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**INTREPID WHITE SAVIORS: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING**

by

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## DEDICATION

to my mother

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**MAGDALENA MALINOWSKA**

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2017

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**ABSTRACT**

Drawing from tourism studies, travel literature, and cultural studies, this dissertation uses textual analysis to explore the hidden ideological agendas of international development in a selection of popular narratives written to describe efforts of Spanish individuals to combat poverty in “developing” countries: *Pura vida* (1998) by José María Mendiluce, *Una maestra en Katmandú* (2002) by Victoria Subirana, *Sonrisas de Bombay* (2007) by Jaume Sanlloriente, and *Los colores de un sueño* (2013) by Alba de Toro. This study provides a sociological framework for understanding the politics of production, distribution, and reception of such narratives and examines the discourse of individual altruism by juxtaposing the fields of mass tourism, international development and contemporary popular literature.

Although development-themed narratives present themselves as depictions of charity work, they are also stories of touristic exploits. This dissertation explores how the colonial myth of the *explorer* is refurbished in narratives of altruistic development within the postmodern mood of “global consciousness”, which is triggered by globalization,

commodification and a sense of uncertainty—factors that produce a relentless drive to “save the world”. Despite the postmodern gloss, however, these narratives exoticize “non-modern” scenarios in which the narrators (*adventure development tourists*) represent themselves as *intrepid white saviors* in the style of explorers, missionaries and survivors of the past. In this sense, these narratives depend of traditional travel literature tropes.

The deliberate status of these popular narratives as commodities is highlighted, exposing their utility as marketing tools for NGOs. To this end, this dissertation connects the idea of “a good story” to a publishing objective. Reception is approached by exploring the role of interpellation: the subliminal ways in which readers become financial supporters within the context of “global consciousness” wherein altruistic impulses are commodified and incorporated into lifestyles. In this sense, literature plays a key role in formulating and naturalizing the discourse of development. This dissertation exposes the double mechanism at work in development-themed narratives: the pursuit of progressive development used to veil complicity with exploitation.



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## INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study was my own travels in lands of the poor. Fed up with a stable career-bound job in an urban location, I bought a one-way ticket to Russia and in a week's time I was boarding the Trans-Siberian Railway bound for Irkutsk. During the next 8 months of backpacking across Asia, I experienced a countless number of thrilling adventures and met a myriad of fascinating people from distant lands. I also met many other backpackers who, like me, came on the voyage of a lifetime in search of adventures. Some of them differed from the rest of us—their travels had a higher purpose. They were working in an orphanage or teaching English to Buddhist monks or cleaning up a local beach—they were using their vacations to help less fortunate others. We were impressed—we were just tourists; they were also volunteers. Those who garnered the greatest admiration were the Peace Corps people who were there long term, not just a few weeks. Their selfless solidarity put our selfish leisure to shame. My admiration was boundless until a 22-year-old gave this reply when asked what she was doing there: "I'm saving the world!" This seemed a bit too much, given that her job consisted of tooth-brushing presentations in an isolated village. Useful?—maybe, but far from world-saving. In any case, I wasn't doing anything of this sort, so I was envious of her experience. I promised myself I'd volunteer as soon as I got back home, but the truth is that I never did.

A few years later in Barcelona I visited the travel bookstore, Altair, in search of inspiration for future journeys. While flipping through *Sonrisas de Bombay* I felt inspired—it was a story of a journalist who traded his comfortable life in Barcelona for a lifetime of saving orphaned children from prostitution in India. This was more than just a

leisurely backpacking trip or a few dozen dental hygiene presentations; this was true adventure of helping others in a way that mattered. I had that feeling again: I too wanted to go to India to help poor kids, just like those that surrounded this handsome Spaniard on the cover of the book—but at the same time I was conflicted: this type of volunteering seemed more interesting to me than the kind back home. I found several other stories of Spanish philanthropists doing work in faraway lands. I was intrigued by these fellow Europeans who traveled abroad, acting on their impulses to help others—why not at home? In both cases, theirs and mine, local philanthropy was an option that was rejected in favor of an international undertaking. Was it about helping or traveling? My struggle to understand their motivations—and mine—led to a series of questions that became the starting point of this dissertation study.

What motivation is there behind traveling abroad to do charitable work? What characteristics do the selected countries have? Who are the people who choose lives in service of others and why? What are their charitable endeavors and what challenges do the benefited locations pose to them? How are all these efforts described, by whom and why? Besides me, who buys these books, and why? These are some of the questions that form one basic line of inquiry: Where is the boundary between adventures and doing volunteer work abroad? This study is an effort to understand the convergence of travel and philanthropic impulses today—in other words, it sits at the intersection of contemporary tourism and international development.

A few words about this field are required, as it stands at the core of the inquiry in this dissertation. International development can be defined as a multi-disciplinary effort to

improve the quality of life of humans via strategies for poverty reduction and general development in a variety of areas. It encompasses governance, foreign aid, healthcare, education, gender equality, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, economics, environment and human rights. It was initiated in the 1940s shortly after the post-WWII creation of the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (today: World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund, and in the spirit of general socioeconomic advancement of the newly liberated and/or formed countries. The following statement by President Harry Truman in his inaugural address in 1949 is taken as an emblematic starting point of the decades-long endeavor of deliberate efforts at world progress: “we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (Truman). During the last 60 years, a wide array of governing institutions and non-governmental and charitable organizations that comprise this field have put into practice the idea of increasing global prosperity through concrete socio-economic, environmental, health, and financial initiatives.

In the year 2000, during the United Nations Millennium Summit, these endeavors were re-formulated into goals to be completed by 2015. During the conference, world leaders agreed to a set of targets, aimed at eradicating poverty, known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability” (World Bank). For the last 15

years, the annual Global Monitoring Report has evaluated progress on the MDGs until their expiration in December 2015.” (World Bank) In 2016, the MDGs have been replaced with a set of new goals—the Sustainable Development Goals with a target date of 2030. Extreme poverty was reformulated from \$1.25 a day to \$1.90 and estimated to affect “700 million in 2015” (World Bank). Development’s work continues as poverty is “morally unacceptable given the resources and the technology available today”, making the field’s “overarching mission of a world free of poverty as relevant today as it has ever been” (World Bank).

The structure of the development field can be described as tiered and pyramidal. At the top, there are the three already-mentioned forerunners of the field, United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. These organizations shape the overall strategies of development for individual countries through a range of activities centered on but not limited to lending money to countries. The three agencies work closely together to generate comprehensive aid packages to impoverished countries, draw up specific strategies for the implementation of poverty-reduction-related goals, and provide experts and tools for their implementation. They are the biggest of the many international institutions dedicated to this cause. Within the UN alone, there are currently more than 60 other agencies devoted to the implementation of the MDGs, representing the broad range of the organization’s fields of action: from the United Nations Development Program, to the World Health Organization, to the United Nations Children’s Fund and many more. The policy-making level is accompanied by a community of large-scale donors who provide the funds necessary to carry out the planned initiatives. These include

development agencies of individual countries, large-scale private foundations, intergovernmental organizations and other private funders. Since donors and policy makers rarely have the capability to actually implement and manage development projects, they depend on professional organizations that specialize in this. These include non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, private voluntary organizations and, in some cases, private companies. International development today is a professional industry, staffed by specialists from various disciplines, as well as researchers and scholars from the field's academic branch which aims to generate a corpus of experts in development practices and theories. Hundreds of thousands of persons are employed by the field of international development, in a wide array of organizations that can be classified within the following nine categories: international organizations, governments, private sector support organizations, finance institutions, training and research organizations, civil society organizations, development consulting firms, information providers and grant-makers. The list demonstrates the large number and the remarkable variety of development actors involved in striving to achieve the field's objective of economically advancing the poor areas of the world.

One development stakeholder stands somewhat outside of the formal structure but plays a key role in the field, and in this study: the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The term's meaning is broad, referring to a wide variety of non-profit, non-allied organizations dedicated in diverse ways to the pursuit of social transformation. Their orientation varies from political, to educational, to health, but increasingly many work on issues related to international development. These NGOs range in scale from large ones

such as CARE or Oxfam to small organizations set up by individuals to target selected problems of a small group of people in a specific school, orphanage, village or neighborhood. This diversity is also reflected in the way they are funded, via fundraising efforts, government grants and private donations; and in the way they are staffed, both with volunteers and with top professionals in their fields. An increasingly large number of them receive funding from and work directly with the aforementioned international development agencies, thus gaining in importance to the field: “Over the past several decades, NGOs have become major players in the field of international development. [...] It is ... estimated that over 15 percent of total overseas development aid is channeled through NGOs” (World Bank). Not all NGOs are financed by agencies such as USAID or UNDP—the micro-scale NGOs rely on private, small-scale individual donations. All in all, NGOs dedicated to development play a crucial role in the international efforts to reduce poverty worldwide. They put into praxis development’s objectives, enacting its philosophy and serving as the primary meeting place for the people on both sides of the development divide: the “developed” vs. the “developing” world.

This dissertation focuses on a group of narratives that describe certain aspects of development. More specifically, they concentrate on the travels made by Spaniards to the “developing” world (India, Nepal and Costa Rica) for the purpose of poverty alleviation in the last two decades. They are, in order of year of initial publication: *Pura vida* (1998) by José María Mendiluce, *Una maestra en Katmandú* (2002) by Victoria Subirana, *Sonrisas de Bombay* (2007) by Jaume Sanllorente, *Los colores de un sueño* (2013) by Alba de Toro. These narratives describe different areas of development. Two of them—

self-authored narratives, *Una maestra en Katmandú* and *Sonrisas de Bombay*—describe grassroots-level NGOs. These tell the stories of their founders—Subirana and Sanllorente—and their successful efforts to expand the scope and reach of their operations from one small-scale project reaching a few dozen beneficiaries to several large-scale ones, benefitting a few thousand people. In contrast, *Pura vida* is a novel that features the story of a development professional working for a major policy-making-development entity (in Mendiluce’s narrative, the UNDP). Finally, *Los colores de un sueño* is another self-authored story centered on the volunteer experience of an individual (de Toro) employed at a decades-old, large-scale NGO (Fundación Vicente Ferrer), with offices and fundraising projects in several developed nations (Spain and USA).

These narratives have been selected because of their connection to development; to the ways they portray this praxis. Nevertheless, not all accounts of poverty, violence, instability or injustice that take place in a “developing” country can be categorized as development-themed narratives. There exists a plethora of social problems that often go hand in hand with economic scarcity: malnutrition and starvation; limited access to water, health services and education; rural-urban migration; politically and economically-motivated emigration; downward and/or upward socio-economic mobility; war and its consequences ranging from rape, to child soldiers, to refugee camps; urban, gang and drug violence; and many more. Many stories simply depict these issues. Even when an external organization is involved, it is not always part of the field of development. For example, issues related to famine, war or natural disasters are handled by institutions dedicated to humanitarian aid, such as the Red Cross or Doctors Without Borders.



Although they are often funded by the same large scale international aid organizations (IMF, WB, and others) that also fund development projects, they have different objectives. International development is related to the concept of international aid but it is distinct from disaster relief and humanitarian aid. While the latter two forms of international aid seek to alleviate some of the problems associated with the insufficient level of development, they are most often short-term fixes. International development, on the other hand, seeks to implement long-term solutions to problems by helping “developing” countries create the capacity needed to enact such sustainable solutions to their problems. It is precisely one of the objectives of the present study to attempt to sieve out those stories that explicitly portray development praxis in such terms in order to focus on concerns related to this field.

This dissertation presents a critique of development’s philanthropic drive abroad through the study of the above-mentioned narratives. These texts blend the private sphere of the individual with the social imperatives of the world, and articulate a particular spatial dimension, re-asserting the divide (center/periphery, North/South, developed/underdeveloped, First World/Third World, etcetera) that justifies development praxis. By examining the connections between the praxis of development and its portrayal in such narratives, this dissertation proposes a study of the ideology behind this economic field. In this regard, this dissertation takes from Louis Althusser’s 1970 essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in which he defines ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” Working within the Marxist spatial metaphor of the superstructure and the economic base, Althusser shows

how the mode of production is reproduced for the benefit of the maintenance of the dominant class by means of the Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses. Given the goal of this dissertation of examining the praxis of development and tourism, Althusser's notion of the materiality of ideology becomes pertinent—"ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice." Althusser's idea of interpellation, or the act of recognizing and hailing of an individual as a subject of ideology, is also pertinent to this study as it highlights the invisibility of ideology—we are "always-already" its subjects.

The narratives examined herein are books published with the aim of retelling the experience of going abroad to help the poor. In this sense, they stand at the intersection of two major structural frames of our times: tourism and international development. By analyzing these narratives, this dissertation underscores the relationship between these two seemingly unrelated fields: tourism and international development. It also investigates their connection to the field of fiction and travel writing. This study seeks to examine how contemporary travelers depict the changing global order to themselves through storytelling. These voyagers continue a centuries-long tradition of using stories to create ways of imagining the changes they are living. By bringing to the fore the connection between travel writing, tourism, and storytelling, this dissertation will show the ideological presuppositions of international development.

Finding both primary sources and critical discussions that specifically refer to the context of international development in Spanish has proven to be challenging. While Latin America's conflicted relationship with Europe and the United States has been the

topic of discussions in various fields, studies specifically focusing on international development praxis and its ideology are rare. For example, while there is an entire subgenre of literature dedicated to retelling the experiences of the Peace Corps volunteers—the institution’s webpage lists over 300 titles—, there are none on the people receiving this aid. At least, I have not been able to find a single one. A similar search for the Spanish-speaking case brought up same results. This uneven discursive exchange has been a topic of discussion within postcolonial and subaltern studies. This dissertation engages with these fields, by highlighting the Eurocentric perspectives behind the altruistic drives portrayed in these narratives.

The praxis described in these stories (the rich helping the poor) share a *de facto* stance of superiority, regardless of the narrators’ national and regional origins—the protagonists could have been German, British or French citizens. In this sense, these narratives might be considered global; they lack any connection to the local history, culture and linguistic peculiarities of Catalonia, in Spain, the region of all four authors. For this reason, this dissertation does not address the specificity of the Spanish context in which they were written. Nevertheless, it is important to justify why Spain might be considered a “developed” country in the sense of development praxis.

Although once a colonial empire, Spain has not been a prosperous nation consistently. Without digging into the remote past, and instead just focusing on the last century, Spain has been both at the top and the bottom of the global standards of wealth. Despite its current status as one of the world’s 35 most advanced economies (per IMF as

of 2013<sup>1</sup>), at the moment of the emergence of development, Spain was indisputably a “Third World” country. Although American in its roots, development’s discourse quickly became hegemonic world-wide: adopted by all countries, “developing” and “developed” alike. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, won by Hitler-backed Francisco Franco, left hundreds of thousands of people dead, the country’s infrastructure severely damaged and its economy ravaged. A decade after the Civil War<sup>2</sup>, Spain was even more economically backward than it had been ten years earlier: “By the early 1950s, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was barely 40 percent of the average for West European countries.” (Solsten and Meditz) The economic situation was undoubtedly that of a country in poverty: “Then, after a decade of economic stagnation, a tripling of prices, the growth of a black market, food rationing, and widespread deprivation, gradual improvement began to take place.” (Solsten and Meditz) It was not an organic process. Several forms of financial assistance played a crucial role in the country’s turn towards growth which began in the 1960s: “Such aid took the form of US\$75 million in drawing rights from the IMF, US\$100 million in OEEC credits, US\$70 million in commercial credits ... US\$30 million from the United States Export-Import Bank, and funds from United States aid programs. Total foreign backing amounted to US\$420 million.”

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<sup>1</sup> It is also a MEDC country (“more economically developed country”) and a high income OECD country as determined by the World Bank ([http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups#OECD\\_members](http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups#OECD_members)) and features on the IMF’s list of 35 advanced economies: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/01/pdf/text.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Despite the country’s endorsement of the Axis Alliance during World War II, the country managed to keep itself out of the armed conflict that devastated most of Europe via Franco’s feigned neutrality: his “non-belligerent” stance. However, this hiatus did not allow the country’s economy to recover given the formidable level of economic damage incurred during the Civil War. Its productive capacity for both industry and agriculture was significantly lowered and the economy further debilitated in the decades following the Civil War by political and economic isolation, imposed both internally (via Franco’s policies of economic self-sufficiency and nationalism) and externally (via branding as an international outcast for its wartime pro-Axis stance).

(Solsten and Meditz) The effect of such measures a few decades later was the immense growth of foreign capital investment—“sevenfold between 1958 and 1960”—and of tourism, both of which steadily converted Spain’s economic structure “into one more closely resembling a free-market economy, [as] the country entered the greatest cycle of industrialization and prosperity it had ever known.” (Solsten and Meditz) This is how Spain became a “developed” country thanks to international development.

In view of the above, this dissertation tackles development’s ideological presuppositions by approaching the selected narratives with one main objective: unveiling the hidden interests of development behind the rhetoric of altruism that define the protagonists’ quests. In this sense the study underscores the contradictions that sustain these journeys. This dissertation proposes an inquiry into the discrepancies found in development as an altruistic phenomenon, first, through textual analysis and, second, through a limited sociological inquiry into the politics of production, distribution, and reception of such narratives. Although the narratives in this study present themselves as chronicles of development endeavors, this study demonstrates that they are also stories of touristic exploits. While being carefully crafted as accounts of individual philanthropic deeds—work in service of *others*—there is a hidden motivation for the *self*: a strong touristic drive to be realized in a development setting. The pursuit of adventure in these narratives is an underlying structure, that of the “authorized” self in need of heroism. This dissertation makes recourse to the tools of literature and textual analysis in order to expose the lucrative success of these stories. Development’s attractiveness (as portrayed in these narratives) to donors and a wide readership lies in crafting a good story. These

books rely on narrative (plot development, character construction, suspense, etc.) for making their protagonists' quests meaningful. This dissertation also demonstrates how these texts became marketing tools for the NGOs they represent.

This dissertation situates the study of the above-mentioned narratives within a wider context. As a result of contemporary tourism, an activity shaped by globalization, commodification, but also by a world perceived to be in a permanent state of emergency, these narratives share the mood of "global consciousness." (MacCannell *Ethics*) Their protagonists are fueled by the imperative to become heroes and "save the world". This particular set of emotions manifests itself in contemporary travel as "moral tourism" (Huggan). This mood, together with the enduring myths and tropes of classic travel literature, fuels the need for adventure. This dissertation reveals development itself as the perfect place and activity for realizing these desires.

The four development-themed stories analyzed in this dissertation do not belong to the canon of Spanish literature, but rather to the realm of popular literature. These narratives are marketed in service of some form of international development and do not claim to have any artistic purpose. This study argues that, although such narratives may be deemed harmless entertainment, they are indeed not innocent. Furthermore, this study engages with the field of literature from the perspective of cultural and postcolonial studies. Without seeking to address the long-standing discussions on the meaning of literature and "literariness", this study finds complicit ideological ground between the lucrative-driven narratives here studied, and Western literary tradition's drive to reproduce colonial tropes, particularly those on the myth of exploration and adventure.

Thus, on the basis of its neocolonial condition, certain type of literature, tourism and international development are closely intertwined. This dissertation exposes a double mechanism at work in the narratives studied: they articulate a representation of development and, at the same time, they hide development's own complicity with exploitation. Contemporary development-themed tourism narrative is heir of canonical travel literature, in that both have prolonged colonialist perspectives. Both types of literature perpetuate the division between "developing" and "developed" parts of the world.

The fact that this study focuses on narratives whose origin is popular culture, requires a particular theoretical framework. Pop-culture has been pondered by many in the past and present, in ways that go beyond the accusation of being an easy distraction or a "narcotic against the banality of everyday life" (Gramsci 371). Michael Denning refutes the notion that leisure reading constitutes mere "escapism." (66) Instead, he suggests that popular texts encode forms of political expression<sup>3</sup> and the underlying desires and fantasies of the readers (67-69; Levine 31). Such texts express "the philosophy of the age" and "the fantasizing of the common people" (Gramsci 371). Precisely because of their popular origin, the narratives in this study provide an alternative interpretative framework to that of canonical literature.

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<sup>3</sup> Denning studied nineteenth-century American dime novels. Denning, Michael. *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*. London, Verso, 1987. According to Levin, Denning affirms the inextricable link between politics and the sentiments of popular literature, yet suggests that these sentiments remain coded in the complex language of the unconscious: escapist literature must be read as "dreams, daydreams, or wish fulfillments" (Denning 66; Levin 32).

Furthermore, although popular narratives lack in literary recognition, they enjoy a wide appeal which makes them an interesting subject of study. Antonio Gramsci, like many others, pondered the reasons for the immense popularity of this type of literature: “Why are these books always the most read and the most frequently published? What needs do they satisfy and what aspirations do they fulfill? What emotions and attitudes emerge in this squalid literature, to have such wide appeal?” (Gramsci 342) Gramsci’s questions relate directly to this study’s interrogation of the motivation behind writing about travel in popular narratives of development. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explain the nature of popular art as a product of what they call “the culture industry”: “art now dutifully admits being a commodity, abjures its autonomy and proudly takes its place among consumer goods” (127). This deliberate, overt status of popular literature as commodity will be a key point of analysis in this study.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation can be described as eclectic as it will include diverse fields of study: tourism studies, literary studies and cultural studies. This approach serves the objective of this study’s inquiry, which is not literary in nature. Firstly, it is also not unrelated to literature. It is precisely my literary training that allows me to undertake an analysis outside the literary realm. Secondly, this dissertation brings up topics that have been treated by both postcolonial literature and traditional literary criticism. Diverse theoretical instruments will be applied to individual chapters to highlight specific concerns that can be evidenced only by that particular field of theory. Detailed explanations of each field’s facets will be discussed in pertinent chapters in



order to illuminate particular issues presented there. Consequently, only a short overview of these non-literary ideological tools is presented in the introduction.

Although this dissertation makes use of sundry approaches to classic literary topics, the key one is travel literature. In this vein, Carl Thompson's digest and Jennifer Speake's compendium are used to provide historical context to the genre. Lily Litvak's 1987 study of Spanish colonial travel writing is taken into account not for its specificity, given the universal orientation of this dissertation, but rather as background and a means to counter balance the universal travel histories. Ideological essence is taken from Mary Louise Pratt's study on imperial travel writing and its complicity with colonialism via a "discourse of innocence". Another important idea originating from literary studies is the trope of the "white savior" examined in different ways by Matthew Hughey, Hernan Vera and Andrew Gordon.

This study also makes use of other fields of inquiry pertaining to ideology. From classics of ideology come the conspicuous ideas of Louis Althusser (Ideological State Apparatuses and interpellation), Karl Marx (commodification and alienation) and Sigmund Freud (dissatisfaction rooted in structure of civilization), as well as those of Edward Said (Orientalism), Walter Benjamin (knowledge as storytelling) and Benedict Anderson (imagined community). The historically-charged dichotomy of savage vs. the noble savage is a key idea explored extensively from within philosophy and history of travel literature. From cultural studies come Stuart Hall's ideas of representation, Guy Debord's notion of "pseudo-needs" and Slavoj Žižek's sarcastic method of de-masking commodification of daily life. Following the context-activated theories of reception, such

as those of Janet Staiger, this study uses online media and popular culture as a source of inquiry. The writings by Eduardo Galeano and Teju Cole are also taken into consideration. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to society, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's social construction of reality, and Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquidity" in postmodern life complement this dissertation's approach.

The ideas of scholars of international development itself—David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers, Michael Woolcock and Wolfgang Sachs—are critiqued, particularly through Arturo Escobar's views on this field. Escobar examines the praxis of international development since its beginning and its discourse through an anthropological lens. This study undertakes a similar critique through the study of narrative with the tools of literary analysis. This is one of the originalities of the present study. Other anthropologists whose ideas this study draws upon include Renato Rosaldo, for his concept of "imperialist nostalgia," relevant to the largely touristic orientation of this study. This dissertation also touches upon the anthropological work of Claude Levi-Strauss and Paul Fussell, and delves heavily into that of the father of tourism studies, Dean MacCannell. Several of his ideas stand at the center of this study—"touristic attitudes", the pursuit of authenticity via travel, and the idea of "global consciousness" as the underlying and defining mood of contemporary touristic practice. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan's survey of contemporary travel writing is another key ideological backbone of the present study, as it shows a close relationship between forms of contemporary travel and identity formation. Several other tourism studies scholars are referenced: Kathleen M. Adams, John Urry, Edward Bruner, Valerie Wheeler, and other sociologists and anthropologists. Two

tourism scholars who focus on the non-theoretical side of the field, such as the taxonomy of touristic practices, are Jafar Jafari and Marina Novelli. Their studies clarify the phenomenon of the travel niches that make up the contemporary tourism scene.

Due to the fact that this dissertation borrows greatly from tourism studies, it is necessary to define the scope of this multi-disciplinary academic area dedicated to the analysis of tourism as a social phenomenon. The field has its roots in anthropology and sociology but today includes scholars from others academic areas. The field's objectives are best explained by one of its top publications, *Tourist Studies*, a multi-disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal by Sage Publications<sup>4</sup> whose main goal is to: “adopt a global perspective, widening and challenging the established views of tourism and seeking to evaluate, compare and integrate approaches from sociology, socio-psychology, leisure studies, cultural studies, geography and anthropology”. The journal examines the relationship between tourism and these related fields of social inquiry, given that “Tourism and tourist consumption are not only emblematic of many features of contemporary social change, such as mobility, restlessness, the search for authenticity and escape, but they are increasingly central to economic restructuring, globalization, the sociology of consumption and the aestheticization of everyday life.” Although the publication includes qualitative analyses of tourism and the tourist experience, as well as analysis of contemporary issues in the field, the main focus of the field—one that is used in the present study—is theoretical.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/tourist-studies#description>

Tourism exists as an important social fact in today's world. It has become one of the world's largest "industries" in a comparatively short time. Its accelerated growth is measured by the World Tourism Organization, which estimates it to be close to two billion tourist arrivals by 2030 ("World Tourism Highlights 2016"). The wide variety of tourism interests—from sports to medical to war zone tourism, among others—have shown remarkable growth rates, which suggest that tourism in all of its manifestations has come to play an increasingly important role in our lives. In the West, tourism carries with it considerable historical weight as scholars such as Boyer (1972), MacCannell (1976), Adler (1989) and Löfgren (1999) demonstrate in their studies. In the modern era in the West, it can be traced to the nineteenth-century excursions of Thomas Cooke and to the travels of young aristocrats and their tutors on the European continent beginning as early as the second part of the seventeenth century. Böröcz (1996) traces the first written mention of the word "tourist" in the West in the English and the French languages to the beginning of the nineteenth century (Huggan). However, the actions that can now be identified as touristic can be traced to much earlier historical moments. Hunt (1984) and Cohen (1984) report on European pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the fourth and fifth centuries as having a secular-touristic side. Balsdon (1969) examines touristic pastimes among ancient Romans. Friedlander (1965) shows the existence of second homes among wealthy Romans.

There may be a temptation—especially in the literary studies—to consider these older tourisms as having special qualities which make them different from the tourist industry of our time, but according to Dennison Nash in *The Study of Tourism*.

*Anthropological and Sociological Beginnings* (2007), a “close examination of the historic reports reveals that it is often difficult to distinguish them from the tourism we know—all of which suggests that, without a great deal of legerdemain, we can demonstrate that something like the tourism we know in the West have come to take for granted has a good deal of historic depth.” (2) Descriptions of exotic places have been a staple of literature since its beginning. Nevertheless, while tourism praxis has been in existence for centuries, “The study of tourism as a sociological specialty rather than merely as an exotic, marginal topic emerged only in the 1970s.” (17) Dean MacCannell’s 1976 *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* is taken as the beginning of the field’s critical inquiry. Though this field will be explored in greater detail in later chapters, the alternative view of travel practice outlined above testifies to the field’s utility for this dissertation.

Tourism studies also serves as a tool to revisit travel writing, desacralizing it as a literary field. Tourist studies reveal the popular nature of both past and contemporary travel—by demystifying the practice of travel, and consequently, the aesthetic implications of travel writing. The well-informed audience of this dissertation does not require an explanation of the field of travel writing; however, a few observations are necessary to highlight its relationship to contemporary travel endeavors. While travel as practice is as old as mankind, and travel writing as old as literature itself, the same cannot be said about tourism. Although the academic study of travel writing as a separate genre is only several decades old, its scope spans well into the past. Conversely, given the extremely short existence of mass tourism—about 50 years—, the academic scholarship

about this phenomenon as a specific field of praxis goes back only 30 years. However, its distinguishing feature is its virtual lack of belatedness: today's tourist studies reflect on current tourism practices. Furthermore, these reflections cloud the division created by the very emergence of this type of leisure practice. In this regard it is difficult to distinguish between written accounts of contemporary travels versus those of contemporary tourism. This observation is relevant in light of the distinction that is often made—especially in travel writing—between the two areas of contemporary travel: tourism and travel.

Naturally, not all travel is tourism. As in the past, travel is undertaken for many reasons aside from leisure—work and family, among others—but the history of scholarship in various disciplines has shown us that the motivations of travel blur and blend. Regardless of the reason for the journeys, the praxis of travel generates encounters with otherness, at the very least, and sometimes even spurs self-reflection. The advent of mass travel has made travel for all reasons available for a vast sector of the globe in a short period of time. The travels described in the narratives in this study are a product of this phenomenon. Not only does the larger field of international development rely on travel and transport, tourism specifically plays an important role in the type of development activities undertaken by the authors of the narratives in this dissertation.

The mainstream differentiation between *tourist* and *traveler* grew out of the birth of mass tourism in the 1960s and was largely produced in travel writing: prior to the popularization of travel practice by the technological advancements of the last century, everyone was a *traveler*. With the global spread of tourism, travel writing—together with travel itself—has been made available to a wider audience. Nevertheless, as Patrick

Holland and Graham Huggan point out, even some of the best-known writers “often seem to react against this democratizing process.” (ii) What helps to maintain this moralistic separation is the “tendency in literature studies ... to intellectualize it as discourses of displacement or focus on the canonized writers (from earlier periods).” (ii) To this end, it is important to remember that travel writing, as a genre, has always had a mixed reception—it has been seen by some as essentially frivolous or even morally dangerous. Travel writers have been accused of being “practiced liars” who are “infested with the itch to tell wonderful stories” (Adams 5) for centuries, revealing the genre’s shoddy beginnings. Many of the consecrated travel narratives were once considered to be popular literature. Since all writers have the aim of presenting their travels and themselves as impressive, this makes the separation between travel and tourism moot. Nevertheless, the “genre has proven remarkably immune to even the harshest criticisms” and has become one of most popular and widely read forms of literature today” (Holland and Huggan vii). This topic will be given more attention later in the study.

Furthermore, the same modern technology that has brought about access to modern aviation and, consequently, mass tourism has also more recently democratized the field of book publishing, making the divulgation in print available to a greater number of writers. This popularization of literature enabled the publication of two of the books in this dissertation. They were printed by an alternative publishing house exclusively dedicated to delivering to the reading audience a different kind of story, a factor that will prove important to this study. Thus, in addition to establishing a connection between tourism and international development, this study also intersects with travel writing.

Moreover, this dissertation stands at the intersection of these three fields—and therein lies its uniqueness and value.

This study considers development travel writing as a textual performance (Butor: 1974) and as an economically sanctioned (Pratt: 2008) and oriented activity (Holland and Huggan ix). This study exposes the privileges of the Western philanthropist-travel writer, in terms of both travel and writing. In this way, it is a study of privilege. Tourism studies points out that, since people travel for many reasons, many of which are unrelated to leisure (Huggan 2), travel is no longer a “privilege through movement,” (Kaur and Tetnyki 25) making the old idea of travel as freedom outdated. However, describing travel in writing continues to be an expression of privilege. Thus, the type of travel depicted in the narratives under scrutiny in this dissertation is an expression of both these privileges: tourism and writing. The history of writing about travel implicates travel in cosmopolitan privilege, expressed both in the concept and description of locality by the center and also in the Western travels in exteriority (Huggan 4). Today, these relationships take on new forms under conditions of postmodernity: within the context of development as a major ideological construct of today and of mass tourism. The latter has transformed a large sector of travel into tourism and, consequently, travel writing into tourism writing.

The performance aspect of travel writing is one of a series of parallelisms between the three fields involved: travel, literature and development. Edward Bruner’s concept of “touristic border zone” points out the artificiality of touristic experiences—theatrical performance in which tourists are always conscious of their roles as tourist and natives



always conscious of their roles as natives (Huggan 4). The scripted arrangement of both travel and writing today is mirrored in the dichotomous structure of international development—each side of the “developed” and “developing” parts of the world plays its assigned role in the political, economic, social and, now, literary binarism. In this way, this study is also an examination of the opposition between the “modern” and the “non-modern”. In short, this dissertation studies the discourse of development (and its normalization) in literature by examining the overlapping of seemingly unrelated areas of the contemporary world: mass tourism, international development and contemporary literature.

The eclectic theoretical framework of this dissertation starts with tourism studies in the first two chapters, transitioning to literary studies in the third one and concluding with cultural studies in the remaining two. The reason for this method and order is strategic: each critical lens reveals different facets of the studied narratives, serving as a platform for the subsequent arguments. Like building blocks, each chapter relies on the conclusions of the previous one, reached with a particular ideological tool. The investigation opens with tourism studies, rather than with literature, to emphasize the non-literary nature of this dissertation. Given that the subject of examination is development praxis, as much as its textual description, the analysis starts with the activity that enables it: travel. It is followed by literary criticism from within travel literature, thus concluding textual analysis. The subsequent chapters experience a change of perspective towards the macro-level, the subgenre of the development-themed narratives. In the last chapters, the lens shifts in two ways: it moves towards the materiality of the narratives—they are

considered as physical objects in their social contexts—and upwards, in a synecdoche-like progression—they are taken as representatives of a larger, universal social phenomenon.

Chapter I shows a close relationship between the fields of development and tourism. Through the lens of tourism studies the chapter analyzes the philanthropists' praxis in terms of touristic behaviors in order to highlight the strong touristic drive motivating the narrators' actions in their chosen development contexts. Through this perspective the chapter shows that philanthropy is not the only motivating factor behind the protagonists' travels, tourism is as well. This chapter is heavy on textual analysis from all four narratives, allowing the readers to familiarize themselves with these lesser-known and specifically-themed narratives.

Chapter II claims that development-related travel is a specific type of tourism, one focused on the pursuit of extremes. This assertion considers the contemporary tourism landscape, which has been shaped by postmodernity to form a series of touristic niches linked to interests (culinary tourism, sports tourism, ecotourism, etcetera). Having identified the pursuit of adventure in development settings as a motivation for some tourists, the chapter proposes a new niche: *Adventure Development Tourism*. Textual examples are taken from all narratives in the corpus.

Chapter III examines how the authors of this study's travelogues describe themselves as protagonists of their development pursuits. For this reason, the analysis excludes Mendiluce's novel. The chapter switches the lens to that of travel literature in

order to identify the rhetorical and narrative strategies used to craft the textual identities of the traveler-philanthropists in their texts as the modern reformulations of the tropes of the travel writing past—*intrepid white saviors*.

Chapter IV shifts optics to cultural studies in order to examine this study's three travelogues as physical objects, in their publishing and organizational contexts. By considering them as products crafted for specific target audiences, the chapter underscores their utility as marketing tools for the NGOs. The novel is again excluded. In this way, the chapter shows a close relationship between publishing, development and literature, as well as their commodification.

Chapter V completes the discussion of literature, travel and development by showing the interlocking nature of the three fields. The chapter discusses the crucial role of literature in crafting and upholding the neocolonialist tendencies inherent in the discourse of development. By evidencing the veiling mechanism of this type of narrative, the chapter exposes literature's continued complicity as a tool of power. Furthermore, development's counter-discourse is presented and questioned from within anthropology and popular culture. All narratives are discussed, with particular attention to Mendicue's novel which is used a strategic counterpoint to the travelogues.

Finally, the conclusion of this dissertation offers some closing remarks and proposes further areas of study.

## CHAPTER I. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS TRAVEL / WRITING

The protagonists of the narratives selected for analysis in the present study are involved in different types of development projects. Jaume Sanllorente is a successful Catalan economics journalist-turned-philanthropist for disadvantaged children. During a life-changing trip to India, he decided to dedicate his life to changing the lives of young slum dwellers. With money acquired by liquidating his posh life in Barcelona, he took over an orphanage in danger of closure that housed 40 children saved from prostitution. Over the last decade, he has expanded the philanthropic activities of the NGO he created—Mumbai Smiles.org—to fund the construction of a school for hundreds of students from the lowest castes and a variety of health, education, and other projects benefitting over five thousand people. The narrative *Sonrisas de Bombay* is a personal account of these development efforts.

Over the last twelve years, Vicky Soberana has dedicated her life to improving educational opportunities in Nepal, a system which has remained virtually unchanged since the colonial times. She started by introducing the Montessori Method of teaching in one classroom in an understaffed school for the children from the lowest Nepalese and Tibetan castes, and with time developed a large-scale curricular project in a school whose construction she funded via her Barcelona-run NGO—www.EduQual.org—created for this purpose. Her work in this and other schools has had a significant impact on the Nepalese education system, stirring a country-wide reflection on education and leading to the first steps towards future reforms. The book that describes these endeavors, *Una*

*maestra en Katmandú*, was turned into a feature film in 2012, titled *Katmandú, un espejo en el cielo*.

The development activities of the protagonist and author of *Los colores de un sueño*, Alba de Toro, are linked to a well-established Spanish NGO, Fundación Vincente Ferrer. Started by a Jesuit missionary in the Anantapur province of India in the 1970s, the organization comprises a vast network of large-scale projects focused on rural development in the country's most underdeveloped countryside area. Alba, blind since birth and a product of Spain's excellent education program for the blind, ONCE<sup>5</sup>, spent several years teaching life-skills and computer education courses in the foundation's High School for Inclusive Education, a school that offers education to blind students in an integrated fashion with those who see, in one of the first such endeavors in India. This unique effort as well as events leading up to it, present a distinctive type of story of development efforts.

Finally, the novel *Pura vida* constitutes an altogether different account of international development, not only in the narrative form it takes but also in terms of the type of development activity it portrays. It is not an autobiographical account, but rather a fiction novel written by a male author, José María Mendiluce, about a female protagonist employed by one of the main large development-goal setting agencies, the United Nations Development Program, rather than an NGO. Ariadna, a Spanish native, moves to Costa Rica from Manhattan to work as a project official on a banana cooperative development

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<sup>5</sup> ONCE – Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles, or the Foundation for Cooperation and the Social Inclusion of the Disabled, in English

program in the country's most underdeveloped and remote area. In addition to Ariadna's daily project-related tasks, the novel portrays several other development professionals engaged in a variety of activities in the UNDP's Central American branch, giving an insider's view of the institution's structure and undertakings.

Emphasizing the type of development work done by protagonists of development-themed narratives in a study that examines precisely these types of fictions may seem redundant at first blush. However, this is not the case if the objective is to make evident the link between development praxis and that of travel. This chapter will demonstrate this by means of answering the following question: in what way are these two very different types of praxis connected, beyond the fact that they involve the basic activity of foreign travel: the crossing of borders? Despite the fact that the above-mentioned individuals do not change their location for the same reasons that "typical" tourists do: for the purpose of leisure or cultural exploration, their action has a great deal to do with precisely this type of movement. Although development practitioners portrayed in the narratives examined in this study claim to travel for reasons different from those of the typical tourist, they behave in a similar fashion.

### **Touristic Attitudes**

In his influential study of tourism, *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell examines the mechanics of tourist behavior. As he points out, the first action undertaken by anyone who travels abroad is to decide where to go. The way the development practitioners depicted in the selected narratives chose their destinations is not very different from of the

way tourists choose theirs. MacCannell explains that tourist destinations are chosen based on their status as an “*attraction*”, a concept he defines as a relationship between a “*tourist*”, a “*sight*” and a “*marker*”. According to the critic, what turns a particular location (*sight*) into one worthy of interest (*attraction*) is its recognition as such (via *markers*). *Markers* are information about a *sight* that elevate it from an ordinary place (a large city in Europe or a tall mountain) to one endowed with special characteristics (Paris as the city of love and Mount Everest as the world’s tallest mountain). Through a set of markers (*off-sight*, such as images, and *on-sight*, such as explanatory plaques), an increasing number of places—both man made (the Pyramids) and natural (the Grand Canyon), entire cities (Venice, New York), geographic areas (the Amazon Forest) and even countries (Italy as the country of art)—are turned into tourist *attractions*. *Markers* are not only images, information or maps about a given sight, but also museum brochures, TV shows, films, lectures, souvenirs, pictures shared with friends on social media, et cetera. It is through these that a tourist makes first contact with *sight*: not the thing itself, but some representation of it, generating touristic interest in a particular *attraction* (*Tourist* 110).

How then do the protagonists of the narratives in this study chose their destinations? Two of them make their choices based on a strong interest in a particular country—full of *markers* that turn those *sights* into *attractions*. As a teenager, Vicky Soberana in *Una maestra en Katmandú*, develops an obsession for Tibet which intensifies during university years: “Aquella idea de viajar ¡al Tíbet! me obsesionaba y yo misma buscaba el alimento para que creciera en mí.”; “Leía todo lo que aparecía sobre el Tíbet

... Si cerraba los ojos, creía poder dibujar cada detalle... como si hubiera estado allí. Si los abría, me asustaba sorprenderme a mí misma pensando en el viaje.” (15) Her obsession with traveling to Tibet brings her to consult with a professor specialized in the cultures of the “Orient”<sup>6</sup> who redirects her towards Nepal, a place with a large Tibetan community which she could easily access. In the 1980s Tibet was closed to tourism. Thus, traveling to Nepal and coming into contact with that community generates her decision to dedicate her life to the improvement of their education. For Vicky the Tibetan community in Nepal, and not some other place, becomes *marked* as the *sight* of the biggest *attraction* within her touristic-cultural horizon.

A similar entry to development work is experienced by Alba de Toro, the protagonist of *Los colores de un sueño*, via a childhood fascination with India: “No me preguntes por qué; lo ignoré, pero todo lo relacionado con la India me atraía y me producía una sensación casi familiar y, si algo sabía en esa época, es que quería ir allí.” (48) Just like Vicky, Alba’s interest in her favorite attraction grows as she acquires more *off-site markers*: “Buscamos en todas las jugueterías hasta que encontramos una muñeca india, y allí empezó todo; ya no había vuelta atrás. La India me había conquistado sin saberlo.” (25) The obsession was life-long: “...desde pequeña, siempre lo quería todo de la India: la Barbie india, el disfraz de india y una película de la India. A partir de ahí, con esta fijación, fui leyendo cosas y me fui interesando sobre todo por la gente, la cultura, cómo vivían allí las personas y cómo eran.” (48) Her dream is realized several years later

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<sup>6</sup> The term is used throughout the study in the sense of Said’s formulation, thus without quotation marks, save for this instance in order to indicate the individual’s lack of questioning of that concept.



during a graduation trip to India, with her parents. Once she makes contact with the *attraction*, her fascination continues to grow and, like Vicky, is quickly transformed into a strong desire to go beyond tourism by forming part of her fantasy land.

This type of profound fascination with a specific place onto which one's fantasies are transplanted is a clear case of Orientalism. If one of the many shades of Edward Said's formulation is the production of romanticized images of Middle East, Asia and North Africa in Western culture, then Vicky's and Alba's mysterious fascination with their respective parts of that region that seem mysteriously interesting, magical and overwhelmingly exciting clearly falls into that idea. Each protagonist endows her or his chosen place with an immense amount of exoticism, transforming it into a fairy-tale land as if taken out of Shangri-la, the mythical hidden city of Tibet. In her narration, Vicky actually uses the words "oriente" and "occidente", attributing to each the exact qualities of Said's construction and, although these words do not appear in Alba's text, she also displays enthrallment with a foreign land which fuels her desire to see it. This captivation by another place is what lies at the core of tourist behavior, and what is at its center of that is the desire to come into contact with *the Other*.

This yearning to experience "otherness", in its more cliché touristic rendition, is found in *Pura Vida* by José María Mendiluce, in the description of the protagonist's process of selecting the location of her new UNDP mission: "La tentaron varios, entre ellos uno en Senegal y otro en Indonesia. Y le pareció fascinante e imposible uno en Ulan Bator, capital de Mongolia." (27) She flips through a listing of open jobs as if through a brochure from a travel agency, and chooses her next place of work and life based on

(unconscious) notions of what she considers exciting. In other words, and in Said's terms, seated in her Occident she is choosing a specific part of her Orient. This, like most other of Ariadna's actions in Costa Rica—the destination she finally selects—, reveals the orientalist underpinnings of her perspective, just as those found in Vicky's and Alba's stories. All along the way she is found exoticizing places, people and their activities in typical orientalist fashion. Prior to her departure from New York, the plot shows her prefiguring the new destination in unrealistically positive terms: "Y Ariadna empezó a soñar y a enamorarse de Costa Rica antes de saber la decisión del comité de nombramientos." (27) Her anticipation that this "nueva etapa de su vida" will be more exciting ("La presumía intensa") is so extreme that she cries tears of joy when landing at the San José airport: "Sintió un escalofrío. ... excitada ... disfrutando intensamente aquel momento mientras la emoción la desbordaba hasta convertirse en un par de lágrimas incontrollables." (43) Like many before her, Ariadna idealizes a journey to be undertaken, displaying a clear example of another characteristically touristic behavior.

Yet, not all fascinations with tourist destinations are prefigured in this manner. Some travelers do not have any preconceived notions about countries they visit and of which they subsequently became enamored. Such is the case of Jaime's encounter with India in *Sonrisas de Bombay*. While in need of a destination for a last-minute vacation intended to relieve the stress of working ceaselessly for two years, he ends up in a place to which he has never felt drawn: "¿Cómo puedo haber venido a un país por el que nunca he sentido el menor interés?" (35) Despite his lack of an obsessive pull towards it—so deeply experienced by Alba and Vicky—, his decision to take his body and money to

India is nevertheless not arbitrary. This country, like those in Adriadna's job catalogue, is not a place devoid of recognition (by him) as an *attraction*. In fact, both of their actions fall within the touristic framework: he is swayed by advertising (*markers*) provided by the travel agency he visits toward a vague idea of traveling to Africa or North America. Instead, he is told that India is a place he *should* visit, a situation MacCannell describes as "discharging one's tourist obligation" (*Ethics* 8). Although Jaume has no interest in it whatsoever—"yo no soy ningún hippie que quiera ir a la India para encontrarme a mí mismo y todas esas cosas" (32)—the agency convinces him by pointing out the "highlighted attractions everyone is supposed to see" (*Ethics* 8). According to the critic, these are, for example, going to the Louvre because one must see the Mona Lisa when in Paris. Serving as another example of clearly touristic mechanism for this study, Jaume ends up with a "paquete turístico llamado 'India en libertad' que me llevaría por el Rajastán, bajando hasta Benarés." (8)

The touristic modalities highlighted in the behaviors of the protagonists of the corpus so far are not the only ways of demonstrating the salient connection between development and travel. Each of the protagonists engages in several types of typically touristic activities which are independent of their developmental goals and actions. The above-described touristic behavior pointed out thus far precedes their involvement in any type of charitable work, for all but one of the protagonists. The above anecdotes show Jaume, Alba and Vicky selecting their vacations—rather than development assignments. The case of Alba, who works for a major development agency at the beginning of her story, would seem to contradict this, but this is not the case. She is shown choosing the

*place* of her new assignment and not the *job* itself. Once they find themselves in their locations, all four protagonists participate in visiting the *attractions*, thereby partaking even more directly in tourism. They take organized excursions, follow instructions in guidebooks, stay in places recommended by previous travelers, visit “must-see” attractions, try “typical” foods, take pictures, send postcards to friends, buy souvenirs and perform a number of other actions undertaken by vacationers abroad. In MacCannell’s terms, they engage in *sightseeing*.

Having made this claim, we must consider its implications for development praxis described in these narratives—is that also tourism? MacCannell’s theory of “touristic attitudes” will prove helpful in the objective of showing how the development praxis described in these narratives can be viewed as touristic practice. In the *Ethics of Sightseeing* Dean MacCannell asks a basic but important question: What do tourists want? It is impossible to answer this question considering that individual motivations differ but a clue is given by what they do, according to MacCannell. Detailed descriptions of their activities, often created by the tourists themselves, provide an opportunity to deduce their desire. An analysis of such accounts in the narratives in this study’s corpus will reveal the motivations of their protagonists.

