Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature* (2007), co-edited with Roy Miki, may be seen as a translocating project, which seeks to unravel Canadian literature from its imbrication in a certain view of the nation-state while also transforming postcolonial critique to address specifically Canadian concerns. The tension in the project is how to re-imagine Canada within the logic of the 'trans', which to many expresses a need for more fluid and open borders. The project suggests that formerly nationalist and postcolonial theorists alike need to start thinking within multiscalar modes of location, revising how we understand region, nation, and the globe as constituting multiple forms of belonging and responsibility that can coexist productively. Finally, this thinking of the multiscalar dimensions of engagement needs to attend to the role of institutions and their contexts and to disaggregated forms of citizenship.

⁵⁵ Nancy Fraser, "Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World," in *Nationalism and Global Solidarities: Alternative Projections to Neoliberal Globalisation*, ed. James Goodman & Paul James (London: Routledge, 2007): 170. See Diana Brydon, "Com-

ject on “building global democracy”⁵⁶ because the deficits our team identifies in global governance must be addressed if social justice and probably even human survival are to be achieved. Thinking about global democracy can be another way to translocate postcolonial critiques and hopes. Our first workshop addressed the question of conceptualizing democracy. In bringing together thinkers from every part of the globe, working within different linguistic, cultural, and political traditions, and in academic, policy, and civil-society contexts, we began to redefine consensually what global democracy might involve and how it might work in our global times. I bring postcolonial and feminist perspectives to these discussions but must engage with colleagues who come from many different political and belief systems. Perhaps those of us working in postcolonial studies have spent too much time talking among ourselves. In thinking about the disputed frames of justice acknowledged by Fraser, this essay has been concerned with the many ways in which “global cognitive justice” is linked to “global social justice”⁵⁷ in fictional and critical texts.

In this respect, *Sorry*, *The Book of Not*, and *Kiss of the Fur Queen* combine witnessing and refusal of the falsely redemptive in narratives that embrace difficult forms of knowing that can re-orient thinking about how Bhabha’s question may be answered. If *Sorry* may be read as taking seriously Spivak’s injunction for white beneficiaries of colonialism to understand our privilege as our loss, then *The Book of Not* investigates “the things that break and cannot be fixed because the force of wholeness has abdicated.”⁵⁸ Colonization, civil war, family dysfunction, white racism, and Western consumer culture each contributes to this abdication. The challenge of “how to become more of a person”⁵⁹ in such a world proves painfully difficult for the novel’s narrator, Tambu, and full citizenship, even in a free Zimbabwe, eludes her.

peting Autonomy Claims and the Changing Grammar of Global Politics,” *Globalizations* 6.3 (September 2009) for an analysis of these changing frames.

⁵⁶ *The Building Global Democracy Programme*, <http://www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org> (accessed 14 February 2009).

⁵⁷ See Boaventura de Sousa Santos et al. for an elaboration of these concepts and how they are interlinked.

⁵⁸ Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not* (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2006): 9.

⁵⁹ Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*, 9.

In an essay titled "Sorry-in-the-Sky," Jones assesses "the *traumatic turn* in cultural studies,"⁶⁰ suggesting it often carries "a *soteriological drive*, a wish to narrativize injustice in the light of metaphysical redemption."⁶¹ *Sorry* seems to be written explicitly to resist this temptation, creating an "ethical hesitation in reading and addressing witness" while seeking to produce "honourable and careful appraisals of truly traumatic histories."⁶² Rosanne Kennedy places Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* within a similar logic of refusal, finding that the novel exemplifies the kind of "empathic unsettlement" which Jones, also citing Dominic LaCapra's first use of this phrase, had called for. Kennedy praises *The Book of Not* for remaining true to its "non-redemptive structure" through to its unresolved ending.⁶³ *The Book of Not* leads Kennedy to the conclusion that it is difficult "to conceptualize the ongoing psychological damage of racism in terms of a vocabulary of loss and mourning; other concepts are needed."⁶⁴ What might those other concepts be?

⁶⁰ Jones, "Sorry-in-the-Sky," 161.

⁶¹ "Sorry-in-the-Sky," 163.

⁶² "Sorry-in-the-Sky," 168.

⁶³ Rosanne Kennedy, "Mortgaged Futures: Trauma, Subjectivity, and the Legacies of Colonialism in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*," *Studies in the Novel* 40.1–2 (Spring–Summer 2008): 103. Both authors have been influenced by Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001). My thinking about trauma has been deeply influenced by Daniel Coleman's careful engagement with this formation in his article, "Epistemological Cross-Talk: Between Melancholia and Spiritual Cosmology in *Soucouyant* and *Daughters Are Forever*," in *Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue*, ed. Diana Brydon & Marta Dvořák (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2012): 53–72.

⁶⁴ Kennedy, "Mortgaging Futures," 104. Kennedy argues that in addressing "the ongoing humiliation of racism in everyday colonial life" (94), *The Book of Not* moves beyond the range of trauma theory, demanding a revised, or translocated, form of analysis. Neither notions of a "traumatic event" nor "loss" seem fully adequate to this situation (Kennedy 104). This insight extends the observation on Dangarembga's earlier work, made by Ann Elizabeth Willey and Jeanette Treiber, that this author's "work often challenges our understandings of the common tropes of postcolonial studies" and "invites the reader to rethink categories often used to analyze postcolonial African literature"; "Introduction" to *Negotiating the Postcolonial: Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga*, ed. Willey & Treiber (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2004): xii. In keeping with this destabilizing function of Dangarembga's writing, *The Book of Not* disturbs many earlier interpretations of *Nervous Conditions*, especially those that see Tambudzai succeeding and Nyasha failing. I am particularly

Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* finds some of those other concepts in the mythologies of the Cree world-system translocated into the structural disciplines of classical music. The Okimasis brothers, like Tambu, struggle to reconcile their residential-school experiences with their lives back home in northern Manitoba, inhabiting Cree language and culture lived according to Cree values. They overhear their ancestral lands described as an uninhabited "last frontier";⁶⁵ their language is forbidden; and their names are changed, but, unlike Tambu, they have access to the alternative stories and world-views of the Cree and the languages of music and dance to sustain their creativity in the face of an enforced memorization of another culture's 'facts'. Its dissonant framing between a Cree cosmology and the language of classical music enables Highway's novel to refuse its readers the Christian experience of redemption while celebrating survival. Highways' "productive dissonance," as described by Sarah Wylie Krotz, produces a complex novel exploring both the pain and the potential of transculturality.