MacCannell postulates that tourist praxis can be reduced to one, most rudimentary activity that makes possible a range of others: the crossing of borders. Whatever the reason that motivates their passage (sightseeing or development), once their destinations are reached, travelers find themselves facing *difference*—of appearance, of customs and of moral norms expressed in dress, art, landscape, language and dance, etcetera. This is

what “animates tourist imagination and eventually travel” (213) (or the desire to remain there for months, years or a lifetime). He explains: “Local normative variation is the basis for a tourist’s experience of difference and otherness” (213)—it is what tourists seek. In other worlds, this crossing “into someone else’s sublimations” (213) is the basis of travel motivations even if other ones exist. Once there, tourists find themselves positioned between two societal structures: their own and that of the cultural *other*, and form attitudes towards the latter. MacCannell identifies five possible variations of “touristic attitudes” that tourists can assume when traveling and while enmeshed in a foreign culture: “relativist”, “missionary”, “assimilationist”, “transgressive entitlement” and “cool indifference”.

### **Touristic Attitudes – Case 1: Vicky**

According to MacCannell, the “missionary” attitude is one of the most common positions tourists assume when abroad. When acting within it, they fervently believe in the sanctity and the superiority of their own ways. The operating structure of the” is based on perceiving cultural difference as an affront to their own, one that needs to be overcome by converting the natives to the tourist’s way of life. “Missionary tourists reach out to the locals, attempting to convince them of the importance of improving their hygienic standards, wearing shoes or pants, eating with utensils, et cetera. They may make elaborate presentations of small but supposedly life-altering gifts such as perfume, wristwatches, soap, condoms, flashlights, or deodorant.” (222) Their interaction with the cultural *other* is focused on demonstrating the inferiority of his or her values.

One of the most blaring examples of this attitude is provided by Vicky in *Una maestra en Katmandú*. The narration of her work in Nepal is replete with detailed descriptions of what she considers to be insufficient resources, immoral treatment of children, unethical social behaviors, and substandard levels of hygiene. The last, being one of the most evident manifestations of this attitude, figures frequently in the narrative. One such example is Vicky's discovery of the lack of hygiene in the Pemba School's boarding unit in which she denounces a series of what are in her view hygienic atrocities: uniforms worn day and night without washing, the lack of an under layer of clothing, infrequent bathing and non-existent tooth-brushing, infrequent changing of bed linens, the ubiquity of fleas and mosquitos, unresolved bed-wetting of younger children, mice droppings, and the general filth of all living spaces. Her strong reaction to this discovery—retold in great detail and with alarm—shows that she perceives her hygienic standards as superior: “La verdad es que me pareció que revivía las novelas de Charles Dickens. ¡Es verlo para creerlo! El adjetivo “cutre” se queda corto para describir el lamentable estado de las habitaciones y de los aseos.” Her outrage, anger and the desire to denounce the hygienic catastrophe—in her view—to the police are demonstrative of the desire to enforce the standards of her (Western) culture. Upon discovering that such conditions are the norm in Nepalese schools, she is incredulous: “La gente cree que eso es lo lógico, lo normal y lo correcto. ¡Ilusa de mí! ¡Y yo que quería hacer una denuncia!”, and remains firmly convinced of the validity of her belief: “Claro que alguna cosa habrá que hacer para proteger, por lo menos, los intereses de los niños de mi escuela. No puedo consentir semejante injusticia ¡Me mueroooo!” (141-2) Putting aside the question of the

validity of Vicky's conviction as a judgment beyond the objective of this study, its mechanism remains an example of the "missionary attitude"<sup>7</sup>.

Determined to put her principles into action, Vicky organizes several undertakings to combat the undesirable conditions in the Pemba school. In one such instance she orders the forceful cleaning of several toddlers, the cutting of their nails and washing of their hair. Convinced of having done a great deed, Vicky is incredulous at the violent condemnation of the act by the children's mothers:

A la vista se veía que estaban hechas unos basiliscos y sus miradas desprendían odio y deseo de venganza. Hablaban y gesticulaban con ademanes fieros, se exhalaban las manos a la cabeza –como si se hubiera cometido un crimen o hubiera acaecido la mayor desgracia imaginable– y daban palmadas o miraban al cielo en señal de súplica. (104)

The tremendously antagonistic reaction of the mothers to Vicky's actions is indicative of the caliber of offense committed<sup>8</sup>: her actions transgressed "leyes y costumbres ancestrales" (104). She reports:

Cuando lavamos a los niños, cometimos el tremendo pecado de eliminar la grasa protectora de sus cuerpos. Atentamos contra uno de los chakras más vulnerables del cuerpo del niño. Llamado *sahasranra*, situado en el centro del cráneo, relacionado con la glándula piel, que es la que representa la conciencia. (104)

In addition, the act of cutting the children's hair amounted to another important infraction: doing it on a sinister day would bring them bad luck, she explains. By forcefully converting the natives to her way of life in a typical missionary style, Vicky acts out of the conviction of the superiority of her values<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> This is an example of: the reenactment of colonial the missionary ideology, driven by the three Cs of colonization: civilization; More on this sentiment and its reformulation today via development in the proceeding Chapters.

<sup>8</sup> It also inserts itself in the same colonial ideology of describing the native inhabitants of the "New World" and other colonies in terms of monsters and savage beasts. More on this in Chapter III.

<sup>9</sup> Seemingly unaware of the colonial origin of her (unconscious) conviction.

However, a closer examination of Vicky's description of this event also reveals her post-factum reflection upon the validity of her conviction: the words "tremendo pecado" and "transgresamos" are indicative of an attempt to accept local customs. In other words, her attitude is at the same time "relativist". This provides an opportunity to point out an important aspect of MacCannell's typology of tourist behavior. It does not suggest that tourists are limited to one mode of behavior that classifies them as "missionary" in nature while others as "relativist", et cetera. Instead, the critic's classification describes attitudes that are available to tourists rather than individuals' behaviors: "most tourists imperceptibly undergo phase shifts through the various attitudes depending on exigencies of situations they find themselves in." (223) An individual may adopt an assimilationist attitude in France where he has traveled numerous times and behave in a missionary manner when staying with a nomad family in the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. Moreover, as Vicky demonstrates, each of the protagonists of the development-themed narratives under analysis undergoes a range of "touristic attitudes".

Although frequently indicative of the "assimilationist" and "relativist" modes, in addition to providing exceptional and frequent examples of the "missionary" attitude, Vicky's story shows numerous cases of "transgressive entitlement". In the view of the tourist experiencing this type of behavior,

other cultures do not exist or have no moral force. Local codes are disregarded and native inhabitants affronted. [...] Transgressive tourists believe the only morality that counts is their own ... that only when they leave are they free to express themselves; that free expression means a complete absence of constraint. (222)

The description of the circumstances surrounding the legalization of Vicky's stay in Nepal provides such an example. After having lived and worked in the country for several



months already, she applies for a working visa. She is summoned to the immigration office where she is denied the working visa she is seeking and, furthermore, is informed that someone had officially denounced her for working in the Pemba School without a permit. As a result, she is ordered to leave the country within 15 days. Her initial reaction to this true and legally valid decision shows entitlement: “Me sentía profundamente humillada, ultrajada, abandonada en manos de un destino que se presentaba injusto y cruel. ¿Qué iba a hacer ahora? ¿Cómo era posible que me hubieran denegado el permiso? ¿Quién iba a ocuparse de los niños de la escuela?” (162) Completely disregarding the validity of the decision, Vicky feels personally slighted by it because she considers her project and personal goals superior to the legal procedures of the country (“missionary attitude”)<sup>10</sup>. Her instinct is to burst out in rage but she manages to contain herself at the request of the school director who accompanies her. She remains silent, letting him negotiate. When the result of the arbitration is a bribe she is to pay in order to obtain her visa, Vicky’s reaction surpasses the mere feeling of entitlement—it transforms into action: she returns to the official’s office and insults him in an angry fashion:

¿Sabe usted, senior Krishna? El corazón de los hombres también se oxida. El suyo está tan corroído por la corrupción, que el óxido se le está saliendo por los ojos, y, si no, fijese en los roles de ocre que tiene bajo el lagrimal. Es el hedor a podrido que le rezuma del cuerpo. Quédese con su permiso de trabajo y con su corazón de hojalata. O es más que un pervertido contumaz, que se reitera en cometer los mismos errores persistentemente. ¡Ah, se me olvidaba! También debería usted lavarse la lengua. A quienes tienen el alma quemada, como la de usted, se les pone la lengua negra, luego se les enciende el aliento como el cráter de un volcán y, de tanto echar llamas por la boca, un día se abrasan vivos. (163)

Vicky’s personal invective transforms into a feeling of superiority that goes beyond her project and tourism: it is ethnocentric in nature. When describing this type of

<sup>10</sup> Another example of ethnocentricity, reminiscent of colonial times.

“transgressive entitlement” behavior, MacCannell gives the example of young European Gap Year tourists—on break between high school and college—in rural Cambodia who refuse to pay the required cab fee not because they lack the funds but for the simple pleasure of insulting the cab driver. He calmly declines to proceed with the trip half-undertaken but has no choice but to tolerate their abuse. The uneven economic relation of power between the two involved parties reveals the mechanism behind the behavior which is free of constraint. Like the young Europeans, Vicky considers her morality to be the only valid one and feels free to express this idea with a complete absence of constraint. As MacCannell indicates, for those who display this type of behavior other cultures do not exist or have no moral force.

### **Touristic Attitudes – Case 2: Ariadna**

Another of the touristic attitudes proposed by MacCannell is that of “cool indifference” and it stands in opposition to the “missionary” one just examined. While the interest level of such tourists as Vicky is sufficiently elevated for them to want to expand energy, time and money to get involved in demonstrating the superiority of their culture, tourists displaying “cool indifference” act as though they were uninterested in the *difference* they are facing. MacCannell gives the example of “hamburger-eating Americans in the restaurant of the Rome Hilton. They hold themselves aloof, taking little notice of local people beyond brief service encounters that they frame in their own terms.” (222) Ariadna’s stay in Costa Rica provides many examples of this attitude. Differently from the other protagonists in this study who display a very high level of

enthrallment with their selected Orientalized<sup>11</sup> cultural *others*, the central figure of the novel *Pura vida* displays virtually none. Having chosen the location of her development work without conviction and having no interest in the culture itself, Ariadna does not engage with it much. The exception is a love affair with Jonas, a local man for whom she develops a strong obsession. Even then, however, the description of their union is limited to descriptions of their highly erotic encounters fueled by the exoticism of his ethnicity. The only reference to his cultural *otherness* is that of his black skin, which she finds fascinating. Not much integration into his culture takes place, beyond learning about the history of blacks in that region from his grandmother in a passive manner that does not elicit any reaction from Ariadna. The remainder of the narration of her several months of work in Costa Rica is devoid of any references to the local culture in which she does not participate. In fact, Jonas is virtually the only Costa Rican person with whom she interacts—she engages in a handful of trivial conversations with his family members and a few other locals during her stay there. Instead, she spends her time engaging with her fellow UNHCR<sup>12</sup> workers in a fashion that is consistent with MacCannel’s explanation: “They stay in a fastidiously maintained cocoon of their own cultural beliefs and standards of comportment” (222). That cocoon for Ariadna and her friends means eating, drinking and spending time with her fellow foreign coworkers in an entitled fashion, which includes drug use and sexual promiscuity taken to the extremes of AIDS and death:

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<sup>11</sup> Although Said’s study focuses on a specific geographic area onto which the name “Orient” was applied with a set of unique “Oriental” characteristics in a specific period of time, the term has a universal scope. As the critic indicates in the introduction to his work, it describes a phenomenon whose mechanism is at play in many other parts of the world during many historical periods. It is in this sense that this study uses the term in the context of Costa Rica.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

“Juegos, bromas, a veces infantiles. Drogas y sexo. Fueron pasando los días, fiesta a fiesta, siempre en fiesta, pues hasta ir a la oficina estando a la espera de trabajo era casi una fiesta.” (57)

Just as Vicky, Ariadna experiences a range of attitudes. Her “cool indifference” several times turns into its violent version: “transgressive entitlement”. In the process of living out a life that shows complete indifference to difference (*Tourist* 222), Ariadna crosses over to this attitude several times. One such instance takes place upon her arrival in Costa Rica, when Ariadna is approached by a middle-aged man attending a Centro American Coffee Cooperatives Conference hosted in her hotel. She accepts several drinks from him, spends several hours flirting despite her lack of attraction to this “barrigón”. Rejecting his proposals for “un besito, un baile, cualquier cosa” she nevertheless exchanges phone numbers with him, accepts his invitation to his coffee ranch, and allows herself to be kissed goodnight. To don Carlos’s surprise, the attractive Spaniard follows the kiss with a vulgar insult as she leaves the bar for the elevators: “Otra vez te metes la lengua en el culo” (45). Given her willing participation in the act, the reaction comes as a huge surprise both to Carlos and the reader: “Carlos quedó entre aturrido y triste, pensando en que andaba aquella atractiva española tan vulgar de lenguaje, tan inesperada en su reacción.” (45) Speaking “vacilante pero digna”, Ariadna acts with a complete absence of constraint. Carlos, like others of his culture, has no moral authority in her eyes. She only considers her own values which she feels entitled to express with whatever level of force, affront and vulgarity she chooses.

### **Touristic Attitudes – Case 3: Jaume**

The story of Jaume's time in India provides examples of several of the "attitudes", but it is by far the best example of the "relativist attitude" which tries to understand local norms for behavior in order to not affront them. Tourists assuming this position attempt to fit in without fundamentally altering their own practices by "accepting that the other's normative arrangements are equal to their own .... [and] understand[ing] themselves to be different from the cultural other, but equal in their existential unhappiness" (221). During his second tourist stay in India, Jaume attempts to visit the Towers of Silence, the burial site of an ethnic-religious sect of the Zoroastrian faith. The Parsis are an important community in Mumbai who exercise a very unusual funerary practice: they leave their dead on elevated structures constructed atop of hills to be devoured by birds of prey. Drawn to this unique place by pure touristic impulse ("Sentía una enorme curiosidad"), Jaume feels disappointment on being denied access to it. Faced with the prohibition of entry to non-Parsis, he reflects on his error of judgment, thus revealing the self-awareness at the core of this particular tourist attitude: "Por un momento me sentí defraudado. Desde el principio del viaje deseaba ver aquellas Torres y ahora me impedían la entrada." (65) Immediately he shows remorse: "Al momento comprendí que mi primer deber era respetar la intimidad deseada por aquella comunidad. Incluso me pareció horrendo que pudieran despertar mi atención unas pilastras con cuerpos descompuestos." (65) Jaume makes a concerted effort to understand local behavioral norms and not affront them, accepting them as equal to his own.

This example, however, provides an opportunity to make an important observation about the touristic attitudes examined thus far: although occurring while the protagonists are already engaged in development activities, these have only referred to situations of *sightseeing*. What about *development* undertakings? Do the protagonists behave in similar fashion when working on their philanthropic projects in their selected development milieus? Jaume’s story provides some clues for answering these questions. In charge of the administrative, legal, and financial aspects of running the orphanage, Jaume is faced with having to adapt to the intricacies of the Indian corruption-driven bureaucracy. On one occasion, attempting to collect a shipped donation of school supplies at the customs office, he learns he is expected to pay a bribe. Rather than criticize or insult the officials (as Vicky does) for a behavior he finds objectionable (but one that is standard practice in India), he finds a middle solution: he waits nine hours, passing time singing and reciting poems, until the officials give in and release his supplies. Rather than criticize the civil administration system as backward, inefficacious and corrupt, Jaume is able to adapt to it in a way he finds palatable: “Con el tiempo también fui cultivando atajos y salidas elegantes para agilizar los trámites lo más posible.” (16) He is able to maintain an optimistic and positive take on these types of situations because he sees them as part of a cultural organization which he does not consider inferior to his own (unlike Vicky). He goes further in his “relativist attitude” of seeing both cultural methods of administration—Indian and European—not as better and worse, but as different, thus equal, by criticizing administrative and organizational feelings of superiority often displayed by NGOs doing work there:

Creo que en general las ONG deberíamos dejar de juzgar las acciones de los gobiernos y corporaciones. Muchas veces las críticas están justificadas y son del todo necesarias para romper barreras que durante años han limitado los derechos del ciudadano, pero solo se deberían admitir en los casos en los que se ofrecen alternativas, verdaderas soluciones a los problemas que se están lapidando. (130)

The pages that describe Jaime's work in India contain many similar statements directly related to development work and the situations it creates. That said, one important observation must be made: his relativism applies only to the execution of the work chosen for himself and not to the validity of doing it in the first place. In that sense, he feels no doubt for its need (and efficacy, similarly to Vicky), thus falling into the missionary realm. This is an important observation for this study.

#### **Touristic Attitudes – Case 4: Alba**

The last of the four texts—that of Alba's stay in India in *Los colores de un sueño*—provides very good examples of last of the touristic attitudes proposed by MacCannell—"assimilationist" behavior—, but also an opportunity to problematize all of these attitudes and some of the notions that have been discussed or alluded to so far in this chapter. What the critic proposes as the "assimilationist position" encompasses a situation of tourists trying to integrate to the local culture by means of emulation. They learn enough of the local language to get by, or travel to places where a foreign language they know is spoken. They wear some parts of local dress, eat local food, and learn simple procedures of everyday politeness. "They self-identify as travelers, and may attempt to befriend the natives. A growing industry niche, agritourist, proffers assimilationist vacations to tourists who not only visit and observe farms but who spend several days doing farm chores." (221) Alba's text showcases multiple instances of such

behavior, but in an interesting manner, especially as it relates to her development activity. Before taking a look at several of them, let us first distinguish between classic touristic “assimilationist” situations from development ones, as we did with Jaume above. Serving as an example of the former is one of the anecdotes retold by Alba in which she displays a complete immersion in the gastronomical landscape of her surroundings: “Ahora ya no nos hacen comida especial porque nos hemos acostumbrado a la de los niños y podemos comerla sin llorar ni moquear; es todo un acontecimiento y me siento muy orgullosa.” (31) The enthusiasm and pride experienced through this cultural immersion also apply to adopting the local manner of dress: “Me he levantado temprano, me he puesto un *punjabi* naranja, me he pegado un *bindi* en la frente” (67); and a local manner of transport: “Me encantan los rickshaws compartidos, esos triciclos a motor llenos a reventar de gente, unos encima de otros, y siempre con la música a tope.” (68) By traveling like a local, she feels like one: “Meter a Tory allí ha sido, como siempre, una odisea, pero al final nos hemos acomodado entre las mujeres con saris y bebés, y los hombres con sacos de arroz. Me encanta el olor de esta gente, una mezcla de especias, paja y sudor... ¡Creo que ya huelo igual!” (68) Alba feels part of her chosen Orient, thus displaying a strong case of the “assimilationist” modality.

Perhaps the extent of Alba’s complete acceptance of the cultural otherness of India, the object of her fascination, is indicated by her repeated comments about olfactory sensations: “El olor de Anantapur es olor de especias y de fruta, y también el olor de las flores blancas de jazmín que nos ponemos las chicas en el pelo—mucho mejor que cualquier perfume—.” (32) Not all is aromatic: “Pero todo eso, mezclado con ese olor



constante a humo de los coches y motos, y también de las montañas de desperdicios que hay quemándose por todas partes. ¡Qué manía que tiene todo el mundo de quemar la basura!” (32) She loves all aspects of her exotic Orient: “Bueno, y también el olor de boñiga y pis de vaca mezclado con el olor a curri, ¡una locura olfativa que me tiene enamorada!” (32) Smelling is one of the main ways that is available to Alba to experience India, given her blindness, but—interestingly—this condition problematizes several of the notions discussed thus far, exposing problem areas. It is often the juxtaposition of areas that reveals hidden layers between them. Just as with the other protagonists, in addition to the “assimilationist” attitude Alba also frequently displays two other behaviors: the “relativist” and the “missionary”. When a young girl in her school falls in love with a boy from another caste whom she can never marry, the Barcelonan suppresses her instinct to encourage the girl’s emotion and hope for its positive resolution. Instead, she advises her to focus on her studies. Alba recognizes the cultural difference at play, and speaks from relativism: “Ester y yo estamos aprendiendo cuales son nuestros límites, porque hay cosas en las que no nos podemos meter y es mejor dejarlas como están, aunque nosotras las veamos de manera diferente o no las podamos entender.” (32) This type of effort to consider the foreign culture as equal permeates the pages of Alba’s story, both in reference to tourist and development situations. Yet, it is precisely in the latter case—within development—that matters become complicated. Alba’s blindness exposes the complexity of the essence of development in ways other protagonists have not. The difficulty of achieving the goals of her development project—to change the perception of the Indian blind—put her in a position of questioning those endeavors. While Jaume

questions development's methods (as seen earlier in his criticism of NGO negative attitudes towards the local administrative infrastructures), Alba seems to put a question mark over the very notion of doing development work.

This is illustrated when this protagonist reflects on her work in a school for the blind organized around western ideology of striving towards social equality and independence of blind persons—an anomaly in India: “En días como hoy me pregunto si lo que hago de verdad va a servir para algo, si van a poder sacar provecho de todo esto. No puedo intentar traer aquí la realidad de allí, porque no hay los mismos recursos, ni las personas poseen la misma mentalidad, ni la sociedad tiene la misma estructura.” (42) She gives the example of Gowtami who is ready to take the step towards independence in every-day domestic activities, which would give her a sense of greater utility at home, given that “nos ha demostrado que puede encender el fuego, cocer el arroz, lavase la ropa” (42). Yet, as Alba well knows, it is more difficult than the blind learning these new skills to convince the sighted around them that this is true, as demonstrated by Gowtami's mother who “solo quiere que se sienta en un rincón” (42). Transformations of this sort would mean social confrontation or even affront in a culture that considers the blind to be a shameful disgrace at the worst, or useless impediment at best. Hinduism views the handicapped as reincarnated punishment for great sins committed in past lives, as Alba explains. Being considered “portador de mala suerte” (84) translates into social stigma for the family, abuse for the child in some cases or extreme overprotection, in others. While blind children from poor families may end up “pidiendo en la calle para contribuir a los gastos familiares” (84), even loving well-to-do families will consider a girl like Gowtami

useless: “Una chica ciega no podrá casarse porque no sabrá cuidar de su marido y un niño ciego no tiene por qué saber de qué color es la yerba porque no la ve.” (84) Alba describes several examples of extreme cases of this type of parental overprotective behavior, such as this of a young boy: “Ranganat no hablar telugu y casi no sabe caminar. Se mueve a cuatro patas y baja las escaleras sentado, moviendo el culito de escalón en escalón. Tampoco sabe comer solo.” (99-100) The sordid description continues: “Es ciego total, y evidentemente su madre lo ha estado sobreprotegiendo hasta el punto de que ni siquiera le ha enseñado a caminar.” (100) Alba realizes that the enormous divide between her culture’s approach to her handicap and that of her Orient’s is virtually impossible to breach. Given that the very essence of her work there is to change the “oriental” method to the “occidental”, her realization that this may be in vain is a sign of frustration, on the one hand and relativism on the other. A closer examination of this last statement, however, may lead to questioning our last assertion: whether her reaction is really an example of relativism.

As we have seen MacCannell indicate, cultural relativism requires “accepting that the other’s normative arrangements are equal to [one’s] own” which in this context would mean considering the Indian approach to blindness as valid as the Spanish one, of which Alba is a product and its advocate. This, of course, would oppose the very development project she is undertaking in her Orient. Thus, Alba’s questioning of the efficacy and the very validity of its undertaking, albeit seemingly “relativist”, is nevertheless indicative of the “missionary attitude”, which perceives the natives’ way of organizing life as inferior. The followers of this attitude engage in proving and demonstrating—in benevolent

ways—the superiority of their methods, concerning various sectors of the organization of social life. Thus, the entirety of Alba’s work with blind children in the High School for Inclusive Education operates within this framework. In fact, despite her attempt to put the Indian view of the blind in the perspective of its culture, in the end, she protests against it, both with actions (her work) and words: “¡noooooo! ¡esa no es la actitud! Pero, por suerte, hay de todos, como en todas partes, y sé que vamos a poder cambiar esto, o al menos, contribuiremos a ello” (42). Alba’s objection, moreover, encapsulates the operating motto of her NGO—Fundación Vicente Ferrer which enables the school’s existence—as well as the whole realm of praxis in this field of the larger umbrella of the “developing” world. In it there is no questioning of the notion of the need for the assistance that is being enforced to the supposed benefit of the cultural other. The presumed superiority of the “developed” world over the “developing” is assumed and unquestioned by the development field. Thus, there is no space for cultural relativism in the development actions of Jaume, Alba, Ariadna and Vicky. Statements such as the following of Alba’s: “No es posible llegar aquí y empezar a juzgar; cualquier punto de vista es respetable y antes hay que observar y entender, intentar abrir la mente sin que se borren los límites.” (53) can apply only to strictly social / cultural circumstances. “Relativism” in touristic contexts, “missionary” attitude in development—this is how tourism and development interrelate.

### **The Dream of Complete Assimilation**

The analysis of the four development-themed fictions in this study's corpus in terms of MacCannell's "touristic attitudes" has served the purpose of reframing development in terms of touristic praxis. A closer look at the "assimilationist attitude" within Alba's story will reveal further connections with tourism. Here, again, her blindness serves as a tool of de-masking and exposing problem areas. In her first contact with India, during the sightseeing trips motivated by a decade of Orientalist fascination, Alba expected a complete absorption into her fantasy-land: "Llámame ingenua, pero yo pensaba que llegaría a la India y me sentiría acogida como si fuera una más." (60) When her dream of being "one" with the inhabitants of her Orient does not materialize she realizes the existence of a barrier between herself and *them*: "La barrera entre "ellos" y yo me parecía impenetrable; para los indios, yo era una *English person* y eso no iba a cambiar por mucho que me pusiera un *punjabi* (el vestido típico) o pulseras en los pies y un *bindi* en la frente." (60) Alba recognizes that her attempts at cultural assimilation via adopting the local customs of dress only take her part of the way toward her dream of total integration: "Hice todo eso nada más llegar; en un intento de integrarme, pero no entendía la lengua, su manera de pensar ni de vivir. Era totalmente ajena a ellos, y ellos lo sabían." (60) She needed to learn the local language, an objective she realizes in a subsequent longer trip to India during which she begins her work at the innovative school for the blind: "Ahora que ya empiezo a hablar telugu con cierta facilidad, me siento mucho más como en casa." (32) Learning the local language is a crucial entrance strategy employed by assimilationists in their objective of achieving this level of penetration into the local culture. Several months later her life in India changes: she is found not only

dressing in the local manner, but also cooking, speaking and even smelling like the locals do, as the previous quotation has revealed. She declares her dream of complete integration to have been made a reality: “¡Hoy sí me siento india de verdad!” (60) Has it?

Alba’s description of her stay in India is written from the standpoint of this cultural assimilation, desired at first but shortly thereafter achieved. She reports feeling completely at home and a part of the local community, doing what they do in their way, including taking the local transport. Thus, has she attained the assimilationist travelers’ dream of complete union with the culture of her fascination? Let us take a closer look at the quote we saw earlier which mentions traveling in shared rickshaws with “Tory”:

“Meter a Tory allí ha sido, como siempre, una odisea, pero al final nos hemos acomodado entre las mujeres con saris y bebés, y los hombres con sacos de arroz” (68). Tory is Alba’s guide dog without whom her independent stay—and work—in India would be impossible. While unquestionably an indispensable tool for obtaining freedom of movement and relative self-sufficiency (also in her own cultural context in Spain), in India Tory is also a glaring mark of *otherness*. Specifically, it is *Western* otherness that counteracts Alba’s multifaceted and wholehearted efforts to blend into the Indian culture. He puts a question mark over her statement about feeling “india de verdad”. As Alba reports herself, the approach to blindness in India is contrary to obtaining self-sufficiency, thus there are virtually no seeing dogs in India. Certainly in the rural Anantapur, she is the only one walking around town guided by a German Shepherd strapped into a contraption with a handle. The proof that she is quite a spectacle for the locals is provided by the protagonist herself later in the book when she discusses lack of privacy in her daily life

there: “En la calle me siento como un mono de feria. Una chica blanca, ciega y con un perro guía debe ser la cosa más rara que hayan visto jamás.” (54-5) Underneath her predominating perception of (achieved) integration with Anantapur there is an underlying (suppressed) layer of recognition of its impossibility.

In Alba’s view her blindness is the obstacle to the communion with India, rather than her ethnic-cultural otherness. However, her statement of frustration also brings to the fore a larger issue: the tourists’ search for assimilation and the (im)possibility of achieving that goal. Although she may prefer not to think of herself as one, she is a tourist like any other, as MacCannell would say, and I would add that her handicap makes that status significantly more apparent than normally. Her description from her first visit makes this abundantly clear:

todo el mundo me miraba, pero no como miran a cualquier turista, que ya es descarado e incluso incómodo. Lo sé porque mis padres me contaban como la gente de la calle me señalaba, le preguntaban a mi madre con gestos si no veía y se ponían a pocos centímetros de mi cara para verme los ojos. (63-4)

Alba’s relativist side—along with her inability to witness herself being the object of such scrutiny—allows her to declare herself indifferent: “A mí, la verdad, me daba totalmente igual, porque sabía que era su manera de hacer las cosas, otro modo de comportarse, y no me sentía ofendida en ningún momento por aquello.” (63-4) Nevertheless, the anecdote highlights this development worker’s tourist status, one which applies to all others in a similar position, even if it does not manifest itself in such blatant manner. They may be there to do something other than sightseeing but they are, nevertheless, tourists in small or large measure (even if it’s only in the view of the locals and not in their own, as Alba’s story shows).

Another important point that Alba's guide dog makes apparent is the close tie between the "assimilationist attitude" and one driving development itself. During her first (touristic) visit, Alba feels what many other development-fiction protagonists do: outrage at the conditions of life they are witnessing in their fantasy-land coupled with a strong desire to do something about it. This feeling accompanies their equally forceful desire to integrate into the foreign culture. This combination motivates their transformation from tourists into development practitioners. Jaume, Alba and Vicky initially travel to their locations as sightseers, in some cases more than once, before they decide to return for a different reason. Made aware of the economic gap between the "developing" vs. the "developed" world during their initial contact, they undergo a life-changing transformation which brings them back as philanthropists. In essence, their touristic experience awakens their philanthropic desire, or in other words, tourism is their gateway to development. This is the most significant of points made so far to show the link between the two fields.

In Alba's case, however, another feeling is present at the moment of her development-related *anagnorisis*—that frustration at being limited in this endeavour by her blindness:

Aparte del sentimiento de querer integrarme, durante el primer viaje me acompañó una sensación que había tenido pocas veces antes—y que me llenaba de rabia e impotencia—: quería hacer algo para ayudar, coger una manguera y ponerme a limpiar la calle, tirar la basura acumulada, coger a un niño que mendigaba y bañarlo y darle de comer... ¡Algo! (63)

She was not able to: "Me moría de ganas de estar activa, pero me sentía muy limitada por la ceguera." (63) Her inability to see is a handicap to her desire to "be useful", to be "active", "to do something to help" the country she has selected as her Orient. Although



in her own country she does not feel limited in this way—Alba tells in detail the superb education and training in self-reliance given to her and her family by the Spanish association for the blind ONCE—in her land of fantasy she feels impotent in not being able to help it. Her philanthropic notions are aborted, at least initially until the Fundación Vicente Ferrer provides her with a solution. This situation shows the merging of the field of assimilation and that of development, and the close link behind them: the desire to improve their chosen Orient is born out of their extreme desire to assimilate to it. That is why the tourists-assimilationists return again but no longer for the purpose of sightseeing. Alba concludes the above lamentation with the following statement, “Necesitaba mil ojos para ser un poco útil en aquel país; me sentía absurdamente inútil y me daba una pena enorme no servir de nada, pensar que me iba a ir de allí sin haber contribuido, sin haber cambiado nada, como una simple observadora.” (63), which brings to the fore another important point. The grievance of being forced to leave her Orient without “having contributed anything” like a “simple observer” reveals something more than the underlying developmentalist notion of the desire to improve it. It also points to another concept, that of a distinction between those who get involved and those who stand by and watch. The latter, of course, are “mere” sightseers or *tourists*.

### **Travelers vs. Tourists**

The above mentioned dichotomy brings us to the decades-old distinction between *travelers* and *tourists* plaguing much of travel literature. With the “assimilationist” attitude in mind, this dichotomy can now be re-thought in new terms: as a touristic drive to integrate with and improve one’s exoticized Orient. Under this structure, the self-

declared travelers are those who assimilate and engage in advancing their chosen locales and the distinction between the two polarities is measured by the degree of assimilation thusly undertaken. In order to better understand this new proposition, it is necessary to discuss the dichotomy in its classic rendition.

Travel stands at the birth of literature; it is intertwined with thousands of years of its trajectory. Travel narratives, full of descriptions of exotic peoples and places, are as old as literature itself. As the famous axiom, attributed to Leo Tolstoy, says: “All great literature is one of two stories; a man goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.” Heroes, villains, soldiers, politicians, thinkers, and many others have left the familiarity of their homelands for a multitude of reasons. Their exploits were recorded in writing and centuries later channeled into a specific branch of literature: travel literature. Until as recently as the middle of the 20th century these voyagers were referred to as *travelers* and it is only with the birth of mass tourism in 1960s that the differentiation between *tourist* and *traveler* emerged. Cheap travel made the once-elite praxis available to an increasingly larger section of society, restructuring the entire paradigm of voyage (and its later description) to include the lower-middle classes and even the poor. The *tourist*—*traveler* dichotomy is largely a product of writing, and mostly produced in moralizing terms. Levi-Strauss’s declaration in *Tristes Tropiques* “Travel and travelers are two things I loathe”<sup>13</sup> (170) is the most famous example of what has continued to plague modern

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<sup>13</sup> The context for Claude Levi-Strauss’s pronouncement is, of course, his work in Brazil as a structural anthropologist recorded several years later in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). His criticism of travelers stems from differentiating between his scientific inquiry (thought to be objective and purposeful) and that of an uninformed explorer (thought to be frivolous and flawed). He criticizes travelogues for their “desire to impress ... so dominant as to make it impossible for the reader to assess the value of the evidence put before him.” (17) Common in anthropology in his time, his sentiment is a reaction to the nineteenth-century

travel literature. Travel writing is full of sanctimonious commentaries on certain types of travelers whose travel practices are considered flawed by those who describe them, but there are no grounds for such bifurcation if we look at the level of praxis. Here tourism studies prove useful, by providing a different view on this classic point of contention.

According to MacCannel, modern mass leisure “especially international tourism and sightseeing” has been “intimately linked” to the experiential and ideological expansion of modern society (*Tourist* 1). He draws this connection by tracing the postmodern man’s action of leisure travel across time all the way to the voyages of mythological heroes via a common thread:

Actually, self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other is a basic theme of our civilization, a theme supporting an enormous literature. Odysseus, Aeneas, the Diaspora, Chaucer, Christopher Columbus, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Gulliver, Jules Verne, Western ethnography, Mao’s Long March. (3)

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honored status enjoyed by the traveler as one who provided data for the armchair anthropologist to analyze (Stocking 1983: 71). However, despite Levi-Strauss’s (superiority-laden) separation of travelers from anthropologists, studies in subsequent years confirmed a close relationship between the two fields. Anthropology realized itself to be a lot less objective than it once thought by revealing the fallacy of “objective participant” reports, which suddenly were realized to share the subjectivity of travelogues. Over time, the field’s valuation of travel accounts also changed, going as far as being considered a minor species of ethnography (Marcus and Cushman 1982: 27). Nevertheless, a separation between the fields has remained, running along the lines of “moral assessments and interest in adventure” which distinguishes travel writing from classic realist ethnographies (Wheeler 1986: 60). Still, anthropology and travel writing continue to be inextricably linked, as the dialogue (in both fields) among scholars continues. Some anthropologists have even proposed reframing of ethnography in terms of travel writing, as once alluded to (sarcastically) by Alfred Louch (1966: 159-60). This view proposes this rethinking as the solution for the central puzzle at the core of the contemporary discussions of the creation of the anthropologist and ethnography—that of separation of experience and outcome—may be clarified by “an examination of how anthropologists’ accounts are and are not traveler’s tales” (Wheeler 1986: 52) Levi-Strauss’s pronouncement is addressed again, this time as an example of irony both intended and unintended. The anthropologist, while speaking ill of travelers consciously engages in that very activity, many years after his anthropological work had been concluded: “I hate traveling and explorers, yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions” (pg. 17). As an ironic twist to his denouncement of traveling, explorers and travelogues, his own *Tristes Tropiques* has been called “one of the greatest travel books of the postwar period” (Cockburn 1984:66).

In other words, this is the desire to assimilate to a new culture. MacCannell goes on to clarify that “This theme does not just thread its way through our literature and our history. It grows and develops, arriving at a kind of final flowering in modernity.”; more specifically “What begins as the proper activity of a hero (Alexander the Great) develops into the goal of a socially organized group (the Crusaders), into the mark of status of an entire social class (the Grand Tour of the British “gentleman”), eventually becoming universal experience. (3) In other words, the essence of the practice of travel has not changed. Over the centuries, hundreds of travelers have left behind the familiarity of everyday life. Their adventures recorded over epochs in epic poems, official letters of conquest and discovery, maps, colonial administration records, paintings, etchings, naturalist logs, autobiographies, essays, fictional narratives, songs and poems serve proof of the persistence of humanity’s desire for the encounter with *the Other*—whether that desire bears out in quests for, clashes with, or being enraptured by this contact. What was once the activity of the upper echelons of society endowed with the economic, logistical and political means that granted them access to foreign lands is now the stuff of every day vacationers. Like hundreds of thousands of voyagers before them, present day mass tourists leave their homes for the same reasons (and several new ones as this study endeavors to show). They also leave a trace behind them, one that today is of a greater range: thousands of photographs and videos, hundreds of travel blogs, advice columns and guidelines are posted online every day as millions of sightseers cross international air space every day. Several hundreds of them publish on paper the written account of their

adventures, thus inserting themselves more directly into the centuries-long and thousands-of-pages-rich history of an important part of the field of literature.

In earlier times of restricted travel, those who left their homeland, traversed borders, explored faraway lands, and came back to tell the story of their voyage often claimed themselves—in their writing—the status of experts in the art of travel. Both actions were a marker of the elite but the global spread of tourism has made both of these practices available to a larger audience. Literature has kept the separation between tourists and travelers, but tourism studies shows us that they are guided by the same motivations. According to John Urry, it is the pursuit of the extraordinary: “Tourism results form a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary.” (11) Tourist experiences involve “pleasurable experiences which are, by comparison with the everyday, out of the ordinary.” (11) While the definition of “extraordinary” may vary from one traveler or tourist to another, or from one time period to another, the motivation remains the same—“a simple desire to leave home and see something different.” (MacCannell, *Ethics* 198) The Grand Tour travelers, whose prose forms part of the cannon of travel writing, were undoubtedly guided by this expectation. This expectation is expressed via what Urry calls the “tourist gaze”<sup>14</sup>: “The tourist gaze is directed to features of the landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience.” (3) Urry believes that the places onto which the traveler directs his/her gaze are chosen because they are unlike those at home<sup>15</sup>. This unchanging

<sup>14</sup> We will return to the idea of the “tourist gaze” in the context of development in later chapters.

<sup>15</sup> This assumption has some problematic implications, for example it assumes that extraordinary experiences are not available locally. Another problem with Urry’s theory, according to MacCannell, has to do with the places the tourists visit: “The idea that there should be out of the ordinary means that every

motivation driving travel abroad serves as another challenge to the *tourist—traveler* separation.

The polarization between travel and tourism is not limited to the intellectualized notions of travel writing, also the self-proclaimed “travelers” look down on those they consider to be “tourists”. Tourists hate tourists as much as everyone else does and the texts in this study’s corpus provide examples of such anti-tourist sentiments. MacCannell affirms: “Tourists dislike tourists. God is dead, but a man’s need to appear holier than his fellows lives.” (*Tourist* 10) Alba’s story provides an example of this attitude: “No me desagrada visitar algún puente o algún monumento, ¡pero prefiero mil veces vivirlos! ... puedo haber visitado la Sagrada Familia, pero lo que de verdad me hizo disfrutar allí fue conocer a aquel vendedor de Kleenex de la entrada que me contó una historia.” (60) Underneath the sentiment described by Alba’s description of the Kleenex seller there is a feeling of superiority over those tourists who engage in typical touristic actions such as visiting attractions, and an insinuation that her alternative way of interacting with the foreign place is a more efficacious manner of penetrating into the “real” local culture. MacCannell explains the reason for these sentiments: “The touristic critique of tourism is based on the desire to go beyond the other “mere” tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture” (10). Those who believe they are successful in this endeavor refuse to refer to themselves as *tourists*. Through this assumed superiority—

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object of the tourist gaze is measured by its relationship to what is “ordinary” for people who view their lives as essentially uninteresting. The boring ordinary is the frame and central referent of the tourist gaze. What attracts this gaze is not merely other. It is out of the ordinary in the sense that the ordinary has given birth to the attraction. Attractions must be haunted by the ordinary in all its manifestations Urry claims it is the task of tourist attractions to “establish and sustain” the “division between the ordinary and the extraordinary” See MacCannell’s *Ethics of Sightseeing* (199)

self-described and manifested in writing—they portray themselves as travelers, or in other words, “assimilationists”.

Seen as shallow in their appreciation of *touristic attractions*, *tourists* are seen as uninterested in achieving the *traveler’s* objective of penetrating deep into the local culture. This is the main accusation against them that permits vilifying their actions, but is this really the case? MacCannell proposes an alternative to this opposition of two different types of performers—one that sees them as players of the same game who achieve the same goal in different degrees. He explains the real essence of the tourist-traveler critique: “Tourists are not criticized for leaving to explore, rather for being superficial in this activity. In other words, touristic shame is not based on being a tourist but on not being tourist enough, on a failure to see everything the way it “ought” to be seen.” (*Tourist* 10) Rather than *tourists* vs. *non-tourists*, MacCannell’s argumentation seems to suggest it is *tourists* and *hyper-tourists*. In actuality, “All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel,” the critic affirms. (*Ethics* 10) The perceived difference between tourists and travelers has been exaggerated, the critic believes:

Tourist and travels ... are equal in that they are both extended a kind of honorary infantile status when it comes to local normative demands. They are equally recipients of a special kind of demeaning indulgence when it comes to their efforts to learn a few words of the local language... Both tourist and traveler are sometimes overpraised for even small cultural accomplishments and, to the relief of their hosts, both eventually go home. (*Ethics* 220)

The development practitioners portrayed in the narratives in this study fall into this category. Eventually, they go home, and when they do, they all write about their journeys, describing them as anything other than tourism.

## CHAPTER II. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS ADVENTURE TRAVEL: EXTREME PURSUITS

The previous chapter showed a close relationship between development and tourism, by viewing the actions portrayed as development by its practitioners through the lens of touristic behavior. Analyzing their praxis in terms of “touristic attitudes” revealed a strong touristic drive motivating their actions. This determination will allow us to propose that development-related travel is a specific type of tourism, one focused on the pursuit of extremes. In order to be able to claim this, it is necessary to consider the contemporary tourism landscape and the factors that shape it.

The first and most important factor in this discussion is the tight interlocking of tourism and globalization. The relationship between these two phenomena is complex and instrumental to this study. According to the tourism scholar Graham Huggan “tourism is both a conspicuous effect and a primary producer of the tangled cultural and economic process of globalization.” (*Extreme 3*) Understanding this interaction is a key component of the effort to understand the state of today’s tourism. Today, international tourism is one of the biggest “industries”<sup>16</sup> in the world. “Over the past six decades, tourism has

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<sup>16</sup> Some scholars view such claims by the WTO and WTTC as misconstrued on two grounds: the ambiguity of the term “tourism” and the erroneous nature of the formulation “tourism industry”, as pertaining to claims of its economic prominence. They claim that tourism is not an industry, rather a form of human behavior like all other “isms” supported partly by distinctive (most of them existing independently) industries. Comparing this or any type of service industry to manufacturing—as the WTO report does when it says the field ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and food—is wrought with challenges. Furthermore, WTO’s “tourism industry” calculations do not distinguish between transportation and the various types of travel undertaken for all kinds of reasons and, thus serviced under the diverse economic subsectors: a) vfr - visiting friends and family which is the strongest of the motivators; b) commercial & technical — encompasses students going to school, salesmen selling goods, professionals attending seminars; c) leisure—



experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world” (2) according to the UN World Travel Organization’s most recent publication “World Tourism Highlights 2016 Edition”<sup>17</sup>. The organization reports that tourism represents 7% of the world’s exports, 10% of the world’s GDP, and 1 in 11 jobs worldwide, ranking fourth as a worldwide export category (after fuels, chemicals and food), but first in many developing countries (3). However, as Huggan points out, it is also an instrument of division. The advent of mass air travel has had the effect of popularizing travel itself, taking it from an exotic to an everyday practice, yet it has not done this in an egalitarian manner. The UNWTO 2016 report states that “Tourism has boasted virtually uninterrupted growth over time, despite occasional shocks, demonstrating the sector’s strength and resilience. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1186 million in 2015.” (3) Airplanes themselves are reminders of the social inequalities on which globalization feeds and which it in turn produces, as their passengers travel for many reasons, largely outside that of leisure. Today travel is needed for survival and is often cruelly coerced, making the ages-old idea of travel as freedom outdated (*Extreme 2*). For most, travel is no longer an expression of “privilege through movement” (Kaur 25). People travel on the account of work, for social and family reasons, in pursuit of better economic opportunities, to escape political conflicts, and for

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this is the traditional meaning associated with the term. Despite the resulting vagueness, these calculations still operate as a useful barometer for understanding the growth of tourism as defined in this dissertation.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418145>

many other reasons. This can be seen in the case of the protagonists who—in their view—travel not for pleasure but in order to participate in efforts to eradicate poverty worldwide.

Another aspect that has shaped the state of today's tourism—as well as the state of the world at large—is the commodification of all social and cultural aspects of modern life. This classic feature of late-capitalist modernity also affected tourism by transforming destinations and their particular features into a saleable commodity, a process sometimes referred to as the “economization of culture” (Huggan 12). The effect of the emergence of a system of cultural and economic interconnections has actively contributed toward the creation of what Kavin Meethan calls “single-global—“tourist space” (27). In other words, and according to Patricia Goldstone, globalization produces a homogenized space by creating interchangeable “packaged environments” (12) in which tourists can enjoy leisure with a maximum of predictability and minimum of risk<sup>18</sup>.

### **Global Consciousness**

What does this “global tourist space” look like? The interlocking of human relations in all realms of daily life under globalization has produced the restructuring of space and time. People are more aware—largely as a result of advanced technology and ease of international travel—of how life in other parts of the world looks. Mass media has made economic inequality across the globe evident, complex and more difficult to ignore than ever. This is one of the contributing factors to the emergence of a new type of *awareness*, which manifests itself in many realms, such as the environment, social justice,

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<sup>18</sup>An example is the “India en libertad” tour taken by Jaume, discussed in Chapter I. We see echoes of this sentiment in all of the protagonists in the present study as they distance themselves from this type of travel.

and human rights. From individual, community, to country-level support both passive and active for a wide array of issues, ranging from the fight for gay marriage to the various Occupy Movements of 2011 against social and economic inequality worldwide, today's global landscape is one of "global consciousness" (Huggan). This term is used by Huggan to point out that this heightened ethical awareness of living in a world that is socially divided but environmentally, politically and economically connected, has also affected the realm of tourism. The way "global consciousness" manifests itself in tourism is in what MacCannell calls "moral tourism".

This new state of tourism produces many new and "reinvigorated" forms of travel practice, all shaped by "global consciousness". In order to understand the mechanism of this new mood of travel let us look at the most evident of its forms, "ecotourism". The awareness of environmental degradation world-wide has produced concern which is expressed in many ways by civil society and governments: denouncement, call for action or for preservation, social activism, education, etc. This has manifested itself in the field of tourism as the desire to travel to ecologically pristine and fragile environments in a responsible manner. The advocates of ecotourism's more extreme version—known as "doom tourism" or "last chance tourism"—travel to increasingly more remote natural locations (such as the Arctic) in order to witness them before they disappear. "Ecotourism" is one of the biggest and most significant areas of the contemporary tourism industry and a clear manifestation of "global consciousness". It claims to be "sustainable", "low-impact", "non-consumptive", "locally-oriented" and "conservation" or "preservation" oriented (Fennell 43). Regardless of the ability to complete these goals,

the mere existence of touristic niche stating its orientation towards these goals is evidence in itself of the “morality” of today’s tourism. In fact, it’s been shown that “eco travel is “environmentally destructive, economically exploitative, culturally insensitive” (MacLaren 97). For this reason, among the objectives of “eco-travel writing is censuring ecotourism, documenting specific ecological problems, and calling for activism. Let us now examine how the idea of “moral tourism” relates to travel practice (and its writings) in the context of / for the purpose of development.

If traveling abroad for the purpose of development can be considered tourism, as argued in the previous chapter, how does it fit into the contemporary—“moral”—tourism landscape? Also in this case, the action of examining its portrayal in writing reveals its inner workings and defining characteristics. If the new ethical awareness of today’s interconnected and divided world leads to many diverse forms of tourism, undoubtedly the one practiced by the protagonists of the fiction under study form part of its “moral” landscape. If concern for nature yields “ecotourism”, it would follow that concern for those in poverty would also yield a specific form of tourism. We have seen our protagonists cross borders to manage an orphanage, to set up schools for the poor, to teach blind children life skills and to work on a community employment project. The concepts of “moral tourism” and “global awareness” elucidate the origin of their altruistic impulses; their philanthropic doings in “developing” countries exhibit this form of tourism. The protagonists manifest concern for the wellbeing of world’s less fortunate, and channel it to specific locations. That is why, with time, they choose to dedicate themselves to long term philanthropy projects there. Chapter I has shown that, for most of

the protagonists studied herein the *concern* starts during their first trips as simple tourists and continues throughout their later work there. The feelings of “uselessness” and “impotence” examined in Alba’s description of her first tour of India is one of the (overt) reasons she returns several times afterwards to spend long periods of time working with the country’s blind children<sup>19</sup> in one of Fundación Vicente Ferrer’s projects. The same is true for Jaume, who formulates this concern most directly of all the protagonists, during his daily observations of the untouchables on the street of Bombay. Penetrating him with their eyes, they make him feel “responsable por su miseria” (45). Although aware of India’s status as an economically-underdeveloped country, he feels shame for not realizing the extreme forms it takes. His reaction after a visit to one of the poorest neighborhoods of the capital eloquently manifests the concern for the less fortunate part of the globalized world: “Me sentía insultado, ofendido, engañado por un mundo que me había hecho creer que todo eran paseos en moto y españolas sonrientes. Si todo sucedía en el mismo escenario, ¿por qué hasta entonces nadie me había apartado el telón? ¿Cuál debía ser mi actitud estando allí?” (57) Jaume articulates the witnessing of the discrepancy in life opportunities between those who have and those who do not.

What this example also reveals is an extreme preoccupation with the current state of the world. Moreover, what the statements and, the actions of Alba and Jaume and others like them point to is a desire for activism stemming from the feeling of responsibility. In other words, and in terms of the ideas presented in Chapter I, their “missionary” attitudes are triggered. These lead them to consider the circumstances they

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter I.

observe to be in need of enhancement. Specific encounters with the local reality turn these individuals into active philanthropists, thus activating the morality of their tourist experience.

### **Slumming it**

Let us examine Jaime's entrance to philanthropy. As indicated in the previous chapter, Jaime's first encounter with the harsh reality of India's poor is accidental. He is on vacation in a country that is known for poverty, but this was not what motivated his trip. He is not surprised by its omnipresence. Initially, he is *aware* but not *concerned*. In fact, he didn't even want to go to India—he is persuaded by a travel agent to “dispatch his touristic obligation,”<sup>20</sup> in MacCannell's terms, to this famous place. However, his indifference changes when he encounters a sociable beggar girl who offers to show him her family. Living in many of Bombay's slums, Pooja's community makes its living by collecting recyclable materials in garbage landfills. He is treated kindly by the girl's kin but is witness wife-beating. A man punishes his wife for her gangrene-consumed legs which make it impossible for her to work. Their two little children are forced to work instead—a situation that brings onto the husband. Jaime feels shock and pity towards the woman, mixed with well-hidden revulsion caused by the foul-smelling wound: “Un sudor frío y cortante caía por mi frente. No sabía qué hacer ni que decir. Me quede inmóvil, observando aquella escena y esperando despertar en cualquier momento.” (61) Jaime's words underline the extremeness of the situation—so great that he is wondering whether

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter I.

it was a dream. Pero aquello era real. Yo estaba allí y el desolador panorama que presenciaba era algo habitual en toda la ciudad, una realidad que seguía anclada en un destino inalterable.” (61) He realizes the acute difference between their life and his own, free from the results of dire economic hardship. *Awareness* transforms into *concern*.

This is the beginning of the change he undergoes during his trip. It is his “moral” *anagnorisis*. He may have remained at that apparent level of poverty—of “awareness”—seen by all visitors to India if it weren’t for Pooja’s initiation to one of its deeper levels. The clever and friendly tourist-oriented beggar exploits the economic discrepancy. Half-inadvertently (as she knew he’d be appalled by the conditions in the slums) she activates his shock (and morality), in hopes of earning a higher profit. It works; from that moment on, Jaime’s attention is focused on the slums and their dwellers. Wanting to see more of them, he initiates an active pursuit of similar instances of acute indigence: “Durante días insistí en que alguien me llevara a zonas de *slums*, a las más recónditas, a las más perdidas en medio de este desierto de arena de ácaros que era Bombay.” (68) He insists until a worker at his hostel finally drives him there. The need to see squalor and misery is so strong that he walks out of the car impulsively to explore on his own, leaving his guide behind: “Algo me decía que debía bajar allí y caminar por las callejuelas de cartones y plásticos de aquella zona.” (68) Something is pulling him towards this—unique and precarious, he is sure—experience. He wants to see more examples of human misery and suffering. The desired scenario quickly produces itself: “No tardaron en correr hacia mí decenas de niños, unos prácticamente desnudos, otros vestidos con harapos roñosos. Todos ellos llevaban las marcas de sarna en sus delgados brazos.” (68) Jaime’s intuition

was not wrong: the slums provide him with a wide spectrum of examples of *extreme* poverty at levels much higher—and of a much more perilous nature—than those he can observe while sightseeing in the city. He is appalled but needs to see even more squalor. What comes to mind is a specific type of traveler on the “moral” landscape of tourism.

Today’s touristic landscape is a type of travel practice that corresponds to Jaume’s moral concerns—one in which leisure objectives are secondary to the altruistic desire to assist poorer communities. Undertaken by individuals interested in goodwill activities whilst on holiday, it is referred to by a variety of terms: “charity tourism”, “aid tourism”, “activist tourism”, “humanitarian tourism” and, most commonly, “volunteer tourism” or “voluntourism”. Stephen Wearing defines these types of individuals as: “Those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment.” (12) One of the most rapidly growing categories of contemporary tourism, it spans the multiplicity of activities performed by “voluntourists”: from trail cleanup and wildlife monitoring, school and housing construction, to teaching English, and playing with the orphans, the disabled, or the elderly. The scope, duration, complexity and location of such projects are wide-ranging. Clearly, the motivation of these tourists seems to be rooted in their disquiet over the economic hardship of a large section of the world, which they view to be in need of their intervention.

Thus, are Jaume’s visits to the poor neighborhoods of the Indian capital this type of travel? It is what comes to mind, based on the indignation visible in the written



reactions. However, “voluntourists” get involved—that is the main purpose of their travel—and at this initial stage of his story portrayed in the above quotes, Jaume is only viewing. Albeit outraged and distraught, participating comes later in his story. At this point he is just a tourist interested in viewing places of indigence. Is it then curiosity about other people’s lives what keeps luring him back to the slums? Curiosity has been, after all, the standard motivation of travel since its origins. It is also one of the things that travel / writing has in common with anthropology. Malcom Crick explains that anthropologists and tourist travel “to collect and expropriate what they value from the other and then [to] tell of their journeys” (28). He points out that anthropologists are a type of tourists given the impossibility of undertaking their work without undergoing a sort of tourism. The convergence between the two fields becomes indubitable when both are seen in terms of *cultural voyeurism*. Even if it is performed for different purposes and in different ways, both practitioners are interested in documenting cultural difference. Jaume’s narration of his journey to India reveals that recording the dissimilarities he observes is one of its objectives.

This also holds true for the other protagonists. Yet in his case, there is an additional factor driving his curiosity about the lives of others—he is fascinated by their misfortune; moreover, it is poverty in a specific setting that interests him—urban. This puts him in a specific branch of contemporary tourism, that of “poorism” or “slum tourism”. This type of tourism is based on the economic discrepancy between the poor locals and the comparatively wealthy foreigners. Tours of the world’s biggest slums, such as the Dharavi slum of Mumbai, South Africa’s Khayelitsha shantytown or the Rocinha

favela in Rio de Janeiro<sup>21</sup>, are available for interested voyeurs. The backpacker travelling through Thailand in Alex Garland's 1997 novel *The Beach* best explains the interest: "I wanted to witness extreme poverty. I saw it as a necessary experience for anyone who wanted to appear worldly and interesting; of course witnessing poverty was the first to be ticked off the list." (64) This type of cultural voyeurism has recently seen efforts to rename it with a positive spin as "pro-poor tourism". Tour operators frame such tours as aiming to foster up awareness of social inequalities by calling them "reality tours" and advertising passing some of the earnings to the visited communities. Yet, in essence, the activity remains the same: curiosity about other people's indigence. This is what drives Jaume's touristic activities during his first encounter with India.

During what should be his vacation time, the allure of slums takes Jaume there several more times, making him a spectator to increasingly more precarious situations. During one visit, he observes the wailing of a young mother over a dead one-month old baby, drowned by her father on the account of her sex, and which would impose an unaffordable dowry on them. His astonishment and outrage are so great he doubts the veracity of the situation: "Mis ojos no daban credito a lo que veían" (75). It quickly becomes clear to him that he is witnessing are situations that go beyond poverty; they are instances hazard and criminality spawned from economic hardship. These occurrences, while bewildering, far from discouraging him, only fuel his immense interest in

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<sup>21</sup> The oldest and most successful tour company of this sort in India is Reality Tours (<http://realitytoursandtravel.com/>) claiming to show "the real India" while giving back 80% of the profits back to the community via a sister NGO. This model of is followed in one way or another in most other tours of this type in other countries offering slum tourism. Much controversy surrounds this type of claims of benefits to the local communities, with the reality being that the tour companies keep most of the profits.

destitution of this caliber. He does not stop his visits. As he uncovers increasingly deeper layers of slum life, more shocking, heartbreaking and unjust in his view, these feelings grow exponentially. Noor, a 10-year-old street beggar girl whose legs had been cut off to elicit more pity (thus more money) from tourists (such as himself), brings him to the point of tears: "Fui a buscar el helado secándome las lágrimas como pude y juntos pasamos esa tarde, en medio del Mar Árabe y de aquella injusticia que me sobrepasó completamente." (75) The pull towards situations that elicit indignation and bewilderment turns into an obsession:

Durante el día traté de evadirme de esos temas y concentrarme en los atractivos turísticos. Pero, por muchos esfuerzos que hiciese para desviar mi atención a otros aspectos ... mis pensamientos regresaban siempre a Dharavi, a Matunga, a Dadar. [...] Los *slums* de Bombay ejercían sobre mí una, sin lugar a dudas, un poderoso magnetismo. (69)

Several feelings motivate Jaume's repeated returns to witness hazardous indigence in the slums: cultural curiosity, pity, indignation, concern. He is undoubtedly a highly emphatic human being, as his subsequent philanthropic undertakings reveal, however, that is not all that motivates his behavior. There is a strong element of *thrill* that also adds to the mix of feelings and motivations, as the word "magnetism" indicates. The *excitement* of danger is what is also at play.

The idea of danger as a motivator of travel forms part of yet another form of contemporary travel, one that is executed for the explicit purpose of witnessing and experiencing dangerous situations. Huggan explains that these types of tours range from "safely insulated, unashamedly voyeuristic appreciations of other people's extreme misfortunes" (100), under which Jaume's visit to Bombay's slums can be categorized, to "deliberately risky visits to current war-torn zones and politically unstable political sites"

(100). This latter brand of tourism has at its core a fascination with atrocities and disaster in current-day combat zones, such as those in Syria, Palestine and Ukraine, and other places. It is known as “danger-zone tourism”, a term coined by Kathleen Adams in a book with the same title. She describes these types of tourists as “travelers who are drawn to areas of political turmoil. Their pilgrimages to strife-torn destinations are not for professional purposes but rather for leisure, although in some cases the professional identities of danger-zone tourist are related to their leisure pursuits” (40). The most famous example of this is the 1993 *The World’s Most Dangerous Places*<sup>22</sup> guidebook written by journalist Robert Young Pelton. Based on decades of reporting from the most conflict-prone areas of the globe (such as interviews with Taliban leaders) for the most famous news outlets (such as the *The New York Times*)<sup>23</sup>, the guidebook has been a best-seller since the 1990s. Pelton provides practical information on survival in areas of extreme danger, and the book’s companion online forum the *Black Flag Café* provides actual and would-be travelers a place to share tips and warnings. This is another evidence of the growing popularity of this type of travel. Although, as Adams points out, danger-zone tourists present a range of motives and interests, “from humanitarian / activist tourists, to adrenalin-rush pursuers, and those seeking first-hand journalistic experience” (42), the common thread among them is the active pursuit of danger. The mindset of

<sup>22</sup> Robert Young Pelton, *Robert Young Pelton's the World's Most Dangerous Places*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003). This is the fifth edition, the first one having been published in 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Pelton has built a career as an experiential solo journalist with a unique style of reporting, interviewing and documentary making, of military and political figures in warzones. His reports have been features in several main news agencies and newspapers. He was host of the Discovery Travel Channel series *Robert Young Pelton's The World's Most Dangerous Places* from 1998 to 2003 and has acted as the National Geographic Adventure’s Contributing Editor and Columnist from 2001 to 2007. He developed several adventure and survival-travel related products. These are just a few of his accomplishments.

many danger-zone tourists is well-captured, again, by the protagonist of *The Beach*, for whom viewing poverty is the first stop to be “ticked off the list”: “Then I had to graduate to the more obscure stuff. Being in a riot was something I pursue with a truly obsessive zeal along with being tear-gassed and hearing gunshots fired in anger. Another list item was having a brush with my own death.” (Garland 64) This quote illustrates, among other things, the close association between poverty and danger. For travelers like him, witnessing poverty is the first step towards more dangerous forms of tourism. This is contrast with Jaume, whose initial interest in the slums engenders long-term altruistic activity rather than thrill-seeking. Still, the link between poverty and danger is clear. A question arises: what is driving the phenomenon of desiring to witness and experience danger, in whatever form it takes.

It has to do extremes. The already referred to scholar, Graham Huggan, examines the state of contemporary tourism in terms of the pursuit of extreme situations in his book appropriately titled *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization*. He proposes that one of the many reasons for this phenomenon is related to a shift in how death, disaster and atrocity are perceived in the (post)modern society: they have become commodified for consumption in the global communications market (Lennon and Foley 5). Television news and other forms of visual media have normalized these concepts and sensationalized them as forms of entertainment. The most striking result of this is the existence of a whole range of touristic products which exploit this fact. One example is

referred to as “thanatourism” (“dark tourism” or “war tourism”<sup>24</sup>), which is built around situations of violent, individual and mass deaths: mass grave sites, concentration camps, battlefields, gruesome scenes ranging from celebrity assassinations to genocidal executions. All these are packaged into fully-serviced tourist attractions, such as Cambodia’s Killing Fields, Vietnam’s Demilitarized Zone, or the Auschwitz Concentration Camp Site in Nazi’s Poland. A related tourism product operates in the aftermath of such natural catastrophes such as the South-East Asian tsunami of 2004 or the 2010 explosion of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull, correspondingly known as “disaster tours”. Jaume’s “slum tourism”, driven by his obsession with viewing extreme poverty, nevertheless, forms part of this touristic praxis.

Whether pondering the remains of past death-events, or witnessing or willingly participating in present-day peril, the above presentation of a section of today’s tourism scene shows that the thrill of *danger* is a key factor in several of its forms. Although the basic motivator of foreign travel is still the pursuit of *otherness*, there seems to be something else that is of interest in traveling for the purpose of experiencing danger. What is valued by these types of tourists is a sense of *lawlessness* in these places, the knowledge that things happen there that are not allowed elsewhere. It is this underlying feeling of transgression that produces the *thrill* of dangerous situations. It is the recipe of *adventure* and according to Huggan, adventure travel is the main branch of today’s tourism, and it is a mix of three components: otherness, lawlessness and danger.

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<sup>24</sup> This term has been also used to refer to what Adams has started calling “danger-zone tourism” in order to distinguish between places of past combat and current one. See the path-producing study of tourism to past war areas: Valene Smith and W. J. Pitts, “War and Its Tourist Attractions,” in *Tourism, Crime, International Security Issues*, Ed. A Pizam and Y. Mansfield (Chiccester: Wiley, 1996), 247-64.

Let us now examine Jamie's trips to the slums in light of this information.

Wanting to witness poverty, he visits the slums repeatedly despite the danger which such visits imply. The majority of the danger he describes is observed as it is inflicted on others. Feeling powerless to stop it, he denounces it in his narration, as the above quotations have shown. Moreover, there is another layer of danger: the personal hazard of being an obvious foreigner (hence an easy target) in a lawless slum. However, this does not discourage his curiosity for the slums, but rather, stimulates it. In fact, Jaume's narration reveals his conscious and growing pursuit of danger. Although he does not announce it overtly in most cases, it is nevertheless clearly visible in his account of slum explorations. There is even one deliberate decision to participate in an overtly risky situation. Near the end of his tour of India, he describes a place that he cannot miss seeing: "Me quedaba por ver algo muy importante, un lugar acerca del que había leído artículos y visto documentales, y que sin duda quería conocer antes de volver a España." (71) Far from being a tourist attraction, it is a slum called Kamathipura. When he tells the taxi driver his destination, he gets an unexpected reaction: "El taxi frenó en seco y eso provocó un gran chirrido que consiguió incluso superar los decibelios del sonoro ritmo de Bombay. —Yo no voy a esa zona. Vaya usted, si quiere, pero con mi taxi no" (71). The taxi driver is stunned at the request because the place is too dangerous even to the locals, let alone tourists.

Although Jaume reports it as such, the reaction of the taxi driver is actually not much of a surprise to him. It only serves to underscore the level of danger of which he is already cognizant. Later in his narration of this visit he reveals that he knows very well

the reason behind the place's infamy, and in spite of it—or rather, precisely on its account—, he is willing to do anything to reach it: “Bajé del coche sin inmutarme. Aquella reacción no alteraría mi propósito de acercarme a ese lugar. *Iría en elefante si fuera necesario*, pero esa noche no dormiría sin haber visto antes el barrio de Kamathipura.” (70-71) Why is he so interested in this particular place and so willing to endanger his life to see it? The sense of curiosity, thrill and adventure seems to overshadow his common sense. Jaume inserts an explanation of the reason of his interest in this place in his narration: Kamathipura is the biggest prostitution area in Asia, although often this dishonor is incorrectly attributed to Thailand. Set up by the British during the colonial times, the slum is divided into areas offering all types of pleasures: straight, homosexual and transvestite, Jaume informs. Jaume also reveals the source of his knowledge to be the movie “*El día en que mi dios murió*” (The Day My God Died) by Andrew Levine<sup>25</sup> which greatly impressed him “por su precisión periodística, su extrema calidad fotográfica y, desde luego, por la crudeza de la realidad que expone” (73). What is of essence for this study is that the nature of the danger, and the disrepute of the place is well known to Jaume beforehand. This is the reason behind his desire to pay it a visit. His intuition—and this previous knowledge—tells him that in Bombay's red light district he will witness misery, hazard and injustice more extreme than in any other place. He knows this, and therefore, needs to see and experience it. For this reason, nothing will stop him from getting there. This is “slum tourism” at its highest.

<sup>25</sup> *The Day My God Died*. Dir. Andrew Levine. Perf. Anuradha Koirala, film, Andrew Levine Productions, 2003. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0376559/>



He takes a train, next walks for two hours to finally arrive at the place whose purpose is easily recognizable by red lights that illuminate the narrow streets. They are filled with girls and boys offering services, their watchful pimps lurking in the background. As he walks through the streets, he begins to feel the danger against which he was warned: “Sentí el *peligro* del que me habían hablado y, a ratos, me había seguido. Aun así, no sentí miedo, esa sensación que no debería formar parte del vocabulario de la vida.” (71) Free of fear but driven by a strange force, he enters one of the many red-lit huts: “Ese conocido impulso, fuera de toda lógica y explicación, que me había acompañado en muchos momentos del viaje.” (71) Breaking boundaries of privacy, he enters the dimly-lit space, and takes the narrow staircase up following the sounds of a moaning male. Pushing the limits of danger a bit more (and clearly trespassing) he draws the curtain to peek inside. Instead of the expected sexual act, he discovers a minuscule room. As the sounds of pleasure continue, he observes the space: empty, save for some decorations of naked girls on the walls. Suddenly he notices something moving on the floor:

Cuando miré hacia el suelo, vi a aquel ser de cuclillas, pequeño, observándome con los ojos abiertos como dos naranjas. Aquel niño, que no tendría más de dos años, me miraba atónito mientras se llevaba algo a la boca. Estaba pasmado, sorprendiéndose más por mi presencia que por aquellos sonoros gritos, que procedían del cliente de la que seguramente sería su madre. Le sonreí y el siguió sin inmutarse. Solo aparto un poco la mano de sus labios para que, a pesar del mal ángulo donde yo estaba y de la escasa luz, pudiera ver que lo que tenía en la boca era un preservativo usado. Quise retroceder, pero mis pies toparon con una cacerola que estaba en el suelo. El sonido en la habitación contigua paro en seco y las cortinas se movieron. –¿Priyanka? (75)

He runs out and gets lost in the crowd, driven by the desire to avoid persecution and in reaction to the impact of the encounter. As he runs, he remembers the description of Kamathipura by an English reporter: “El infierno en la tierra.” (75) He recalls the

recommendation of a yogi for calming the heart, but finds the task of imagining his heart as a ball of light so that no knife can penetrate it impossible: “Ante la imagen de aquel bebé comiendo el preservativo usado, me suponía un enorme esfuerzo tener un corazón de luz.” (75) His reaction of distress indicates the severity of what he witnessed. To him, it seems to be one of the most extreme examples imaginable of *lawlessness*, *danger* and *otherness* that poverty can produce. This is the reason he came here. He gets what he hoped for—his *adventure*.

If the claim that the pursuit of *adventure* is what brings Jaume to Kamathipura (and other slums) does not sound sufficiently convincing, perhaps Jaume’s own words can help: “Ma habían advertido muy seriamente acerca de los peligros de moverme por aquella zona, pero hice oídos sordos a los consejos y me *aventuré* a cometer la *locura* de perderme por sus empedrados sin más compañía que la *curiosidad*.” (72)<sup>26</sup> The words “me aventuré”, “locura” and “curiosidad” jump out and beg analysis. Although on the surface the pages that tell Jaume’s story of philanthropy present the motivation to be the search for examples of injustice, there is more that is at play. Jaume writes his book, *Sonrisas de Bombay*, (and with it, the above anecdotes) after he had already dedicated several years of his life to active self-styled philanthropy in India. This means he frames them as related to this fact, which actually had not yet occurred. The above-cited actions are not yet motivated by the his philanthropic agenda of seeking out more proofs of injustice in order to denounce and counteract them, even if his narration strives to portray

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<sup>26</sup> My emphasis.

them in this light<sup>27</sup>. His decision to dedicate his life to counteracting the abuses of sexual exploitation of children comes many months later on another visit to India. Thus, what else can motivate Jaume's desire at this point for slum visits but a sense of *adventure*: the *thrill* of being a witness to *otherness*, feeling the *danger* and being in a context of complete and utter *lawlessness*? Even if he doesn't think of himself as an adventure-seeking tourist or report himself as one in his narration of his activities in India, at this initial juncture on his road to a life of philanthropy, he is precisely that. In fact, the movie that motivates him to disavow all rules of reason, safety, private property and common sense, and venture out into the very heart of Bombay's most notorious slum is nothing other than a *marker* that points him towards a *site* that becomes for him a *touristic attraction*<sup>28</sup> in terms of Chapter I. Kamathipura, the jaw-dropping place of unimaginable extremeness is at the same time a place wrapped in a veil of thrill rooted in hazard, anarchy and strangeness, to a specific type of (an adventure-seeking) tourist. There are other motivating factors that mask the fear he should be feeling, that cloud his judgment sufficiently to want to get involved and that reveal his kindness and deeply-felt concern for the wellbeing of others. It is not our objective to deny these, but rather, to claim that they are not the only ones<sup>29</sup>. A sense of *adventure* is another key motivating factor of Jaume's behavior and that of others like him.

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<sup>27</sup> The question of different motivations of development travelers is an ongoing concern addressed in this study. The motivation behind writing of the novel by the real-life authors will be approached in the next chapter.

<sup>28</sup> As MacCannell would argue. See Chapter I.

<sup>29</sup> Other possible factors are discussed in the next chapters.

If the word “adventure” is commonly used to refer to an exciting or unusual experience or to a bold and often risky undertaking with an uncertain outcome<sup>30</sup>, then Jaume’s conscious pursuit of danger in the slums indisputably falls in that realm. As seen, Jaume knows very well what to expect in the prostitution neighborhood of Bombay. He is aware of the danger involved in his visit, he is warned again by the taxi driver who refuses to take him there, and still, he does not change his mind. While consciously feeling danger (“Sentí el *peligro* del que me habían hablado”) but none of the fear others may feel (“Aun así, no sentí miedo”) Jaume puts himself in physical danger—why else if not for the *thrill* of it? Thrill is defined as a sudden, strong and deep emotion or excitement<sup>31</sup>, both of negative and positive nature, and it is an emotion that is mostly brought on by actions. Jaume knew very well what happens in Kamathipura, but he needed to see it with his own eyes, he needed to experience its danger first hand.

Although not intended as a story of adventure tourism, it has been our aim to show that Jaume’s encounters can be, nevertheless, reframed precisely as such in terms of Huggan’s *adventure* factors: *lawlessness* (which he condemns), *danger* (which he defies) and *otherness* (which he witnesses). Jaume’s visits to the slums clearly exhibit all three components. While otherness is experienced on a daily basis while in India, just by virtue of its vast array of cultural differences (from food and dress to such extremes as the Parsi minority’s “burial” practices<sup>32</sup>) his visits to the slums serve as glaring examples of the other two components. Jaume’s narration leaves no doubt about the slums being the

<sup>30</sup> “adventure, n.” *Oxforddictionaries.com*. June 2015. Oxford University Press.

<sup>31</sup> “thrill, n.” *Oxforddictionaries.com*. June 2015. Oxford University Press.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter I.

epitome of lawlessness: lack of education and healthcare, domestic violence, mutilation, infanticide—these are just few manifestations that he experiences. They are enough to leave the impression that many more—the most unimaginable abuses and crimes are part of the daily order of things in the slums. Although Jaume does not explicitly refer to what he witnesses in legal terms, they are nevertheless clear violations of the law by any society's standards, and that is precisely what, on the one hand, outrages him and, on the other, keeps luring him back. Although he does not position it as such, we have shown his narration of his visits to the slums to be “slum tourism”, a type of “danger tourism”. They are two examples of travel practices on the contemporary tourism scene.

We have mentioned that the factors that shape of today's tourism are globalization and “global consciousness”. The touristic behaviors analyzed so far have resulted from the interplay of the two. There is an additional key factor that produces another set of touristic practices: a world perceived to be in a “state of emergency”. The reaction to this belief takes on the form of an extreme manner of interacting with the surroundings. Coined by Huggan as “tourism of suffering”, it describes a set of touristic praxis that is governed by an accelerated interaction with the world, particularly with nature. In contrast to the travel practices of the past century, today's interaction with nature is often participatory and faster. In *The Accelerated Sublime: Landscape, Tourism, and Identity*, Claudia Bell and John Lyall explain: “Descendants of grand tourists viewing the “sublime” landscape, no longer meander but [rather] accelerate through ... space.” (xii)

One of the main ways this change from the passive viewing of nature to the kinetic experience of it has found expression is in adrenaline-filled leisure activities. Those range

from the relatively safe ones such as alpine skiing, bungee jumping, and white-water rafting, to inherently dangerous ones qualified as “extreme sports”, such as base jumping, free diving, etc. All of them have become commodified by the leisure industry, which both manufactures the desire for and the satisfaction of the interest in “more extreme, more dangerous, farther away, deeper, steeper, or faster” manners of experiencing nature (Huggan 99).

Although the protagonists of this study’s corpus do not engage in bungee jumping and similar extreme sports, the idea of an accelerated and interactive relationship with the world is nevertheless useful to us. Firstly, Jaume’s thrill-filled pursuit of danger in the slums can easily be seen in these terms: active quest for the most extreme realms of the urban landscape. Furthermore, there is another way that this new fast-paced relationship with the world relates to our protagonists and their development setting: via another modality of the “tourism of suffering”. Given that not every tourist today wishing to connect with nature has the need or the ability to experience it in this accelerated manner. In addition to “extreme sports”, today’s immensely varied leisure market provides alternative outlets for interacting with nature. They appeal to those who, instead, wish to recapture the “authentic experience of extreme travel / exploration / adventure before modern technology made potentially life-threatening activities and hazardous itineraries relatively secure” (Bell and Lyall 193). According to Bell and Lyall, this “retro-positioning” (193) of the nature-bound tourist is part of the postmodern cult of nostalgia in which an intense search for experiential authenticity is serviced by providing older, more endurance-based activities that imply a “purer, less technologically mediated

engagement” (193) with nature. These types of tourists risk getting lost in the wilderness (literally, as in Krakauer’s book *Into the Wild*) or death climbing Mount Everest (again, literally *Into Thin Air*<sup>33</sup>). What they seek is extreme circumstances: weather, heights, geographical formations which in turn produce extreme exhaustion, physical and mental strain. The sought after result is a self-imposed experience of extreme hardship that is often converted into an amateur life-philosophy, as Huggan points out. He goes on to explain that this “pathologically self-testing form of travel” (108) often generates in writing a “self-congratulatory survival tale” (115). This is what Vicky, another of our protagonists, exhibits this in her story, in *Una maestra en Katmandú*, but in the context of development rather than in natural environment. Jaume’s story demonstrates how “global consciousness” and the perception of a world in crisis during his purely leisure-motivated travel activates the need for the altruistic activities he performs thereafter. We showed it to be his *adventure*. Next, Vicky’s story will allow us to see how these notions advance in development situations.

### **The Martyrdom of Suffering**

As in Jaume’s account, Vicky’s story can be read as adventure travel motivated by the thrill of danger, and in the same terms of *otherness, lawlessness and danger*. Her narration of living and working in development in Nepal for several years provides countless examples of hazardous circumstances of various types. There are descriptions of dilapidated buildings, flimsy and unsafe housing constructions, unpaved muddy roads,

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<sup>33</sup> Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*. Anchor Books, 1996.; Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*. Anchor Books, 1997.

unlit streets and trash-filled pedestrian areas full of filthy, famished beggars of all ages, much like Jaume's India. These are among the many standard features of a "Third World" urban life, thus none of them should surprise the reader of a text about philanthropic work in that setting. This, at least, seems to be Vicky's view since she doesn't dwell much on these factors, the way Jaume does. Instead, she directs her outrage—and *concern*—to the poor state of hygiene of her students. Cockroaches and mice are a daily reality at the Pemba School's boarding unit. During her visits to the families of the local schoolchildren she reports the lack of basic amenities such as water, electricity, and plumbing. Extremely small spaces are shared by several families, together with their livestock. Her indignation at the general lack of sanitation is so strong that she organizes several school-wide cleanliness-enforcing initiatives, most of which backfire due to deeply-rooted cultural views. Shaving children's heads to combat lice turns out to be an offense to some of the several ethnic minorities represented at the school, whose beliefs include preserving children's natural hair growth, not removing body secretions for extended periods of time or not performing certain activities on specific days of the week:

Estas son las madres de los niños que han nacido en martes. Según la tradición de esta gente, el día de la semana en que se nace es un día en el que están prohibidas ciertas prácticas." (138) She continues: "Por ejemplo, lavarse el cuerpo, cortarse las uñas, cortarse el pelo, cambiarse de ropa, casarse o viajar, entre otras cosas. Habéis transgredido sus leyes y piensan que la mala fortuna ha entrado en la vida de sus hijos. (138)

What Vicky reports as outrageous is not only the hygiene catastrophe (children's heads full of lice, their eggs and scabs) but also its integration with religious and cultural beliefs. This is the new discovery that is being reported as an additional, shock-provoking layer over the already-known facts about life in the "Third World".



Anecdotes of extreme filthiness paint a picture of the hazardous conditions endured by the locals—in the view of the Spanish philanthropist working and living there, but clearly not in the view of the locals. These stories reveal a major discrepancy in the perception of hygiene between Vicky and the beneficiaries of her charitable undertakings. The greater the difference between these views, the more shocking the anecdotes as told by Vicky. One such example occurs during her first days at the Pemba Elementary School where she is given the opportunity to organize classroom instruction for several dozens of children from the lowest layers of the Nepali society, according to her rules. Her report of the first day of class is dominated by the description of the discovery that many of the children are ignorant of “normas básicas de higiene”, such as those concerning defecation: “Pensé que me iba a dar un ataque al corazón allí mismo. No podía creer lo que está viendo: al parecer, algún niño se había bajado los pantalones y había defecado en clase. Otros debieron de imitar su ejemplo, de modo que la clase estaba llena de pisadas de orines y de excrementos.” (97) It is a rather surprising start to her much-anticipated and self-fabricated educational project. The magnitude of her consternation is indicated by the detail she gives to her depiction of the incident:

El suelo, embadurnado y maloliente, les hacía patinar, y los niños resbalaban y se caían por todas partes, y se golpeaban y se desplomaban sobre las heces de sus compañeros o las suyas propias, rebozándose en la porquería. Había un olor insoportable en la clase, y yo les veía caminar haciendo equilibrios, con los brazos extendidos, mientras trataban de ponerse a salvo. Caminaban como si estuvieran en un lodazal y, cuando resbalaban, se abrían como un compás y caían sobre sus traseros, llorando y salpicándolo todo. (97)

Depicted as a kind of scatological carnivalesque fete, the anecdote is retold in a manner that draws attention to its irksome details. The reader has no choice but to imagine the visual and olfactory aspects of the scene:

Sharmila y yo corríamos de un lado para otro, atendiendo a los niños—y pringándonos de lo que no quiero contar—sin saber a qué emergencia acudir. Los apilábamos en una esquina libre de excrementos, pero se escapaban, como accionados por no sé qué resorte, y volvían a patinar en el piso ya a derrumbarse. (97)

It would have been possible for Vicky to dispense the story of little kids pooping in a simple sentence or two, the way she deals with the other examples of “Third World” inadequacies. After all, it is part of a toddler’s life on any continent even if in a lesser dimension. Yet she opts for precise description, turning it into a drawn out story that is constructed to provoke an array of feelings, ranging from disgust to uneasiness to pity. She presents the hazard of the situation, with both astonishment and amazement, in other words with a kind of *thrill*.

An additional factor that can be perceived in her account of the extremity of the situation is her accelerated mode of interaction with her surroundings. Unlike the passive viewers of “sublime” landscapes of the past of travel, Vicky rushes to take charge of her—defective, in her view—environs, in the manner of the “extreme sports” tourists in search of an active and rapid way to interact with nature. Her landscape may be different than theirs, but her approach is the same: kinetic, participatory, and—to a large extent—adrenaline-filled. This can be seen in the remainder of her story of defecating toddlers, which becomes more rousing as it enters the next phase, bringing new surprises:

Los niños apestaban de tal modo que resultaba nauseabundo acercarse a ellos. La mayoría tenía manchas de orines en la ropa, el cuerpo comidito por las moscas y restos de excrementos en los pies y las manos ... cuando los desnudamos, me percaté de la gravedad de la situación: algunos no habían conocido el agua jamás. Los pobrecitos tenían mugre acumulada desde hacía meses y años. (98)

Vicky is set on dealing away with the months and years of dirt accumulated on their skinny bodies—a statement which in the context of the detailed narration ceases to be hyperbole. Some of these children literally have not ever been washed, a fact offered in a

clear effort to garner for itself shock and pity. However, what it also reveals between the lines, is the distress of the person in the midst of this escatological disaster: “resultaba nauseabundo acercarse a ellos”, “Había un olor insoportable en la clase”, “Sharmila y yo corríamos de un lado para otro, atendiendo a los niños –y pringándonos de lo que no quiero contar—sin saber a qué emergencia acudir”. Both Vicky and the “retro-positioned”, endurance-seeking nature tourists that climb Mt. Everest desire the same sensation: a self-imposed experience of extreme hardship.

If in Vicky’s view the obstacle to the education of these children is complete lack of hygiene, it is nevertheless no obstacle for her: “O aquellos niños acababan limpios como soles o yo no me llamaba Vicky” (98). With the help of her classroom aides she undertakes the task of forcefully washing the several dozen toddlers. This allows her to pass to the last stage of the emergency relief plan for the hygiene catastrophe, the toilet. Repulsion, bewilderment, and details also abound in this part of the story:

El siguiente paso era mostrarles qué era un lavabo y qué era un retrete los niños miraban abriendo aquellos ojos profundos y rasgados: no entendían nada, no sabían por qué salía aquí de aquellos tubos ni acababan de comprender por qué debían hacer sus necesidades en un lugar concreto. El váter era, simplemente, una taza incrustada en el suelo y los niños miraban el agujero como si fuera un lugar misterioso. Algunos creían que servía para refrescarse los pies y las niñas no se atrevían a ponerse de cuclillas allí por si se caían y se las tragaba aquella sima. (98-99)

If the idea behind “tourism of suffering”, whether “extreme sports” or “retro-tourism”, is to willingly design and implement circumstances of adversity, then Vicky’s discovery and management of the hygienic catastrophes in the Pemba School is a clear example of precisely that. The lice-infested, never-washed, nauseatingly-stinky, defecating children are deemed by her unfit for the role of student in the educational project she has chosen for herself. To her, they are an atrocious disaster of which she is the focal point. She

stands in its center, having to endure it, make sense of it and put an end to it. Thus, the extremity of the situation she reports, and the high level of detail with which it is presented, serve to portray her as a casualty of a calamity she resolutely withstands. This is why she has come here; dealing with this type of hazard is what thrills her. *Lawlessness* and *otherness* as the source of suffering is what produces for her the feeling of *adventure*.

Further indications of Vicky's "tourism of suffering" are provided by several gory tales that surpass the astonishment factor of the defecation episode, but there is one instance that is particularly fitting to our proposition. It revolves around one of the dangers of daily living in the "Third World": inadequate medical services. At the center of this anecdote stands the protagonist herself, several months pregnant:

Por el camino yo notaba como un picor en el ano; era una sensación rara que me producía malestar. Cuando llegamos a casa de Maya, me metí en el cuarto de baño y me encerré. De repente tuve la imperiosa necesidad de limpiarme el orificio anal. Cómo serían mi pánico y mi estupor, cuando vi que de mi ano estaba saliendo una especie de gusano que se enroscaba en mis dedos conforme iba tirando de él. Se trataba de un parásito blando y transparente, de cuarenta centímetros de largo y un centímetro de grosor. De una sacudida lo lancé en el aire, y cayó justo frente a la puerta. Todavía continuaba moviéndose con mucha lentitud. (268-69)

As expected, Vicky's reaction to such a gruesome discovery in her own (fragile) body is one of great shock which she shares in an exhaustive manner:

Quedé sumida en una especie de trance histérico, porque no tenía ni idea de cómo reaccionar. [...] Noté como mi cuerpo se paralizaba y me sentía totalmente indefensa e impotente. Tenía tanto miedo que la lengua se me hinchó y sentía como si tuviera un corcho dentro de la boca que me impedía respirar. Me había quedado acurrucada en un rincón del cuarto de baño, jadeando, llorando, chillando, sin poderme mover. (269)

If prior to this point in her story Vicky is the witness of other peoples' health-related calamities, here she herself becomes their focal point. She passes from chronicling, denouncing and striving to remedy theirs to now being the defenseless victim. There is no doubt that Vicky's story fits comfortably into that category of "tourism of suffering"; the

endurance of extreme physical and mental strain in this case is unquestionable. The story gets worse when she brings the several-centimeters long worm (collected in a jar) to a (western) doctor who identifies it to be female of the *ascaris* parasite and explains its modus operandi to be that of depositing of hundreds of eggs inside the human body and then exiting. Since she is pregnant, she cannot be medicated. This is another layer of hazard turned into suffering that her chosen *adventure* affords her.

The detailed description of the discovery and extraction of the parasite from her anus is intended to produce several effects. Firstly, it adds to the story of the precariousness of daily life in Nepal that the book *Una maestra en Katmandú*<sup>34</sup> tells, while making it more impactful for the Spanish reader since the victim is one of their own. Secondly, out of the undoubtedly many medical problems experienced in several years of daily life in Nepal, this one is a particularly gory one to be chosen for inclusion. It is the most gruesome out of a handful included. All of them seem to be chosen for their shock factor: incorrect administration of medicines in a roadside shack that resulted in poisoning, burning-iron rods inserted into knees without anesthesia or warning as a remedy for pain, and an abortion-ritual performed by a religious healer involving poison, prayers, offerings and oblation. The protagonist is the subject of most of these calamities although not all, but they are retold with a similar level of detail as the parasite and for the same reason. In addition to the astonishment of its horrid nature, Vicky's report of her

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<sup>34</sup> Vicky's protagonism is underlined by the title which hints at the center stage she takes in her (third World) environment (which she endures).

medical predicament with the parasite includes the matter-of-fact reaction of the

Nepalese:

Los nepalíes, sin embargo, no entendían por qué me tomaba tan a pecho aquella tontería. Muchos me decían que los gusanos podían echarse también por la boca y que, a veces, la gente expulsaba unas bolitas blancas que, al abrirse, contenían cientos de lombrices diminutas.” The explanation continues: “Decían que lo mejor era echarlas, porque si las bolitas se reventaban dentro del intestino, el cuerpo entero se infestaba de aquellos parásitos, que comenzaban a movilizarse y salían al exterior por cualquier orificio del cuerpo: ojos, nariz, boca y ano. (270)

For the locals, this image, which to a Western reader is as if from a B horror films, is just an everyday reality. This discrepancy between their perception and that of Vicky and her Westerner readers, is the important factor that is being transmitted in this narration. It adds significantly to the narration’s shock factor, which is consciously constructed for the purpose of emphasizing the suffering she endures. Painting detailed description of enduring harsh circumstances suffered during and as a result of voluntary philanthropic work is another example of Huggan’s “self-congratulatory survival tale” (105) mentioned earlier. It also has the effect of presenting the protagonist as a *hero*. This notion will be explored further in the next chapter, but for now let us just point out that this heroism gives justification to the “missionary” attitude behind the development project underway, which in turn points to “volunteer tourism”. Vicky’s anecdotes serve as examples of the type of touristic behavior that all protagonists exhibit once engaged in their development projects.

We have been discussing how “tourism of suffering” applies to Vicky’s example but we have not stressed the pleasure that is generated in the act of self-organized suffering. Again, the example of Mt. Everest climbers lends itself to demonstrating the mechanics of this phenomenon. The mountain remains a very dangerous place, especially

for the vast majority of hikers who are unprepared, despite the availability of better equipment. Death and injuries abound, but as Huggan explains, it is precisely this awareness of the possibility of a fatal accident—highlighted by frozen bodies of previous climbers which sprinkle the route towards the top—is what produces “the payoff of meaning”. The anthropologist Sherry Ortner points out in her study of Himalayan mountaineering (Ortner 139) that for the amateur climbers of Mt. Everest success is measured in terms of failure not accomplishments. This increases the value of the experience. Thus, similarly to “tourism of suffering”, “volunteer tourism” is characterized by meaning produced by suffering and a sense of success measured in failures. Although the danger “volunteer tourists” experience is less overtly hazardous, the mechanism is the same: the conscious and self-imposed exposure to suffering as a result of the precariousness, risk and hazard (which are at the core of daily life in the “Third World”) produces meaning. This is the location of their pleasure. Thus the shock that Vicky’s narration is crafted to produce is needed in order to emphasize the extent of suffering—the larger the sacrifice the greater the “payoff of meaning” and thus pleasure.

### **Global Bodies**

What is striking in Vicky’s dealings with the unhygienic state of the children in the Pemba School is her direct management of them. She feels completely at liberty to do with them as she sees fit: wash them, shave their heads, mandate their dress, and reformulate the responses to their physiological needs. These undertakings fall within the realm of the “volunteer tourism”, and exhibit the “missionary” touristic attitude discussed

in the previous chapter<sup>35</sup>. While education is within the jurisdiction of her self-styled development project, forcing hygiene practices onto them is not. Nevertheless, she manipulates the bodies of these children, taking ownership of them in the fashion of the well-known figures from the colonial past: the missionary and the naturalist. The missionary's civilizing and catechizing task paved the way for the 18<sup>th</sup> century all-seeing European man, whose "imperial gaze" contemplated and possessed colonial nature, as Mary Louise Pratt (*Imperial Eyes*). Just as the missionary managed the souls and bodies of the subjects under his imposed religious rule, the naturalist gave himself the right to manage nature—to catalogue, name, and interpret the natural world. Like both of these figures, Vicky gives herself the right to manage the bodies she finds in her area of domination, the development context she has carved out for herself<sup>36</sup>.

This behavior points to another area of the contemporary tourist scene, one focused on the movement and use of bodies. A byproduct of globalization, it takes many forms, from work-related migration to modern-day slavery, but perhaps the clearest and most extreme examples is "sexual tourism". Sex tourism today is a product of the intersection of globalization, travel, and imperialism. While it is not exclusively associated with travel from "developed" to "developing" countries, it is strongly linked to global economic inequalities. Huggan explains: "symbiotic connection between globalization and the trafficking of sex and sexual identities that highlights vast disparities within the global economy—those who travel in search of sexual freedom, for

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>36</sup> We will further explore the link between missionary writings, travel and development writings such as that of Vicky's in the subsequent chapter.



instance, versus those who travel in need of sexual work” (341). All sides are part of the same globalized economy. While none of the individuals engaged in development work in this study declare to travel to their selected “Third World” countries for the purpose of engaging in paid sexual activity with the locals, there are a few ways this topic connects, quite directly, to development work portrayed in their narrations.

The first thing that comes to mind is Jaume’s visit to the prostitution neighborhood in Bombay we saw earlier. While he is not a user of “sexual tourism”, his subsequent development activity is directly related to his initial touristic visit, which redoubles his “global consciousness”, directs it specifically to sexual exploitation, and consequently motivates his transformation into a philanthropist. He decides to intervene against sexual exploitation by taking financial and operational responsibility for an orphanage for prostituted worker children. Although during his initial touristic visit to India he is a witness to many heart-wrenchingly unjust situations that bring him to the point of tears, as seen earlier, child prostitution is this area of injustice that ends up affecting him most. His later decision to move to India permanently to take charge of the lives of the children rescued from prostitution can be read as the manipulation of bodies within the framework of Huggan’s “global bodies” postulate, but in the direction opposite of that of “sexual tourism”. His “global consciousness” of the exploitation of “global bodies” is what opens the door for him to development, a field that—coincidentally—also consists of manipulation. This entitlement to rarely ask the receivers of altruism what they need is very much part of the field. It is also a characteristic of the “missionary attitude” that is at the core of “volunteer tourism”, which is one of the main criticisms this type of

tourism receives<sup>37</sup>. Vicky's anecdotes of the (mis)adventures in toddler defecation at the Pemba School serve as perfect examples of these notions, also applicable to all the protagonists in this study.

In contrast to Jaume, another of the protagonists, Ariadna, behaves in a more typical manner; the story of her time in Costa Rica, *Pura vida*, shows her a conscious user of "global bodies". While on an official development project in Costa Rica from one of the major official organizations in the field (UNDP), she engages in a sexual relationship with a local man in a village that lives off sexual tourism. Descended from colonial-times slaves and nineteenth century Jamaican immigrants brought in for the construction of the railway, the current-day (in 1987) inhabitants of Puerto Viejo are ex-employees of a foreign banana conglomerate that abandoned the village a few decades prior. Left with no jobs or electricity, the town's residents eke out their meager existence with the help of foreign visitors. Bohemian travelers are lured in by the town's only remaining resources: its paradisiac nature and the village youth. They, in turn, are ready to fulfill their every wish: from information about the best surfing spots to serving as a source of sexual pleasure. It is in this context that Ariadna meets Jonás, who becomes her obsession. What makes Jonás so attractive to this white Barcelonan is his ethnicity, which she reads in terms of eroticism ("Es el erotismo vivo, es la atracción pura, es perfecto y poderoso"), animalistic dimensions ("monstruo"<sup>38</sup>), and as a projection of her prefigured ideas about

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<sup>37</sup> We will return to this important topic in future chapters.