The Cree sensibility of Highway's text, with its trickster poetic and bawdy humour, proves especially difficult for students in the classroom who are seeking narratives that enshrine victimization, mourning, and trauma while promising redemption for their white readers. Cree humour that ends a book about horrific child sexual abuse and violent rapes with a wink can be very confusing for students who are willing to acknowledge guilt and sorrow for past wrongs but have more difficulty recognizing the resiliency of a culture that does not share their cosmology. Equally difficult for students who crave cultural authenticity in indigenous figures is the text's use of camp humour, its deployment of the hybrid Fur Queen, and its use of Jeremiah's relationship to classical piano as "an index of the challenges of transculturation."⁶⁶ Elsewhere, I have argued that Highway's novel carries a "personal anguish back

interested in extending Brendon Nicholls' insight into the ways that Nyasha "is the self-regulating subject *par excellence*" (Nicholls, "Indexing Her Digests: Working through *Nervous Conditions*," in *Negotiating the Postcolonial*, ed. Willey & Treiber, 131) in *Nervous Conditions* to think about the ways in which *The Book of Not* continues Dangarembga's investigation of the self-regulating subject through Tambudzai.

⁶⁵ Tomson Highway, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998; Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2005): 141

⁶⁶ Sarah Wylie Krotz, "Productive Dissonance: Classical Music in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*," *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en Littérature Canadienne* 34.1 (2009): 183.

into the public sphere to find appropriate forms of redress and progress."⁶⁷ Highway uses a persistent strategy of postcolonial translocation to challenge the settler mind-set and destabilize its expectations of what a native text should do. Sam McKegney argues that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* departs from the standard routes taken by residential-school survivor narratives – what he calls *legacy discourse* – by refusing to offer either “closure and healing,” on the one hand, or “testimonial evidence,” shaped for the purpose of seeking legal redress, on the other.⁶⁸ Instead, Highway works toward imagining a new kind of politics in which the spiritual and political are linked. Julia Emberley similarly sees the novel operating “through an ironic de-signification of the Christian myth of origins,” contesting “the Christian myth of resurrection,” and suggesting the need “to theorize a de-familiar unconscious and perhaps to create an unfamiliar praxis, a network of political kinships strong enough to contest the use of intimate violence to maintain the hegemony of today’s global military-communications-industrial complex.”⁶⁹

The doubled protagonists of each novel complicate the *Bildung* structure of the traditional novel of education by highlighting the relational autonomy that both links and distinguishes the two non-familial “sisters” in *Sorry*, the two brothers in *Kiss*, and the two cousins in *Not*. Each of these novels contributes to re-thinking the conditions necessary for democratic participation in global times in ways that stress the enabling potential of difficult forms of knowing and relating. Particularly troubling in this respect is Tambu’s wrestling with the Shona concept of *unhu* and its refrain, “I am well if you are too”⁷⁰ in *The Book of Not*. Tambu can find no way of reconciling her mother’s understanding of *unhu*, and her mother’s authority within Shona systems of *unhu*, with the alternatively based authority of the Western colonial school. The novel stages these debates to trouble simplified models of understanding that would merely oppose colonized to colonizer, individual to community, in ways that might valorize one above the other. Instead, it shows that reciprocity as a value, while central to survival in certain contexts, can also contain within itself a capacity for encouraging the very kinds of competitions it only appa-

⁶⁷ Brydon, “Compromising Postcolonialism,” 23.

⁶⁸ Sam McKegney, *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School* (Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2007): 147–48.

⁶⁹ Julia Emberley, *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007): 253–55.

⁷⁰ Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*, 65, 123, 145.

rently deplores. *The Book of Not* challenges romanticized notions of indigenous community and the independent individual alike, while dramatizing the incremental breakdowns in human relations that can lead to what others label a failed state. Cheah argues that “Culture as freedom is persistently performed and undone in radical postcolonial nationalist *Bildung*.”⁷¹ Is this a helpful way to describe the undoing of *Bildung* in *The Book of Not*? Or is an alternative vocabulary required?

These texts pose difficult forms of knowing that challenge readers to move into spaces of troubling engagement. I have focused on the traumatic turn in postcolonial studies because of its implications for how postcolonial thinkers understand the relations that link enquiry, injury, and responsibility in aesthetic structures that function both emotively and politically. It is sobering to read the complex and principled investigations of Bhabha’s question in these three novels, each engaging the question from a differently situated location within yet-to-be-decolonized spaces. Through them, I hope to have shown the value of including attention to settler-colony imaginaries in postcolonial studies. I have argued for the value of difficult forms of knowing and have raised questions about the limits of some of the categories through which the postcolonial has constructed itself and now seeks to renew itself for global times. Finally, I have suggested that the context of globality disturbs postcolonial certainties, translocating them into new arenas of power where cognitive and political justice may prove just as elusive but are demanding redirected investigations into how they might be achieved.

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⁷¹ Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 394.

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