<sup>38</sup> The description of Jonás remits to the first colonial contacts with the inhabitants of the New World: the natives were described in terms of monstrosity and eroticism. This is a classic trope of travel literature of the Age of Discovery and Exploration, that has continued much beyond the initial contact between the old and "new" worlds. We will return to this description in Chapter V and to the notion of travel literature tropes, in Chapter III.

her imagined “Orient”<sup>39</sup>. For Ariadna Costa Rica is a place full of sensuality, sexuality, pleasure and licentiousness. Although these notions are not new to her, what makes them different with Jonás is the presence of the additional—necessary—components of her recipe for adventure: black skin and poverty<sup>40</sup>.

In fact, Ariadna’s *adventure* can be framed in terms of “poorism” as much as in terms of “sexual tourism” which satisfies her fantasies. She can make them come true due to her acquisitive power, and although she does not have to purchase sex from him literally, it gives her the power to manipulate his body to her liking. In fact, the “sexual tourism” which takes place in Jonás’s village is far removed from the forced prostitution of Jaume’s story. Nevertheless, it remains an uneven exchange, one that is driven by poverty and enabled through tourism. The (black) boys of the (paradisiacal) village serve (white) tourists by satisfying their (exoticized) sexual desires, in exchange for gifts: “Ustedes, los turistas nos invitan a unas birras, las cogemos y hacemos todas las cochinas que nos piden y alguna más que se les ocurre en el camino, y les invitamos a marihuana” (114). Although the exchange is voluntary and enjoyed by the boys of Puerto Viejo, as declared by the speaker, this does not annul its exploitive nature, which is at the core of “sexual tourism”: “Saben aquí es siempre lo mismo, bueno para los turistas, que siempre llegan fatigados, pálidos y nerviosos como si sus vidas fueran puro sufrir; pero para nosotros es un poco cansado. Solo ustedes cambian y aunque eso enriquece también nos cansa.” (114) He continues: “Cuando se van, no se acuerdan más de nosotros ...

<sup>39</sup> Refer to Chapter I for a discussion of the role the Orientalizing process plays in the selection of development locales for our protagonists.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter I for a more detailed account of how the concept of Orientalism relates to the novels in the corpus of this study.

vienen a culear y a encontrar emociones con nosotros, por negros, fumotas y calientes, pero les importa un carajo nuestra vida” (114). It is clear that the negative aspects of this exchange outweigh the few positive ones. The tourists come and go and the locals have no option but to stay. This statement captures the essence of the relationship of servitude and dependency in existence between the two sides of this type of touristic transaction. One of the sides are the managers of the “global bodies” they come to enjoy, but which in turn are located on the other side. They come to get their (sexual) adventure.

As Jaime and Vicky, Ariadna’s style of tourism is for her an *adventure*, one played out in sexual terms. The components of her recipe are the same—*otherness*, *lawlessness*, and *danger*—and they are extreme. The first of these needs no further clarification; Ariadna’s fascination with Jonás’s ethnicity turns him into the ultimate *Other* for her. To grasp the remaining two components, we must mention the extent and nature of their sexual relationship, which is the novel’s main topic. Ariadna and Jonás are not a standard monogamous couple, which the romantic love that parallels their sexual union would seem to indicate. While involved with Ariadna, Jonás has sexual relations with other men and women, with her knowledge. Ariadna’s falling in love with Jonas is preceded by a months-long relationship with her bisexual coworker, which involves threesomes with his gay boyfriend. It culminates in the contraction of HIV by one of the men, his suicide and the “accidental” death of the other—caused by alcohol and cocaine which all three of them, as well as Jonás later on, use on a regular basis. All these activities are reported by Ariadna as lawless and dangerous transgressions which *thrill*

her—a fact she overtly states. Her work in Costa Rica for the UN Development Programme provides her with the *adventure* of her lifetime.

It must be underlined that it is Ariadna’s development setting what provides her with an opportunity to engage in “sexual tourism”. Ariadna’s status as a development professional (educated and employed by the field) leads her to exploit the development setting for her pleasure. The relationship between development and tourism in her story seems to be opposite of that of Jaume’s, whose development project combats sexual exploitation. While he manipulates bodies for the purpose of the betterment of their welfare—something Vicky and Alba also do, to different extents—Ariadna does it for her personal pleasure. Nevertheless, if we look at it from the stance of various types of tourism, all protagonists behave the in a similar fashion: their development localities provide them opportunities to engage in touristic activities of their choice. It’s “volunteer tourism”, and “pro-poor tourism” for Jaume and Vicky, while for Ariadna it is “sexual tourism”. The links between development and tourism differ, but they are nonetheless extremely close. This realization has important implications which will be clarified in the chapters that follow.

### **The Thrill of Every-day Life**

Huggan has shown us how globalization and a shift in leisure patterns have altered our relationship with our surroundings, both with nature and with people, towards the more dynamic and interactive. The commodification of tourism has yielded a new direction in tourism: the pursuit of more *extreme* forms of *adventure*. We have seen this

search taking different forms for Jaume, Vicky and Ariadna: the thrill of the slums, the martyrdom of suffering (for a cause) and the rush of transgressions, in their development settings. These development-actors / tourists find the extreme to be extraordinary, but not all adventures require extreme interaction with the development surroundings. The last of our protagonists finds *adventure* in daily life as a volunteer in a different culture. The extremeness of her thrilling experience is located in the dissimilarity of her life with that of others, and it is “volunteer tourism” that makes it happen.

Alba’s story of her life in the Anantapur region and work with the blind is full of descriptions that reveal her own version of *adventure*. She is fascinated by the most mundane aspects of daily life in India: wearing a *punjabi*, the local dress; putting a *bindi* on the forehead or flowers in the hair; being able to eat equally spicy foods as the locals, etc. Participating in a simple (cliché) activity, such as henna decorating, is a source of incredible excitement: “Vuelvo a casa ... y estoy totalmente cubierta de henna, ¡manos y pies! Thusleem, que es una arista, me ha pintado con esa mezcla que prepara con hojas, leche y limón, y ha hecho unos dibujos impresionantes. [...] y aquí estoy, casi sin poderme mover para que no se me despinte todo.” (52) Alba sees *otherness*—of any type or caliber—in extremely positive terms. For her, experiencing India’s culture in contrast to her Spanish one is utterly thrilling. The pages that narrate the story of her year-long encounter with India are full of exclamation marks expressing amazement, joy, delight, and exhilaration. Anything and everything turns into an *adventure*: “Incluso pisar una boñiga de vaca me parecía fantástico, y encontraba muy divertido tener que regatear durante horas y que hubiese cucarachas paseándose por mi habitación” (52). For Alba,

living her daily life in India itself (while on a development project) *is* an exciting exploit. Nothing more extreme—such as Jaume’s visits to the houses of slum-dwellers—is needed.

The term for Alba’s touristic interest in the cultural differences during her work-stay in India is “cultural tourism” (also known as “immersion tourism” or, most recently, “experiential tourism”). It is one of the original forms of travel, in existence since the beginnings of tourism itself. With roots in the Grand Tour’s aristocratic educational and often interactive experiences, this form of tourism is based on active participation in all aspects of the culture of the host community: food, music, customs, history, celebrations, dress, etc. It is an expression of another one of the touristic attitudes discussed in the previous chapter, the “assimilationist attitude”<sup>41</sup>. In addition to descriptions of the specific work performed in the school for the blind (her “volunteer tourism”), Alba’s narration of her stay is speckled with countless anecdotes of participation in cultural and (excited) annotations of cultural differences. In addition to being a skilled teacher of blind skills, which makes her a “volunteer tourist”, Alba is also an enthusiastic “cultural tourist”.

Unquestionably, the key component in this evaluation is her blindness, which makes any mundane activity more difficult, thus making their implementation in India all the more challenging. However, she does not present it as suffering as Vicky does. Rather, she is happy to be living and working on her own, with the help of a guide dog. For this reason, any aspect of the quotidian life in rural India has the potential to turn into an exhilarating adventure, including taking public transport: “En Kadiri he cogido otro

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<sup>41</sup>See Chapter I.

*rickshaw* hasta la escuela, que se encuentra en el pueblo de al lado. He llegado orgullosa y satisfecha de mi misma. ¡He ido por todos estos lugares yo sola, con Tory!” (70). Again, it is reported with excitement produced by obtaining the level of independence Alba has in Spain, now here in rural India, as she explains. What’s exciting is precisely doing it in India, given that the activity itself is not new to her having been born completely blind in a country blessed with ONCE, one of the most advanced support networks for the blind in the Europe<sup>42</sup>. Along with *difference*, chaos is another source of excitement for this tourist:

Anantapur también es ruido... si tuviese que describirlo, diría: “¡Piii! ¡Piii! ¡Piii! ¡Piii!”. En la India se conduce con la ley del claxon, tocan la bocina y ... ¡se aparten los demás! ... algunos tienen musiquita de Navidad y otros, aquella canción de “¡La cucaracha, la cucaracha ...!” (33) She continues: “Además, todo el mundo lo grita todo, el que vende tomates, el que tiene un *rickshaw* y berrea el nombre del lugar al que va, y el que pide dinero para comer. También está el ruido de las campanillas que llevamos las mujeres en los pies, las campanas de los templos, los cascabeles de los *rickshaws* y los carros –que, además, llevan la música a tope” (33) She is enthralled with the noise: “Es algo espectacular. ¡Por fin Tory y yo hemos encontrado un sitio donde podemos hacer todo el ruido que queramos! (34)

The numerous exclamation marks clearly show the excitement produced for Alba in the daily adventure of taking public transportation. The noise pollution rather than annoy her or disorient her, seems to produce euphoria. What also forms part of this elation is the lack of laws, which permit her to experience a freedom she is used to having in Spain but in a greater dimension: here she and her guide dog can finally be as loud as they want. Her development setting (her exoticized Orient<sup>43</sup>) provides her with *adventures* her “developed” country (Occident) cannot, precisely because it’s chaotic and lawless. This is Alba’s version of Jaume’s thrill of “slum tourism”. Just as in the case of the other

<sup>42</sup>ONCE - Organización Nacional de Ciegos Espanoles, formed in 1936 is an institution of specialized social services for the blind that provides means of overcoming the obstacles posed by blindness in order to develop socially, professionally and personally. Self-reliance, and provides educational services, job normalization and universal accessibility are some of the elements that comprise the ONCE service structure. Its successful model has been followed worldwide. [www.ONCE.es](http://www.ONCE.es)

<sup>43</sup>For a discussion of how this concept applies to the works in this study’s corpus, see Chapter I.



protagonists, Alba's development setting is what allows her *adventures* in “immersion tourism” and “volunteer tourism” to take place.

### **The Transformation of Tourism**

We have seen through Alba and other protagonists the different modalities of travel practice on the contemporary tourism scene. Shaped by globalization and the rampant commodification of tourism, as well as the perception of a world in crisis, the state of today's tourism is the result of several decades of transformations. As mass tourism developed and grew exponentially since its beginnings in the 1960s it has changed greatly in its scope, form and objectives. How did we get here: from the Grand Tour travelers who toured the classic products of European civilization in luxurious accommodations in order to return to their elite milieus reaffirmed in the superiority of their nationality to individual middle-class tourists who venture to hazardous locations, in culturally different locales in order to engage in ameliorating the misery-stricken lives of others? How did “travel” evolve towards “moral tourism”?

In order to attempt to answer this question, let us consider the history of tourism by looking at the phenomenon from within its own scholarship. Dean MacCannell, known as “father of tourism research”, describes the trajectory of tourism scholarship (and thus tourist praxis and its description in writing), dividing it into three stages. Its initial stage was started by his foundational book *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1976, which focused on structural questions of tourism—documenting both positive and negative impact of the relatively new phenomenon of tourism on communities and

cultures, but stopping short of criticizing tourist behavior and motivation. According to MacCannell in his most recent publication, *The Ethics of Sight-seeing* (2011): “Most critiques focused on the role of tourism in reinforcing economic inequality, power differentials, commodification of culture, and racialization of the exotic “other”. (36)

Commenting on his own study from that period, he explains:

My own publication from his period suggests that tourists experiencing weakened social bonds and compromised nature at home are fascinated by the prospect of finding “authentic” communities, unspoiled nature, et cetera, on tour. I cautioned that tourism is structured in such a way as to block tourists in their quest for “authenticity. (36)

We will return to the notion of authenticity in tourism in later chapters.

Around 1990, what MacCannell calls the second phase shifted focus from critical studies of the tourist experience and impacts of tourism on local communities toward what it saw as its defining characteristic: fun, pleasure, and the pursuit of happiness. Pioneered by John Urry and saturated by postmodernity, the position states that “the motive for tourist travel is a simple desire to leave home and see something different” (MacCannell *Ethics* 198) because “places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures” (3). Urry says tourists only want to get away from home in search of a break from routine, while Edward Bruner contends that upscale tourists want to be entertained. MacCannell explains the shift between the two phases:

According to proponents of the second wave, by attempting to discover “deeper” meaning, the first tourism researchers (myself included) missed the point. Tourism is not about structural and political stuff. Instead, it should be understood in social-psychological terms as a subfield of entertainment, a source of personal relaxation and enjoyment. (*Ethics* 37)

There is an awareness of the artificiality of all touristic experiences by “post tourists”

(Urry) who “engage readily in the playful enjoyment of explicitly contrived attractions

rather than a serious quest for authenticity” (Jafari 545). In this phase, pleasure is seen as the objective of touristic activity.

As a reaction to the excessive focus on enjoyment, the phase that followed was an explosion of concern about the ethics of tourism, according to MacCannell, especially after the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio. It’s Agenda 21 reframed tourism in moral terms: “travel and tourism should assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature ... contribute to the conservation, protection, and restoration of the Earth’s ecosystem ... [and] recognize the support the identity, culture and interests of indigenous peoples.” (*Ethics* 38) Tourists began to be categorized within this framework as “good” vs. “bad” according to their participation in a series of new variants of tourist activities which emerged in the last twenty years: ecotourism, sustainable tourism, alternative tourism, green tourism, post-tourism, etc. Today, in the third stage of tourism research, tours are structured in terms of these concerns, and brochures and guidebooks are written from the perspective of “responsible tourism”. “Classic Journeys” to the most iconic attractions are reframed as in terms of their ability to meet these disquiets: to provide income to local people, conserve the environment, and promote understanding of other cultures. The concern for the plausibility of reification of these concerns is the basis for the current anxieties about the morality of tourism. Thus, “moral tourism” is the modality of the current landscape driving one of the world’s biggest economic areas. Moreover, its main characteristic is the pursuit of extremes—*adventure*. We have seen in this chapter how it relates to travel undertaken for development.

### **Touristic Niches**

What MacCannell refers to as “moral tourism”, Huggan labels “global consciousness”—the concurrence of ideas is clear and their practical manifestation has been the subject of this chapter. A wide array of touristic practices, which evolved from the awareness and concern for a just world, as well as from the commodification of tourism and globalization, make up the current shape of tourism. We have said that what globalization means for tourism is the creation of a “single tourist space”, paralleling the general homogenization of the world, but we need to underline now that there is also an opposite phenomenon that is taking place within the same space: a diversification of the tourist industry, in which a wide range of different and often new types of tourism emerge, largely as a reaction to it. The types of travel practice we have seen our protagonists enact form part of this occurrence: “slum tourism”, “pro-poor tourism”, “voluntourism”, “cultural tourism”, “sex tourism”, “tourism of suffering”, “poorism”. We have mentioned several other touristic practices. However, what should be emphasized are the extent of the expansion and the diversification of the tourist industry. It is divided into a tremendously vast and diverse array of interest niches. It is impossible and unnecessary to list of them all, but Marina Novelli’s *Niche Tourism: Contemporary Issues, Trends and Cases* provides a general idea. It lists tourism practices central to the tourism industry: special interest tourism (photographic, geotourism, youth, dark, genealogy, transport, research), activity based tourism (small ship cruising, sport, wildlife, volunteer, adventure), future niche tourism (space, virtual, ethical). Although only published in 2005, Novelli’s book is already dated in this dynamic industry. In this

space Wikipedia proves to be the most up to date source of the list of contemporary tourism niches.

Since nomenclature is not standardized there are many overlapping categories of tourism: what one calls green tourism, another calls ecotourism, for example. There are new categories—niches—popping up every day. Today, in 2016, a quick look under the category of “adjectival tourism”, which refers to the numerous specialty travel forms of tourism that have emerged over the years, reveals 57 categories of travel praxis, all with their own adjective. Many of them are in common use in the tourism industry and academia, while others are emerging concepts. They range from the commonly known categories (each subdivided into multiple subcategories) such as “nature tourism” (agritourism, rural, wildlife, etc.), “culinary tourism” (wine, gastronomic, etc.), “LGBTQ tourism”, “religious tourism” (halal, kosher, Christian, etc.), “low-impact tourism” (responsible, sustainable, etc.), to less common ones such as “medical and dental tourism” (fertility, plastic surgery, etc.), “historic tourism” (archeological, genealogy, militarism heritage), and, finally, to underground ones labeled as “extralegal tourism” (sex, drug, suicide, etc.). Each of these niches has its own Wikipedia page and, undoubtedly, several other web pages with practical information, travel agents, advice blogs, and many other resources.

What is the significance of such an extraordinary diversification of the tourism field today for this study? Huggan points out that these interest niches are symptoms of globalization and the commodification of all realms of life within postmodernity, with its attendant problems: the uncertainty and precariousness of everyday life, alienation from

work and meaning, boredom, crisis of masculinity, and several other factors. What these niches have in common, nevertheless, is their focus on the desire for *extremeness*, in different forms. Each one represents the search for *adventure* which today is perceived in terms of *danger, lawlessness and otherness*, and is often sought out via tourism. We have shown this type of pursuit also to be true for development individuals, whose writings reveal their actions to relate to touristic practices of contemporary tourism, *despite their overt presentation as philanthropy*. By showing they form part of the broader context of adventure tourism allows us to propose them as a new touristic niche: *Adventure Development Tourism*.

### CHAPTER III. ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL WRITING AS MEANS OF SELF-FASHIONING

In the previous chapter we proposed that development-related travel is a specific type of tourism, one focused on the pursuit of extremes. This claim considered the present state of the contemporary tourism landscape and the way it is shaped by factors of postmodernity. Although our protagonists do not think of themselves as tourists, we identified them with a new type of touristic niche which we termed *Adventure Development Tourism*. This was accomplished despite the fact that the narratives under our scrutiny were written with the explicit objective of retelling charitable undertakings rather than travel adventures. In this chapter, we will focus on three travelogues in the corpus of this study in order to examine how their authors describe themselves as protagonists in writing: how their senses of *selves* are inscribed into the stories of their pursuits in development. In other words, we will examine their efforts to craft their textual *identities*.

The first step in analyzing the way these philanthropists-travelers portray themselves as protagonists in their narratives is to discuss the concept of identity, which we will consider as a historical, relational, and performative condition. This approach will guide our analysis of the self-fashioning efforts these travelers. Identity can be defined as a person's conception and expression of their own and other's individuality or group affiliation. It is how we see ourselves, whether individually (self-identity), collectively (cultural identity) or as a nation (national identity). What underlines this concept is that

identity formation is closely linked to another person's perception. William Shakespeare famously said: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players; /"<sup>44</sup> Expanding on Shakespeare's metaphor, the sociologist Erving Goffman, in his seminal 1959 work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, proposes a dramaturgical approach on society to explain social identity. He believes that a person's identity is constructed—and re-adjusted repeatedly—on the basis of his/her interaction with other people. When individuals in a society come into contact with other people, they behave as actors on a Shakespearian stage: aware of their audience, they guide the others' impression of themselves. In social interaction, as in theatrical performance, there is a *front* region where individuals are "on stage" facing spectators, thus hiding a *back* region which is concealed from view. In dramaturgical sociology it is argued that human interaction is determined by time, place, and audience. In other words, for Goffman the *self* is a dramatic effect that emerges from the immediate scene being presented.<sup>45</sup> At the core of both the Shakespearian metaphor and Goffman's dramaturgical view of society stands the performative act which is based on language since acting is expressed via words. The close link between performance and language is useful to this study of narrative in order to approach the protagonists' act of writing as a theatrical performance which turns them into goffmanian actors and their readers, into spectators<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> William Shakespeare. *As you like it*. 2.7

<sup>45</sup> Goffman forms a theatrical metaphor in defining the method in which one human being present itself to another based on cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Performance can have disruption (actors are aware of such), but most are successful. The goal of this presentation of *self* is acceptance from the audience through carefully conducted performance. If the actor succeeds, the audience will view the actor as he or she wants to be viewed.

<sup>46</sup> This idea becomes the launching pad for the idea of the *intended reader* of the narrations under scrutiny. We will return to this idea later.



The connection between identity and language is also explored by Stephen Greenblatt in his seminal work on identity formation and the rise of subjectivity during the Renaissance. He explains that “Self-fashioning occurs always, though not exclusively, in language.” (9) In his analysis of the works of key sixteenth-century writers—More, Tyndale, Shakespeare, and Marlowe—he describes the emergence of subjective identities made possible by the fall of Theo-centrism. The pre-formulated and unquestioned sense of identity of the Middle-Ages, gave way to a new ideological schema: the humanism of the Early Renaissance permitted individuals to shape their own private ones. For the first time, a person’s sense of *self* ceased to be predetermined, and was left free to be defined. However, the process of shaping one’s subjective *self* was a complex one in the sixteenth century: the highly theatrical and pretentious Renaissance society produced highly crafted public *identities* which were vastly different from *private* ones (Goffman’s *front* and *back* of social interactions). This opposition between the public/front and private/back areas is crucial to examining all the efforts to craft textual identities, including those of the protagonists.

Furthermore, identity, or the socially-constructed *self*, is associated with another concept, that of *other*. In fact, it is impossible not to bring it up when discussing identity given the interlocked nature of the two entities—the *self* exists primarily in opposition to the *other*. Starting with Hegel’s concept of the *other* as a constituent part of self-consciousness, the two interconnected figures have seen numerous interpretations in a variety of academic disciplines, from Jean Paul Sartre’s existential theories to Edward Said’s post-colonial approaches. Said’s “Oriental” *other* stands in opposition to the

“Occidental” European powers, whose invention and subordination was informed by scientific scholarship, providing justification for the “us” and “them” dichotomy. Said’s concept of Orientalism is central this study, making itself apparent thought this study. Whatever the interpretation, what is of essence is that key to the notion of the *other* is that it is negatively qualified. As Greenblatt points out: “self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile” (9). Not only is it an antagonistic *other*, it’s also an inferior one: “threatening *Other*—heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist” (9). All our protagonists serve as perfect examples of this. Vicky’s forceful overriding of the Tibetan and Nepalese cultural norms, along with her rejection of the educational, medical and legal practices, reveals her perception of those cultural others as savage. Jaume’s savage *other* is the Indian culture, and the abject poverty which forces children into sexual slavery—he positions himself vis-a-vis this perceived monstrosity as their protector. Although expressed in opposing terms to Vicky’s, Alba’s enchanted acceptance of the Indian culture, and enraptured integration into it, is indicative of the same perception of the other as *strange*. While she rejects India’s attitude towards the blind as *heretic*, alien; Ariadna positions herself vis-à-vis a figure she eroticizes but whom she perceives as an *adulterer*, a sexual heretic of sorts: an eroticized *savage*.

As other travelers, our philanthropists-travelers form their sense of self via the antagonistic *other* they encounter on the journey. This interplay of *self* and *other* is a key axis of the present study. Later in the chapter we will consider how development adds a different dimension to this process. We had said that self-fashioning is inextricably linked to language and to the act of writing. Although our philanthropists position themselves

neither as travelers nor as writers, we will place their writings in the context of travel writing. In the previous chapters we observed how the practice of travel—the modern tourism scene—looks like. Now we will consider how it is described in writing. In other words, we will examine the field of travel writing today.

### **The Modern Travel Book**

Let us go back to the beginning and begin with a seemingly simple question: what is travel writing? In order to answer it, we must start with the concept of travel. At its most basic formulation, it is a movement through space. This journey may vary in scope, destination or characteristics, but there is one constant: it guarantees an encounter with *difference*. However, given that we share our basic humanity with all people, at the same time it is also an encounter with *similarity*. “[A]ll travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity *and* identity, difference *and* similarity” (Thompson 10), as Carl Thompson defines it in a recent study of the genre, *Travel Writing*. In other words, if travel is the encounter between *self* and the *other* that is brought about by movement in space, then travel writing can be understood as a record or a product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that was involved. Our travelers record in writing the various cultural differences they encounter during their philanthropic endeavors. It is in these negotiations with the cultural *others* they chronicled, that we will be able to understand the *selves*—the social identities—they have crafted in their texts.

Describing what happens in the cultural “contact zones” (Pratt) that occur on journey is more involved than simply producing a report of unfamiliar peoples and places. There is an additional component that is revelatory of the traveler. Written into the account of the wider world, there is an imprint of the person who moved through space to produce it, and, by extension, that of his culture. Over the years, the manner in which this encounter has taken place, and in which it was recorded, has changed. The history of travel is intimately linked to the history of literature, as previously pointed out. The two fields have always overlapped, creating grey zones and areas of ambiguity. Over time, a hybrid genre emerged known today as *travel writing*. Early journeys, both fictitious and real, have been studied as both historical records and literature. As people have moved around the world for a multitude of reasons, likewise, they have written about it driven by diverse motivations. It is important to keep this in mind as we refer to this genre in the present analysis. In order to understand travel writing today—the *modern travel book*—and, consequently, the place development-themed fictions in it, we need to take a brief look at its genealogy.

During the Age of Navigation and Exploration, and the subsequent colonial era, an increasing importance was placed on empirical evidence and inductive reasoning. Descartes famously postulated an absolute division between mind and matter—the observing subject and object—, placing emphasis on the human capacity to reason. The Enlightenment brought out new protocols for what the historian of science Steven Shapin

calls “epistemological decorum”<sup>47</sup>. These conventions called for impartiality, one based on experiential and eye-witness observation. A new sort of European traveler emerged, the scientific surveyor or “explorer”. Travel gained in importance as numerous institutions—such as the Royal Geographic Society among others—formed to sponsor explorations of distant unknown and colonized lands, for both scientific and economic reasons. Initially involving highly trained professionals, it shortly opened up to laypersons as the activity of “naturalizing” became available to a wider sector of the educated society. The Swedish natural historian Carl Linnaeus<sup>48</sup> developed a sophisticated yet easy to use taxonomic schema that allowed non-scientific travelers to participate in the project of classifying the world’s flora and fauna. This was an age in which the information gathered by the traveler was very much at a premium and a new objectivity-guided scientific mode of description was used to report it, as Thompson points out. He states that “Useful knowledge”, in other words, “natural-historical and ethnographic information relevant to contemporary scientific debates, or else with an obvious strategic or commercial application” (76-77), was gathered and recorded in the most factual, detached manner possible. Increasingly, sophisticated instruments were used to reduce the potential for the traveler’s subjectivity, and centers of knowledge—the numerous natural societies—applied Enlightenment principles in regulating and

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<sup>47</sup> “Epistemological decorum” describes what denotes reliability and plausibility in knowledge in a given era. It is the “expectation that knowledge will be evaluated according to its appropriate practical cultural and social action”. He shows “how the skill of doing the proper thing in the proper setting informed the assessment of knowledge-claims as well as the evaluation of social conduct.”- Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, xix

<sup>48</sup> Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist, is known as the father of modern taxonomy and considered one of the fathers of modern ecology. He laid the foundations for the modern scheme of binomial nomenclature.

systematizing not only “the sort of information they gathered but just as crucially, the observational methods they used to gather and record data” (74). From this emerged, in the late seventeenth century, a fairly standardized stylistic and structural template for the travelogue: “Abstract or metaphysical speculations were to be kept to a minimum, as were subjective impressions and personal thought and feelings. Instead, writers were advised to prioritize the observation of measurable, material phenomena in the external world” (76), Thompson explains. In order to reduce subjectivity and ensure factual information, on-the-spot journal keeping—recorded in a distanced, neutral manner—was prescribed. Travel writing at this time was an essentially utilitarian and functional form, which was largely unconcerned with any presentation of the authorial self in the text, or with any self-conscious crafting of the text as an aesthetic artefact (104). However, this “scientific” mode of description became problematic with the advent of Romanticism.

By late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a shift took place in writing about travel: Romanticism reframed the focus from reporting on exploration efforts and nature to emotional adventures which showcased the travelers’ sensibility and the beauty of nature. While the Enlightenment’s “scientific” mode of description proscribed the traveler’s personal feelings and impressions, considering this to be presumptuous and vain, and likely “earn[ing] the writer a rebuke for being, in eighteenth-century parlance, too ‘egotistical’” (104), the new “sentimental” mode made it its focus. Rather than presenting “useful knowledge”, the travelers focused on themselves and on aesthetics. The narratorial self was brought to the foreground, showing the personality of the traveler. The travelers of the sixteenth to eighteenth century described the discovery,

colonization and exploration of the “new” world, but by the nineteenth century there was nothing left to “discover”. All was known to the Europeans and there were increasingly more of them traveling, as technological advancements such as the railway and the steamship made the experience of traveling available to increasingly larger portions of society. The Grand Tour became popularized as leisure travel exploded. Exploration turned inward; the voyage became an excuse and an opportunity to showcase one’s selfhood. This mode of travel writing strived not simply to present information about the wider world, but also to dramatize the complex interactions that necessarily occur between *self* and *other*, the traveler and the world (Thompson). This travel was, of course, part of a larger literary and cultural movement, later labeled “Sentimentalism” and “Romanticism”. In travel writing, as in many other literary genres, a more subjective and emotive register was adopted, soon becoming the norm that continues until today. However, shifts between epistemological epochs are never as clear cut as here presented.

Throughout the nineteenth century both registers, the “scientific” and the “sentimental”, coexisted and overlapped in varying degrees, in a widely-read and highly-regarded genre known as “voyages and travels”. By the early twentieth century, a split occurred and two separate realms emerged: the various scientific academic disciplines (ethnography, geography etc.) on the one hand, and the literary “travel writing”, on the other, Thompson states.<sup>49</sup> It is this second realm that we have come to study as a subgenre of literature, and it is from this latter branch that today’s travel book evolved. In the

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<sup>49</sup> Although the split took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this division began in the nineteenth century. The various geographic societies that sponsored scientific explorations and their descriptions, increasingly reported these efforts in a style that kept the readers interested. The “voyages and travels” accounts gained in popularity and the figures of the explorers (reported in the first person) became more prominent.

process of the split, “travel writing” lost intellectual status and cultural prestige. With the scientific objective removed, it became associated only with the literary components of the “voyages and travels” genre: anecdotism, subjectivity and fiction (and lies).

Thompson explains that this loss of regard was partially regained only in the mid-to-late twentieth century, but for a long time “travel writing” was a minor genre, as can be seen in Lévi-Strauss’s famous dismissal: “I hate travel and travelers” (170).<sup>50</sup> The genre was reborn with the publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said, in 1978 and with the advent of modern travelogues like those of Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin (Thompson). Said’s groundbreaking study awakened academic interest in the travel writing genre, resulting in a boom of travel writing itself that continues until today.

Thompson stresses the importance of proper nomenclature, key to avoiding anachronisms: not including the word “modern” or “literary” when talking about the travel book is misleading. Most of the travel texts of the exploration epoch “should not really be regarded as ‘literature’ in the modern sense of this term (Thompson). They served more pragmatic ends, although this did not prevent these texts also from being read for pleasure and achieving immense popularity with the reading public. To borrow a useful distinction from Stephen Greenblatt, in these texts we see not the “imagination at play” but rather the “imagination at work” (Thompson 85), their objective firmly fixed at conveying gathered knowledge. Modern travel reports, such as those produced on the Grand Tours by such writers as Gerard de Nerval<sup>51</sup>, are very different from Christopher

<sup>50</sup> Chapter I for a discussion of this quote.

<sup>51</sup> Gerard de Nerval wrote *Voyage en Orient*, published in 1851, retells the stories resulting from his travels in Cairo and Beirut in 1842.



Columbus's letters to the Catholic Kings of Spain. Nevertheless, both have been studied as travel literature.

A quote from Paul Fussell further illustrates the predicament of the travel literature genre. The critic considers travel books in contrast to guide books which, according to him, "are not autobiographical and are not sustained by a narrative exploiting the devices of fiction. A guide book is addressed to those who plan to follow the traveler, doing what he has done, but more selectively." (Fussell 230) He defines the travel book as a "sub-species of memoir", but this definition is based on the pronounced emphasis on the narratorial self that characterizes most *modern travel books*, Thompson would point out. Thus, it does not apply to accounts of travel written in previous eras, including classic travel writings. Thompson points out:

Prior to 1900 in the English speaking world at least, contemporaries usually talked of a genre called 'voyages and travels' rather than 'travel writing' or the 'travel book', the term 'voyages and travels' embraced an enormous diversity of travel related texts, that took a variety of different forms and served many functions: ships logs, travelers journal and letters; the report of merchants or spies or diplomats; account of exploration, pilgrimage, and colonial conquest and administration; narratives of shipwreck; accounts of captivity amongst foreign peoples and much else besides. (19)

In later centuries this corpus expanded to include travel-related writings of soldiers, sailors, surveyors, merchants, scientists, diplomats, journalists, artists and many others.

As this list of occupations suggests, the types of texts they produced varied greatly, yet all of this material arguably constitutes a form of travel writing, if by travel writing we simply mean a first-person, non-fictional account of travel, Thompson stresses. However, in many other regards, they differ from contemporary travel books. The extreme popularization of travel in the late twentieth to early twenty first century, together with the explosion of cyberspace and digital photography, opened the door to amateur travel

reports, largely published online in the form of personal blogs but also selected for publication by an increasingly diversified and independent publishing field. This study's corpus is composed of reports of this new type of travel—undertaken for a new reason, that of philanthropy. However, as we have been pointing out in this chapter, it is not far from its origins.

Today, the *modern travel book*—regardless of the nature of travel described—retains the traces of its past. Structured as a “mixed account” (19), it is an amalgam of the “sentimental” and “scientific” reporting modes. Thompson explains the most common structure to be “a combination of narrative sections, in which the narrator describes the events of the journey and his or her personal travel experiences, and more descriptive sections of commentary and reflection, in which the traveler proffers an interpretation of those experiences, and essays some broader conclusions about the people and places that have been visited.” (87) Most of the stories in this study's corpus follow the structure, but there exist other formats such as fictional novels. For example, *Pura vida* is not structured as a travelogue but still displays this duality of reporting modes<sup>52</sup>. Today's travel writers have at their disposal all the literary devices and narrative conventions developed by earlier travel writers and by all the modes of travel writing. In order to align themselves with the scientific register, they may present their narrative as a lightly-edited transcription of journal-entries made “on the spot” done in the tradition of the “naïve empiricism”<sup>53</sup> typical of the Age of Exploration. Vicky and Alba “authenticate” their

<sup>52</sup> We will analyze the implications of this difference in format in the last chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Empiricism claims that knowledge can only be gained, if at all, by experience—a *posteriori*. “Naive Empiricism” refers to the early stages of this ideology which relies exclusively on empirical observations and not interpretations thereof. It later developed into “sophisticated empiricism” in which indirect

stories by inserting into perceptibly crafted accounts a few sections marked as “from my diary”. This has the goal of emphasizing to the reader that the narrative as a whole is grounded in personal experience, giving it the impression of an “eyewitness” account. Furthermore, writers may insert classically objectivist literary devices used in the earlier epochs such as tables, lists and graphs to give the impression that factual information is being conveyed rather than a subjective viewpoint (Thompson 86). The travelogues in this study incorporate a great deal of factual information on the various aspects of the cultures into which the protagonists are inserted: statistical footnotes, definitions of foreign words and concepts, facts incorporated within text, intertwined with anecdotes, etc. However, these “factualizing” strategies are not the full story of today’s *modern travel book*, as Thompson points out. The “mixed account” includes an array of “subjectivizing” methods.

Of the many strategies belonging to the subjectivity-oriented register that form part of today’s travel accounts, an important one is the telling of amusing anecdotes. Such is the case of Vicky’s misadventures with defecating children or Alba taking public transport with her seeing-dog, as seen in the previous Chapter. Rather than accuracy of representation or factuality, the goal is set at crafting an overall mood designed to hold the reader’s attention, by telling an interesting story.<sup>54</sup> “They claim, in short, the authority of fiction, and by so doing side-step the requirement that they be strictly truthful in their reporting.” (Thompson 89) All the narratives under our scrutiny have this aim. Otherwise

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measures are used as evidence for intended observation. In opposition to Empiricism, Rationalism believes in *a priori knowledge* which allows for a conclusion to be reached through logic which proves a given question via a hypothesis that is tested – *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<sup>54</sup> We will return to this idea in another context in Chapter V.

they may not have been replete with numerous attention grabbing anecdotes retold with suspense and for the comicality of it.<sup>55</sup> However, as Thompson explains, “If on the one hand the genre prioritizes aesthetic affects and pleasure it gives its readers, over the accuracy of its account of the world, on the other hand the *modern travel book* will also usually present itself as being broadly a factual representation of real experiences and real places.” (89) In this way, *modern travel books* contradict themselves: “the writers of [...] literary travelogues often claim, somewhat paradoxically, the authority both of fiction and of non-fiction.” (90)

In other words, as Thompson points out, the *modern travel book* is poised between two registers that once made up “voyages and travels”, asserting the contradictory authorities of both invention and veracity. Another way to describe this mixed genre is one used by Rob Nixon, who points out that travel writing today oscillates between “an autobiographical, emotionally tangled mode” and a “semi-ethnographic, distanced analytical mode” (15). Vicky’s account provides a good example of this fluctuation between the two modalities. While one page provides a pseudo-ethnographic description of the Newar, the oldest ethnic group of the Kathmandu Valley, complete with historical timeline, linguistic and ethnic typologies and cultural practices<sup>56</sup>, a few pages later this

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<sup>55</sup> Several of these were discussed in detail in the previous chapter, but one other example may help highlight the point of the anecdotal intentionality. If retelling of attention-grabbing funny stories were not part of the objective, Alba’s story may not have contained an anecdote unrelated to her philanthropic work, told as an aside: upon asking for assistance with bus transfer in a small village, she is helped by a girl who turns out to be blind as well. The punchline of the anecdote is that neither one of them realizes each other’s condition for a long while, thus establishing a literal account of “the blind leading the blind”.

<sup>56</sup> Subirana states: “los newar, que son la etnia más antigua del valle de Katmandú. Su historia se remonta a 2.500 años de antigüedad y su tradición ... ha sobrevivido la dominación de las dinastías Gopala, Kirat, Licchavi y Malla. [...] Su lengua se denomina Nepal Bhasa, y es una mezcla del tibetano-birmano; [...] la subcasta de los Jhapu, que son generalmente campesinos de una casta muy inferior. Para que todos lo sepan,

factual report contrasts with a description of protagonist's highly emotive reactions to such a mundane event as the decision by school authorities regarding student uniforms. Her opposition to this decision triggers several intense crying fits which the protagonist eagerly documents<sup>57</sup> while reporting on the shortcomings Nepal's education system and her efforts to counter them. This oscillation between facts and fiction, between objectivity and subjectivity, has been at the center of writing about foreign cultures since its beginnings (also manifesting itself in the delicate boundary between ethnography and travel writing).

This combination of modes is perhaps the key signature of reporting on encounters with alterity abroad throughout the genre's history. If *selves* in travel writing have in the past been constructed by means of *others*, how is this done today? How does the past of travel literature aid in this process? What tools of classic travel writing are used by contemporary travelers to describe their *selves*—and the *others*—in the *modern travel book*? Furthermore, how is this achieved in the narratives under our scrutiny, given their focus on development.

### **Travel Writing Tropes in the *Modern Travel Book***

It is in the act of writing that travelers present themselves and their interactions with the peoples and places they encounter while on journey. Rather than true reflections of reality, these are carefully-crafted constructions of both themselves and the locations

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las mujeres visten con un sari negro que tiene una franja roja alrededor, llevan la oreja repleta de aros de oro y se tatúan las piernas.” (35)

<sup>57</sup> Subirana states: “No sé cuánto tiempo estuve llorando. ¡Otra vez las malditas corbatas! Me refugié en un lugar apartado y pude llorar todo lo que quise” (106)

they visited. Travel writers make use of a wide range of narrative devices furnished by the history of travel literature. The *modern travel book* reproduces many of the tropes of colonial discourse and the rhetorical and discursive strategies for representing the *other*, and consequently, the *self*. These persist today in modern travel writings in reinvented forms. As is known, a “trope” can be thought of as a recurring motif, within any type of cultural production, that conveys a specific and poignant symbolic meaning. Examining some of the main tropes of the past of travel literature first will make it possible to identify their contemporary reincarnations in the narratives under scrutiny.

One of the rhetorical devices frequently used in colonial travel writing that persists today is that of *historical stasis*—a representational strategy used by the West that depicts the cultural *other* as inhabiting another time period. This method is based on the stadial theory of cultural development.<sup>58</sup> The assumption that human societies evolve naturally through successive stages of social, economic and technological development that inevitably culminate in Western modernity (Thompson 147). This implies that societies that have not developed in the manner of Western ones are stuck in an earlier historical phase that the West has outgrown, and as such are inferior. Of the four philanthropists-writers in this study, Vicky uses this rhetorical strategy most frequently to describe the organization of life in Nepal. The previous chapter showed her sharply criticize the living conditions in the Pemba School as belonging to the nineteenth century:

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<sup>58</sup> Enlightenment thinkers speculated that societies progressed through stages of increasing development. Hegel argued that social development was an inevitable and determined process, similar to an acorn which has no choice but to become an oak tree. In a similar fashion, it was assumed that societies start out primitive, perhaps in a Hobbesian state of nature, and naturally progress toward something resembling industrial Europe. It was believed that all societies pass through a series of four stages: hunting and gathering, pastoralism and nomadism, agricultural, and finally a stage of commerce.

“La verdad es que me pareció que revivía las novelas de Charles Dickens.” (141) When describing cultural and religious practices she frequently designates them as belonging to the Middle Ages, hence deficient and inferior in most cases. However, the strategy of historical stasis is not limited to being used as tool for pejorative valuations. It can be used to produce a positive image of the foreign culture, such as the one that can be seen in Vicky’s admiration of remote villages of the Himalayas: “me sentía agradecida a la vida por haberme brindado oportunidad de compartir con aquella gente lo que yo llamaba vestigios de otra era y otra civilización” (226). To her, this place that is frozen in time is beautiful precisely on the account of its historical stasis: “volvía de un viaje a la Edad media [...] Había traspasado la barrera del tiempo en uno de los parajes naturales más hermosos del universo” (226). This positive side of the device of *historical stasis* can be identified with the strategy of *primitivism*. This is the belief that simple lives are better than those in more modernized societies and that people living close to nature in primitive ways are good because of it. Vicky oscillates between using the Middle Ages to express acclamation and derogation of the foreign place. Whether expressed in positive or negative terms, the temporalizing act of characterizing foreign peoples in terms of living fossils or survivors of earlier epochs amounts to the same: freezing the cultural *other* in time. In both cases, the strategy of *historical stasis* allows Western travel writers to position themselves as emissaries of modernity and progress. Alba’s teaching at the first inclusive education school for the blind in India is an example of this, as is Vicky’s mission to change the methodology of the entire early education system in Nepal. Jaume’s efforts to improve the lives of Indian orphans, lepers and other marginalized

groups and Ariadna's development organization's projects in Costa Rica benefitting an impoverished racial minority are also examples of this paradigm<sup>59</sup>.

Whether inferiority or praise is assigned to the peoples of the foreign lands, this act of temporalizing demonstrates the process of "othering". Its two opposing mechanisms—the positive and the negative valuation of difference, also referred to as "weak" and "strong"<sup>60</sup>—form part of the one and the same mechanism of self-aggrandizing. It is yet another tool in a travel writer's kit, which elevates the Western travel writer to the level of an expert and a leader. In Chapter I we discussed exoticizing in the context of Orientalism as its positive manifestation, and identified numerous examples of this praxis in the narratives in this study. Whether exoticized or demonized, the inhabitant of a different culture is placed in the slot of the deficient *other*. Whether resulting from fear, ignorance, revulsion or contrariwise, from surprise or amazement, the process of "othering" legitimates the traveler's conduct with the cultural *other*. It also legitimates the culture and norms of the traveler.

### **Savage—Noble Savage**

During the Ages of Exploration and Colonialism the *self-other* binarism found its expression in the *savage—noble savage* opposition. The figure of the *savage*—and its

<sup>59</sup> This is also the "missionary attitude", in terms of Chapter I.

<sup>60</sup> Thompson points out that the much-used term "othering" in travel writing studies can be confusing as it is used with two slightly different senses: "In a weaker, more general sense, "othering" simply denotes the process by which the member of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and the members of another culture. In a stronger sense, however, it has come to refer more specifically to the processes and strategies by which one culture depicts another culture as not only different but also inferior to itself." – Thompson, *Travel*, 132-3.



counter-ego the *noble savage*—was an instrumental figure in the activity of writing about travel in that epoch. Despite its specific historical origin, it continues to play a vital role in today’s travel writing, and especially in development-themed narratives. The term “*noble savage*” dates back to the late seventeenth century. It first appeared in English in John Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada*, published in 1672<sup>61</sup>, but the concept dates back elsewhere in Europe to a century earlier, and can be traced as far back as ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>62</sup> The beginning of the Age of Exploration in the early sixteenth century saw the emergence of an idealized view of the indigenous peoples from the New World. As early as the first voyages of discovery, there emerged the idea of an unspoiled world inhabited by child-like creatures living in harmony in nature. Christopher Columbus spoke of “*paraíso terrenal*”<sup>63</sup> in his third voyage in 1498, while a few years later, Pêro Vaz de Caminha marveled at naked “innocent” natives in 1500. Such early European explorers and colonizers as Pedro Alvares Cabral, Amerigo Vespucci, Jacques Cartier<sup>64</sup> wrote about the figure of the indigene living in harmony with nature and possessing a child-like simplicity, an innate morality and a natural happiness, giving rise to the myth of the “*bon sauvage*”. It became a staple of early travel writing from fifteenth to nineteenth

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<sup>61</sup> John Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* was a theatrical play published in 1672 about the Spanish conquest of Granada in 1492 and the fall of last Islamic ruler on the Iberian Peninsula.

<sup>62</sup> In ancient Greece Homer, Pliny and Xenophon idealized the Arcadians and other primitive groups, both real and imagined. Later Roman writers such as Horace, Virgil, and Ovid gave comparable treatment to the Scythians.

<sup>63</sup> “Grandes indicios son estos del Paraíso Terrenal, porque el sitio es conforme a la opinión de estos santos e sanos teólogos” -*Relación del Tercer Viaje por don Cristóbal Colón*, Edición facsimil de la carta enviada a los reyes, según el texto manuscrito por el P. Bartolomé de las Casas, Madrid, 1962, folio 8.

<sup>64</sup> Amerigo Vespucci (1454-1512) was a Florentine navigator of the New World, for whom America is named. Jacques Cartier (1491-1557) was a French explorer and navigator made most famous by his explorations of the north of the “new world” (today: Canada), claiming it for the French. Pedro Álvares Cabral (c. 1467-1520) was a Portuguese navigator who discovered Brazil on a voyage to India.

centuries. Travel literature of that time took up the theme of voyages to distant, unspoiled, previously undiscovered lands untouched by Western modernity. The quality of life in these primitive outposts was typically depicted as superior to its Western counterpart.

The figure flourished during Romanticism, becoming a vehicle for social critique of the injustices of society. For writers such as Montaigne<sup>65</sup>, Diderot and Rousseau, the man living in a “State of Nature”<sup>66</sup> was a symbol of humanity’s innate goodness, an *other* who has not yet been corrupted by civilization. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the “noble savage”, or “bon sauvage” in French, was considered of worth because the Eurocentric imagination of the time believed him to be unspoiled by material developments and the trappings of the emerging modernity. This idea fit well with the sense of modernity’s slow abandonment of its traditional roots and the consequent loss of touch with humanity’s true moral instincts (Thompson). During that time, Western literature increasingly spotlighted the *noble savage* figure to show Europeans the moral depravity of their allegedly advanced civilization. While religious wars<sup>67</sup> caused mass slaughter and a breakdown of civility across the continent, Michel de Montaigne penned *Of Cannibals* in 1580. In the essay, he reports that the Tupinamba people of Brazil, who ceremoniously eat the corpses of their slain enemies as a matter of honor, are not nearly

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<sup>65</sup> Montaigne, Rousseau and Diderot were one of the most significant philosophers of the French Renaissance. Their attention focused not so much on Montaigne’s skepticism as on his portrayal of indigenous peoples of the New World, such as the tribe he describes in “Of Cannibals.” Inspired by Montaigne’s recognition of the noble virtues of such people, Diderot and Rousseau created the ideal of the “noble savage,” which figured significantly in their moral philosophies. In Scotland, David Hume’s work also shows signs of Montaigne’s ideas.

<sup>66</sup> “State of Nature” denotes the hypothetical conditions of what the lives of people might have been like before organized societies came into existence. The question that was pursued and theorized was: What was life like before civil society and how did government first emerge from such a starting position

<sup>67</sup> A period of civil unrest and military operations fought between Roman Catholics and Protestants known as The French Wars of Religion (1562–98).

as barbarous as Europeans who battle one another over religious differences. “One calls ‘barbarism’ whatever he is not accustomed to” (113), wrote Montaigne. He reported the cannibals as being not as simple, ignorant and barbarous as some insisted, living in harmony with nature, and enjoying a perfect religious life and governmental system. In a “state of nature” human beings are essentially good, he states. Evil impulses and destructive behaviors manifest themselves only as a result of societal stresses. By means of the above logic<sup>68</sup>, Montaigne and other travelers who described activities deplored by Western societies exempted them from condemnation.

It should be mentioned that during this period both words “savage” and “sauvage” did not have the connotations of fierceness, moral degradation or cruelty associated with it today. Instead, the English word also had the secondary meaning of the French equivalent of “wild”<sup>69</sup>, as in “wild flower”. The indigene of that time was believed by many to be a good, innocent, unspoiled creature of paradise with unrestrained freedom, as opposed to the constraints and complexities of “civilized” life. The word “barbarian” at this time retained the Greek meaning of an outsider to this modern society dominated by

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<sup>68</sup> Cannibalism has been an important concept in Latin American intellectual discussions throughout history, taking on various forms. For example, in the Brazilian modernist poetry movement, Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 “Manifesto Antropófago” uses cannibalism as a metaphor for the creation of a modern and cosmopolitan, but still authentically national Brazilian culture. Since the first European visions of the New World as monstrous and savage, cannibalism has been a fundamental trope in defining Latin-American cultural identity. From its ethnographic beginning, it found an especially fertile ground in the cultural productions of the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Cannibalism as a cultural metaphor, constitutes a way of understanding the others and the self, and the complex relationship between the two entities. In the last decades, the cannibal has been redefined in various ways in the context of the construction of postcolonial and postmodern identities. The book by Carlos Jáuregui entitled *Canibalia: Canibalismo, Calibanismo, Antropofagia Cultural Y Consumo En América Latina* is a good treatise on this topic. (Jáuregui, Carlos A. *Canibalia: Canibalismo, Calibanismo, Antropofagia Cultural Y Consumo En América Latina*. Iberoamericana, 2008)

<sup>69</sup> Dryden also wrote in 1697, “Thus the savage cherry grows ...”; and Shelley wrote in 1820 in his “Ode to Liberty”, “The vine, the corn, the olive mild / Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled”.

culture, arts and sciences. This is well illustrated in the memoir by the eighteenth century French traveler Baron de Lahontan, who lived among the Huron Indians. He describes one such indigene:

Adario ... looks with compassion on poor civilized man—no courage, no strength, incapable of providing himself with food and shelter: a degenerate, a moral cretin, a figure of fun in his blue coat, his red hose, his black hat, his white plume and his green ribands. He never really lives because he is always torturing the life out of himself to clutch at wealth and honors which, even if he wins them, will prove to be glittering illusions. ... for science and the arts are but the parents of corruption. The Savage obeys the will of Nature, his kindly mother, therefore he is happy. It is civilized folk who are the real barbarians.<sup>70</sup>

In the author's estimation, the indigenes living in a simple way were immeasurably more enlightened than the Europeans, who inhabited a purportedly more "civilized" society<sup>71</sup>.

The description of Adario as an emblem of the whole Huron Indian community illustrates another frequently-used strategy, that of the *synecdoche*—a rhetorical trope in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of it, or vice versa. Although only a small set of people may be met on a journey the traits they exhibit are assigned to all of their countrymen. Thus, generalization, as the part that stands for the whole, becomes a frequent strategy in travel writing given that it lends itself to stereotyping the *other* into a category defined by the Western traveler. All the narratives in this study's corpus make use of this rhetorical convention.

This idea of an innately good human nature stood in opposition to another European perspective. In his 1651 *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes presented a negative view

<sup>70</sup> Baron Lahontan published *Les Dialogues curieux entre l'auteur et un sauvage de bon sens qui a voyagé* in 1702. It is structured as a dialogue between himself and "savage" he calls Adario. He was a fictitious figure based on the author's time spent with the Huron Indians.

<sup>71</sup> There seems to be some contradiction of the meaning of "barbarian" in this assertion, as it seems to hint towards the modern meaning of the word – as vicious and cruel.

of man living in a “State of Nature”, a view which Rousseau later opposed<sup>72</sup>. Hobbes saw life in an ungoverned natural environment as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”<sup>73</sup> and responsible for bringing out depravity in man. The “state of nature” pits everyone against another in a state of constant competition, fear and defense, creating a condition of “a war of every one against every one”.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Hobbes argued a strong central authority in the form of an absolute monarchy to which people accede voluntarily via a social contract. The establishment of the civil society would require giving up some rights for the sake of protection against falling back into the brute state of nature. The idea of man as a brute animal in need of political protection served as the basis for the call for a civilizing mission in the colonies. The idea was widely accepted. Along with Hobbes’s opposition to *primitivism*<sup>75</sup> Charles Dickens, for instance, spoke in similar

<sup>72</sup> The difference of ideas between the two philosophers was not as great as it is commonly believed. Both of the philosophers propose an organization of the state based on a “social contract” between a form of civilized government and men who chose to adhere to its rules. Both advocate for a civilized society, differing in the type of government they deem the most efficacious / best. While Hobbes advocates for an absolute monarchy as the best type of government, Rousseau proposes a direct democracy decided in an assembly. This difference stems from each thinker’s perception of human nature. Rousseau criticized Hobbes for asserting that since man in the “state of nature... has no idea of goodness he must be naturally wicked; that he is vicious because he does not know virtue”. On the contrary, Rousseau holds that “uncorrupted morals” prevail in the “state of nature” given that goodness is not a social construct, rather an innate outgrowth from man’s instinctive disinclination to witness suffering which engenders empathy. He places the “primitive” man within the third and optimal state of human development, positioned in between two extremes: that of near-animals and that of the decadence of civilized life: “Nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state, when placed by nature at the equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man” (*Discourse on the origin of inequality* part two, the basic political writings, Hackett, p. 64.) However, Rousseau never suggests that humans in the “state of nature” act morally, seeing the ability to submit to justice and reason and abandoning instinct to be a function and a necessity of living in a civil state. For Rousseau, man can be ennobled only through participation of civil society.

<sup>73</sup> Hobbes. *Leviathan*. "Chapter XIII - Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery"

<sup>74</sup> Hobbes. *Leviathan*. "Chapter XIV - Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts"

<sup>75</sup> From the beginning of classical thought there had been two contrasting opinions about the natural state of man: a favorable and an unfavorable view. “Hard” primitivism perceived primitive existence as subhuman, animalistic while “soft” primitivism of the Romantic era which saw nature as pure and plenty. Since Antiquity, the idea that man should simplify his life has been debate that has often reappeared, taking on various forms. From the Myth of the Golden Age it transitioned into Pastoral poetry, finally resurfacing

terms about the “Noble Savage”: “I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilized off the face of the earth.”<sup>76</sup> The passage of time signaled a change in attitude towards this figure: in the nineteenth century belief in progress overtook Romanticism’s idealized nature and its central figure, giving way to scientific development. With it, the simpler ways of life of the “natural man” began to appear inferior and doomed by progress to an unstoppable extinction. Within this context, the figure of the “noble savage” lost its utility as a tool of criticism of European decadence and acquired a new function, highlighting Europe’s accomplishments and the expansion of the European Imperial powers (Thompson). The rise of scientific determinism contributed to the decrease in the perceived exoticism of the ethnically dissimilar “noble savage”, whose physical differences became formulated into the “science” of “race”<sup>77</sup>.

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during the Age of Exploration. Having encountered other unknown peoples, Europeans began asking themselves about human nature and the value of civilization. During the Enlightenment, arguments about the supposed superiority of indigenous peoples were chiefly used as rhetorical devices to criticize aspects of European society. The idea that simple, “primitive”, life is more desirable than more complex, “civilized” life took hold in many disciplines, especially in the arts. The artistic movement of Primitivism, which borrows visual forms from non-Western or prehistoric peoples, has been important to the development of modern art. Paul Gauguin, Henri Rousseau and Paul Klee are a few examples of this. Hobbes was a “hard” primitivist. — Paul Hazard. *The European Mind*. (1680-1715) (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books [1937], 1969);

<sup>76</sup> Charles Dickens 1853 article on "The Noble Savage" in the journal *Household Words* (Volume VII, No 168, 11/6/1853) says: “My position is, that if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense.” “My position is, that if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense.”

<sup>77</sup> Racial science originated in the Enlightenment’s quest to catalogue and classify every aspect of the natural world. Initially, scientists sought to chart the physical differences between the various branches of mankind, but very quickly, it began to assume that anatomical differences had as their corollary different intellectual and moral capabilities. These ideas were expressed in the following works: Robert Knox *The races of man* (1850), Comte de Gobineau *Essay on the Inequality of the human races*, 1854-55) and J. R. Gliddon and J. Nott’s *Types of Mankind* (1854). They classified different human races on the basis of what were supposed to be essential characteristics, inherent in every racial ‘type’. This supposed science of race is now regarded as utterly spurious but was widely accepted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It is important to point out the racialized nature of the idea of the *noble savage*: the otherness of the naked child-like native includes his ethnicity. The indigene is admired for living in the “state of nature”, but at the core of this admiration is envy for his perceived “purity” and freedom. The *self—other* binarism stipulates an opposition; the indigene’s innocence implies the European’s moral depravation. Conversely, the European’s whiteness is in direct opposition to the *other’s* darkness which is perceived intermittently as exotic and inferior. The act of “weak” *othering* disguises this notion of cultural and racial superiority as idealization and exotization but it is nevertheless a vital part of defining the *other*. The racial underpinnings of this trope are central to colonialism, as Matthew Hughey asserts in *White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption*:

With growing colonial contact and an increasingly media-saturated world, the notion of a *white* messianic penitance of a naturally pure and unspoiled culture of noble savage’s slowly trickled in the popular imagination. Soon the characters of the noble savage and the *white* colonizer became staples of popular culture and an all-too-seductive device by which *racial* difference and interactions were interpreted. (9)<sup>78</sup>

The racial nature of the *savage—noble savage* dichotomy has important implications for this trope’s manifestation today, as will be seen.

### **Explorer, Survivor, Missionary**

In order to contextualize the narratives on development, we have considered the mechanism of the *savage—noble savage binarism*, as an important of travel writing in the Age of Exploration and Colonization. There were other tropes that complemented and

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<sup>78</sup> My emphasis.

interacted with this duality. Three figures in particular are of utmost pertinence to our discussion of the accounts of philanthropic travelers today: the *explorer*, the *survivor* and the *missionary*.

The nineteenth century was the height of the Age of Exploration and Colonization and the leading figure that stood at its center was the *explorer*. Emblematic examples include Charles Darwin, David Livingstone, Richard Burton and Henry Morton Stanley<sup>79</sup>, among others<sup>80</sup>. Their reports provided European and American intellectual societies with highly useful geographical, natural-historical and ethnographic information about practically every region of the globe. They also “gripped the popular imagination” (Thompson 53). *Voyage of the Beagle*, *Missionary Travels* and the accounts of the many polar expeditions became the staple of what came to be known as “exploration narrative”, one of the most important forms of travel writing in this era of high imperialism. Explorers such as these were regarded as exemplary figures, ideal embodiments of imperial masculinity who symbolized the highest ideals of science and Christian civilization. They were the bearers of the three Cs of colonialism: Christianity, Civilization and Commerce<sup>81</sup>. These “seeing men”, acting as “monarchs-of-all-I-survey”,

<sup>79</sup> Richard Francis Burton was a British consul and explorer of Asia and Africa, as well as a translator of numerous European, Asian and African languages. Henry Morton Stanley was a British journalist made famous by his explorations of Central Africa during one of these he found the disappeared David Livingstone.

<sup>80</sup> There were also Spanish *explorers*, *missionaries* and *survivors* in this time period. Lily Litvak’s *El ajedrez de las estrellas. Crónicas de viajeros españoles el siglo XIX por países exóticos (1800-1913)* studies nineteenth century travelers and their descriptions of exotic lands. They exhibit the same tropes of exoticism, eroticism, and monstrosity and savagery of the natives. Litvak’s study shows these travelers motivated by the same search for adventures “la atracción de lo diferente y la confrontación de lo inédito, hizo de cada milla marina recorrida una deslumbrante experiencia, colmada de fantasía y magia.” (3)

<sup>81</sup> The Three C’s of Colonialism were the official reasons given by the colonizing powers in order to justify to themselves and the world their hegemony. In practice the last of the trio of Christianization, Civilization and Commerce was the real reason behind their actions. The legacy of the economic exploitation of the



observed nature with their “imperial eyes [that] passively look out and possess”, as Mary Louise Pratt observes. Following the decorum of their epoch, they reported “useful knowledge”, applying the objectivist mode of narration that strived to deemphasize their subjective *selves*. However, with time their travel experiences were increasingly presented in a stirring style that drew on the literary techniques that developed in another flourishing nineteenth century genre, that of the imperial adventure stories associated with such writers as Frederick Marryat, Rudyard Kipling and Rider Haggard, and with *Boys’ Own* magazine, as Pratt points out (Thompson 52). These fictional tales of adventure often drew on contemporary accounts of actual exploration for their settings and plots. For example, as far back as 1719 Daniel Defoe structured his *Robinson Crusoe* as a fictional version of the spiritual-autobiographical shipwreck narratives, while Johnathan Swift parodied the voyage narratives produced by William Dampier and similar figures in his 1726 *Gulliver’s Travels*. As Thompson explains:

Thus the two overlapping genres came to function as an ‘energizing myth of English imperialism’, in Martin Green’s phrase (1980: 3)—that is to say they worked to legitimate the imperial project to domestic audiences, whilst simultaneously inspiring readers with fantasies of the heroic exploits they might themselves perform in distant regions of the world. (53)

This figure is important to our study, as will be seen.

In addition to exploration narrative, the Age of Exploration and Colonialism produced a great deal of “survival literature”, or first-person accounts of shipwrecks, castaways, mutinies, abandonment, captivity and enslavement. This immensely popular type of narrative started in the fifteenth century at the very beginning of the Age of

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colonies casts a long shadow—much of the problems plaguing the world today—economic, political, environmental and social—have their roots in this dark period in world relations. Its relation to international development will be discussed in the next chapter.

Exploration and continued well into the eighteenth century. With shifts in time, historical circumstances and epistemological decorum, the focus of these stories changed from reporting adventures and suffering, to the complexities of the sentimental affairs of everyday life in the colonies, thus becoming known as “sentimental literature” (Pratt). In both cases, the story was told from the perspective of the one who survived life in the savage land and came home to tell the story. Both genres were immensely popular, benefitting from the growth of mass print culture, Pratt points out:

Survivors returning from shipwrecks or captivities could finance their fresh start by writing up their stories for sale in inexpensive pamphlets or collections. In 1759, for example, the *Monthly Review* announced the availability of a fourth edition “with considerable improvement” of *French and Indian Cruelty: Exemplified in the Life, and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson*, in which the reader is promised accounts of Williamson’s kidnapping as a child, and his life as a slave, planter, Indian captive, and volunteer soldier, as well as of “Scalping, Burning, and other Barbarities, all at one shilling. (84)

Thus, next to the figure of the *explorer* there stood that of the *survivor*.

The popularity of both branches of the genre is linked to the new historical context of early European colonialism and the slave trade. This literature offered a place for showcasing new types of situations engendered by the new reality, Pratt shows: Europeans enslaved by non-Europeans, Europeans assimilating to non-European societies, and Europeans confounding new transracial social orders. Pratt explains that literature furnished a “safe” context for staging these “alternate, relativizing, and taboo configurations of intercultural contact” that were taking place. For this reason, the context of survival literature was ‘safe’ for transgressive plots, given that the very existence of a text presupposed the imperially correct outcome: the survivor survived, and sought reintegration into the home society. The tale was always told from the viewpoint of the European who returned” (84). By late eighteenth century, the different themes that

comprised this type of literature were familiar to mainstream readership, and included the “sex and slavery” theme. These allegorical narratives “invoke[d] conjugal love as an alternative to enslavement and colonial domination, or as newly legitimated versions of them” (84). This type of *survival* story, reconfigured into a development context today, is told in the novel *Pura vida*.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to the sentimental and shipwreck survival topos there was yet another variant, one that was a lot less sensationalist: missionary writing. Missionaries were some of the first outsiders to experience new cultures, together with explorers, despite the different focus of their travels. Digging deeper into Western history, missionary activity spans at least the two millennia of Christianity’s existence, but with the Age of Exploration, their activities and writings surged. Rather than focusing on horrific suffering, missionary writing presented the traveler’s ordeal as the route by which an errant individual rediscovered God. As Thompson elucidates, “Another sort of religious traveler was also becoming more common by the end of the period. The evangelical revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to the establishment of a number of missionary societies, and accounts of missions to “heathen” tribes soon became another popular strand of the voyages and travels genre.” (50) Initially published by missionary societies, by the nineteenth century missionary journals reached apotheosis as popular publications as “an unusual amalgam of autobiography, ethnographic study, religious exhortation, and general moralizing” (Speake 797). These narratives frequently spoke in defense of the natives and denounced colonial exploitation, such as Bartolome’s

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<sup>82</sup> It was discussed in Chapter II in terms of “sexual tourism”.

de las Casas *Relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552). While missionary writings readily reproduced familiar stereotypes of the debased and vicious natives, there was an attitudinal difference with the colonial ideology: the belief that the degeneracy of indigenous people was recoverable and could be “ameliorated by the firm and saintly hand of the missionary” (Speake 787). This idea becomes important in the context of philanthropic travel, as will be shown.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, the figures of the *explorer* and the *survivor* are complemented by that of the *missionary* in the Age of Exploration and Colonialism. Although most missionary travel writing is not well known given that most remains unpublished in missionary archives, some missionaries became famous through their tales of adventurous travel in unexplored parts of the world. One such blend of the *explorer* and *missionary* figures was David Livingstone. His account of his journeys across Southern Africa over a period of 16 years, titled *Missionary Travels* and published in 1857, was an instant publishing sensation, with immediate reprints and unprecedented sales, according to *Literature of Travel and Exploration. An Encyclopedia*. This was owed “both to his extraordinary sense of vocation as missionary and traveler, and his abiding sense of moral purpose” (787) which made him an irresistible subject for biographers during his own lifetime, after his death, and right up to our own times: “He was and remains one of the archetypal ‘heroic explorers’ whose feats of physical endurance seem to transcend the normal limits of human frailty.” (787), according to the encyclopedia. Consequently, he has often been

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<sup>83</sup> There is an obvious connection between the missionary practices of Colonialism and the contemporary secular incarnation of this attitude found in modern day developmentalism. We will return to this idea in the next chapter.

remembered as a man of action: “an indomitable explorer, traversing the landscapes of Africa.” However, it wasn’t just Livingstone’s reputation as a heroic explorer that immortalized him as a hero of his age. It was also his status as the standard bearer for a renewed crusade against African slavery; *Missionary Travels* “was effectively a manifesto for action on an imperial scale.” (787) His actions spoke much louder than words—both as missionary and explorer—; and it is precisely this amalgam what makes him an important predecessor for our protagonists.<sup>84</sup>

Having examined some of the main tropes of travel writing’s past, let us take a look at how they are reused and reconfigured in today in our specific subgenre of travel writing. How do the authors of our development-themed travelogues use the tropes and rhetorical devices available to them to construct *selves* and *others* in writing? What social *identities* do they present in their texts, given their philanthropic objective and in the context of globalization and commodification of daily? We believe that the three tropes described above play a fundamental role in the construction of the textual identities of the protagonists in our study. We will show how the *explorer*, the *survivor* and the *missionary* are reformulated into a new figure that stands prominently on the contemporary scene of cultural production: the *white savior*.

### **The White Savior**

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<sup>84</sup> There were many other explorers, many of them Spaniards in Latin America and other distant parts of the world, as Litvak’s *El Ajedrez de las estrellas* shows. Referencing Spanish explorations of the New World would seem relevant to this study focused on Spanish travelers of today. However, Livingstone was chosen because of his embodiment of the unique blend of two tropes that are relevant to this study: missionary and explorer.

In order to understand the *white savior* figure, we need to go back to the *savage—noble savage* dichotomy on which it is based. Although this nomenclature is no longer used, this colonial binarism is as productive and active in contemporary travel writing as ever. The two-faced structure allows for oscillation between *savage* and *noble savage* figures, as needed by the Western travel writer. Our narratives provide ample evidence. Vicky frequently portrays the Nepalese as “savage” by referring to them as barbarous, base and ignorant. She insults her Tibetan husband in a similar fashion but in those explicit terms: “Tú no eres más que un salvaje.” (99) This word that is historically-charged with meaning is not an arbitrary choice. Vicky the traveler-writer, knows how to make use of the *savage—noble savage* binarism today in her writing, switching between the two figures at her convenience. While deferential towards some aspects of Nepalese culture and society in many instances, she taps into the feelings of cultural and racial superiority on other occasions. Here, for instance, she declares her culture not to be superior: “prefiero mantener los ojos muy abiertos y no juzgar, ya que estoy en otro país, en otra cultura, en otra dimensión” (115). Vicky’s example illustrates the active presence of this duality today in writing about travel, as well as in society at large. All our protagonists manifest some version of this racialized dichotomy, but we will focus in detail on one of them to illustrate how the *white savior* trope works in the context of development travel and writing.

In the previous chapters we saw Jaume lament the injustices of quotidian life in India’s slums. We have seen him teary-eyed when faced with specific examples of such existence: upon meeting Noor, the amputee beggar girl, or Kavita, the month-old baby

girl drowned by her father on account of her gender. From the moment he gains awareness—“global consciousness”, as stated in Chapter II—of the reality of India’s poor, he feels unable to ignore it: “Estaba psicomatizando mi rechazo a una situación que me parecía inaudita en pleno siglo xxi y de la que, sin saber muy bien por qué, en parte me sentía responsable.” (62) With each new encounter he feels more and more personally responsible for the effects of this country’s economic, socio-political and cultural practices. Over time he formulates a sense of duty; although this is a national problem, he feels it is his responsibility to find a solution for it. In Chapter I we identified this touristic behavior as the “missionary attitude”, while in Chapter II we examined his observations and reactions to slum life in terms of specific types of present-day touristic practices, such as “poorism”, “slum tourism” and “volunteer tourism”. Yet when we shift focus from analyzing touristic praxis to that of writing about it—in other words, when we look not at what Jaume does but at how he describes it—another concept comes to mind. When considered within the framework of cultural production, the protagonist of *Sonrisas de Bombay* fits perfectly into the contemporary cultural trope of *white savior*.

The *white savior* can be described as a messianic character that saves a lower class, non-white character from a sad fate. Although present in contemporary literature, this trope is particularly productive in the cinematic field given its commercialized orientation in Hollywood productions. Like fictional narratives, films are driven by tropes which with time turn in to genres. Hernan Vera and Andrew Gordon explain in *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* that the *white savior genre* in cinema is recognizable through the presence of a white person that is positioned as “the great leader

who saves blacks from slavery or oppression, rescues people of color from poverty and disease, or leads Indians in battle for their dignity and survival.” (8) Cinematic examples include such mega-hits as *Dances with Wolves (1990)*, *Dangerous Minds (1996)*, *The Last Samurai (2009)*, *The Blind Side (2009)* and many more (8). At the center of this type of film stands a white godlike protagonist dedicated to helping people of color who cannot or will not help themselves. He/she teaches nonwhites right from wrong, framed by the movie as the only character able to recognize between these moral distinctions. The parallels with the tropes under discussion are clear: the *noble—savage*, the *missionary* and colonialism’s *civilizing mission*.

As with the protagonists of the films of this genre, Jaume portrays himself textually in these terms. Just like them, by assigning himself the role of saving a segment of India from itself, he indirectly condemns its society for not acting in similar, morally correct terms. Upon meeting a group of children rescued from prostitution at a small orphanage in danger of closure, he declares: “Todos ellos eran víctimas de una sociedad que los había condenado a la cárcel de la pobreza y la tortura de la injusticia, ángeles de un cielo olvidado a los que ahora tenía el inmenso honor de conocer.” (83) He blames the society for “victimizing” its “angels” (*noble savages*) by abandoning them to a life of “torture” in poverty (the *savage* figure). Despite his otherwise acquiescent attitude towards Indian culture, Jaume also utters a number of direct condemnations (“*strong*” *othering*), such as this one: “Eran los intocables, recogiendo basuras, pidiendo caridad, suplicando clemencia al reino de la *ignorancia* y el *desprecio* y a las normas impuestas por la ley absurda del más rico y el *consumismo* más descarado.” (49) He points a finger



at the factors he considers are to be blamed for the heart-wrenching injustice of extreme poverty. Jaume speaks in terms of hate toward the culture which, in his view, enables this situation to flourish: “El odio es malo. ... No obstante, en ese momento sentí un odio profundo. Odio hacia el padre que había asesinado a su propia hija, Kavita, acribillando con ello el futuro de aquella chica enlutada y el cadáver que estaba en mis brazos.” The hate of this otherwise gente man feels is monumental: “Odio hacia aquella situación y mi absoluta impotencia para impedir tales hechos. Odio hacia aquellas personas que me observaban y que posiblemente presenciaron la muerte de la pequeña como si se tratara de algo normal.” (70) Jaume blames the Indian cast system and culture for the misery of those he meets there (the rhetorical method of the *synecdoche*), a system that generates conditions belonging to the past (the *temporalizing trope*): “!Era como estar de repente en la Edad Media!” (37) What is beginning to emerge is a view of India as dysfunctional, inferior and immoral, in other words *savage*.

It may seem at first glance that to identify Jaume’s impetus to do good for others as an expression of racial supremacy is misguided. However, a feeling of superiority is precisely what lies underneath the figure of the *white savior*<sup>85</sup>. Although the conflict in Jaume’s story does not develop explicitly racial terms, as is the case with numerous

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<sup>85</sup> It may seem that applying the term “white savior” to a Spaniard carries a certain degree of contradiction, given the particular historical baggage attached to the word “white” in the Anglophone, and especially North American, context. However, it is used in this study as a trope, thus representative of a literary structure. Nevertheless, it is a concept that is linked to colonialism, and as such, laden with racial undertones, as we have pointed out. However, what this questioning does bring to mind is Spain’s turbulent history as a colonial power, Europe’s poor region in Franco’s isolation years and subsequent rise to today’s membership in Europe’s economic and political elite (EU). In this process, the country has oscillated between developed and developing country, as indicated in the introduction. The implications of which will be explored in the next chapter.

Hollywood films, the narrator-protagonist can be clearly identified as an incarnation of the *white savior*. Distraught and astonished by the misery the Indian society and culture engenders, Jaume decides it is within his power to remedy it (the strategy of *self-aggrandizing*). His particular setting may seem different than those portrayed in the typical movies of this genre, but the mechanism is the same. The self-ascribed role of the “savior” requires for the “other” to be “dysfunctional”, both in Jamie’s case and in Hollywood films. In other words, the emergence of “the knightly savior of dysfunctional ‘others’” relies on the myth of an inherent Western supremacy which considers its own cultural practices to be normative. His—white—culture is the locus of “good values” and “strong work ethic” because his is—supposedly—the norm to which the non-Western “others” should aspire. As Matthew Hughey explains in *White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption*, whiteness is associated with either normativity or idealism and is linked to sets of behaviors, achievements, and statuses to which all who desire social and economic mobility should aspire (3). It is only from this stance that Jaume—as the *white savior*—can begin to consider that it should be his life’s duty to save the “others” from themselves.

After conducting a survey of Bombay’s poor, a praxis which we identified as “poorism” and “slum tourism” in the previous chapter, this (white) savior chose the greatest (non-white) victims of the (cruel) Indian culture which (in his morally superior view) are responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the economic and social deficiency. He had seen several other consequences of extreme poverty. We saw him express indignation for all of them, but it was this particular group of orphans that turned

this tourist into a self-proclaimed savior with the job of bringing them out of their misery. Why this particular group? Most likely it is because he considers them the most vulnerable and thus worthiest of his rescue: the greater the victimization, the greater the magnificence of the one who brings them out of that state. Going back to the cinematic genre of the *white savior*, Hughey explains the mechanism in terms of redemption: “The trope is so wide-spread that varied intercultural and interracial relations are often guided by a logic that racializes and separates people into those who are redeemers (whites) and those who are redeemed or in need of redemption (nonwhites).” (5) These particular children are deemed by Jaume the most “in need of redemption” (the noblest of the *noble savages*), the worthiest of his sacrifice and of his act of redeeming. If this sounds a bit reminiscent of messianism, there is a good reason for it.

As Hughey observes, this figure often has messianic overtones: “Such imposing patronage enables an interpretation of nonwhite characters and culture as essentially broken, marginalized, and pathological, while whites can emerge as messianic characters that easily fix the nonwhite pariah with their superior moral and mental abilities.” (2) This is also true for Jaume whose decision to take on the role of the *savior* is motivated partly by a feeling of indignation in the face of a specific type of victimization of children and partly by an epiphany. While emotionally distressed by the situation of extreme poverty he observes, his transformation into a *savior* is not immediate. It is not until he has an illuminating experience during the last day of his visit on the way to the orphanage that his messianism is activated: “Por un instante, mis ojos se nublaron y no vieron nada. Mi mente quedo en blanco, dormida. Era como si una luz enorme viniera de fuera hacia mí.

O tal vez de mí hacia fuera. Fue como si, por un momento, alguien estuviera poniéndole a esa escena una banda sonora con la música más bella jamás escuchada.” (Sanllorente 81)

This experience is explained by Jaume precisely in mystical terms: “yo recuerdo muy vivamente aquella sensación, que *unos calificarían como experiencia mística* y otros de alucinación a causa del cansancio, pero que coincidió exactamente con nuestra entrada en Vasai.” (85), the location of the orphanage. What was supposed to be a last-minute attempt to transform his sense of injustice into tangible help by writing an article to draw attention to the orphanage’s problem, turns out to be an epiphany. What follows is a meeting with the victims of extreme poverty that takes on a different meaning and which ends up being the trigger for this life change. Upon returning to Spain he knows immediately that it is his job to save these children: “tenía que ... salvarlos a todos de las llamas de la pobreza y la atrocidad. Si nadie me ayudaba a salvar a estos niños, el siguiente paso estaba claro: los salvaría yo.” (85) He decides to become their savior, fully aware that this would entail a complete life change and life-long commitment: “Ayudaría yo directamente al orfanato, buscaría las fuentes de ingresos, las formas de trabajo y gestión y todo lo que fuese necesario para que no volvieran a las estaciones y prostíbulos de Bombay. Establecería con ellos un compromiso de por vida y sin posibilidad de dar marcha atrás.” (95) He immediately puts this decision into action: sells everything, quits his jobs, moves in with parents to save money, sets up an NGO and starts looking for funding among friends, family and work contacts. Once this decision is made, he does not waver in the face of the doubt and rejection of others. His transformation into the “white

savior” of the “dysfunctional” “nonwhite pariah” is not a whimsical adventure. It is his destiny.

As he prepares to move to India for good and attempts to convince his family and friends it is not a waste of his career and life, he struggles to understand his transformation: “¿Por qué esos niños? ¿Por qué sucede ahora con ellos cuando siempre ha habido también pobres y necesitados en mi propia ciudad? ¿Por qué no había tenido antes este instinto de ayudar que ahora era imparable? –aquí, pensé, entra el juego el destino” (95). He draws a parallel between his situation and that of trans-national couples who feel a pull towards a specific person. He explains this inexplicable force as “fuerzas que unos llaman dios, otro destino y otro azar, las cuales, por mucho que nos esforcemos, no conoceremos jamás.” (95) Thus, it is not that he is a self-appointed rescuer of some poor kids from a retrograde culture, rather he is a messianic savior ordained to change the destiny of these unfortunate souls. He mentions the word “destino” several times throughout his story. He interprets in terms of destiny his trip to India, his career choice as journalist, and his first interviewee, Vicente Ferrer, the founder of the most famous Spanish NGO<sup>86</sup>. It is also from this messianic self-importance that he dismisses the rejection of his project by fellow Spanish colleagues and friends: “ninguno de aquellos comentarios me frenaba. Tal vez echaba por la borda un futuro brillante como periodista. O tal vez no. Lo que sabía con certeza es que dibujaba con el cielo del mundo cuarenta

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<sup>86</sup> Started by a (now former) Jesuit missionary in the Anantapur province of India in the 1970s, the organization comprises a vast network of large-scale Rural Development Project program for the poor in the country’s most underdeveloped countryside area. Over the years the organization has developed multiple projects ranging from microfinance, education and health services and many more, as is attested by its website: <http://www.fundacionvicenteferrer.org/es/> .

futuros que brillarían como cometas. Y la luz de cuarenta alumbra más que la luz de un solo.” (10) His messianic mission is bigger than his own private life and that is what makes sacrificing his career, friends and family worthwhile. Furthermore, his new role as a savior is not limited to a handful of children in some dysfunctional country—it forms part of a bigger and greater project of saving humanity (the strategy of *self-aggrandizing*): “me di cuenta del grado de responsabilidad que tenemos todos y cada uno de nosotros sobre el futuro de la humanidad. Nos pasamos la vida lamentándonos del mundo, diciendo que va mal y criticándolo, pero a menudo nos olvidamos que nosotros somos una parte de ese mismo mundo. Empecemos a cambiar nosotros, y una parte del mundo ya habrá cambiado.” (101) This type of sermon, spoken from the perspective of the “savior” of the world, populates many pages of *Sonrisas de Bombay* and of the other books in this study’s corpus.

### ***Intrepid White Savior***

The above analysis of Jaime’s transformation into a self-made redeemer has allowed us to demonstrate how the classic tropes and rhetorical devices of colonial travel writing have persisted over time. We can see how the *savage—noble savage* dichotomy is instrumental to the emergence of the *white savior* trope; it serves as the *other* against which the *savior* constructs himself. Without the dark *noble savage*, the *white savior* has no opportunity to play his/her chosen role. Moreover, without the *savage* context which oppresses the *noble savage*, and from which he/she can be rescued, the *white savior* would not be able to fulfill his/her destiny as a protector, rescuer and redeemer. In this

sense, it is easy to see how this new figure is a reformulation of the colonial *missionary*. In fact, we propose that not just this one, but all three figures past travel writing presented earlier—the *missionary*, *the explorer* and *the survivor*—are reconfigured into this new trope. While the applicability of the *missionary* to the *white savior* is made clear in the above analysis, that of the remaining two figures require an explanation. Let us take a look at the *explorer*.

In the previous chapter, we pointed out that *adventure tourism*, the main branch of contemporary tourism, is characterized by *otherness, lawlessness and danger*, and involves such modalities as “slum-tourism”, “thanatotourism”, and “danger zone tourism”. Upon revealing examples of the active pursuit of these factors by our protagonists, despite their self-proclaimed philanthropic motivations, we proposed to call them *adventure development tourists*. After examining their written accounts of these activities with the lens of tourism in the previous chapter, we are now able to look at them with that of travel writing. This allows us to establish parallels with one of the classic tropes of travel writing, that of the *explorer*. Although our protagonists do not consider themselves to be any sort of travelers or tourists, they construct themselves in terms of the *explorer* trope. As others before them, they are seekers of cultural otherness in extreme settings that are untouched by the hand of mainstream tourisms. These are virtually impossible to attain due to tourism’s tendency to commercialize “off the beaten path” locations, turning modes of travel into increasingly more extreme forms of adventure. In touristic terms, these postmodern *explorers* are popularly known as backpackers.

However, when seen through the lens of literary tropes, we will designate them *intrepid adventurers*.

How is the figure of the *intrepid adventurer* structured in writing in today's context, which makes it virtually impossible to fulfill the desire for the pursuit of extreme adventures? Travel has been commodified via globalization and the commodification of tourism. Postmodern life doesn't offer the proper landscape for satisfying the desire for adventures via tourism. As in the past, in today's travel writing this objective is achieved by means of "othering" in ways that make the places and peoples seem "primitive and atavistic in comparison with the supposedly enlightened West" (Thompson). An atmosphere of exoticism and danger is generated by keeping "elsewhere" as "other", presenting it not as a real place inhabited by fellow human beings that are properly our equals and contemporaries, but rather as "an area or playground where Western travelers may seek out thrilling adventures, or work through personal psychodramas." (Thompson 160) Moreover, it is necessary for "abroad" to be kept sufficiently "savage", both in terms of the people and the place itself, so that the proper degree of thrill can be achieved. However, this is increasingly difficult to achieve even in writing, as more people travel and see firsthand even the most remote locations once not accessible to an average tourist, such as Mount Everest or the Perito Moreno glacier. For this reason, there has been a growing trend in contemporary travel and travel writing to approach both activities with skepticism, sarcasm and disappointment<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> In a post-modern world that is characterized by globalization, hyper-consumerism, the experience economy, consumers know of the impossibility to achieve an "authentic" tourist experience. Aware of the artifice of touristic structures, including those that are "of the beaten track", they opt for alternative modes of experiencing foreign cultures, such as spending some months working remotely from another country.



Given that the modern *intrepid adventurer* is a seeker of extreme exploits, his/her pursuits are frequently organized along a specific plot line. Just as those of any literary *hero* the deeds of today's *explorer* are organized along the plot line of the *quest*, a staple motif of mythology and fictional literature<sup>88</sup>. It narrates the stories of brave protagonists overcoming adversities to obtain an important object. One example are knights-errant fighting monsters for a higher good. These virtuous heroes complete impossible feats, sacrificing personal goals in the name of higher principles, just we have seen Jaume, Vicky and Alba do. They all present their philanthropic activities as personal sacrifices made for the benefit of others and in the name of humanity. For instance, Jaume proclaims "responsabilidad" over "el futuro de la humanidad", while Vicky considers her work in cosmic terms: "Había llegado la hora de devolverle al Universo el favor que me había hecho dándome el poder de la consciencia, del análisis y de la libertad de expresión." (39) In order to achieve their lofty philanthropic goals, they first have to surpass a number of impossible deeds and personal trials which lead them to their destined heroism. In this way, the protagonists fashion themselves into knights-errant of development, into heroes of philanthropy: "Tenía que adquirir un compromiso serio para que los marginados del planeta tuvieran la oportunidad de abrir los ojos a una nueva

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When they visit explicitly touristic sights they are acutely aware of their artifice and accepting of it. See Royek and Urry (1997) and this article on Berlin as capital of post-tourism:

<http://nymag.com/next/2015/03/berlin-is-the-post-tourist-capital-of-europe.html>

<sup>88</sup> Tobias, Ronald B. *20 Master Plots*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1993. (ISBN 0-89879-595-8) – this study places the quest as the number one master plot; another recent study of plots features gives it similar importance by including it in a list of 7 plots -- Christopher Booker. *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. (London: Continuum, 2004).

vida.” (39) These *intrepid adventurers* boldly go where others do not dare, as colonial *explorers* once did, into the (savage) territory of today’s extreme poverty and injustice.

As a result of their courageous acts, their development activities put them in danger, according to their narrations. Jaume is under constant threat from thugs who want to reclaim the prostituted children given safe haven in his orphanage. Vicky barely escapes rape by a police chief who was called to investigate a case of domestic abuse of her Nepalese female friend. On another occasion, her life and pregnancy are endangered by inappropriate medical procedures performed erroneously by the largely-untrained roadside pharmacists. Alba’s blindness puts her at constant risk, in a society where the blind are marginalized. The act of retelling these difficulties has several functions. First, it serves as a boost in the boldness level of the adventures had by these travelers; they will seem daring. Second, it also speaks to the level of their commitment to their development projects; it will seem deeper. Thus, the suffering that is endured by these philanthropists is reported as a necessary part of their development work, given that it is performed in countries that belong to the “Tercer Mundo” (355), in Vicky’s words, and in contexts of extreme poverty. Thus, another effect of including these types of anecdotes in their accounts is that it gives them the opportunity to construct themselves as *survivors* of difficult circumstances—another staple figure of colonial travel writing.

In colonial times, enduring torturous conditions and dangerous situations in “savage” lands allowed the *survivors* to come home and tell their stories, in which they positioned themselves as heroes that emerged victorious and stronger. Recreating this trope today serves to elevate the thrill of the adventures experienced by the intrepid

travelers to the level of *extreme*, as discussed in the previous chapter, where we also identified these types of activities as a brand of “tourism of suffering”.<sup>89</sup> The enthusiasts of this type of tourism seek out a mode of travel that entails physical and/or psychological anguish and travail, whether in the form of adrenaline-rush sports in locations that allow it (whitewater racing, ice climbing etc.) or in the form of slower mode of physical endurance while climbing of Mount Everest. In either case, the self-imposed experience of extreme hardship described in writing also makes use of two tropes: that of the *survivor* and of the *explorer*, mentioned above. This retro-positioned mode of contemporary tourism for *intrepid adventurers* purposefully recreates the modality of the Age of Exploration, allowing contemporary tourists to feel like the *explorer* that stood at its center. However, undergoing extreme hardship and suffering as a form of leisure activity, for the pleasure of personal satisfaction, is not considered by them to be as valuable as doing it in the name of underprivileged kids. Jaume’s example above showed us that development work demands personal sacrifice on behalf of others, as a result of which a greater reward is garnered—a chance to be a *white savior* and *intrepid adventurer* at the same time.

The trope of the *suffering voyage* and its *survivor* points to yet another classic feature of travel writing which reaches further into the past of writing about travel than the previously-discussed figures: the medieval practice of suffering pilgrimages. A frequent topic of medieval writings, this literary motif applies to the story of voyages undertaken for religious reasons, in search of spiritual and/or existential transformation.

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<sup>89</sup> See previous chapter.

Pilgrimages traditionally involved making up for religious trespasses through the pilgrims' readiness to undergo discomfort and pain in the course of their journey. It is precisely through this suffering that the payoff of religious renewal was achieved. It was this outcome that was the objective of the journey. Furthermore, the motif of the *pilgrimage* is essentially the same as the above-discussed *quest* motif, but with a religious component—both have heroes at their center that undergo discomfort willingly. One evokes a journey on which penance is made for past sins, while the other is chivalric protagonist who withstands danger in pursuit of a noble goal (Thompson). The similarity becomes greater when the chastity vows taken by many questing knights are considered. In this regard, Jaume describes never wanting a romantic relationship. He explains that deciding to dedicate his entire life to his orphanage at the expense of a married life was not a difficult choice for him. Despite declaring himself as not being religious, he describes being mistaken for a priest by a nun who claims to have noticed his saintly aura. There's also his mystical experience in the taxi cab mentioned above. By choosing to mention these anecdotes in his narration, Jaume makes indirect use of the aforementioned trope. The decision also has the function of pointing to his transcendence, underscoring the messianic nature of his life-long commitment to his philanthropic undertaking.

The *pilgrimage* motif is related to another common trope of travel writing. With the advent of Romanticism, the medieval pilgrimage journey becomes secularized, taking on the form of a metaphysical "interior voyage" during which the *self* is discovered and realized. In these types of accounts, the journey functions as a narrative device whereby the author's whole life may be brought into focus. Thompson explains: "Many

travelogues of this type also present the journey as a key stimulus to a new understanding of the travelers' life. In this way, the travel account does not just offer a larger history of the *self*, it is also plotted as developmental narrative of growing self-knowledge and self-realization." Therefore, it "becomes a record not just of a literal journey, but also of a metaphorical interior "voyage" that represents an important existential change in the traveler. (114) Here again Jaume's transformation into the *white savior* serves as an example of the persistence of this motif. He acquires self-knowledge of his destiny to dedicate his life to being the protector of children rescued from prostitution. The book *Sonrisas de Bombay* is the record of not only his actual journeys to India, but also of the *interior voyage* that brought about this transformation. The other two travelogues under our scrutiny—*Una maestra en Katmandú* and *Los colores de un sueño*—fulfill this double function.<sup>90</sup>

This *interior voyage* trope links to another important literary tool, the autobiographical device. This template has its origins in the long Western tradition of spiritual autobiography which starts with Augustine's *Confessions* in the fourth century but gains in popularity in travel writing as a consequence of Romanticism. As Thompson explains, "Spiritual autobiographies traditionally charted the author's relationship with God, and culminated in episodes that described either conversion to Christianity or else a renewal of Christian faith" (114-5). With Romanticism, however this narrative pattern was increasingly secularized into one of self-discovery and self-realization (Thompson).

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<sup>90</sup> *Pura vida* is a novel, rather than a travelogue, as has been indicated earlier. The implications of the format will be discussed in Chapter V.

We have seen Jaume report in his story the process of self-discovery, but Vicky's conclusion of her story provides another example: "Este libro quisiera ser el espejo en el que se reflejen las consecuencias de una decisión semejante: he escuchado el mensaje interior y, esforzándome para superar el miedo, me he arrojado al abismo." She continues: "Quienes tienen el hábito de la introspección y han aprendido a vivir según el flujo natural de las cosas habrán encontrado aquí experiencias y sentimientos parecidos a los suyos; los que aún no se han adentrado en esta forma de sentir la vida tal vez se decidan a dar el salto y se lancen al precipicio. (364) Speaking from the standpoint of the end of the suffering pilgrimage-knighting quest, Vicky describes the "inner voyage" of spiritual transformation that she underwent in the process of the literal voyage she describes. The book serves the double function for her as a spiritual autobiography of sorts and a record of her *quest*.

Travel writing in this mode presents the journeys being undertaken as an important rite of passage, and as a process of self-realization. After Romanticism, the form changes, and today in the modern travel book increasingly there is a tendency "for the travel account to be plotted so that it progresses towards some sort of conclusive, climactic scene, in which the traveler seemingly gains an epiphany insight into him- or herself." (Thompson 115) In other words, the plot line advances towards the moment of *anagnorisis*<sup>91</sup>, in Aristotle's terms, as seen in Vicky's quote. However, for our protagonists this moment is also located at the beginning of their accounts dedicated to

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<sup>91</sup> *Anagnorisis* means recognition in Greek. It is a moment in a play when a character makes a critical discovery, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for.

retelling the philanthropic work done in their chosen foreign locations. For them, the critical moment of discovery also occurs at the point of their lives in which they recognize one specific aspect of extreme poverty that bothers them in the developing country of their particular interest. For this reason, Jaume, Alba, Vicky and Ariadna's stories dedicate multiple pages to recounting this moment in great detail and imbuing it with great importance.

What is more, our travelers record more than just the moment of epiphany in the plot line of their own unique version of the *quest*. They also document their sensations and judgments, both in the act of travel and in the act of retrospection. They include information about how they thought and felt at various junctures of their travels, "some modern travel writers also go to much greater lengths than was ever previously the case to situate their journeys in a larger personal history of the self." (Thompson 13) This self-historicizing, or self-narrativising, has the purpose of giving the journey an instrumental role in their lives. Beyond being an eye-opening occurrence, providing unique experiences, the journey is written into the life of the traveler as a keystone event that defines it and gives it meaning. The journey itself, not just some event that forms part of it, is constructed within the life of the traveler as an ephiphanic moment that gives unique insights into his- or her life as a whole. In the very last words of her story, Vicky confirms: "En el fondo del precipicio solo esta uno mismo. Yo cierro aquí mi carpeta con cuidado. Barcelona, 1 de marzo de 2002." (364) There is nothing more to write. Her life as been defined.

This auto-generated structuring of parts of life in writing serves to underline the autobiographical nature of large sections of travel writing, given that most forms of post-medieval travel writing incorporate some elements of personal information and first-person narration<sup>92</sup>. The autobiographical nature of this genre “may be regarded as an important branch of what is now often termed “life writing” (Thompson). That is to say, travel writing has frequently provided a medium in which writers can conduct an autobiographical project, exploring questions of identity and selfhood whilst simultaneously presenting to others a self-authored and, as it were, “authorized” account of themselves” (99). Jaume, Alba and Vicky certainly do that. The idea of an authorized version of themselves presented in writing is an important concept, one that takes us back to the beginning of this chapter and its purpose.

We set out at the start of this chapter to analyze how our protagonists describe themselves in their writings. Although it may not have always been the case in the past, a travel book today is a public statement. It is written with the explicit objective of speaking to a reading audience<sup>93</sup>, thus anything written is done so with the knowledge that it may be contemplated by many. For this reason, the identities of the travelers who describe their pursuits abroad on the pages of such *modern travel books* as ours are not private. Rather, the subjective, intimate selves in these narratives are fashioned into official—“authorized”—versions of themselves for the purpose of being presented to the reading public. This procedure may be achieved in a manner that makes the reader believe this is

<sup>92</sup> The impersonal accounts of the Age of Exploration sought this objective, but they still contained some biographical information, even if indirectly. Many times it was separated and formulated in personal letters.

<sup>93</sup> In the next chapter we will discuss in depth the intended public of the narratives under study.



not the case, that what they are getting are the actual identities of the travelers whose undertakings they are following, but this is not the case. Goffman has shown us that social interaction, just as a theatrical performance, distinguishes between a *front* region that is crafted carefully in order to be presented to the audience, and a *back* region that is hidden from its view. Those on the stage of life, or as presented on the pages of their books, consciously perform the best version of themselves. Greenblatt has shown us that this *performative act*—the act of self-fashioning—is a public one, given that it is always done in language and requires the subjugation of the *other* for the representational needs of the *self*. We have been analyzing this process for the protagonists in the travelogues in our study, in this chapter.

Although the travelers—*Adventure Development Tourists*, in previous chapter's terms—protagonists self-fashion themselves in their travelogues as philanthropists rather than travelers, we discovered that they make great use of the tools of travel writing when constructing their textual identities. By placing their “authorized” *selves* in the context of travel writing, we were able to show how they make use of its vast repository of tropes and rhetorical devices. Reaching into the past figures of the *missionary*, the *survivor* and the *explorer*, we have shown how our *Adventure Development Tourists* construct their unique, carefully-crafted textual identities by means of contemporary reformulations of these figures: the *white savior* and the *intrepid adventurer*. The narratives in this study have allowed us to show how these two figures are used in the context of international development portrayed in writing. Building on this, we are able to propose that in context of development, they are amalgamated into one figure that stands at its core: the *intrepid*

*white savior*. Furthermore, following the *self-other* binarism we conclude that the *other* against which this *self* is constructed is also a very specific one. This kind of self-fashioning requires the opposing *other* to be endowed with unique characteristics: a desperately poor foreigner destined to live out his wretched life in a dangerously underdeveloped, inconsequential country. It is this particular construction that allows for this new figure to flourish in the development-themed *modern travel book* and other fields of cultural production. This study has shown Jaume, Alba, Vicky positioned as *intrepid white saviors* in their travelogues.

This, in turn, points to further inquiries: to what end and with what consequence? These questions we will attempt to answer in the next chapter. The figure of the *intrepid white savior* proposed in this one is the result of a scrutiny of our development fictions with the tools of literature. When we turn back to the previous chapter focused on touristic praxis, we realize that the *intrepid white saviors* parallel *adventure development tourists* proposed there. Switching lenses from tourism to literature has allowed us to change focus from the act of travel to that of writing about it, and consequently, uncover the mechanisms relative to each one. Showing a close relationship between tourism and travel literature today, one much denied by the latter field, we set the stage for being able to show how travel writing becomes a useful vehicle for development philanthropists, in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV. WHITE SAVIOR INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

In the previous chapter we viewed the narratives in this study's corpus through the lens of travel literature. This permitted us to identify the rhetorical and narrative strategies used to carefully craft the textual identities of the traveler-philanthropists. We identified specific travel writing tropes used to self-fashion their "authorized" identities as *intrepid white saviors*—a reformulation of the modern *white savior trope* and the pursuit of adventures that govern the contemporary tourism scene (identified earlier as *adventure development tourism*). In this chapter we will examine the motivation behind this type of self-fashioning by switching lenses to cultural studies. By considering these narratives as physical objects and examining them in their social and media context, we will be able to identify the *target public* of these products manufactured for a specific group of consumers. In previous chapters we examined both the act of travel and the act of writing about it, showing a close relationship between the two fields. In this chapter we will focus on the field of development in order to show how this marriage of travel and writing becomes a useful tool for many philanthropists.

### Intended Reader

A guide book is addressed to those who plan to follow the traveler, doing what he has done, but more selectively. A travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveler at all, but who require the exotic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form romance which their own place or time cannot entirely supply. —Paul Fussell, *Abroad*

The above passage by Paul Fussell indicates plainly the purpose of writing down one's travel experiences. Unlike the guide book, which is written for those who will

imitate the traveler's footsteps, the travel book is not addressed to those who will travel at all. While the former is produced for travelers, the latter is crafted for readers. By contrasting a literary creation with one that is not, the critic has shined a new light on the *modern travel book*, and has allowed us to consider our development-themed narratives in a different context. Once it is clear that the reading audience of these stories will likely never follow the protagonist, the purpose of the "exotic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form romance" becomes clearer. Discovering certain characteristics of the text will indicate who the intended readers are.

There are several narrative and aesthetic strategies that the narratives in this study employ to give a specific shape to their stories. Each of these strategies represents a conscious decision that has been made in order to achieve a specific effect and attract a certain kind of reader. Closely examining these factors in Alba de Toro's *Los colores de un sueño* will help, consequently, to understand the intended reader of this and similar stories.

The most striking feature of Alba's story is that she addresses the reader directly in a colloquial manner as if engaging in a conversation. The second-person point-of-view is a strategy used by writers to create a sense of intimacy between the reader and the narrator. It is not common in literature, where first- and third-person forms are preferred, but it has not been absent either, especially among modern and postmodern works. Authors fond of partial or full second-person address include Albert Camus, Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, Carlos Fuentes and Jay McInerney. Their narrative strategy uses

second-person personal pronouns and other forms of address to generate a reader who is active in the plot.

From the beginning of *Los colores de un sueño*, the narrator-protagonist addresses the reader directly: “Voy a explicarte una historia—mi historia—, aunque no me va a resultar fácil, ya te aviso.” (11) Using this narrative strategy, the author implicates the reader by making him/her a character in the story. Alba even interrupts her introduction to her reader in a way that deepens this illusion: “Me llamo Alba, nací cerca de Barcelona [...] Y ahora ... Ahora me voy corriendo hasta la cocina porque oigo que la leche del *chai* está hirviendo y si no apago el fuego, pasará una desgracia [...] ¿Sigues aquí?” (11) The question “Are you still here?” firmly pulls the reader not only into the conversation but also towards the tea that accompanies it on the narrator’s side. The reader finds him/herself imagining the smell and taste of the infusion, the sound of the kettle, the momentary absence of the interlocutor and her return. “Todo controlado. A veces el fuego me da u poco de miedo, sobre todos cuando estoy sola. Pero ya lo apagué y me he preparado una taza de *chai* con canela. Si quieres, en la cocina todavía queda; te lo recomiendo, está buenísimo.” (11) The last sentence clearly illustrates the power of this narrative strategy—the reader’s involvement in Alba’s story is so profound that he/she literally is offered a cup of tea to be “shared” together with the protagonist for the rest of the “conversation.” The distance between the fictional and real planes is challenged, the reader is asked to suspend his/her sense of reality, and a certain idea comes to mind.

The gesture of inviting a reader to partake in a textual experience can be linked to Louis Althusser’s idea of “interpellation,” the act of recognizing and hailing of an

individual to become a subject of ideology. In his seminal 1970 essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” the French Marxist philosopher defines ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” (“Ideology”)

Working within the Marxist spatial metaphor of the superstructure and the economic base, he shows the way the mode of production is reproduced for the benefit of the maintenance of the dominant class. This objective is achieved by means of two intertwined but separate parts of the Marxist superstructure: the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). RSAs include the government, armies, police, courts and prisons, and function primarily on behalf of the dominant class and often through violence or repression. They are public and generally attempt to curb change disadvantageous to the dominant class. These stand separate from but in concert with the ISAs, which consist of different types of institutions and groups such as religious groups, educational systems,<sup>94</sup> families and political parties, as well as communication and cultural media organizations. ISAs are plural, mostly private and function primarily by means of ideology. The ISAs and RSAs work jointly, although in different ways, and conform to the ruling ideology which sustains the dominant class and defines all our lives. Of course, individuals are not aware of the ruling ideology that directs their lives, in part because it is not an abstract external concept, but rather the

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<sup>94</sup> According to Althusser, the most efficacious / important of the ISAs is the educational ideological apparatus (for class struggle). Incidentally, two of the three fictions under our scrutiny are involved in educational development work: Alba teaches computer science and life skills in a school for blind kids, Vicky sets up Montessori-styled schools in Nepal and is involved in nation-wide educational reforms. Although Jaime starts off his development work in India by taking over the management and financing of an orphanage for children rescued from forced prostitution, his project evolves into other programs which include building a school.

opposite: “ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice ... This existence is material.” (“Ideology”)

The materiality of ideology brings us back to Alba’s tea cup, which is offered directly to the reader. Ideology exists in its praxis. It is already part of everyday life, of all acts such as shaking hands with a friend met on the street—this simple activity constitutes a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life. If this everyday activity doesn’t seem ideological, another example by Althusser will make it clearer. The act of being hailed by a policeman illustrates the functioning of ideology. The simple words “Hey, you there!” transform the individual into a subject of ideology in which both sides take on assigned roles and willingly behave according to defined protocol. It is in this act of summoning that ideology constitutes individual persons as its subjects: “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals ... or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects ... by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing.” (“Ideology”) If it is still difficult to see ideology in these quotidian actions, Althusser has an explanation: “what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology.” This is because the main effect of ideology is “the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, ‘I am ideological.’” (“Ideology”) That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology.

In other words, we are always in a process of actively enacting ideology as its subjects, regardless of our cognizance of it or lack thereof. We—the concrete individual

persons—are the carriers of ideology. We are “always-already interpellated” as subjects, into a number of “subject” positions: the position of occupation, social status, gender, religious affiliation, etcetera. For Althusser, these positions are multiple and diverse—defined by some constructed but imaginary sense of the *self* that is useful for the reproduction of the mode of production and the maintenance of the dominant class.<sup>95</sup>

Putting aside the idea of class struggle, let us examine what this means for our discussion. If the ISAs (and the discourses they propagate) “hail” the individual in social interactions, giving him or her an identity as Althusser proposes, then the identity that is awarded in Alba’s invitation to join her for a cup of tea is that of the reader. Her second-person point-of-view can be rethought as an act of “interpellation” of the reader as subject of an ideology. The question remains: ideology of what type? What is the subject position the reader is expected to take? If it is an invitation to partake in a group, what are that group’s characteristics?

The group to which Alba—the author-protagonist—extends an invitation on the pages of *Los colores de un sueño* is her readers. We can imagine that this group is delimited in some way, for example: Spanish speakers mostly in Spain where the book is published, persons interested in development and philanthropy, persons interested in India and its culture, perhaps also in stories of the blind and of female protagonists. These are a few of the many ways this delimitation can be made, but they do not encompass all possible characteristics of the imagined recipient of the story. This entity—the intended

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<sup>95</sup> They are produced by social forces, rather than acting as powerful independent agents with self-produced identities. Thus in this sense, Althusser goes against the classical definition of the subject as cause and substance, emphasizing instead how the situation always precedes the (individual or collective) subject.



reader—is a product of the author’s imagination (Schmid), and as such it is not stated explicitly in the text, but rather suggested in the extra-textual information or author’s statements. Also referred to as *implied reader*, the intended reader “designates the image of the recipient that the author had while writing or, more accurately, the author’s image of the recipient that is fixed and objectified in the text by specific indexical signs.” We are in the process of examining these signs in de Toro’s narrative.

Thus, when Alba interpellates the reader with a request to join her for a cup of chai and a chat about her adventures in India, the implied readers to whom that request is directed form a finite and limited (per the set of criteria such as those suggested) group, or in other words, an *imagined community*. The idea of imagined community was put forth by Benedict Anderson in his 1983 work entitled “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism” in which he examines the emergence of the idea of a nation. He defines as “an imagined political community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” According to Anderson, the reason the community is imagined is that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (9) In a similar fashion, Alba’s readers in their minds form a unified group guided by a common interest. This idea extends to all other groups in a society since, according to Anderson, all communities are imagined and are “to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.” (9) How is de Toro’s community of readers imagined? The several dozen blind kids—concrete and presumably alive—to whom Alba teaches computer science in her story form part of a

larger *imagined community* that can be labeled, for example, as “disadvantaged (blind) kids of Asia in need of Western help,” a community to which Jaume’s and Vicky’s kids also would belong.<sup>96</sup> These *imagined communities*—or, *intended readers*—are not to be confused with actual individuals or readers, of course. The implied reader is a function of the work, even though it is not represented in the work, and the actual readers, while inconsequential at the time of writing, do matter for reception of the work thereafter—an idea which will be developed later in this chapter. For now, let us focus on our analysis of the “indexical signs” of de Toro’s text to learn more about the image of the intended reader “objectified in the text” of development-themed stories such as those by Alba, Jaume, Vicky and Ariadna.

Alba’s direct statements—in other words, interpellations—to her imagined interlocutor-reader reveal another narrative strategy, one that is designed to bring the narrator and the reader closer together. By presenting herself as inexperienced in the art of writing and unsure of the importance of her message, the narrator-protagonist lowers herself from the status of expert (of the story) to that of an uninformed reader (unaware of the story about to unfold): “He tenido muchas dudas a la hora de enfocarla porque no soy, ni mucho menos, una escritora; nunca antes me había puesto a escribir, pero por algún motivo me parece que quizás esta historia podría servirte.” (10) The strategy of “false humility” is a well-known rhetorical device called *captatio benevolentiae*, dating back to Roman times. It was practiced by Roman orators and thereafter, in court settings during

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<sup>96</sup> Similar conjecturing can be performed for all fictions in this study’s corpus, which, in turn, form part of the larger imagined communities of “developing” and “developed” countries. Conceptualizing the world in this manner—as two opposed and uneven sides—has real consequences, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

the Middle Ages, before making it to the prologues of chivalric romances. The “winning of goodwill” was aimed to capture the favor of the audience. Like Alba’s statement above, which opens the first chapter of her story, the *captatio benevolentiae* is a direct address which asks the reader to view the work favorably. It must be noted that this form of address has undergone a significant transformation in meaning with the advent of a secularized modern society. The audience whose goodwill needed to be won in the Middle Ages was that of royalty to whom the texts were dedicated and under whose auspices it was reproduced. Thus, the “false humility” was in fact part of the social structure which was vertical and theocentric in nature. The humanist forces of Early Modernity started to erode this vertical structure, which with time transformed into a new “horizontal-secular” typek (Anderson). Anderson showed that an important contributing factor in this transformation was the “development of print-as-commodity” because it was the key to the “generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity” in which the readers are imagined to exist in time at the same time, within the same community (9). The development of this “transverse-time,” which is linked to the appearance of the modern novel in the seventeenth century and of the newspaper a century later, is what allows Alba to give new use to the *captatio*. For Alba the *captatio* has the effect of positioning her as equal to the reader, and this is a powerful and essential action.

Thus, if the hailing of a reader to enter the imagined community of *adventure development traveler* story readers can be seen as an attempt to establish an affective tie between the reader and the writer, then this horizontal relationship can be contrasted—ironically, perhaps—with the vertical relationship that is depicted in these stories. While

the summoning of readers is kept within the plane of equals, development efforts performed or described by these protagonists reveal a top-down relationship of inequality. This becomes important when the idea of “interpellation” is considered again, in reference to ideology. If the hailing is an invitation to participate in an ideology as its subject, then Alba’s friendly *captatio* takes on another function. It is an interpellation of an equal to an equal, not only to the community of readers but also to the imagined community of doers: “No sé qué efecto te producirá cuando la termines de leer ... De ti depende lo que hagas con ello.” (10) With this simple phrase, the imagined reader is interpellated to become the subject of the ideology of development, to join the ranks of its enactors. This example illustrates clearly the materiality of ideology: it exists in its practice; and the field of development becomes yet another ideological state apparatus, an idea to which we will return later in the chapter.

### **Product is crafted**

Althusser tells us that the key to the functioning of ideology is that it does not make itself apparent. Although everything takes place in ideology, we do not realize this fact. Thus, it may seem that the narrative and rhetorical strategies we have pointed out are innocent, nevertheless they form part of a larger tactical operation. Although they are nothing out of the ordinary, her story needs them more than other texts do because its author-protagonist is not famous. Alba is an ordinary girl-next-door, with no claims to fame. There is also nothing extraordinary about Alba’s development activity: her volunteering in India forms part of a large, well-known Spanish NGO, that of Vicente

Ferrer<sup>97</sup>. Thus, what makes her story extraordinary—hence, worthy of writing down, publishing and reading—is precisely her handicap. It is for this reason that all the rhetorical and narrative strategies are put in service of the goal of highlighting the exceptional nature of her development work. It is for this reason that the announcement of her blindness is delayed until the third chapter, thus creating a sense of suspense. The handicap is foreshadowed in various ways, but it is not revealed until the proper ground has been laid, that of the reality of India’s lawlessness, chaos and otherness, so that the harsh conditions can be contrasted with the bravery and uniqueness of a handicapped development actor. “No, no es que sea más caótica que la historia de la mayoría de las personas, [...] No hay asesinatos, ni sexo. Pero es una historia ... digamos ‘distinta.’” (10) It is a different story because the protagonist is atypical for this type of activity, and the text has been arranged to emphasize this fact.

The question is by whom. These strategies may seem to be the devices of a clever writer, however, they are more likely the strategies of her publisher. Although the writing process of de Toro (who is blind, and therefore uses a voice-recognition writing device as she specifies in her story) is not known to us, she does indicate her complete lack of experience as a writer, as we have seen above. Furthermore, she reveals that the idea to write her story was not born with her, rather with her publisher: “Todos tenemos nuestra historia [...] Así que, cuando Jordi Nadal de Plataforma Editorial me dio la oportunidad, pensé que tenía que contarte esto.” (10) It is clear that significant efforts have been made to assign extraordinariness to this Spaniard who saw herself as ordinary: “A mí me

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<sup>97</sup> See Chapter III

encanta hablar con la gente, sentarme a escuchar cualquier cosa que quieran decirme ... Estoy segura de que la mayoría de las personas tienen experiencias suficientes para escribir más de un libro.” (10) Alba confirms that her story was commonplace until the publisher shone a light on it and made it stand out.

In order to fulfill the objective of making the story of an ordinary person’s life extraordinary, several publishing, presentational and marketing strategies must be employed. These have to do with the materiality of de Toro’s story, in other words, with the book as a physical object. In addition to a multi-page insert of color photographs, which serves as a powerful attractant, there are “pull quotes”. These have the objective of enticing potential readers into the text. In this common journalistic and publishing device a key phrase is “pulled” from an article and used as a graphic element. It is typically placed in a larger and distinctive typeface on the same page. The book that contains Alba’s story has a “pull quote” on virtually every page. Of the fourteen pictures, seven feature Alba dressed in colorful saris and surrounded by smiling kids. Alba’s blindness as the main focus of the book is revealed when it is placed in service of another of the strategies used by the publishing field to directly manufacture readership—the back cover text contains the following description: “¿Que cómo son mis sueños? ¡De colores! De pequeña empecé a soñar que un día me iría a la India. Que escucharía el ruido atronador de sus calles, que olería esa mezcla casi indescifrable de aromas distintos y que estaría rodeada de niños. Supongo que, cuando lo explicaba, algunos debían pensar: “¡Pero si Alba es ciega! ¿Cómo se va a ir a la India?”<sup>98</sup> This rhetorical question is employed again

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<sup>98</sup> de Toro, *Los colores*. Back cover.

when her childhood and adolescence as a blind person are described as a device to signal the uniqueness of this volunteer in the middle of the narration. The book is marked as one about an extraordinary person doing an extraordinary thing.

### **Target Audience – From Story to Book**

All this pulls us away from the *intended reader* and toward the *target audience*, thus out of the realm of literature and into the realm of marketing. By analyzing the book as a physical object, we enter a different domain in which the *intended reader* turns into the *intended consumer*. In marketing, the term “target audience” refers to the particular group of people to which an advertisement, a product, a website or a television or radio program is directed. The key word is “product.” While a text is written with a certain reading *audience* in mind, a product is produced with a certain *consumer* in mind. Social demographics are studied to understand the characteristics of this *ideal consumer*. Thus, once narrative is turned into a book—in other words, a product—is marketed to a certain kind of consumer, via some of the above-mentioned strategies. In literature this link is severed—the text is considered for itself in a vacuum, or as a brainchild of its author. The physicality of the text is not taken into account; neither are the interventions of the editors or publishers. However, this is exactly what we set out to do next given that this context will shine a light on the text and its author. To illuminate the important relationship between a product and its producer, we turn to the later writings of Marx in which he states: “consumption is not only the concluding act through which the product becomes a product, but also the one through which the producer becomes a producer.” (138)

Whereas in the preceding chapters we have analyzed the texts in this study in terms of literature and tourism, we will now consider them in relation to consumerism.

Although scholars often prefer to consider literary texts as pure creations of their authors, in fact publishers have always involved themselves heavily in the contents. With travel literature in particular, historically, publishers have played an important role, both positive and negative. Since people have been fascinated by tales of strange and beautiful places for centuries, travel literature has consistently sold well. Some publishers have encouraged, defended and paid their writers well while others have bullied them, stolen their manuscripts and ignored their authorial requests. Since the beginnings of travel literature, regardless of the exact category of text—letters/journals, scientific/geographical texts, travelers’ narratives, journalists’ or professional writers’ narratives—the role of the publisher has been the same: to craft a product that will sell. For this reason, since the beginnings of writing about travel, texts have been manipulated and shaped to generate sales. While most readers tend to regard the text in their hands as the fruit of solely the author’s efforts, the reality is quite different. Beyond proofreading and editing, an average text has always undergone a great deal of manipulation to enhance aesthetics and readability, all in an effort to craft a salable product. “The extent of the editing depended on the individual writers, the timeliness of their travels, and the market. Publishers had to decide on a case-by-case basis whether to insist on rewriting or to publish whatever was delivered.” (Speake 982) This was the case in the past and still is today—publishers adhere to market needs when deciding what to publish. As the “Publishing” section in the *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia* sums



up, “The challenge for publishers was to help writers derive coherent, relevant, and readable texts from fragments and intimate details.” (982) This is the case today for narratives of all genres.

With this said, let us examine Alba de Toro’s publishing company, its products and their target audience. Plataforma Editorial positions itself as an alternative publisher: “Plataforma es una editorial independiente que publica libros que dan ganas de leer y divulgar.” (“Sobre Plataforma”) Established in 2008, it was created specifically to recount special experiences in “Libros con autenticidad y sentido”, as stated on its website. The company’s literary assortment features several other thematic lines, represented graphically by a clever image of the metro network converted into a matrix with each of several lines representing a different topic. These range from “cocina y nutrición” and “empresa, valores, emprendeduría y ventas”, to “inteligencias”, “amor”, “saber vivir” and “valor.” The network also includes a “Testimonio” grouping of texts, which unites “biografías de personas admirables narradas por sus protagonistas,” where both de Toro’s book and Sanllorente’s *Sonrisas de Bombay* are listed. This line of books features stories intended to inspire: “Todas las historias son experiencias inspiradoras, que despertarán valores como la solidaridad, el esfuerzo o el optimismo.” (“Sobre Plataforma”) The company describes its methodology as “Nos estimula descubrir obras auténticas, autores con talento y generosos al compartir lo que saben, capaces de emocionarnos y de dar sentido a nuestras vidas.” (“Sobre Plataforma”)<sup>99</sup> Given this objective, Plataforma declares that it contributes 0.7 percent of the sales of books from the “testimonio”

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/contacto/15/1/13/contacto.html>

collection to philanthropic organizations linked to the titles. It lists the multiple charitable organizations it has supported since its establishment in 2007, including de Toro's Fundación Vicente Ferrer and Sanlloriente's Sonrisas de Bombay NGO. Thus, the editorial, publishing and marketing efforts that convert de Toro's tale into attention-grabbing story are, in this context, revealed to be less about transforming an ordinary individual into a hero, and more about generating a specific type of publishing product: a testimony of a philanthropic experience. This is how it is marketed by the specific publisher to the target audience of the "testimonio" genre of books.

With this in mind, let us take a look at how a "testimonio" genre story is marketed as a product, by means of analyzing the extra-textual aspects of the book, starting with the covers. As a product, a book is a physical object: it has a certain size, typeface, front and back covers, paper, blurbs on the dust jacket and images, etcetera. All these are messages that produce a certain idea of the product before it is consumed. Moreover, they often decide whether the product is consumed as the popular axiom against judging a book by its covers indicates. They guide the reception of the product, indirectly. Before the book is opened, it is already inscribed within a specific ideology of consumption. Thus, just by virtue of belonging to the "Testimonio" section of the Plataforma website, a message about the nature of the content is set in place. This "background that sets up assumptions about a text's meaning and thus influences its current interpretation" was put forward by Hans Robert Jauss as "horizon of expectations." Let us examine the materiality of the books in our study, as it lures potential readers in and guides their reading of the narrative contained on its pages.

Alba de Toro's back cover text focuses on her blindness and her determination to visit India despite all odds: "¡Pero si Alba es ciega! ¿Cómo se va a ir a la India?" As mentioned previously, she is made extraordinary by her Indian philanthropic adventures and this is the key to garnering interest in her. She is also portrayed as an example to be followed: "Con una sensibilidad exquisita, un optimismo contagioso y buen humor, Alba demuestra con su ejemplo que lo importante es conocernos, identificar qué queremos y, a partir de ahí, ¡perseguir nuestras ilusiones!"<sup>100</sup> She has followed and "alcanz[ó] sus sueños" and the community of readers are invited to do the same. This invitation is a kind of interpellation: it suggests that we, the potential readers, should follow our dreams, led by her. As we glance at the book deciding whether to invest our money and time into reading it, we are indirectly deciding whether to enter not only the imagined community of readers of development-themed stories, but also the community of development doers. The book promises to show that it is possible to follow Alba's footsteps. If a blind girl did it, anyone can—so goes the implicit message.

Sanllorrente's story is also published by Plataforma Editorial; thus it is subject to the same marketing and product positioning strategies. His book's back cover description focuses on the extremity of his life-changing decision to move to India, which is framed as his destiny to help the children of Bombay. His "visión amorosa" that brought him there promises to show the reader the secret to happiness: "nos desvela el secreto para ser más felices buscando la dicha de los demás."<sup>101</sup> The story of dangers, injustice and death

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/ficha/278/0/3481/los-colores-de-un-sueno.html#>

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/ficha/270/1/707/sonrisas-de-bombay.html>

threats that “nos proporciona un ejemplo para seguir adelante a pesar de las adversidades. Una lección de amor sabio, entrega, sacrificio y esperanza que nos invita a recorrer el camino hacia un mundo mejor.”<sup>102</sup> The book promises to show the reader how to be a better person for the world, in this way serving as a hook to garner readership. In the same manner as de Toro’s book, it acts as an interpellation tool, one that even more explicitly hails a potential reader to become active in philanthropy.

Although Subirana’s book is not published by Plataforma, but rather by one of Spain’s two biggest publishing houses, Aguilar, part of the Penguin Random House<sup>103</sup>, it follows the same pattern. The back cover description first highlights the evolution of her development work over the years, starting from “las ilusiones de una joven maestra solidaria con una misión entre ceja y ceja” and ending with “la consolidación de un proyecto educativo universal para los más pobres y marginados en Nepal.” Her perseverance and commitment to her goals made her overcome all obstacles, which included “un matrimonio de conveniencia con un sherpa... que terminó convirtiéndose en un gran amor.” The description ends with the classic tropes of a love story, travel and poverty: “El relato de la apasionante peripecia vital y profesional de la autora da como resultado un libro extraordinario donde el lector encontrará no sólo una hermosa y rara historia de amor, mezclada con un fascinante libro de viajes, sino, sobre todo, una visión divulgativa pero contundente de la más cruda realidad en el Tercer Mundo.” Framing the

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.casadellibro.com/libro-una-maestra-en-katmandu/9788466326674/2055043>

<sup>103</sup> The other is Planeta

story of development with these three components makes it more appealing, thus more salable.

What stands out in these conscious publishing and marketing strategies is an effort to frame author-protagonists as heroes of philanthropy, knights on philanthropic quests, or in other words, *intrepid white saviors* who went against all odds for the benefit of others, for a higher good, as seen last chapter's terms. The framing suggests it was their destiny and for this they are marked as worthy of admiration. The hero status is crucial to the salability of the products, consequently, it is highlighted by the book titles, which reveal a great deal about the focus of the story. Sanllorente's novel is entitled *Sonrisas de Bombay: el viaje que cambió mi destino*, Alba de Toro's is *Los colores de un sueño* and Subirana's is *Una maestra en Katmandú*. While they are positioned as development-themed products, in other words, as stories of helping others, the titles reveal them to be focused on the protagonists themselves. The front covers confirm this aim with descriptions such as: "El libro que descubrió el Proyecto de Jaume Sanllorente" and "Testimonio de una joven invidente que hace realidad sus ilusiones ayudando a los niños indios." This objective is supported by front cover images which reveal the same focus on the philanthropy doers rather than the philanthropy beneficiaries. In this way, the Spanish readers are able to identify with the Spanish protagonists. Each of the covers has a photograph of the protagonist-author surrounded by local children (de Toro) and/or hugging one of them (Sanllorente and Subirana). None of this is incidental. These descriptions and images reveal is that there has been a conscious choice made to present these books as stories of individual *intrepid white saviors* rather than the stories of (dark)

*noble savages*. The decision is likely driven by the imperative of salability—stories of adventure and philanthropy of white heroes in dark lands apparently sell better than other configurations, especially if they involve kids. Consequently, the locals on the covers are exclusively children. Marketing tells us of two drivers of product advertising: emotional and rational. Eliciting interest through pity works—poor kids are the classic tearjerkers. They appeal to the consumers’ emotions.

Stating clearly what has been implied thus far, publishers strive to craft a product line. For the texts under our scrutiny, this product line is books that tell stories of individual philanthropic heroism championed abroad by *intrepid white saviors*. The books in our study are just a few examples of this thematic subset of literature that can be qualified as the “testimonio” of philanthropic experience, but publishers make efforts to manufacture more of them. One way, for example, is to sponsor competitions that invite the public to write their own stories of this type. In 2015, Plataforma Editorial organized a literary contest titled “Premio Feel Good”, sponsored by the Foundation “La Caixa”, a major Spanish bank and sponsor of cultural endeavors. The winner of this first edition of the competition was chosen from 181 manuscripts in several languages. *Mi lugar en el mundo*. *El agua de la vida* is a story by Paco Moreno, a well-to-do lawyer whose life was changed by a trip to Ethiopia<sup>104</sup>. After witnessing the devastating effects of water-scarcity in the country’s nomad communities, he set up the NGO *Amigos de Silva* upon his return<sup>105</sup>. The stated objective of the competition, which is adjudicated by one

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/ficha/285/0/4932/mi-lugar-en-el-mundo.html>

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.amigosdesilva.org/en>

representative from each of the two sponsoring entities (Caixa and Plataforma), is one of “impulsar el optimismo entre escritores y lectores, a partir de historias con autenticidad y sentido que transmitan alegría y bienestar, que contagien ideas positivas y que sobre todo ayuden a ser más fuertes, más sanos y más felices.” (“Quienes somos”)<sup>106</sup> The reason behind this endeavour is the perceived lack of optimism: “Vivimos en un mundo donde existe demasiado pesimismo, y ha llegado el momento de cambiar la situación.” (“Quienes somos”) It is clear that this narrative is a clone of de Toro’s and Sanllorente’s stories, both also published by Plataforma. This example reveals the following: via the “testimonio” collection of books, and via the Premio Feel Good competition, the Plataforma Editorial publisher tries to *manufacture* a new line of products portraying one person’s charitable efforts in a developing country.

As with any consciously-created *product*, the “testimonio” collection by Plataforma Editorial there appears to be a formula (a template that is reproduced) and a strategy (to generate sales). In addition to literary, aesthetic and publishing stratagems, a marketing one is also employed. Plataforma Editorial not only contributes a percentage of the sales to the NGO the book describes, it also gives the readers a chance to influence the story it crafts for them, to shape it to their liking—or at least, it gives readers the impression of having this influence. At the end of all “testimonio” collection texts, readers are invited to send feedback that is to be taken into account in the subsequent editions. In the case of de Toro’s first and only edition (in other words, a book by an unknown author) this request is simply a request. In contrast, in the 16<sup>th</sup> edition published

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/contenido/268/1/sobre-plataforma.html>

authored by Jaume Sanllorente, the known philanthropist, the call for feedback is supplemented with a sprawling four-page list of fan letters and praise. The feedback provided by readers of these novels has the multi-faceted objective of acting as profile-raising propaganda (surely only positive comments will be selected), as possible instructions to reshape the stories in future editions and as components of the template which will be used for future stories in the “testimonio” collection (to produce more such stories). In this way, the reader (consumer) of this type of story (product) is guaranteed to get exactly what he/she wants—a custom-made product. Thus, efforts to copy the bestseller story of charitable work—the adventures of a hero philanthropist—are clearly undertaken by Plataforma Editorial. Its “Testimonio” collection features other titles that have followed the recipe, for example, *Goundi. Unas vacaciones diferentes. Una aventura solidaria en Chad* by Isabel Rodríguez Vila<sup>107</sup>. This book is an account of a different way—adventurous and solidarism-driven—that one nurse spends her vacation time, in Sub-Saharan Africa doing charity nursing work. As expected, it follows the template: cover picture of the (white) protagonist, catchy title, locals portrayed as kids, etcetera.

Reader comments play another role: to serve as product reviews, much like those posted to Amazon. Drawn in by a heart-wrenching picture of poor kids on the cover, the potential readers can flip through the collection of pull-quotes that highlight the extent of the sacrifices made by the hero of philanthropy—a fellow Spaniard who is there to improve the locals’ lives. The many comments at the end of the book validate the

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.plataformaeditorial.com/ficha/0/0/780/goundi-unas-vacaciones-diferentes.html>



potential reader's choice to purchase the book. The comments act as product endorsements that give the book credibility and vouch for its value, confirming the product is worth the price.

The objective of this analysis has been to demonstrate that the texts we analyzed in the previous chapters do not exist only as literature. By treating the narratives as physical objects—books—and showing multiple strategies involved in crafting a line of publishing products as a “testimonio” genre of philanthropic experience, we are able to point out not only the texts' materiality but also their lack of literary originality—Benjamin's “aura” that is lost in the contemporary “age of mechanical reproduction.” (*The Work of Art*) In previous chapters, we pointed out the commodification of travel, which extends to commodification of travel writing as we have attempted to show in this chapter.

### **The White Savior Industrial Complex<sup>108</sup>**

For the philanthropy-focused texts under our scrutiny, the commodification of travel writing implies the commodification of development itself. Since they are products that tell stories of philanthropy, it must follow that they play an important role in that field. This, in turn, puts into question the motivation behind the decision to write them. Indeed, if we consider that behind each book stands an organization that carries out the philanthropic work described on its pages, it is easy to see that these stories are important

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<sup>108</sup> This phrase was taken from the following article, which will be discussed in Chapter V. Teju Cole. "The White-Savior Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*. 12 Mar. 2012. [www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/?single\\_page=true](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/?single_page=true)

extensions of the specific charitable organizations they describe. Since these narratives address philanthropy funded in Spain but performed abroad, they establish an important link between the two worlds. Given that most of the NGOs were founded by the very authors of the stories in which they are also their protagonists, these narratives are key to establishing a personal relationship between the reader of the carefully-produced story and the author-protagonist's real-life philanthropic project. In this way, the stories become means of attracting attention—and thus, donors—to their NGOs.

By placing our books in the context of their organizations, we will be able to reveal this symbiotic relationship. Taking as an example Sanllorente's NGO, his book bears the same name, clearly acting as a tool for the marketing of the organization. A quick look at the website, [Sonrisasdebombay.org](http://www.sonrisasdebombay.org)<sup>109</sup> reveals the extent to which it acts as a tool of interpellation. Stories such as Sanllorente's hail the readers not only to the community of philanthropically-minded readers, but also actors. Sanllorente's book offers the readers an opportunity to act on their philanthropic impulses, in various ways. The website offers the following ways to get involved: various levels of supporting membership or financial patronage, both for individuals (one-time or monthly donations) and corporations (increases brand recognition). Interested compassionate readers can become volunteers by putting their professional skills to work for the NGO's office in Barcelona and online. Volunteering in India is not an option for them as the organization informs, the local population can more efficaciously organize its own affairs.<sup>110</sup> This is

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.sonrisasdebombay.org/sonrisasdebombay/es.html>

<sup>110</sup> They state: “Como organización de cooperación al desarrollo en Bombay, apostamos por promover el trabajo voluntario y remunerado, siempre que es posible, con personas que residen en la India, especialmente con las comunidades más necesitadas de la ciudad de Bombay. Así pues, no contamos con un

undoubtedly a disillusionment, however, the organization states it happily arranges visits to its Indian facilities and projects, providing a chance to meet the local beneficiaries. Those who cannot travel (or do not have specific skills to offer the administrative and technical team in Barcelona) can still help Indian slum inhabitants by helping the NGO to grow. Opportunities include community outreach: organizing informational chats, fundraising events in schools, libraries, et cetera.

Another way of helping Sonrisas de Bombay, and perhaps the easiest, is simply buying products created by the NGO for this purpose. These include: other books by Sanlloriente on other philanthropic endeavors<sup>111</sup> and a range of products ranging from a two-euro bracelet, bags made by women in the slums as part of the NGO's skills-generating project, and custom-made merchandising products with the NGO's logo such as T-shirts, mugs and calendars. These are meant to increase brand recognition. Another way the NGO keeps its contributors involved is by organizing contests. For example, one of these yielded a collection of short stories entitled *10 Cuentos 10 Sonrisas*, produced to celebrate NGO's 10th anniversary in 2015, or the photo contest related to India travel, which for this year's 7<sup>th</sup> edition is focused on Indian food.<sup>112</sup> The NGO's anniversary was also celebrated in another manner that furthers its marketing goals by appealing to the

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programa de voluntariado internacional. Trabajar con personal local, además de fomentar el desarrollo socioeconómico, implica facilidades en temas de idioma, conocimiento de protocolos culturales, cercanía geográfica, etc.”; <https://www.sonrisasdebombay.org/sonrisasdebombay/es/que-puedes-hacer-tu/voluntariado.html>

<sup>111</sup> The organization's dossier from 2013 lists many options. They can be seen here:

<https://www.sonrisasdebombay.org/docroot/sonrisasdebombay/includes/files/sdbpress/95/attachments/document/DossierEmpresas2013.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.sonrisasdebombay.org/es/noticia/llega-la-vii-edicion-del-concurso-un-click-una-sonrisa-la-receta-para-sonreir-990.html>

sponsors by visual means: Bollywood-style short film, in the style of the blockbuster *Slumdog Millionaire*.<sup>113</sup> The 15-minute film *Smileywood*<sup>114</sup> tells the story of two children—one from within a community that has benefitted from the NGO’s various projects, and one outside it. It is an upbeat testament to the organization’s achievements, directed to its supporters made in a style that appeals to popular cinematic culture. It is an advertisement of its philanthropic products. Its objective is to attract more consumers. Another way the Sonrisas brand generates income for its philanthropic activities in India is by partnering with a well-known Spanish tourism agency, RCC, which offers an organized tour of India that includes a visit to the NGO. The 10-night “Sonrisas de Bombay” tour takes tourists to the classic India tourist sites: Delhi, Agra (the place of Taj Majal), Jaipur and Bombay, where two whole days are dedicated to visiting the buildings and the projects of the NGO. The description of the trip on the RCC website states that 3% of the total cost of the trip are be donated to the NGO. Two trips are scheduled for summer 2016 at the price of 1,695 €<sup>115</sup> each. It’s a chance to dispatch their touristic obligations and act in a “globally conscious” way.<sup>116</sup>

This list, which outlines the various ways the NGO attempts to garner donors in Spain to finance projects in developing countries, serves as a snapshot of the organization’s efforts. It is not limited to Sanllorente’s Sonrisas de Bombay. It describes a general practice. Victoria Subirana’s NGO Eduqual<sup>117</sup> as well as the Fundación Vincente

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.sonrisasdebombay.org/es/noticia/smileywood-la-pelicula-744.html>

<sup>114</sup> <http://www.smileywood.org/>

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.racc.es/viaje/sonrisas-de-bombay>

<sup>116</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>117</sup> <http://eduqual.org/wordpress/?lang=en>

Ferrer<sup>118</sup> in which Alba de Toro volunteered use similar or identical methods of attracting potential donors, as do many other NGOs. In these efforts, their stories of philanthropism neatly packaged into attractive books that act as bait, play a crucial role. They form part of a larger phenomenon, the blatant commodification of development that Teju Cole calls “White Savior Industrial Complex”. (“White Savior”)

### Careers Are Made

One other important way that development and book publishing overlap in the context of commodification is revealed by the careers of the philanthropists. Earlier in the chapter we saw the story of an ordinary girl turned into a salable development-themed publishing commodity by means of publishing and marketing strategies. Despite the publication of her book, de Toro remains an unknown figure on the Spanish philanthropic scene with just a handful of interviews in the press following the publication of her story. Her work with the blind children in India was done for one of the oldest and most well-known and respected Spanish philanthropic organizations, but the book did not have a significant bearing on the organization’s solid financial and operational standing. Nevertheless, she has benefitted personally and professionally from the experience—the book reports her new identity as a translator of Telugu in England.

In the case of Victoria Subirana, the publishing of *Una maestra en Katmandú* seems to have played an important role in her philanthropic career, even though Subirana was already a well-known figure in Spain’s philanthropy scene at the time of publication.

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.fundacionvicenteferrer.org/es/>

Working since the mid- 1980s, she had achieved numerous successes by the time she decided to describe them—the purpose of *Una maestra en Katmandu* is precisely to serve as a testimony of a lifetime dedicated to fighting for children’s access to quality education in Nepal. This work has been recognized with numerous awards<sup>119</sup> from private and public institutions in Spain and abroad, including a medal from the King of Spain for “extraordinary work of merit and initiative” and an award for the best solidarity work for her NGO Eduqual. The Eduqual website—[www.eduqual.org](http://www.eduqual.org)<sup>120</sup>--lists 16 prizes and awards that span 17 years of philanthropic work. The list also includes Spain’s top cinematic prize, Premios Goya and UNICEF for a documentary entitled “Children from Nepal” filmed in the NGO’s school. Subirana has obtained recognition as an educator for

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<sup>119</sup> Complete list from the website: 2012, Magisterio Newspaper. Special educational mention as a founder of “The Pedagogy for Transformation” her own pedagogical method and his implementation.; 2011, FOUNDATION EduQual finalist in the prizes Prince of Asturias.; 2010, Victoria Subirana received from his Majesty the King of Spain Don Juan Carlos and the Ambassador of Spain in Delhi, Mr. Ion de la Riva, the Official Cross of the Order of Civil Merit granted to Spanish or foreign citizens who give relevant services to the State, carrying out extraordinary works with of undoubted merit or important initiatives.; 2009, Vicki Sherpa Eduqual Foundation received the “Kapital Prize 2009”, for the best social and solidarity work.; 2008, Vicki Sherpa Eduqual Foundation received the award for the Values of Coexistence, by the Rodolfo Benito Samaniego Foundation. This award promotes values such as peace, solidarity, freedom and democracy.; 2006, Vicki Sherpa Eduqual Foundation received the award for “Human Behaviour” by the Spanish Association of Educated Word and Good Customs which Honor President is the King of Spain D. Juan Carlos I.; The film “Children from Nepal”, winner of Goya in 2004, was awarded the UNICEF 2006 to reflect the reality of the tasks undertaken by NGOs, and reflect the values of hope, solidarity and overcoming of the children of the streets. This document was made in the Daleki school in Kathmandu.; Vicki Sherpa obtained the Prize Protagonists of Solidarity from Luis del Olmo for her “value, generosity, encouragement and determination”; 2005, Vicki Subirana awarded the Prize “Land of Women” granted by the FUNDACIÓ Yves Rocher, organization support by the Institut de France; 2004, Appointed as Peace Ambassador by the Pakistani Community of Catalonia.; 2004, Goya award for the documentary THE CHILDREN OF NEPAL, which was filmed by the Catalonia Cinematographic Studies Center.; 2003, UNICEF selected Daleki School like example to follow by other organizations interested in promoting the education and integration of children with incapacities.; 2003, Prize ONCE to solidarity and the overcoming.; 2002, Awarded with prize TONETTI to the Humanitarian work. (Nelson Mandela and Federico Greater Saragossa were previously granted); 2000, MEDAL D’ OR by the VIC UNIVERSITY; 1999, Prize MESTRES ‘68, granted by ASSOCIACIÓ MESTRES 68 and the ROSA SENSAT ASSOCIACIÓ.; [http://eduqual.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=11863&lang=en](http://eduqual.org/wordpress/?page_id=11863&lang=en)

<sup>120</sup> <http://eduqual.org/wordpress/>

her “pedagogía transformadora,”<sup>121</sup> which is protected in the intellectual rights register and used in the Programa de Formación del Profesorado offered by Spain’s main online university, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia.<sup>122</sup> Her work in Nepal has involved hands-on teaching, country-wide educational reform, management of the organization’s various schools, shelters and educational programs,<sup>123</sup> as well as the preparation of culturally-appropriate teaching materials and the establishment of the country’s first primary school teacher’s learning institution<sup>124</sup> run in partnership with the universities of Zaragoza and Tribhuvan. Eduqual Foundation’s most recent report produced for its 20-year anniversary lists 15 wide-ranging projects<sup>125</sup> in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Explanation of this method, according to the organization: “La Pedagogía transformadora considera la mente como un elemento esencial en el aprendizaje, porque de ella dependen muchas de las destrezas básicas para desarrollar nuestras actividades vitales, tales como la memoria, la percepción de los sentidos, la concentración, el equilibrio, el razonamiento, la capacidad de relacionarse, la comprensión, el raciocinio etc. En el área de la pedagogía aplicada esta filosofía considera a la mente en si misma como una asignatura, y la adquisición de la madurez mental como un proceso. Para ello, trabaja de forma prioritaria las virtudes, los valores, las disciplinas y el respeto al individuo, y se le dedica el mismo tiempo que a otras asignaturas importantes del currículo. Estas prácticas no son opcionales ni extra-curriculares sino que están integradas dentro del currículo educativo como una asignatura más; en forma de espacios específicos, equipamientos, actividades, y materiales.” -

[http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?\\_pageid=93.23965396.93\\_23965397&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?_pageid=93.23965396.93_23965397&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

<sup>122</sup> [http://www.fundacion.uned.es/publico\\_calendario/4012](http://www.fundacion.uned.es/publico_calendario/4012)

<sup>123</sup> <http://eduqual.org/wordpress/>

<sup>124</sup> [http://elpais.com/diario/2011/04/13/ultima/1302645602\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/2011/04/13/ultima/1302645602_850215.html)

<sup>125</sup> Gestión y desarrollo de la escuela Sinamangal • Gestión y desarrollo de la escuela Catalunya • Programa “Comedor Escolar” • Programa “Rincones para Parvulario” • Programa “Biblioteca Escolar” • Programa “Transporte Escolar” • Programa “Asistencia Sanitaria” • Programa “Música y Danza” • Programa “Aula de informática” • Programa “Deporte” • Programa “Aula de Ciencias” • Programa “Taller de recursos pedagógicos” • Programa de “Capacitación para Mujeres” • Programa de Educación “no reglada” • Centro de formación de maestros (Teacher training) † Centro de acogida /Programa de integración de niños discapacitados – source: <http://eduqual.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Proyectos-hasta-2010-castell%C3%A0-amb-pissarres.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> All the above-said keeps Subirana in the news, both as a representative of Eduqual, its Nepalese side, VEDFON, and as an individual. Scandals have been known to boost media visibility, also in Subirana’s case. In 2008 she was the subject of a complot against her led by her Tibetan ex-husband implicated in the VEDFON leadership, which included physical abuse and stabbing threats<sup>126</sup>. Subirana’s week-long hunger strike worked in eliciting a reaction from the Nepalese government to open an investigation into the corruption inside VEDFON<sup>126</sup> and a suicide of a student in one of the schools. If her visibility in Spain is

This success of course did not come easily or overnight. Subirana details in her book the numerous rejections she encountered in the 12 years of struggling to gain financing and recognition for her development efforts in Nepal. She speaks of the lack of awareness of the need for such efforts in the 1990s. At that time the only figure of Spanish philanthropy abroad was the Spanish former missionary Vicente Ferrer, whose foundation has been working in a rural region of India since 1978. Besides him, there was nobody doing any form of philanthropy, thus Subirana's struggles. With time and perseverance her relentless efforts paid off largely in Catalonia where she started to get occasional TV and newspaper coverage of her projects. By the time her story of philanthropic struggles *Una maestra en Katmandu* was published in 2002, she had already achieved most of her successes. Therefore, although the book was not instrumental in the success of Subirana's philanthropic career, once published, as expected (and planned) with time the book did amplify her fame and recognition. She was published up by Spain's major publishing house (rather than the alternative and little known Plataforma Editorial), serving as a stamp of approval and, thus, an assurance of success.

This strategy for garnering fame bore more fruits when her story was picked up by the film industry, which in 2012 adapted the story of her life and philanthropic work for the big screen. The movie, entitled *Katmandú, un espejo en el cielo*, was directed by one

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moderate, it seems to be a lot more extensive in Nepal. She seems to be an inspiration for others—she is taken as a “mujer imprescindible” on a blog with the same name on Women's day<sup>126</sup>, she is claimed to be “la major profesora del mundo” on a coaching website<sup>126</sup> called laclavedetuexito, and taken as an example of a feminist in a women's magazine<sup>126</sup>. She has appeared in the radio and has commented on the Nepal earthquake for Spanish television



of the most well-known and renowned Spanish directors, Icíar Bollaín, who has worked with top actors of Spanish and international renown. Bollaín started her decades-long career as an actress, subsequently transitioning to directing. She acted in 25 feature films<sup>127</sup> and directed 7 feature films, 6 short films and a documentary. She has been nominated 9 times, winning Goya award in 2003 and Mercedes-Benz award at the Cannes film festival 1999 and in 2011, Premio Ariel for the best Ibero-American film in 2011 with *También la lluvia*.<sup>128</sup> The movie that portrays Subirana's life features the well-known actress Verónica Echegui in the leading role. Echegui, a nominated and prized actress who starred in thirteen films<sup>129</sup> and several TV series, plays the role of Subirana in a story that focuses on the beginnings of her work in Nepal<sup>130</sup>. Needless to say, Victoria Subirana is a prominent figure on the Spanish philanthropic scene and beyond. Her story of philanthropic struggles in Nepal is now well-known to a large part of the

<sup>127</sup> Feature films: *El sur* (Víctor Erice, 1983), *Las dos orillas* (Juan Sebastián Bollaín, 1986), *Al acecho* (Gerardo Herrero, 1987), *Mientras haya luz* (Felipe Vega, 1987), *Malaventura* (Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, 1989), *Venecias* (Pablo Llorca, 1989), *El mejor de los tiempos* (Felipe Vega, 1990), *Doblones de a ocho* (Andrés Linares, 1990), *Sublet* (Chus Gutiérrez, 1991), *Un paraguas para tres* (Felipe Vega, 1992), *Entretiempo* (Santiago García de Leániz, 1992), *Dime una mentira* (Juan Sebastián Bollaín, 1993), *Tocando fondo* (José Luis Cuerda, 1993), *Jardines colgantes* (Pablo Llorca, 1993), *Tierra y libertad* (Ken Loach, 1994), *El techo del mundo* (Felipe Vega, 1995), *Menos de cero* (Ernesto Tellería, 1996), *Niño nadie* (José Luis Borau, 1997), *Subjujice* (Josep María Forn, 1997), *Leo* (José Luis Borau, 2000), *Sara, una estrella* (José Briz Méndez, 2002), *Nos miran* (Norberto López Amado, 2002), *La balsa de piedra* (George Sluizer, 2003), *La noche del hermano* (Santiago García de Leániz, 2005), *Rabia* (Sebastián Cordero, 2010); Short film: *Polvo enamorado* (Javier López Izquierdo, 1990)

<sup>128</sup> Bollaín was selected as Mejor Actriz Española in 1992 by the film magazine *Cartelera Turia*. She received the Premio Ojo Critico, II Milenio of Radio Nacional de Epana in 1993 and the Premio "Ciudad de Cuenca" for her work in II Festival de Cine "Mujeres en Dirección". She is a member of Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas de España and in 2006 she funded, together with other cineasts, CIMA (Asociación de mujeres cineastas y de medios audiovisuales).

<sup>129</sup> Kamikaze (2014), *La gran familia española* (2013), *La fría luz del día* (2012), *Katmandú, un espejo en el cielo* (2012), *Verbo* (2011), *Seis puntos sobre Emma* (2011), *La mitad de Óscar* (2010), *Bunny and the Bull* (2009), 8 citas (2008), *La casa de mi padre* (2008), *El patio de mi cárcel* (2008), *Tocar el cielo* (2007), *El menor de los males* (2007), *Un difunto, seis mujeres y un taller* (2007), *Yo soy la Juani* (2006), *El álbum blanco* (2005), *Cerrojos* (2004)

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.lavanguardia.com/cine/20120203/54248555094/katmandu-un-espejo-en-el-cielo-critica-de-cine.html>

country. Publishing has played an important role in this achievement. Together with the film industry, it has given her philanthropic work a stamp of approval (and further recognition to her NGO).

Another person who has known how to advance his philanthropic career by means of publishing (in a different way) is Jaume Sanllorente. If Subirana serves as an example of an expert of self-styled Spanish philanthropy, Sanllorente can be thought of as its newest junior superstar. Whereas it took Subirana two decades to go from the micro-scale (one classroom of kids) to macro (several schools and a multitude of projects benefiting thousands of persons), Sanllorente achieved the same in less than 8 years. He went from taking over a defunct orphanage of 40 kids in 2006 to administering a series of projects of various types that, as of 2016, benefit 5000 persons<sup>131</sup>. On a personal level and similarly to Subirana, Sanllorente's projects have also benefited him professionally: once a journalist and barman, today he is a figure of Spanish philanthropy relatively well-known in Spain and beyond. His philanthropic fame has allowed him to surpass the conventional potential of his journalistic training, opening the doors to further skills and expertise at the Instituto de Estudios para la Paz y la Cooperación<sup>132</sup>, at the Institute of United Nations Studies in India and at Harvard Kennedy School in the Strategic Management for Leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations program. He worked for Barcelona TV and COM Radio, served as Catalonia's delegate for Comercio Exterior, has been a member of the advisory committee of the International Symposium on Poverty Alleviation in a

<sup>131</sup> <http://blogs.lainformacion.com/laregladewilliam/2009/08/19/jaume-sanllorente-y-las-5000-sonrisas-de-bombay/>

<sup>132</sup> <http://universidadabierta.org/>

World Market, has chaired the Advisory Board of the leprosy NGO JAL and is an active patron of the Foundation Corporación Valora. He has received several awards for his work, including the Axuda 2007 award, the Tierno Galván award for the Human Values, the “Caring Young” Award of the Film Festival of Castilla y León, and the Gold Medal of the Spanish Association of European Development. He is the World's Ambassador of the Bombay Leprosy Project. The Government of Spain awarded him in 2009 the Cruz de Oficial de la Orden del Mérito Civil (Officer's Cross of the Order of Civil Merit) for his “extraordinary contribution in the fight against poverty”, similarly to Subirana. His leadership and entrepreneurship methods are used as examples in case studies in universities and business schools<sup>133</sup>. He is currently a lecturer at the University of Barcelona in the Master's Program for Leadership and Personal Development.

The preceding list catalogues the very successful career of a professional in development, in Spain and beyond. The spark for this success was ignited by the 2009 publication of *Sonrisas de Bombay*, before which neither Sanllorente nor his project were known. His project was a private endeavor on a micro scale, affecting 40 people—he was not an actor on the Spanish development scene. The book garnered recognition for the NGO and, consequently, increased its donor pool and operational complexity. What took Subirana decades (and Ferrer, even longer), Sanllorente achieved “overnight” precisely as a result of the timely and clever publishing of his story, as will be shown. While it is not surprising that philanthropists gain experience and recognition for their work, and

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[http://www.ieseinsight.com/fichaMaterial.aspx?pk=93198&idi=1&origen=3&idioma=2&\\_ga=1.107579591.418392760.1478393860](http://www.ieseinsight.com/fichaMaterial.aspx?pk=93198&idi=1&origen=3&idioma=2&_ga=1.107579591.418392760.1478393860)

furthermore, it is not the objective of this study to evaluate business strategies, Sanllorente's case allows us to examine the mechanism of the White Savior Industrial Complex.

The key to Sanllorente's success has been the close relationship between publishing, literature and development. The exact extent of the mutually-beneficial relationship between the philanthropist and the publisher is further revealed in a video posted by the publisher on Plataforma's website and entitled "Jordi Nadal presents Bombay Smiles to sell its publishing rights." The founder of Plataforma Editorial, Jordi Nadal, directs himself in English to potential buyers of rights to the successful product he has developed, his book. He reveals the immense importance of *Sonrisas de Bombay* to the growth of his company, a small alternative publishing house poised against the major multinational publishing powerhouses (such as Subirana's Aguilar). He calls *Sonrisas* "the most important book for my company" because it was the fifth one published at a key time: "Actually this book means the biggest part of the reality of my company." Nadal also reveals in the video is that he was the person who gave Sanllorente the idea of writing the book by commissioning it in 2004. Published in 2007, the book "quickly was on the bestselling list in several newspapers." It was so popular that "in a year and a half I have been printing 10 editions in Spanish, 3 editions in Catalan, and I sold the rights to a cartoon." The video was posted on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at which time Nadal sold rights to several publishing houses in other countries: "we are actually having this book [sic] into seven major countries and we are very proud." He reveals that a "major movie is going to be made with a director of good name and deals are now in process." Clearly, this book

has been the key to the success of Plataforma Editorial and vice versa, as he confirms: “I’m very proud to say we are the publishers of *Bombay Smiles* and this is by and large our blockbuster and bestseller and the book which is pretty much linked to the history and the foundation of Plataforma Editorial.”<sup>134</sup> The success that Nadal describes has continued, and at an equally rapid rate. At the time of writing this dissertation, the book is in its 22<sup>nd</sup> edition, in other words, 12 editions in seven years. No movie has been made to date, but the Plataforma-Sanllorente alliance produced a few other products: a comic book version of *Sonrisas de Bombay* and a photo book of the slums of Mumbai assembled jointly with a known photographer. This is the success Nadal was trying to replicate by commissioning Alba de Toro to write her story.

This information is important for this study for a reason. It demonstrates that the key to Sanllorente’s success has been his ability to take advantage of the commodification of daily life, publishing in particular, at the cusp of the explosion of global mass media in the late 2000s in order to garner interest in his project. Youtube and Facebook did not exist before 2005 and smartphone proliferation was just starting. It was not until the early 2000s that communications technology gradually developed into a major part of global society's infrastructure. However, the key is the telling of the story—without it there would be no donors, hence, no NGO (and no development career for Sanllorente). Philanthropists in this study stand at the center of everything; they are the persons who undertook the philanthropic work, set up the NGOs that funded them and, after some time, they wrote a book about this. With the carefully crafted stories of their pursuits and

<sup>134</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R1hyxYWOt8>

the “authorized versions” of themselves as protagonists, they fashioned a hook designed to captivate their readers sufficiently to fund their projects. Thus their stories—made into publishing products—are the key to the success of their philanthropic endeavors (and also their personal and professional lives). This, along with the networks of products, projects, blogs, videos, websites, competitions, workshops, interviews, et cetera, is development commodified. Furthermore, because they are the philanthropists, authors, protagonists and producers of commodities all in one, this is the reason why their stories matter. Their real-life existence gives credibility to the projects of their NGOs, and this is vital because money is involved. Having a successful career as a recognized, prize-worthy, professional philanthropist appeals to the rational side of marketing, thus lending an air of trustworthiness to their fund-raising efforts.

If the objective of telling the story is to shine a light on the NGOs in order to get donors, there is one important question that remains: How exactly do Sanlloriente, Subirana and de Toro propel their readers to transition into doers of philanthropy? Knowing this mechanism is important as it translates into financial success for the NGOs (and their life-improving projects for the chosen few hundred). We can gain an insight into this mechanism by examining the reaction of the readers to these stories. This brings us to the territory of reception.

### **Reception**

This chapter’s content—books as physical objects; the context in which they are created, crafted, marketed and consumed; the socio-economic framework in which they

are inserted; and the various philanthropic products intimately linked to that framework—all take us far from literary analysis. A few clarifications about the three components of the experience of reading are needed: the text, the reader and the context of the act of reading. Reception has to do with how texts (and other works of art) have been interpreted, and methods of interpretation have undergone many changes historically. Janet Staiger in her study of the reception of Hollywood films has summarized different interpretations and divided them into three groups of approaches.<sup>135</sup> We take her context-activated theories group to be the most relevant to this study that goes much beyond the text itself. Unlike text-activated theories, which assert that meaning is “in” the text for the reader to interpret, and unlike reader-activated theories, which assert that the meaning is “in” the readers’ interpretation, context-activated theories suggest that meaning is “in” the contextual event of reading, in the interaction between the text and the reader and the circumstances in which that interaction takes place.(48) The belief is that the text, the reader and the historical circumstances surrounding the act of reading are all equally significant in creating meaning. The interpretive event occurs at the intersection of

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<sup>135</sup> According to Janet Staiger. *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992): 1) Text-activated group of theories believe that the text exists and will set up what the reader will do; the reader is constituted by the text or by social and literary conventions, and meaning or significance is “in” the text for the reader to interpret. The question it asks is: what are the specific features of the text? What will the ideal or competent reader do when encountering those features?; 2) Reader-activated group of theories believe that text exists, but the reader, as an individual, can greatly redo or appropriate that text, the reader is constituted by social or literary conventions or psychologies, and the meaning or significance is “in” the readers’ interpretation. The question it asks is: what are the causes for the variety of readers? They examine features of readers and those features’ consequences for the reading experience; 3) Context-activated group of theories believe that the text and the reader are equally significant in creating meaning, historical context is very significant for the interaction, meaning or significance is “in” that contextual intersection. This differs from the other two by looking at contexts for reading experiences; thus historical circumstances become central to the account. Which historical factor matter, however, depends upon the writer’s model of causality as well as the event being studied. The question it asks is: what contextual factors account for the interpretation?

multiple determinants: membership in classes, strata, or groups; material conditions of livelihood and environment; education, age, gender, nationality, race, sexual preference, and political beliefs as well as circulating discursive propositions and ideologies.<sup>136</sup> The question this approach to reception asks is this: What contextual factors account for the interpretation? As Manfred Naumann says, readers and texts “mutually permeate each other” and “the concrete individual reception of the work is always a social process mediated by many factors” (107).

Earlier in the chapter we commented on the intended readers, stipulating what characteristics they are imagined to have. We distinguished them from the actual readers, which are largely unknown and not thought to be relevant in a critical literary study. However, today’s technology allows us today to take a look at some of them. Thus, what are the reader reactions to the “testimonio” stories that have been crafted for them? Sanllorente’s book will serve as an example, as it has an extensive comments section both online and in print. “Comentarios de los lectores” announces: “Su opinión es importante. En futuras ediciones estaremos encantados de recoger sus valoraciones sobre el libro.” What follows are several pages of readers’ opinions, which number 38 in the 16th edition used in this study. The front cover announces that the book has more than 140 comments on the website. Since the current edition of the book is the 22<sup>nd</sup>, these numbers must now be even higher. Unsurprisingly, all comments chosen for printing are supremely positive, consonant with their objective of confirming the story’s claims of heroism. The readers

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<sup>136</sup> Staiger, *Interpreting*, 47: “in every case, the self-images and personal associations constructed by the reader in the reading event and the relation of those self-images and associations to abstract categories of determinations matter more than any theoretical array within which a researcher might be inclined to posit the reader.”



thank Sanllorente for his work and for sharing his story, congratulate him on the book and invoke God's blessings for him and his deeds. They report devouring the book in one day, say they admire him and describe with ardent epithets how they feel inspired by Sanllorente's philanthropism. In this way, they consecrate the image of the hero of philanthropy presented in the work itself. Several promise to visit his NGO in India or report having already done so. Sanllorente's character is judged in extremely positive terms and he is taken to embody morality and goodwill: "un referente, modelo ejemplar de persona." (201) Most of the commentators are women—only nine of the 38 are men.<sup>137</sup> There are two couples, one family and even a youth group from Argentina that shares a similar ideology. The "jóvenes socialistas" declare they wish to contribute to the cause of Sonrisas de Bombay despite their miniscule budget because they are "compañeros en la lucha pacífica contra la injusticia y la miseria." (201)

The following comment encapsulates all of the above sentiments, showing the fervor that Sanllorente's story stirs in many readers:

Me parece uno de los libros de testimonios más maravillosos del mundo. Jaume me parece una persona extraordinaria y, aunque no le gusta de le alaben por lo que está haciendo, me parece un verdadero Dios lo que está haciendo con esos niños... Ojalá haya más personas como él, y ahora estoy seguro que no moriré sin ir a Bombay y visitar aquella maravillosa obra, y echar una mano si es necesario, que supongo hacen falta muchas manos. Un beso Jaume y te mando todo mi apoyo y toda mi energía desde Madrid. Ya te quiero sin conocerte. ATALAYA, 8 de enero 2008 (198-99)

This comment, along with the many others, clearly shows that the book has made these readers feel something exceedingly powerful: empathy, pity, a sense of injustice.

<sup>137</sup> The strong feminine following count can be explained in part by the fact that Sanllorente is a pleasant-looking not-married man in his 30s. The book is about his life and there are several pictures of him inside it. He also presents his book in person and appears has a strong media presence.

If these stories evoke feelings, this is because they were crafted to do so, as was shown previously. As practitioners of development they are not professional writers—they tell these stories of development to garner interest in and financial support for their projects. For this reason, as we pointed out, storytelling is crucial. It can be said that without a story there are no followers, in any context. Religion serves as a good example of this claim—what is a Bible or the Quran if not a collection of stories that inspire not only a following, but also a reaction? This reaction goes beyond heartfelt pity and empathy since philanthropy needs donors. Thus, the stories are crafted to make the readers want to “do something” about the misery described. The stories make them feel like they want to get involved. Several readers support the work carried out by the NGO *Sonrisas de Bombay* by becoming contributors or by simply purchasing the book—in Althusser’s terms, they are interpellated as subjects in the ideology of development. Others go further, like this reader who reports wanting to contribute to Sanllorente’s project:

así que, por 15 euros, solo 15 euros, sé que algún niño sonreirá, y que nosotros tres habremos contribuido a ello. No contenta con esto, QUE NO ES NADA, voy a empezar una cadena a través de todos mis contactos, dando a conocer el Proyecto de Jaume, y a invitar a que compren el libro. Que apadrinen a una de estas preciosidades y que sigan la cadena. Es probable que alguien abra su corazón. Sé que alguien lo hará. Os invito a todos a hacer lo mismo. [...] DOLORS (204)

The emotional response to the story of disadvantaged children is coupled with the desire to intervene. One family likens their reaction to India’s poor to that on Sanllorente in the book—feeling “lo que tu cuentas en tu libro”, they sponsor two children upon return. The book becomes a catalyst for solidary action. Through their published comments, those who engage in it extend the invitation to others, forming a chain reaction, like the one

described by the reader, is envisioned. The imagined community of philanthropists is growing. For Plataforma Editorial and Sanllorente's NGO, it is also a community of potential consumers of its many philanthropic products.

In fact, the success of philanthropic commodities guarantees the community of philanthropists will grow. As with any area of commodified society, the rule is that it needs to expand. New products and projects are constantly provided for the philanthropic consumers eager to "do something", and this requires the continual production of stories that fuel the emotional impetus that is at the core of that desire. This production requires philanthropic writers. The authors in this study present their "testimonios" as a once-in-a-lifetime activity performed for the purpose of chronicling their lives so that their stories can serve as backgrounds for their NGOs. They do not present themselves as writers of philanthropy, just as they do not present themselves as writers of travel. In fact, they emphasize their lack of experience and the need for help, thanking a whole editorial team involved in the telling of their stories. This is the case with Subirana and de Toro.

However, a review of Sanllorente's life online reveals the presence of a personal website, which is independent of the charity Sonrisas de Bombay and Plataforma Editorial and in which he is presented as an "autor." The website [jaumesanllorente.com](http://jaumesanllorente.com)<sup>138</sup> lists several books published by other publishers, mostly different editorial branches of the mega-company Planeta: the 2014 story of the 2013 collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, entitled *La costurera de Dacca* and published by Espasa, as well as *La canción de la concubina*, a 2011 story of human trafficking in the Philippines published by Booket.

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<sup>138</sup> [www.jaumesanllorente.com](http://www.jaumesanllorente.com)

There is also an autobiographical personal account from 2013, entitled *El poder de las sonrisas*, published by Conecta (an innovation-focused subset of Penguin Random House Publishing Group), in which Sanlloriente explains the personal transformation he underwent that led to, and the consequences that have followed from, his life-changing decision to move to India to do charity work.<sup>139</sup>

Sanlloriente’s decision to dedicate himself to telling more stories like those examined in this study—that is, stories from the development-themed sub-genre—promotes its professionalization. Just as there are professional travel writers, so Sanlloriente is an example of a writer who specializes in producing development content, crafted by a sector of the publishing field and packaged for consumption for compassionate readers who want to “do something.” He knows these “libros con autenticidad y estilo” will get him donors. This phenomenon is development—and literature—commodified. Since the time people first started writing about their travels, publishers have given them the means to do so, in ways that have changed over time. In the last century, “publishers [have] enable[d] them to continue travelling and writing.” (Speake 983) Today publishers are still the chief enablers of travel writers, both those who write about travel in general and those who write more specifically about travel in the context of philanthropy. Publishing plays a key role in making possible not only the writing but also the “developing”—travel writers’ projects would not have enough money

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<sup>139</sup> The second title “la fuerza transformadora de un sueño” reveals how an individual’s dream can turn into a collective reality, in a professional and committed team dedicated to working towards a Mumbai free of poverty and social injustice by means of effective and sustainable development projects. It’s also an homage to the persons, friends, coworkers and followers involved in the daily activities of the organization. It is also a look back at the failures and successes of the 10 year-long journey of working towards a more just Mumbai.

to go forward were it not for the publishers who mold the stories of “developing” efforts into salable commodities that produce donors. The key to Sanllorrente’s success—and to that of The White Savior Industrial Complex—has been establishing a close relationship between publishing, literature and development.

### **Development commodified**

As we pointed out, the response that is elicited by the carefully structured stories of development is so powerful that it leads to action in various forms. This is precisely why Sanllorrente, Subirana and Ferrer’s endeavors, as well as those of the entire White Savior Industrial Complex, are successful. This interpellation yields active participation in the ideology of developmentalism. This act of interpellation, which transforms readers into doers, is therefore the mechanism of ideology since, as we know, ideology exists only in praxis. However, a question remains: Why is it possible to get individuals in Spain to pay to improve the life of an unknown (dark) other in a faraway (savage) place. Why do Spanish readers feel sympathy on such a large scale?

The answer to this question brings us back to the concept of “global consciousness” from the previous chapters. We have said that postmodernity is shaped by several factors that influence all realms of contemporary life: globalization, commodification and a perception of a society at risk. This mix combined with internet-technology creates an instantaneous awareness of- and a preoccupation with the world’s economic, social, environmental and political inequalities. In Chapter II we linked “global consciousness” to tourism in which it develops certain kinds of touristic niches, such as

“responsible”, “sustainable” or “moral” tourism. This modality of postmodern living manifests itself in the field of commodity production and consumption in the form of *corporate social responsibility*, otherwise known as CSR. CSR is “A company’s sense of responsibility towards the community and environment (both ecological and social) in which it operates.” (Business Dictionary) It often takes the form of philanthropy and volunteering by a company’s workers. This is why the philanthropists in this study’s corpus offer programs of direct corporate financial patronage and employee participation. Studies have shown that most consumers believe companies doing charity will receive a positive response<sup>140</sup> and that consumers are loyal and willing to spend more on these types of retailers. This is why Spanish businesses are supporting the projects of Spanish NGOs, such as those described in our narratives, in India and Nepal.

The “global consciousness” of wealth inequality between nations has also manifested itself via the “fair trade” movement. This phenomenon aims to achieve better trading conditions for developing countries by purchasing products from producers there at higher prices in order to stimulate higher social and environmental standards. It is generally seen as a more efficient way of promoting sustainable development than traditional charity and aid. However, CSR practices are not without criticism—not only are the results counterproductive in many cases; the process of CSR itself is seen by many of its detractors as a pernicious legitimizer of capitalism. What began as a social movement against uninhibited corporate power has transformed into a “business model”

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<sup>140</sup> Jens Hainmueller, Michael J. Hiscox, and Sandra Sequeira. "Consumer Demand for Fair Trade: Evidence from a Multistore Field Experiment." (*Review of Economics and Statistics* 97.2 (2015).) 242-56.

or a “risk management” device that generates sales. The extent to which these types of corporate activities drive sales specifically to benefit corporate profit is revealed by this passage from the website of Unilever, one of the world’s top consumer product companies: “Our sustainable living brands are growing 30% faster than the rest of our business and delivered nearly half our total growth in 2015.”<sup>141</sup> It is for this reason perhaps that Unilever is ranked #1 in social responsibility by the *Fortune 500* magazine.<sup>142</sup> The motivation behind CSR today may be more business-driven than empathy-driven; however, this possibility is not fundamental to this study. More crucial is the realization that all of these sustainable living endeavors are the result of a general awareness of inequality that forms part of present-day times. It is, thus, within this context that we need to consider the activities described in our narratives and the reactions to them. It is in this context of apparent empathy and solidarity that individuals open their wallets to financially support others in poorer parts of the world.

We have said that powerful feelings of empathy are generated by the stories of individual philanthropy and that emotions are the motivating factors that transition “globally conscious” individuals from readers to doers who actively contribute money to improving life elsewhere. “Doing something” about the misery in the “developing” world—in whatever way they can—makes them feel useful. However, this global empathy is quite new. The “global consciousness” has not been permeating our reality—or the fields of philanthropy and development—for long. Subirana affirms as much in a

<sup>141</sup> <https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/sustainable-living-news/news/sustainable-living-brands-leading-unilever-growth.html>

<sup>142</sup> <http://fortune.com/worlds-most-admired-companies/unilever-41/>

statement at the end of her story: “Se habían puesto de moda los piercings, los tatuajes y las ropas de Nepal. Se hablaba de cosas que antes estaban casi prohibidas: yoga, budismo, meditación.” (361) Without the “moda” for all things Indian, the efforts of a handful of philanthropists (Vicente Ferrer, a direct precursor to our contemporary protagonist-authors who started his efforts in India in the late 1970s) were marginally known and limited in scope and finances. There was no “concienciación masiva por temas de ayuda al Tercer Mundo y la cooperación internacional,” which developed only when cultural appropriation of the “Orient” was completed in Spain in the 1990s and early 2000’s: “Oriente había entrado en Occidente con una fuerza arrebatadora, modificando esquemas en lo exterior y en lo interior.” (361) And it is in this moment that Subirana decided to write her story—because there was a receptive audience for it (2002): “Llegaba en el momento más idóneo para explicar mi experiencia y extender este mensaje: los odios están receptivos, las almas abiertas, millones de seres en todo el mundo se han infectado del virus positive y se manifiestan para combatir el mal.” (361) The key to manufacturing a product successfully is knowing that there is a market that demands it.

Thus, while empathy plays an important role in philanthropy as depicted in our narratives, it is not the only motivating factor. We had said that commodification of daily life is a feature of postmodernity and as such includes individual philanthropy and the whole field of development. We can now add that it is precisely because of the commodification of development that its ideology and praxis have gained in recognition and importance. Precisely because it has been commodified, philanthropy, along with other forms of sustainable living, has become “the thing to do” or “the way to be.” Being



engaged—in whatever way—in the enactment of “global consciousness” has become a “lifestyle” or, in other words, an identity (and a cool one). Empathy has been exploited and commodified, just like all other facets of life.

### **Identity Niche**

Lifestyles have to do with identity on a broader level, in terms of the relationship between the *self* and the *other*, than those discussed in the previous chapter. The concept of a lifestyle has also felt the impact of the forces of (post)modernity: whereas in industrial societies the crafting of a “lifestyle” occurred through a process of emulating elites, today “... modernized peoples, released from primary family and ethnic group responsibilities, organize themselves in groups around world views provided by cultural productions.” (MacCannell *The Tourist* 30) Cultural productions encompass all sorts of ideologies, attitudes and events ranging from ComiCon Conventions, to The Super Bowl, to vegan fests, to Burning Man and Lollapalooza, to Republican or Evangelical Conventions. Group formation takes place as participants of these social phenomena move closer together or further away based on their mutual understanding. Moreover, MacCannell points out that the direction of these dynamics is important given that “The group does not produce the world view, the world view produces the group.” (*Tourist* 30) In other words, society subdivides itself according to interests and these interests are expressions of adherents’ identities. In terms of this study specifically, when we say that sustainable living is “the thing to do” for many people today, we mean that it is an important identity that they share. The individuals buying Fair Trade products,

applauding CSR activities of Unilever or sponsoring the Sonrisas de Bombay, Eduqual or Vicente Ferrer philanthropic endeavors form an identity niche.

We have already seen this phenomenon played out in tourism. In the previous chapters we showed the field of tourism shaped by factors of postmodern life: globalization and commodification, which convert tourism into a series of touristic products, or in other words, touristic niches. We showed how touristic niches correspond to areas of interest, which in the case of our protagonists took on the forms of “poorism”, “voluntourism”, “danger-zone tourism” and “slum tourism.” Thus, in this context, group formation, which centers on interests in specific ways of traveling, is closely linked to identity formation. Tourism studies scholars Holland and Huggan in *Tourists with Typewriters* show the intimately close relationship between travel and identity formation in the contemporary world. Their extensive survey of recent adventure travel literature indicates the crucial role travel plays in articulating selfhood. Their important conclusion, that a journey allows the traveler to “discover” or consolidate an affiliation to a subculture, is echoed by another critic, Stephen Levine, who states: “Travel titles increasingly reflect the notion that identity niches correlate to separate modalities of travel, so that one may travel in a specifically masculine, feminine, black or gay or lesbian manner.” (28) Previously, we stated that our protagonists travel as *adventure development tourists*. We can now add that they and their followers and supporters—their readers and/or contributors to their projects—form an identity niche, which in turn forms part of the general mood of “global consciousness” that encompasses all of postmodern thinking and praxis. This is why the members of this imagined community buy their

books and get inspired by their stories, why they donate to their orphanages, schools and leprosy projects—because it is a lifestyle, an identity of a “globally conscious consumer.”

A simple book, such as any of those in this study’s corpus, can be the entry point that brings a person into the community of fellow armchair philanthropists. However, this ease of joining the community of “globally conscious consumers” is also a problem since identities today are not permanent—many can be assumed by any one person. Today there are many identities that can be assumed by any one person. Identities are multiple and fluid, as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman asserts. Identities may be chosen if they look promising, or discarded when they disappoint. They “are now as ‘mobile’ as the world itself, changeable and protean, elusive, difficult to hold, uncertain.” (207) This is because “People may still have fixed addresses, but the sources of their information, values, desires, dreams, Weltanschauung - do not.” (207)

That is why identities are not fixed to space but rather to ideas, lifestyles, cultural productions, interests, events. For Baumann this “fluidity” of identities largely depends on the power of mobility: “For those who can move at will, the experience is joyful and exhilarating” while “For those who are bound to the place, the experience is threatening and frightening - identities may be taken away with or without warning.” (207) Thus, this fluidity of identity is only for those who have the freedom to choose it: “as far as the control over own identity is concerned, globalization means empowerment for some, disempowerment for others.” (207) This divide between those with power/mobility and those without is at the core of development’s efforts to eliminate the wealth gap. Not only

does the wealthy part of the world exert power over the poor part in terms of resources and development; the rich also have authority over the poor's identity.

### **“Modern” vs. “Non-modern”**

Furthermore, this mobility-driven divide of the world into empowered vs. disempowered can be conceived as modern vs. non-modern. The underlying logic of the “developed” vs. “developing” binarism is the fundamental structure of our world, as MacCannell points out: “The deep structure of modernity is a totalizing idea, a modern mentality that sets modern society in opposition both to its own past and to those societies of the present that are pre-modern or un(der)developed.” (*Tourist* 9) His study analyzes this arrangement of contemporary society from within tourism, stating that this particular academic field is uniquely poised to reveal this otherwise hidden structure. MacCannell's study of modernity via tourism shows the search for authenticity that underlies our social lives and interactions. This quest is directed at *otherness* and *elsewhere*, driven by the assumption that “authenticity” does not exist in modernity itself. The opposing entity—non-modernity—is thus designated as the locus of all that is understood as “authenticity.” It is precisely the non-modern world that the stories of the philanthropic endeavors in this study's corpus show. Our authors-philanthropists specifically chose India, Nepal and Costa Rica because they are not modern and, for this reason, are believed to be more authentic. This rationale also explains the intermittent mixture of exoticization and condemnation that appears in descriptions of these places. Thus, the “developing” world is the necessary locus—not accidental—of the philanthropic endeavors of our author-

protagonists, precisely because of its condition of “non-modernity” which makes it seem “authentic” and full of adventures (as shown in previous chapters). If this seems obvious, let us point out that philanthropy can be done without leaving one’s country.

This modern vs. non-modern arrangement of the world is not accidental. It is erected consciously by the “moderns” to fulfill their needs, and it has had many conceptual incarnations: “savage” vs. “civilized”, “the colonizer” vs. “the colonized”, Said’s “Oriental” vs. “Occidental”, etc. In its basic terms, it is the *self* vs. *other* binarism. “No other major social structural distinction (certainly not that between the classes) has received such massive reinforcement as the ideological separation of the modern from the non-modern world.” (9) The “non-modern” is a vital part of the “modern” life. It is ingrained in it. (9) As we saw previously, the *self* defines itself in terms of the *other* but in the process; it defines itself as the opposite of the *other*. These two parts are mutually co-dependent since the *other* is an integral part of the *self*—as we showed, our author-protagonists would not be able to fashion themselves as *intrepid white saviors* in their fictions if they did not in the process portray the recipients of their philanthropic deeds as savage enough to need help but also noble enough to deserve and appreciate it. Thus the uneven structure of development described above is precisely the key to its existence. Development could not exist in a different configuration; it is our claim. The readers, who are moved to tears by the stories of heroic adventures in philanthropy, would be denied their chance to support the causes of the author-protagonists and in the process claim for themselves a place in the identity niche of “globally conscious philanthropic supporters,” thereby living out their own fantasies through the texts.

We pointed out the “modern” vs. “non-modern” division of contemporary reality. When, within development it takes on the form of the “developed” vs. “developing” binarism, it is in a top-down orientation, one that is related to *charity*, from the Latin “*caritas*.” The word “charity” is laden with historical context, having its origin in the Bible, from the Latin translation of the original Greek “*Deus caritas est.*”<sup>143</sup> In Christian theology “charity” refers to the universal love of god and men.<sup>144</sup> It is present in most religions<sup>145</sup>, and has formed part of the Christian tradition since Christianity’s beginning. Charity underwent a particular flourishing in the 12th and 13th centuries in Medieval Europe: rich patrons began to found leprosaria and hospitals, and new religious orders emerged dedicated to this type of charitable work for the poor and the sick. In Spain the idea of “*caridad*” established itself and for many centuries reigned as an important social obligation of the Catholic nobility and bourgeoisie. Within the Catholic morality of that time, the poor provided a valuable service to the rich, who operated under the mandate to be charitable. Thus, despite the original early Christian intention of universal love, the practice quickly took on a vertical and financial orientation, whereby those who have would give to those who have not. Charity is sometimes equated to solidarity. Although the two words often appear interchangeable, the relationships they represent are different. Solidarity presupposes horizontality, as Eduardo Galeano has famously pointed out:

A diferencia de la solidaridad, que es horizontal y se ejerce de igual a igual, la caridad se practica de arriba hacia abajo, humilla a quien la recibe y jamás altera ni un poquito las

<sup>143</sup> “*Theos agapē estin*” (1 John 4:8) appears in the bible, but the Greek concept of *agapē* dates back to Homer meaning the love of gods, that is distinguished from “*philō*” the brotherly love of friends and “*eros*”, romantic and sexual love.

<sup>144</sup> In Christianity *Agape* is considered to be the love originating from God or Christ for humankind.

<sup>145</sup> *Tzedakh* in Judaism, *Zakat* in Islam, *Dāna* in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism

relaciones de poder: en el mejor de los casos, alguna vez habrá justicia, pero en el alto cielo. Aquí en la tierra, la caridad no perturba la injusticia. Sólo se propone disimularla. (319)

Charity and solidarity are two fundamentally different ways to experience the *other*.

While the latter implies an equal, mutually benefitting exchange, the former assumes a position of superiority.

**CHAPTER V. DEVELOPMENT AND *ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL*  
LITERATURE — DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-DISCOURSE**

In the previous chapter, we examined the commodification of literature and its intersection with the field of international development. Switching lenses from literature and tourism to that of cultural studies, we were able to analyze the stories in this study's corpus from yet another angle: as books manufactured by publishing companies for their consumers. By examining the physical aspects of our books in the context of the NGOs they represent, as well as their products and services designed for their readers-consumers, we showed not only a close relationship between publishing, development and literature but the utility of this subgenre of literature to development's practical concerns.

In this chapter we will conclude our discussion of literature, travel and development and tie the three fields together. We will show their interlocked nature and complicity by means of discussing the discourse of development. We will reveal the neocolonial nature of the field by tracing its colonial roots. We will discuss the importance of non-scientific descriptions of development to both scientific and lay audiences, and show development's counter-discourse.

In the last chapter we pointed out the vertical structure of charity, the guiding principle of philanthropic work described in the narratives in this study and of the field of development itself. We saw Galeano contrast it with solidarity's horizontal orientation. He pointed out the fixed power structure of charity that "jamás altera ni un poquito las



relaciones de poder.” (319) Far from producing justice for its beneficiaries, Galeano argues, it humiliates them: “la caridad no perturba la injusticia. Sólo se propone disimularla.” (319) This paradoxical result seems to completely contradict both the message of the stories under our scrutiny and the idea behind of the White Savior Industrial Complex. While it is not the aim of this study to judge the efficacy of the real-life good deeds performed by the various charitable organizations and individuals in the long trajectory of both religious and laic acts of *caritas*, such is the objective of the growing anti-development movement which questions the underlying logic and the resultant praxis of the field. If the goals of the field of international development can be qualified as well-intentioned, what can possibly go wrong with their execution? Certainly the narratives we have been examining show successful implementation of good-deeds. Nevertheless, this is not the complete picture. The source of the field’s inherent inequality has to do with its very birth.

### **The Ugly Side of International Development**

As previously indicated, development was born in the aftermath of WWII in the spirit of general socioeconomic advancement of the newly liberated and/or formed countries. For this purpose, the new world order created institutions designed for this objective: United Nations, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (today, World Bank) and The International Monetary Fund. Taken as an emblematic starting point of the decades of efforts of putting into practice the idea of increasing global prosperity by means of socio-economic, environmental, health and financial

initiatives formulated for this purpose, Truman's inaugural address in 1949 gives a clue to the root of the problem with development's inherent inequality:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching *misery*. Their food is *inadequate*, they are *victims of disease*. Their economic life is *primitive* and *stagnant*. Their poverty is a *handicap* and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people ... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life ... what we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.

What is striking in this text is the depiction of poverty as wide-spread and in need of immediate action. At the core of Truman's statement is the perception of the world as one in dire need of urgent betterment and the sense of obligation to fulfill that objective. As Arturo Escobar explains in his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*: "The globalization of poverty entailed the construction of two thirds of the world as poor after 1945." (23) If defining individuals as poor is typically done by means of comparison with others who possess things, then the same approach was taken on a larger scale: countries world-wide were compared to a handful of affluent ones and defined in relation to the standards of wealth of the more economically advantaged nations, and the yardstick of comparison was found in the annual per capita income (*Encountering*). Escobar points out that, according to Wolfgang Sachs, the shift in the perception of poverty that occurred in the aftermath of WWII on a global scale, and was carried through thereafter, "was nothing more than the result of a comparative statistical operation." (9) Thus, as Escobar explains: "in 1948 when the World Bank defined as poor those countries with an annual per capita income below \$100." This action transformed "almost by fiat, two thirds of the world's peoples into

poor subjects.”, and if the problem was one of insufficient income, the solution was clearly economic growth. (Escobar *Encountering* 25-6) This is how international development was born.

If the statistical calculation is not enough to prove the abruptness with which the globalization of poverty took place, here is another one. The aftermath of WWII saw the dismantling of the last of the colonies—a process which had initiated a few decades earlier and saw its most significant steps after WWI. Thus, by the 1940s the world saw itself transformed in a significant way: a multitude of new countries that had emerged from the past empires were now filling geographical and political maps. However, albeit free, they were economically fragile. Ravaged by centuries of economic exploitation by the colonizers, the newly decolonized areas were at an often markedly low level of economic advancement. Thus, the statistical calculations which transformed the vast majority of the globe into economically inferior could not have been a surprise to the ex-colonizers since they themselves were responsible for having created this disparity (Escobar *Encountering*). What is ironic about the sense of surprise which permeates Truman’s speech at the “discovery” that most people live in conditions that are lesser than those of the small elite of rich states, is that these same “conditions approaching misery” existed prior to decolonization and were caused by the same actors, Escobar points out. The same “inadequate food” and disease existed in the colonies. However, they were not subjects of concern or motives for immediate remedial action—the colonizers didn’t care about poverty because nothing could be done to develop economically the countries they were exploiting. (Escobar *Encountering* 23)

Instead, Escobar explains, the colonizers idealized the poor by viewing their conditions as a matter of choice and by assigning positive value to frugality, humility and simplicity. This perception suited the beneficiaries of the colonial situation, but when it changed (its dissolution), so did their view of poverty. Having first denounced colonialism, the modern post-war world had to then modify the view of the former colonial subjects. Here again Truman’s speech sheds a light: “We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. *The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans.* What we envisage is a program of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing.”<sup>146</sup> The perception of the poor had to be adjusted: far from being a condition to be admired, poverty was no longer going to be ignored—the previously-exploited masses of people now could not be left to their own devices. Underlying Truman’s quote is a sense of responsibility for past actions, a condition that indicates that the newfound impetus to tackle global poverty was, perhaps, only partially motivated by the aura of humanitarianism that characterized the establishment of the UN and other post WWII institutions. A sense of accountability and guilt was also a factor in the invention of international development in the decade after decolonization.

Fixing the “primitive and stagnant” economic life (Truman) of the “poor” countries—a task to be done by the same agents who caused it—became the mission of the newly-formed discipline, a “discipline” in the Foucauldian sense and as such one with

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<sup>146</sup> My emphasis.

its own “discourse” (Foucault). In his seminal studies on this topic, Foucault investigates how certain representations become dominant and shape lastingly the ways in which reality is thought of and acted upon. His work on the dynamics of discourse and power in the representation of social reality, *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), shows how certain modes of thinking become pervasive and dominant, and, thus, end up disqualifying and de-authorizing other modes of thinking and acting. By the 1950s, the development discourse of transforming drastically two-thirds of the world in the pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress “has become hegemonic at the level of circles of power” and by the 1970s “development [has] achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary.” (Escobar *Encountering* 5) With this normalization of development discourse, many countries saw themselves as “underdeveloped” (the term “developing” was adopted much later) and saw the need to improve economically at any means. There was no alternative to the discourse of development and to the dream of extending prosperity and abundance to all the peoples of the planet, until recently in the 1990s when the questions of “how to” do it turned into “whether to” do it, according to Escobar. (5) In order to discuss what is wrong with the idea of spreading the “American dream” all over the world, the mechanism of this discourse must first be examined.

In his book, Escobar dissects the discourse of development as one based on the relationship between knowledge and power (along Foucauldian lines), and outlines three components that define development: the forms of knowledge through which it comes into being; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse. (7) It is through the last of these that people come to identify

themselves as “developed” or “underdeveloped”. Through this “efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power”, the discourse of development transformed the “poor” into the “assisted”, thus converting them into a problem to be fixed *via* development. (23) Progress became defined in terms of development strategies, as Escobar again makes clear. However, this change in perception of poverty had an important motivating factor: the post-war decolonization era saw a major transformation of economic interactions on the world scale *via* intensification of capitalism, according to the critic: “massive poverty in the modern sense appeared only when the spread of the market economy broke down community ties and deprived millions of people from access to land, water and other resources. With the consolidation of capitalism systematic pauperization became inevitable.” (Escobar 22) Under these circumstances—and for this reason—development discourse found a fruitful ground, and was consolidated in the following decades. The “problematization of poverty” was the initial step in a process, which shortly thereafter saw the professionalization of development knowledge and the institutionalization of development practices. Moreover, all of it was related to a change in representation—poverty was mapped, geographically and politically, and designated as the “Third World”.

The US emerged from WWII as the uncontested leader of the newly-shaped political, economic arena, but its hegemonic stance was soon challenged by the consolidation of the communist *foci*: in the Soviet Union and in China. Corresponding areas of influence (political and economic) emerged and the world soon entered the Cold War. With it came a major shift in how the world was imagined: it became divided into

three conceptual areas of political and economic competition and activity. While the “First World” (non-communist industrialized countries) battled an ideological war with the “Second World” (industrialized communist countries), the rest of the globe (non-industrialized poor countries) was labeled the “Third World,” and relegated to the sidelines (though not always, as it often saw itself as the stage for Cold War confrontations). This new geopolitical representation gave the less wealthy countries a new importance in the hegemonic competition for extending areas of political, ideological and economic control as both ideological blocks searched for cheap resources needed for their growth, Escobar points out. In the US, the consolidated modern capitalism demanded the acquisition of new markets and consumers, and the new “politics of poverty” allowed for it by turning the poor into objects of knowledge and management. (23) The “Third World”, with its defining trait of poverty (now in negative terms as lazy and irresponsible), became the subject of study, control and assistance of all sorts: education, childbearing solutions, hygiene lessons, health assistance, etc.—a process often defined as “infantilization” (23). A whole discipline was born to deal with this new social category of people and countries. Development was invented as a solution for the problems of the “Third World”—a solution which simultaneously satisfied the needs of the “First World”.

According to postcolonial critics, development became a new strategy to gain hold of countries and their resources—one that satisfied the needs of the West and one which the Western countries judged to be a normal course of evolution and progress. By conceptualizing progress in such terms, development became a powerful strategy for

normalizing the world, for the purpose of acquiring new markets for the investment of surplus capital and satisfying the need for raw materials to support the growing capacity of the Western industries. (23) Seen in this way, development is a prolongation of colonialism with its key features; it is based on a feeling of superiority over the dominated peoples, of an uncontested right to the resources in their space, but with a different discursive framework—one that justifies its actions as humanitarianism rather than unabashed exploitation. Modernity requires a subtler message but the reality remains the same: the wealthier nations (where the ideas of development originate) impose their industrial and economic structures on poorer nations (where the ideas are put into praxis) in order for the latter to become consumers of developed nations' goods and services, thus establishing a client-service relationship. This is the criticism that development ideology faces today (although primarily within academia, as development remains an active area of political-economic praxis).

The uneven relationship at the heart of development is not only ideological. Since its beginnings, the field's praxis has been unfavorably arranged by the "developed" countries for the rest of the world. Although concerned about finding a solution for the poor nations of the new world order after WWII, the main preoccupation of the US was actually centered elsewhere: in Western Europe, and on a different project—its reconstruction. A huge aid package (19 billion USD in the years 1945-50) was implemented (via the Marshall Plan) for the purpose of rebuilding, stabilizing and strengthening Western economies, Escobar notes. This was done in an unprecedented way: without seeking any economic benefit, for the first time in history. Despite its



concern for the wellbeing of all peoples of the globe, the US and the inventors of development did not award the same treatment to the poor nations they were so eagerly trying to “develop”. All of the “Third World” together received only 150 million USD in aid, and for a very different reason: not to grow and strengthen (a goal that benefits the “Third World”) but to create “the right climate” (Truman) for the investment of capital (one that benefits the “First World”). (Escobar, *Encountering* 26) This meant: curbing nationalism, curbing and controlling the Left and controlling the working class and peasants. (26) The IBFRD<sup>147</sup> and the IMF were created to achieve this objective, but rather than by means of giving money away as in the case of Western Europe, they did it by lending it. (26) In this way, development fell short from the outset by creating a relationship of dependency between the poor and the rich nations, one that greatly benefited the latter and little the former. This is the inherent neocolonialist nature of international development, and it was made possible by forcing a shift in representation and by disallowing a natural course of economic and social development. Instead, a top-down, technocratic, culturally-imperialistic and ethnocentric strategy of development was imposed to match the level already achieved by the “developed” nations. The success of development lay in standardizing this discourse—turning it into the only possible and “natural” reality, a process Foucault calls “normalization” (*Discipline*).

It is for this reason that in the recent years the field has been questioning itself regarding the legitimacy of the theoretical framework driving its practices, now seen as exploitative. It is not only anthropologists, such as Sachs and Escobar (whose research

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<sup>147</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

has been taken as the backbone of the post-developmental view presented herein), who question the assumptions at the core of international development, but also the actors within the field. Textbooks used to educate development professionals—such as Andrew Sumner’s (together with Tribe) *International Development Studies: Theory and Methods in Research and Practice*—explain the reasoning of the post-development critique: “the ‘post-modern’ position is that ‘development’ is a ‘discourse’ (a set of ideas) that actually shapes and frames ‘reality’ and power relations. It does this because the ‘discourse’ values certain things over others ...: those who do not have economic assets are viewed as ‘inferior’.” (14) This is the same notion of superiority today that was at the core of colonialism over a century ago.

To better understand in what way development is a continuation of colonialism, it is useful to refer to Homi Bhabha’s explanation of the theoretical framework behind colonialism:

[colonial discourse] is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a “subject peoples” through the production of knowledge in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. ... the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. ... I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a “subject nation”, appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity. (9)

Here, the connection of colonialism to development becomes clear. First, the discourse of development created a space for a “subject peoples” (changed the “poor” to the “assisted”). Then, it set forth the production of knowledge about them—strategies of helping the “underdeveloped” improve which actually benefitted the “developed” nations, justifying this maneuver in terms of “infantilization” of the poor and by reframing it as a

“secular theory of salvation”. In this way, by being turned into a “subject nation”, the “Third World” became governed, neutralized and controlled *via* development which “appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity.” (Escobar, *Encountering* 52)

Not illogically, the outcome of this domination is similar to that of colonialism: vast destruction and oppression of multitudes of people. In his book, Escobar shows concrete examples in various countries of the failure of putting into practice the development theory, concluding: “the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression.” (52) Negative outcomes of development—contrary to the ideology that drives them—are the reason why some development critics are calling for an end to it altogether, proposing other solutions.<sup>148</sup> Today, in times of post-modernity, post-colonialism and subaltern studies, in the times of denouncing colonialism in the past and scrutinizing the present for any remaining vestiges of it, there persist, nevertheless, many areas of both theory and social praxis that continue to be infused with an air of ethnocentric superiority. International development is one of them, despite the humanitarian nature of its objectives. We have been studying how it is depicted in literature.

Following Escobar’s three components of development’s discourse, it can be concluded that the narratives in this study’s corpus are one of the forms of knowledge

<sup>148</sup> See: Escobar, Arturo. "Beyond the Third World : Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and AntiGlobalisation Social Movements." *Third World Quarterly (Print)*, 2004, pp. 207-230.

through which discourse on development comes into being. The NGOs described in them, together with their supporting fans, are the system of power that regulates its practice. They are instruments of development discourse that uphold the “developed” vs. “developing” divide, allowing the readers to recognize themselves as part of the former. Thus, from this it can be concluded that literature participates in creating and maintaining the official development discourse. It participates in normalizing this discourse, thus upholding the inherent neocolonialist nature of international development. In this way, literature is complicit in maintaining the tight relationship between knowledge and power. These assertions are made based on Escobar’s qualitative and historical analysis of the field of development from within cultural anthropology. Let us now consider it from within the field of literature.

### **Discourse of Innocence**

In this study, we have examined, from within different fields, various features of development praxis and ideology in a collection of stories written by Spanish actors of development. By describing the efforts to combat different facets of poverty in selected developing countries, these narratives contribute to the general knowledge on development. Escobar links the birth of development’s ideology to a shift in representation from the “poor” to the “underdeveloped” and “assisted”. The narratives in this study contribute to this discourse by showcasing the founding and maintenance of organizations set up sole purpose of providing know-how, methodology and resources in countries deemed as insufficiently developed politically, economically and socially, in

comparison with Europe. The central figure of both these stories and organizations is the European expert who orchestrates the “underdeveloped” country’s path to progress. In this way, Sanllorente’s, Subirana’s and de Toro’s texts participate in normalizing this discourse, as do their NGOs by engaging donors, volunteers and consumers of a multitude of development-related programs, products and experiences created for them. This is the obvious way that the literature we are scrutinizing contributes to development’s discourse, to justifying the field’s very existence by showing a vision of development that works. This positive depiction works only by necessarily hiding the ethnocentric, self-serving and neocolonial nature of the field. This “authorized” and benevolent version of development is a strategy that remits back the Age of Exploration and Pratt’s idea of the “discourse of innocence”.

The cult of the explorer died centuries ago in the process of decolonization and in the aftermath of the two World Wars. Professional scientists took the place of explorers and, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was nothing left to be discovered, but the figure of the explorer has not disappeared. The desire for exploration and adventure has persisted until today. As modern life brought the separation of work and leisure time, tourism largely filled the latter, serving as the locum of attempts to realize the desire for the pursuit of heroic adventures, as shown in previous chapters. International development serves as perfect location for realizing the desires of the adventure development tourism. Moretti, following Bakhtin states that “without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible” (100). Just as “in modern European novels, what happens depends a lot on where it happens”, so the contemporary adventure development tourism stories

happen in a specific space—in “developing” countries. Decolonization and the aftermath of the two World Wars made the overt and violent reification of the West’s immense self-belief in its intellectual and moral superiority over the rest of the world “increasingly unpalatable” (62), as Thompson affirms. Nevertheless, today’s politically-correct world that prohibits overt expressions of ethnocentric superiority has a place for it—in the “developing” world. Development praxis today serves as a perfect context for living out fantasies of both adventure and moral superiority. What fuels this contemporary desire is the past of travel literature.

Nineteenth-century adventure narratives became the “energizing myth of the empire” as they reinforced prevailing notions that the world was ripe to be conquered. Our adventure development travelers rely precisely on this notion to stimulate interest in their stories of philanthropic deeds. In fact, some scholars, such as Charles Sugnet, have argued that many twentieth-century travel writers “still arrogate[s] to himself the rights of representation, judgment, and mobility that were effects of empire” (75). The narratives under our scrutiny reserve for themselves both these privileges, whereby well-to-do European selves describe travel undertaken into the country of the underprivileged other. By readily assuming these imperialistic privileges, our narratives show that, there still persists a certain type of cultural nostalgia, “a thinly disguised desire to resurrect the imperial past.” (Levin 5)

The development-themed narratives in this study evidence this desire by depicting protagonists as bravely overcoming danger and lawlessness of the dangerous world of misery. In the process, they project the feeling that this type of world is ripe for their

conquest and exploration. As the colonial explorers depicted the New World, they depict the developing world as static and yielding to their “developing” mission (like the natives to the “civilizing mission” of the colonial times). This world is awaiting them so that they can fulfill their self-assigned role of intrepid white savior, without objections because it is sanctioned by destiny (in their view). Furthermore, it is also authorized by the developed-vs.-developing-world structure (like the empire-vs.-colonies structure of the past). This perilous context converts their development work into extreme form of adventure.

Writing about their own endeavors, adventure development tourists borrow tropes from colonial travel literature to mold themselves in the image of those classic heroes of exploration as intrepid white saviors. In this way, travel, literature and development come together in contemporary discourse of development.

Furthermore, by presenting their protagonists as modern day explorer-missionaries dedicated to bringing progress to the wilderness of poverty, the narratives under our scrutiny deemphasize touristic curiosity and the pursuit of adventure.

Understatement becomes the mechanism of discourse creation. This is the reason why the stories we are scrutinizing are perceived as testimonies of philanthropy, rather than stories of adventure travel. As Pratt shows in her study of colonial travel literature, this procedure is not new. Although the “seeing-men” engaged in gathering scientific data were perceived as non-political, their “naturalizing” was not as “neutral” as it seemed. Pratt shows how the international scientific expedition of the Age of Exploration and Colonization became one of “Europe’s proudest and most conspicuous instruments of expansion.” (38) In the second half of the 18th century, it was “a magnet for the energies

and resources of intricate alliances of intellectual and commercial elites all over Europe.”

(38) This seemingly neutral knowledge, gathered in an effort to systematize nature, represents not only a “European discourse about non-European worlds” but also an “urban discourse about non-urban worlds, and a lettered, bourgeois discourse about non-lettered, peasant worlds,” according to Pratt (33) In the same way, contemporary narratives of development endeavors, such as those of Spaniards in India, Nepal and Costa Rica, represent discourses about these places and peoples.

Similar neutrality was claimed by another branch of colonial literature. The previously-mentioned “sentimental literature” which focused on the domestic sphere. Pratt shows how stories of sexual exploitation of colonial subjects were presented as allegories of romantic love—with the colonial subjects portrayed as willing participants. Similarly, today’s development-themed stories portray the beneficiaries of philanthropic endeavors as happy recipients of “assistance”. Pratt shows that both the “informational” and the “sentimental” narrative registers of colonial times subjected the native people and culture to mystification. The former depicted the landscape while generally ignoring the presence of human subjects, and the latter exaggerated the degree of reciprocity and exchange between European and native. Both types of travel narratives presented colonial exploitation in a way that disguised fundamentally unbalanced relations of power. Today’s stories of development endeavors, much like the “informational” and “sentimental” stories of colonial times, depict and codify the uneven power structure at the core of development.



In other words, in the same way that travel writing of the colonial era was implicated in colonialism through the colonizers' written representations of the colonized, travel writing today functions in much the same way. The imperial metropolis has always seen itself as the center that defines the periphery, whether through "the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development" (8), as Pratt shows. Like the travel and exploration writing of the past, today's development-themed narratives produce "the rest of the world" for European and North American readership. Travel writing, among other institutions, is heavily organized in the service of that imperative [to produce]", Pratt concludes—as is "much of European literary history." (8) In the past, travel writing energized the legend of the empire, framed in terms of the civilizing mission; similarly, today's stories of *intrepid white saviors* energize the myth of development's power to transform. The colonial discourse was expressed in terms of three Cs: Civilization, Christianity and commerce. Today, development discourse is expressed in terms of developing *primitive* and *stagnant* conditions in the part of the world that lives in misery. According to this discourse, "poverty is a *handicap*". Just as in the past, contemporary travel writing in the context of development contains codified messages that foment the field's ideology. It also energizes travels and development praxis, and written descriptions.

Just as colonial travel writing concealed "the values that underwrote the greatest non-reciprocal non-exchange of all time, the Civilizing Mission (Pratt 85), so development narratives such as ours, hide the top-down structure of the field that feigns to be based on solidarity rather than charity. Stories like those in this study direct the view

towards the individual's heroism, obfuscating the uneven nature of the relationship at the center of the development "contact zone". They also hide the self-serving aspect of this type of self-fashioning and of the very philanthropic praxis depicted.

We saw Escobar expose the uneven structure of development praxis designed to systemically prolong neocolonial exploitation—the utilization of the powerless by the powerful. This process of unveiling parallels that of Pratt's, which exposed colonial travel literature's masking of radically asymmetrical power relations designed to block guilt out of European consciousness. She showed how "discourses of innocence" encoded and legitimated the aspirations of economic expansion and empire, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (85). Today development discourse claims its own innocence. The twentieth century has constructed the field of economic and political exploitation based on identical asymmetry of power disguised as virtuousness, via a discourse which mystifies its exploitative aims by presenting itself in philanthropic terms: practitioners of development discourse aim to demonstrate that they provide a chance at abundance to the large part of the world that—allegedly—lacks that chance. The act of exploitation is presented as one of equalization and reciprocity. We have been showing that much like the travel writing of colonial times, the development-themed narratives of today rely on a "discourse of innocence" to veil and, hence, to prolong exploitation, in a clean-conscience manner—a condition that is more necessary now, in the shadow of the professed post-modern belief in global egalitarianism. Like the colonial texts analyzed by Pratt, the fictions in this study's corpus "underwrite" the neocolonialist, appropriative relations, which today take the form of international development.

### Counter-Discourse?

Pratt's study identifies another important aspect of colonial literature—its impact on readers. "Narrative travel accounts ... were essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger European public." (30) These texts determined the perception of the general public at the time. In the same way, today's development-themed travel writings influence how their public views the "developing" world and the "contact zones" between the two realms. In this way, *Sonrisas de Bombay*, *Una maestra in Katmandú*, *Los colores de un sueño*, *Pura vida* and other similar narratives shape the way development is perceived world-wide, by acting as a mediator between this field and the general public. By presenting stories of development praxis performed by self-made heroes of philanthropy sustained by a community of donors, they uphold and naturalize the discourse of development.

The importance of the mediation of the non-scientific discourse cannot be ignored. Any information, including fictionalized stories, contributes to the description of the field. It may seem that the official (textual, visual and statistical) information produced by scholars and practitioners of development is a better form of information than that in the narratives under our scrutiny, but perhaps surprisingly, quite the opposite may be true. The evidence of fiction's importance comes from the field itself, which is beginning to recognize non-scientific, fictionalized narratives as a powerful form of knowledge, both for the lay public and the scientific one. In an article entitled "The Fiction of Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge" development academics David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers and Michael Woolcock explain

the power of anecdotal description of development. They argue that “relevant fictional forms of representation can be valuably set alongside other forms of knowledge about development, such as policy reports or scholarly writing, as valid contributions to our understandings of development” (10). Referencing Walter Benjamin’s idea that all knowledge is a series of stories, Lewis, Rodgers, and Woolcock argue that fictional accounts of development-related issues “reveal different sides to the experience of development to more formal literature, and may sometimes actually do a ‘better’ job in conveying complex understandings of development in certain respects” (10). They remind their fellow development professionals that storytelling has existed within the social sciences as a long-acknowledged research and presentation method, citing ethnographic writing as example.

From their own field, they bring up a well-known success story on storytelling in development by one of the field’s most important entities, the World Bank. At the turn of the millennium, the organization collected “the voices of more than 60,000 poor women and men from 60 countries, in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves.” (“Voices”)<sup>149</sup> The participatory research initiative, called “Voices of the Poor”, is an example of how “stories” or “narratives” have successfully contributed to development knowledge in their field, according to Lewis et al. They argue before other development professionals that fiction, as a literary form, is a valid representational form of development knowledge. They claim it is more efficacious,

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<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20622514~menuPK:336998~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992,00.html>

because works of literary fiction are more engaging. They “often reach a much larger and diverse audience than academic texts and may therefore be more influential than academic work in shaping public knowledge and understanding of development issues” (8). Fiction is especially compelling because it evokes the essential “being there” (Geertz) quality that convinces a reader more than facts and statistics, the development scholars state. They conclude, “If more people get their ideas about development from fiction than from academic writing, then surely the fiction of development itself constitutes a potentially important site for the study of development knowledge” (10). This realization is particularly significant in light of the field’s funding structure. The objective of a large sector of the field of development—the UN Development Programme, the World Bank, the IMF, and others—is to generate donors that fund the various development initiatives crafted by large-scale development policy-setting actors. Although miniscule and individually-run, the NGOs associated to the development narratives in this study have the same objective of garnering donations, thus they rely on the same methods. Since a compelling tale has the power to attract broad audiences—both for small NGOs and large-scale agencies of the field—, “having a ‘good story’ is essential if one wants to make a difference in the world (as most people in development surely do)” (Lewis et al 5). Thus, successful storytelling is at the center of all forms of development knowledge creation, in other words: discourse.

Consequently, development-themed narratives, such as those in the present study, are instrumental in creating today’s development discourse. In the previous chapter we showed that cultural productions are instrumental to identity formation since interest

groups formulate around world views they represent. From this realization we can progress to noting the importance of the process to reality itself, which is socially constructed, as the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have shown in their seminal book *The Social Construction of Reality*. Language is central to that process given that it is “the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations” (39-40).

Through language, knowledge and people's conception of reality become embedded in the institutional fabric of society, they state. Reality is therefore a social construct driven by language which creates meaning.<sup>150</sup> Thus, social order is an ongoing human production in which international development is included. For this reason, fictional narratives such as those in this study significantly influence the way development is perceived and experienced. "Language is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether" (40), as Berger et al said, to which can be added: in particular when it is formulated into a “good story”.

In fact, cultural productions are an important form of discourse. They are the key factors in shaping current and future world views, according to MacCannell: “cultural productions are powerful agents in defining the scope, force and direction of a civilization. ... cultural experiences ... today are organized to generate specific feelings

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<sup>150</sup> The idea is that persons interacting in a social system create mental representations of each other's actions. These concepts become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be institutionalized. In the process of this institutionalization, meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people's conception of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore a social construct in which language has the key function of creating meaning.

and beliefs.” (29) In the previous chapter we showed the White Savior Industrial Complex at work—the efficacious methods utilized to fulfill its objectives: generating financial and ideological supporters of the saviors’ programs, selling their products, spreading their message across the society. In today’s technologically interconnected world, the tools of social communication—social media, picture and video sharing, online news outlets and others—significantly magnify the inherent power of cultural productions to shape world views. This likely is the reason that why this realm is also the place where a critique of development—counter-discourse has taken hold.

### **White Savior Industrial Complex**

Teju Cole<sup>151</sup> is one of several critics of the banalization of development in the social sphere. In an article in *The Atlantic* entitled “The White Savior Industrial Complex”<sup>152</sup>—he coined the term we have been using—he criticizes the emergence of a recent “activist” movement taken up by Western youth as well as numerous celebrities, pointing to the popularization of the *white saviorism* phenomenon on a larger scale. He questions their desire to “help” places of extreme humanitarian disasters, marking it as misguided, naïve and offensive, albeit well-meaning. He cites as an example the Kony 2012 movement<sup>153</sup> which rallied American high-school and college youth in support of a campaign to oust the Ugandan cult and militia leader, fugitive and indicted war criminal, Joseph Kony. The video for the campaign spread widely and in 2012 was ranked by PBS

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<sup>151</sup> Cole is a regular contributor to publications including The New York Times, Qarrtsiluni, Granta, The New Yorker, Transition, The New Inquiry, and A Public Space.

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

<sup>153</sup> <http://invisiblechildren.com/kony-2012/>

and *Time* magazine as the most viral video ever. Although there were already international political endeavors to deal with Kony, the video acted as a catalyst, spurring a resolution by the US Senate and contributing to the African Union's decision to send troops.<sup>154</sup> Cole's criticism of this movement and others like it is primarily a disapproval of privilege and entitlement: "This movement believes devoutly in fame and information, and in our unequivocal power to effect change as citizens of a privileged world. Our privilege is both the source of power and the origin of our burden—a burden which, in fact, on closer scrutiny, isn't really a burden at all, but an occasion to celebrate our power." He goes on to illustrate his point: "Mac owners can help end the conflict in eastern Congo by petitioning Apple; helping to end the war in Darfur is as simple as adding a toolbar to your browser. The intricate politics of African nations and conflicts are reduced to a few simple boilerplate propositions whose real aim isn't awareness, but the gratifying world-changing solution lying at the end of our thirty-minute journey into enlightenment." He points to American political meddling in and financial and military support for countries all over Africa, such as the 1.3 million USD in American aid that the Egyptian military used to suppress the country's once hopeful movement for democracy, killing dozens of activists in the process (Cole).

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<sup>154</sup> The documentary was made by Jason Russell for the campaign group Invisible Children Inc. with the intention to draw attention to Kony in an effort to increase United States involvement in the issue and have Kony arrested by the end of 2012. However, the campaign has been widely criticized for largely ignoring the fact that Joseph Kony was already pushed out of Uganda long before the film was made as well as for hypocrisy by ignoring human rights abuses by the Ugandan military. The campaign was accused of for using funds largely for themselves, and for hypocrisy by ignoring human rights abuses by the Ugandan military.



Cole provides these facts because it contextualizes the notion to help—something campaigns like the Kony 2012 movement do not consider, but should. Cole explains that this context “has a bearing on our notions of innocence and our right to ‘help.’” He goes on to say that realizing this inconvenient truth would not be optimal for the *white saviors* because it would require them to give up their illusion that “the sentimental need to ‘make a difference’ trumps all other considerations.” According to Cole, “What innocent heroes don’t always understand is that they play a useful role for people who have much more cynical motives.” According to Cole, The White Savior Industrial Complex functions as “a valve for releasing the unbearable pressures that build in a system built on pillage. We can participate in the economic destruction of Haiti over long years, but when the earthquake strikes it feels good to send \$10 each to the rescue fund.” The critic clarifies that he frequently makes such donations so his criticism is not directed against these types of acts per se. Rather, he warns that “we must do such things only with awareness of what else is involved. If we are going to interfere in the lives of others, a little due diligence is a minimum requirement.” This type of condemnation of the phenomenon of developmentalism in all its forms is growing.

It is particularly fecund in the realm of popular cultural productions on social media. One such example is the Instagram account called “Barbie Savior”<sup>155</sup> that features a series of pictures of the blond white iconic doll in Africa, on a “world-saving” mission. The description encapsulates her project, thus revealing its aim to mock *white saviorism*: “Barbie Savior. Jesus. Adventures. Africa. Two worlds. One love. Babies. Beauty. Not

<sup>155</sup> [www.barbiesavior.com/blog/2016/6/3/stoporphantrips](http://www.barbiesavior.com/blog/2016/6/3/stoporphantrips)

qualified. Called. 20 years young. It's not about me...but it kind of is". One of the first picture descriptions indicates the shallow understanding of African reality and the self-assigned importance in a complex, misunderstood situation:

"We take so much for granted in America. Pumpkin spice lattes. Chickfila. Ugg boots. Yoga. I will never view my rights the same way after hauling my own water today. This is the reality of so many poor Africans. I even broke a heel! And also it broke my heart. Now I think I understand what it means to be broken in order to be made whole. I'm not going to lie, I was frustrated. But I got a tan and did even more soul searching. There is ALWAYS a silver lining!! And always an adventure".

Another one shows a black doll in front of a hut with the following description by the supposed Barbie *white savior*:

The people living in the country of Africa are some of the MOST beautiful humans I have ever laid eyes on. I feel so insignificant next to my new friend Promise. She has no running water, no makeup, no clothes but the ones she herself has sewn, and no strict diet to follow—her figure is kept flawless because she is in a constant state of malnutrition. She has nothing, but she still has raw beauty and Jesus—and now me!

Descriptions like this one accompany each picture, mocking in a playful and sarcastic manner the naïve "save the world" mentality of the "developed" world's *intrepid white saviors*. In this case, the efforts may just work, as they are directed to tearing down the White Savior Industrial Complex, rather than upholding it. The site has more than 100,000 followers and is gaining in recognition, having been cited by news outlets Huffington Post and ABC, among others. It collaborates with several organizations that focus on reshaping development practices and discourse: Better Volunteering, Better

Care<sup>156</sup>, globalsl<sup>157</sup>, JadedAid<sup>158</sup>, Learning Service<sup>159</sup>, Whydev.org<sup>160</sup> and even a website called Humanitarians of Tinder<sup>161</sup> that llects pictures from Tinder depicting *white saviors* in order to mock the practice.

As we showed in previous chapters, behind the *intrepid white savior figure* there is the self-made hero who believes he or she can change the world singlehandedly. The author-protagonists in this study's corpus may be examples of these heroes, but they inhabit the same realm as other naïve young people with good intentions, making them believe that changing the world is an easy and cool thing to do. Though their stories do in fact tell of the arduous efforts they likely had to endure before succeeding, their stories are nevertheless structured to inspire people to follow their footsteps, as we showed. Thus, the author-protagonists manipulate the popular and prevalent desire to “save the world”, knowing most people will never actually attempt to do so and will donate instead.

<sup>156</sup> <http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn-in-action/better-volunteering-better-care> in their own words: “Better Volunteering, Better Care is an initiative founded in 2013 by Better Care Network and Save the Children UK. The goal of the initiative is primarily to understand and share information regarding the impact of international volunteering in residential care centres (orphanages) and to raise awareness about the negative effects of volunteering in these settings.”

<sup>157</sup> <http://globalsl.org/> is an “online research hub sponsored by more than a dozen universities, NGOs, and foundations concerned with advancing ethical global partnerships and learning. The site amasses evidence-based tools and peer-reviewed research to advance best practices in global learning, community-university partnership, & sustainable development”.

<sup>158</sup> <http://jadedaid.com/> describes itself: “JadedAid was launched in 2015 by Jessica Heinzelman, Teddy Ruge, and Wayan Vota after realizing that existing power structures and humanitarians’ propensity to take themselves too seriously were inhibiting honest dialogue about our industry that could catalyze transformative change for improved results.”

<sup>159</sup> <http://learningservice.info/> is an “advocacy group dedicated to rethinking the way we look at volunteer travel. Our website is an information portal for potential volunteers, with videos, articles and downloadable toolkits to help you make a responsible choice. And you can sign up for updates about our forthcoming book!”

<sup>160</sup> <http://www.whydev.org/> WhyDev.or’s logo is Committed to getting Development right. It’s a community blog that “aims to promote open and participatory discussions about development.”

<sup>161</sup> <http://humanitariansoftinder.com/> invites Tinder users to place pictures of white saviors they find in their Tinder travels, in order to denounce the practice.

Rather than lending their efforts to other existing NGOs—such as Fundación Vicente Ferrer, which has been a well-run, well-known NGO in Spain since the 1970s—our author-protagonists chose instead to take poverty alleviation into their own hands. Like the White Saviors of Tinder or any number of “voluntourism” participants, they need to feel like heroes of philanthropy. Contrarily, they would have opted for different, likely more efficient, ways of helping.

### **Everyone Wants to be a Hero**

This desire to be a savior in the flesh forms part of a phenomenon that goes beyond the few figures analyzed in this study. A quick search online reveals several other Spanish examples of “voluntourism” websites created by people who, like Sanllorente and Subirana, founded their own NGOs instead of supporting already existing ones. Just like them, they wanted to be heroes of their own quests to save the world. Some examples of other self-styled heroes include Fundació Daniel Shah & Nuria Toneu which operates the Sirena Primary School and Orphanage and support a hospital and a clinic. The Fundació was established by a couple of former workers of various humanitarian organizations who after many years decided “seguir el seu propi camí i ... crear la seva obra d’ajuda social”, according to the website<sup>162</sup>. Another project called Amigos de Tara seems to be a carbon copy of Sonrisas de Bombay. The description on the NGO’s website <http://www.amigosdetara.org/> tells the story of the founder, Natalia Pallás, fascinated with India since adolescence (like de Toro). Pallás traveled there in 2004 “impulsada por

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<sup>162</sup> [www.ongvic.org](http://www.ongvic.org)

un deseo solidario” (in other words, dispatching her “global consciousness”) to work as a volunteer in a small high school in Calcutta. When the school closed due to insolvency (like Sanllorrente’s orphanage), Pallás made it her mission to support the school (like Sanllorrente). Months later the school opened its doors and Pallás was the boss of her own NGO, Amigos de Tara, (like Sanllorrente). Today the organization has expanded its activities to Nepal and sports a website that offers a series of commercial, volunteer, individual and corporate sponsorship products similar to Sanllorrente’s. (Still lacking, however, is a book that describes this *intrepid white savior’s* sacrifices and heroic deeds.) Pallás even fits the profile mocked by the Barbie Savior project. Putting her ignorance on full display, she reports on the NGO’s website:

A pesar de mi absoluto desconocimiento de la cultura, el idioma y la cooperación, de no parar de llorar de emoción y de impotencia, recuerdo que cada día era un reto, un desafío, una incertidumbre. Crecí mucho, cada situación escondía un aprendizaje. Me sentía como una niña que no sabe nada del mundo y por primera vez va descubriendo todo.

Her emotion and excitement at “realizar mi sueño” of being the *white savior* manifests long before she becomes a “voluntourist”. She was exoticizing India long before travelling there: “Sentía una conexión especial con el país y de alguna manera intuía que si iba allí mi vida tomaría el rumbo que en mi interior anhelaba.”<sup>163</sup> As we pointed out in the previous chapter, most *intrepid white saviors* enter philanthropy via an initial stage of *adventure development tourism*.

A slightly different approach is taken by Corazones de India, which collect money in “mundo occidental para ayudar a los más necesitados en distintas partes de India. Directamente. Sin intermediarios.” Rather than organizing their own projects, they seek

<sup>163</sup> <http://www.amigosdetara.org/blog-entrevista-a-natalia-pallas>

out small local NGOs: “nuestro deseo es atender pequeñas organizaciones humanitarias que se cruzan en nuestro camino, y que merecen nuestra confianza y admiración por la obra que están realizando”. The main page of the website<sup>164</sup> features one of the owners, a (white) woman surrounded by (dark) Indian children, following a marketing and branding recipe pointed out in previous chapters. Their other website displays similar images. Clearly, Corazones de India have learned one of the most important lessons of their industry: children elicit more pity and thus, more donations than adults.

These are few examples of non-governmental organizations, but many more exist today in Spain, as attested by Spain’s La Agencia Española de Cooperación. In its “Registro de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales de Desarrollo,”<sup>165</sup> La Agencia lists 2052 organizations registered with official status as NGOs dedicated to development abroad. This extensive list underscores the reality of the “global consciousness” mood and our claim that it contributes to forming an identity niche with that orientation. Saving the world is a life-style driven by individual heroes of philanthropy, the few *intrepid white saviors* who give the “globally conscious” members of an imagined community of wannabe armchair philanthropists the chance to “do something” about poverty by supporting their NGO. In the terms set forth by Cole, the NGO-bearing white saviors exercise their Western (white) privilege and power to act on their desire to save (the dark part of) the world.

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.corazonesdeindia.org/>

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.aecid.es/ES/la-aecid/nuestros-socios/ongd/registro-de-ongd>

As Cole notes, these well-meaning white saviors are guided by the same belief in the indisputable power to produce change. Driven by their privilege, they go about doing it on their own terms and without regard for the actual needs of the local beneficiaries and “a little due diligence.” Escobar’s study shows how this presumed ethnocentric superiority guides decision-making for major development actors such as the IMF and the World Bank, producing misguided solutions that ignore local circumstances. As Cole states, their desire to be heroes overshadows the actual needs of the people.

This need of individuals to provide solutions to complex societal problems is fueled by a factor of (post)modern globalized life, hitherto unmentioned—the failure of nation-states as the guarantors of basic needs. This condition of the contemporary reality is referred to by Zygmunt Bauman as “liquid modernity”. It refers to a society of individuals in which the government no longer provides security, identity, or services for its members. In the postmodern world, says Bauman, “the belief in salvation by society is dead”, a condition he calls “societas abscondita.” (“Living” 10) Gone is the idea that reason applied to social organization can improve our lives; gone is the ideal of the just society. No longer are we to solve our problems collectively through Politics (with a capital P), he asserts. Instead, the individual must look to himself alone to solve his problems and improve himself. Faced with this present-day crisis of citizenship and disenchantment with the potential of political engagement, individuals inevitably take socially-produced problems into their own hands, de critic asserts. By deciding to fix problems failed or ignored by governments, our individual philanthropists earn far more social credit than simple travelers. In the process, they gain identities as heroes, via

representation: of the *self* (as *intrepid white savior*) and the *other* (as *noble savages* worthy of the hero's efforts). In the times of "hard modernity" this type of action would not have been possible or necessary. Indeed, this type of ideology and praxis are embedded in contemporary "liquid postmodernity". Thus, uniquely postmodern conditions enable our figures of individual philanthropic effort to appear on the landscape of development, a field until recently run exclusively by large organizations that addressed problems via politics and in an authoritarian manner, in other words, in the manner of Bauman's "hard modernity." (*Utopia*)<sup>166</sup>

Disenchantment with the perceived lack of governmental solutions causes individuals today to experience "global consciousness", feelings of extreme concern for the world. This mood contributes to the general perception of the world "in a state of emergency," a feeling exacerbated by a range of seemingly irresolvable conflicts embedded within it (endemic civil wars, emerging environmental crisis, the global terrorist threat), according to Huggan. (6) This sensation is reflected in the daily life, the life-style of the "globally conscious" individuals such as those who support the philanthropists in this study's corpus. It is consequently reflected in travel writing—the

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<sup>166</sup> However, as Bauman shows, the efforts to fill in the gap created by the departure of the "hard modernity's" nation-state are doomed to fall victim of the very lack of fixity—happiness is in the here and now and in the pursuit of experiences, rather than in a carefully constructed future fixed in space—an idea Bauman explores in *Utopia with No Topos*. The idea of happiness as a here and now experience relates to the idea of "identity niches" explored by us in the previous chapter. Bauman was brought up in that context to indicate the fluidity of identities. Unlike in the "hard" times, today's identities are multiple and fluid—they are discarded and/or changed in accordance with interests and circumstances. The contrast between "liquid" and "hard" times is explored by Bauman in many of his works, in various manners. – Bauman, Zygmunt. *Utopia with No Topos. History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2003, pp. 11-25.



tourism studies critic Huggan argues that “much of what passes for contemporary travel writing is, in turn, the epiphenomenon” of this perception. The development-themed fictions we have been analyzing herein are examples of this uncanny recreation, given that the surge in interest for social justice causes in many forms, of which individual philanthropic endeavors are one part, is a reaction to this concern for a world thought to be in crisis, at a time when globalization makes it possible to act on this belief.

### **Consumer Catharsis**

The desire to help developing countries is motivated by other forces as well: the actors’ underlying sense of responsibility for the developing world’s poverty, and the accompanying sense of guilt for not experiencing economic scarcity themselves. These sentiments are transmitted by these stories, both directly and indirectly. In a previous chapter we saw how Sanllorente’s realization of his ignorance of the extent of poverty in India made him abandon his comfortable life in Barcelona—smiling girls on motorcycles lost their luster as his guilt for his “first-world” circumstances set in. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud singles out the “sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization” (81). That the reason civilization makes us feel guilty is that it is built upon a renunciation of our basic instincts. As this ‘cultural frustration’ dominates the social relationships between human beings, the development of the individual is a product of the interaction between two forces that stem from this condition: “the urge towards happiness, which we usually call ‘egoistic’, and the urge towards union with others in the community, which we call ‘altruistic’.” (87) Thus, the

permanent sense of guilt underlying our civilized state is bound to a sense of care for others. Guilt's accompanying dissatisfaction is an important urge that governs our behavior—this seems to be the genesis of altruism. Therefore, it must follow that doing philanthropic work, even if only of the “armchair” type, provides a sense of catharsis and, therefore, pleasure.

Moreover, this mechanism is also what fuels the White Savior Industrial Complex—it works because it provides a sense of relief for the “developed” world individuals for living alongside poverty of others—facts globalization makes evident. NGO's exploit the “developed”-world guilt by making it the basis of their fundraising efforts; the appeal to responsibility and shame animates their online advertising, programs, products, volunteering options, videos, and more. Hence, the books in this study's corpus offer much more than courageous stories of fighting heart-breaking poverty: they offer countless people in the developed world the chance to rid themselves of their culpability by opening a door to a guilt-erasing structure. Whether through a two-euro bracelet, an escorted tour of India or even a few hours of reading once in a while, everyone can feel like a *savior*, living vicariously through the *intrepid white savior* on the pages of one of the narratives. The White Savior Industrial Complex, which these NGOs promote, provides a ready-made product that makes being a “good” person—that is, a “globally conscious” consumer from the “developed” world—easy. Empathy is exploited and commodified.

Slavoj Žižek examines this notion in his 2012 movie *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, in which he discusses Starbucks's clever solution to the guilt of consumption haunting today's "high consumerism":

their message is: Yes, our cappuccino is more expensive than others, but—and then comes the story—we give one percent of all our income to some Guatemala children to keep them healthy, or the water supply for some Sahara farmers, or to save the forests, to enable organic growing coffee... whatever, whatever.

This example is, of course, a picture of CSR, corporate social responsibility—discussed in the previous chapter—at work. What Žižek says next, however, is the explanation of the mechanism that makes the corporate message work. Whereas the two spheres—the guilt-producing product and the guilt-erasing countermeasure—once were separate, CSR products such as Starbucks coffee ingeniously combine them. This combination enables the consumer today “to be a consumerist ... without any bad conscience because the price for the counter measure—for fighting consumerism—is already included in the price of a commodity.” By providing an antidote to the guilt “developed” nations feel about their privileged lives in a globalized world, Starbucks sells catharsis to the consumer. Žižek puts it succinctly:

When, confronted with the starving child, we are told: ‘For the price of a couple of cappuccinos, you can save her life!’, the true message is: ‘For the price of a couple of cappuccinos, you can continue in your ignorant and pleasurable life, not only not feeling any guilt, but even feeling good for having participated in the struggle against suffering.’

Žižek's implied criticism is not new. Friedrich Engels accused the English bourgeoisie of being charitable out of self-interest. Treating charity as a business transaction, they make a pact with the poor: "If I spend this much upon benevolent institutions, I thereby purchase the right not to be troubled any further, and you are bound thereby to stay in your dusky holes and not to irritate my tender nerves by exposing your misery. It is

infamous, this charity of a Christian bourgeois!” (279) This de-masking resonates with the previously-discussed inherent verticality of charity and its opposition to solidarity.

This points to another idea. Encapsulated in the Starbucks cup is the “pseudo-need” of a “society of the spectacle”—an idea originated by Guy Debord that describes the artificiality of daily life in late-stage capitalism. The “spectacle” refers to the socio-economic relations between people mediated by images or other cultural productions—for example, Starbucks coffee or the development-themed “testimonios” and their NGOs. The idea goes that, since primary human needs, originally shaped by history and society, have long been met, they have now been replaced with an incessant fabrication of “pseudo-needs”, which are imposed by modern consumerism. Commodities are no longer produced just to be used; they are manufactured in abundance to be sought for the recognition they confer and for their value *as* commodities. The stories in this study demarcate the value of philanthropic projects and products within the White Savior Industrial Complex. “Pseudo-needs” mark the field and its commodities as worthy of fetishizing. In this way, a “craze for it”<sup>167</sup> is proliferated, turning it into what Debord calls together with Marx “fetishism of commodities”, and what we referred to in the previous chapter as a “life style” and an “identity niche”. Modern—“liquid”—society subdivides itself according to interests which become formulated into identities, rather than according to nationalities like it did in the—“hard”—past, as showed in the previous chapter.

<sup>167</sup> Zizek’s idea of “the craze for it” is linked to Lacan’s “objet petit-a” or the unattainable object of desire.

Debord believes that the “spectacle” is rooted in economic abundance. However, we would like to point out that this abundance is one-sided. Debord’s assumption that the mode of capitalism has met basic human needs applies only to a section of the world. The consumption of the fetishized “pseudo-needs” is a game that favors one half of the development divide. The “pseudo-needs” of the “developed” world (overpriced Starbucks coffee or Sanlloriente’s book) support actual basic needs in the “developing” one (Guatemalan children’s health or shelter for Indian orphans). “Pseudo-needs” are subject to the caprice of individuals in “developing” countries. Since identities are fluid, as we showed together with Bauman in the previous chapter, the identity niche of the “globally conscious” consumer (or the “armchair philanthropist”) can be easily abandoned and exchanged for a more fashionable alternative. The cost of this exchange is borne by the “developing” world, with no consequence for the “developed” one. Everything is exchangeable, even altruism and consumerist pleasure are carried off by the waves of “fluidity”.

As expected, these drastically uneven relations of power are neatly hidden from plain view, in yet another example of Pratt’s “discourse of innocence”. As we saw Cole point out, our “gratifying world-changing” solution, far from being our burden, is in actually our privilege, an occasion to celebrate our power. This veiling of the true nature of the power structure between “developing” and “developed” countries is the essence of the discourse of development.

### **Epilogue - The Ugly Side of Development in Literature?**

The arguments in this and the previous chapters have referred to three of the four narratives in this study's corpus: *Los colores de un sueño*, *Una maestra en Katmandú* and *Sonrisas de Bombay*. In the preceding paragraphs we said that they contribute to development's discourse by showing a vision of development that works and, thus, justifying the field's very existence. However, this positive vision contrasts with the deleterious view of the field taken by anti-developmentalists such as Escobar and anti-white-saviorists such as Cole. Consequently, the question arises what might a literary representation of development that corroborates their view look like? One of the texts in this study seems to do just that—*Pura vida* plainly shows development's ugly face. The description of Ariadna's time in Costa Rica has been discussed less in this study because her story is different from those told by Jaume Sanllorente, Victoria Subirana and Alba de Toro—Ariadna is not the author of the narrative that recounts her adventures. The author is José María Mendiluce, and *Pura vida* is a novel, not a travelogue. Thus, unlike Vicky, Jaume and Alba, Ariadna does not exist. Its overtly fictitious nature, when contrasted with the covert one of the travel "testimonios", will prove to have important implications for this study, as will the disjuncture of author and protagonist. The intention of the below analysis, thus is not to enter into a larger discussion of fiction vs. reality or ideology vs. truth, rather to establish a counterpoint that reveals hidden aspects of both types of texts, crucial to our discussion of discourse.

*Pura vida* is similar to the other stories in this study in some ways, while vastly different in others. Just like the other narratives, the novel can be categorized as a modern travel book since it is structured as an amalgam of the "sentimental" and "scientific"

reporting modes inherited from the past of travel writing. Just like the three travelogues, which incorporate factual information about the cultures in which the protagonists find themselves, this fictional account of development praxis inserts historical data within a fictional plotline. To add veracity to the setting, a local 1987 newspaper is quoted and letters (albeit fictional) are intertwined between chapters adding to the illusion. Given its overt fictional form, this narrative's mix of "factualizing" and "subjectivizing" methods is tilted heavily toward the latter. This is because a fictional story does not have a vested interest in appearing as a factual account, the way a development-themed travelogue does. Taking from both facts and fiction, a story such as *Pura vida* can be free to appear largely fictitious—a liberty *Sonrisas de Bombay*, *Una maestra en Katmandú* and *Los colores de un sueño* cannot afford. The reason for this difference is linked to the author's motivation for writing.

Given Sanlloriente's, Subirana's and de Toro's objective of transforming their readers into financial supporters of the NGOs' projects with which they are associated, these development-themed narratives have the imperative to be perceived as factual autobiographies of real-life philanthropic endeavors. The label "testimonio" chosen by Plataforma Editorial<sup>168</sup> advances this perception of veracity by virtue of the word's association with the law: "a formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law."<sup>169</sup> In fact, the insistence on the truth in these stories is written into the text, as a note at the very end of Subirana's story shows: "El contenido de este libro es

<sup>168</sup> See previous chapter for a discussion of this publishing company.

<sup>169</sup> "testimony, n." *Oxforddictionaries.com*. June 2015. Oxford University Press.

totalmente real, solamente en algún caso muy concreto, por razones personales y de respeto, se ha cambiado el nombre de ciertos personajes.” (366) Mendiluce, conversely, does not have an NGO to support in Spain, with projects in India and Nepal. He is neither an individual philanthropist like Subirana and Sanlloriente nor a “voluntourist” like de Toro. At the time of writing *Pura vida*, he was a politician and an author. In the 1980s he worked for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on various humanitarian missions in Angola, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and other countries in Central America. In 1991 he transferred to work on the Balkan conflict and the humanitarian issues it engendered, earning distinctions in that field. Upon leaving the UN in 1994, he was elected as a representative of the EU parliament where he served until his death in 2015.

A parallel between his personal life and that of his protagonist, however, should not be established. *Pura vida* is not the semi-autobiographical fictional account of Mendiluce’s experiences in development, since Mendiluce’s career was in humanitarian relief stemming from natural disasters or armed conflicts and Ariadna is depicted as an employee of the UN Development Programme which is dedicated to long-term economic development.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine that it is inspired by observations of a field that forms part of the context of “assisting” poorer countries. There is also an overlap in real and fictional timelines, as Ariadna’s story takes place in 1987-88 during Mendiluce’s Central American assignment. Whatever the case may be, what is of essence

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<sup>170</sup> See introduction for an explanation of the difference between international development and humanitarian relief.



is that his motivation to write the story was different from those of Subirana, Sanlloriente and de Toro.

If the need to garner donors for building a school or an orphanage was not the impetus for writing a story about a development project in Central America, what was? Since there was no need to market an NGO by means of a “good story”, Mendiluce might have been motivated purely by literary aspirations. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that he is a published writer of a total of eight books<sup>171</sup>, of which many are novels. The one included in this study’s corpus was the winner of the Premio Planeta prize of 1998, which substantiates our theory. Under no pressure to convert the book into a money-harvesting tool, the author was free to bask in as much fiction as he wanted. Under no pressure to tell *his* story of development, he chose a female protagonist. The different drives that led the two types of authors to write their stories of development in different genres are the key to important dissimilarities that go beyond aesthetics. These genres are the reason these narratives tell drastically different stories of development—Mendiluce’s is a negative one.

Firstly, Mendiluce’s protagonist, Ariadna, is not an individual philanthropist, but rather belongs to the professional side of development. Since she is employed by one of development’s most important and powerful entities, her project does not have the funding problem often faced by small-scale NGOs. Nevertheless, it is a failure. UNDP’s efforts to economically revive an area impoverished by the departure of a multinational

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<sup>171</sup> *El amor armado* (1999), *Con rabia y esperanzas* (1999), *Tiempo de rebeldes* (1988), *Pura vida* (1998), *Por la tercera izquierda* (2000), *La nueva política: por una globalización democrática* (2002), *Luanda, 1936* (2002), *La sonrisa de Ariadna* (2007)

company are counterproductive. The project to form banana cooperatives and provide them with infrastructure and income is structured in a way that benefits the new multinational company that buys their products. By fixing purchase prices, Dole, Inc. forces the cooperatives into non-sustainable financial dependency by leaving them no other recourse but to borrow money:

... aquí intervenían el PNUD y el Banco Mundial, para prestarles dinero con el que pagar y poder volver a endeudarse, convenciéndoles además de que sus problemas eran consecuencia de su mala gestión más que de los precios que cobraban y de los altos costes de mantenimiento de las pequeñas propiedades en las peores tierras. ... Años y años de pesticidas y abonos tóxicos que además mataban los corales ... las langostas y los peces ... Toda una cadena de desastres. (159)

Far from helping the coops to succeed, UNDP and the WB are portrayed in *Pura vida* as causing direct harm to the already underprivileged communities. In this way, the institutions enable the reinstatement of a colonial economic and social structure, creating modern-day neocolonialism. The novel presents a clear and detailed picture of the failure of development: economic and environmental destruction resulting from exploitation conducted under the umbrella of economic expansion.

The breakdown is multifold. In addition to the systemic-level failure of UNDP's activities in Central America, there are institutional- and individual-level versions of it in this novel. *Pura vida* shows not only that the Costa Rica branch director is aware of the banana cooperative project's allegiance to Dole, Inc. rather than to its beneficiaries, but also that he is actively corrupt on an administrative level when he covers up a drug-related car crash and death of one of his employees in the agency's vehicle. Whereas he should be seeking to fulfill his agency's goal to ensure the most effective use of the UN and international aid resources, he not only turns a blind eye to it, but also encourages his

employees' lack of professional engagement and work-place professionalism. And he is not the only one. In fact, the entire institution, together with its New York headquarters, is depicted in *Pura vida* in an unambiguously negative light. By placing his protagonist at the very core of the field's praxis, Mendiluce can clearly and thoroughly expose the field's inner problems.

The negative depiction also pertains to the protagonist. Despite her years of academic training and professional experience in the field, which position her as an expert in development practices and theories, Ariadna possesses none of the idealistic and altruistic ideas that constitute the affective core of the official ideology of the field. Rather, she is portrayed as lackadaisical about her project (she barely works) and complacent about lack of professionalism in her office (she gets paid to do nothing for five weeks while waiting for the arrival of the director of her project). Her account of the discovery of her project's collusion, fraud and failure is disinterested and purely descriptive. Ariadna goes as far as manipulating her profession for personal gain. For example, while wrapping up her field mission, having contributed nothing to her institution's activities in Costa Rica and having done little else to earn her "generoso salario" (95), she falsifies the results of her professional performance by reporting it as a success: "Ariadna se aplicó los últimos días a redactar el Informe de Progreso del Proyecto, siguiendo las instrucciones de Nueva York, con el formulario PPR/86/REV/CA, diseñado para que cualquier desastre pareciera un éxito. Y le dijo a Virginia cuando terminó que hasta parecía que habían hecho algo más que perder el tiempo." (95) The protagonist of *Pura vida* is not a hero of philanthropy.

Consequently, does this mean that Mendiluce is disapproving of Ariadna and her misconducts? Does she embody a development skeptic and is the novel meant to be a condemnation of the field? Does Mendiluce believe, together with Escobar, that the field is an imposed “top-down, technocratic, culturally-imperialistic and ethnocentric strategy” (Escobar) of forcing the socio-economic and cultural standards of one part of the world on another? It would seem so, but this is not the case, because despite involving his protagonist in deleterious circumstances, the author does not censor her. This can be seen in the lack of distancing between the protagonist and the omniscient narrator, who displays a strong admiration and continued complacency with all she does and says. Mendiluce inserts no irony in his textual creation, thus endorsing all its aspects. To him, the story of Ariadna is one of finding true love with an exotic black man in the midst of his paradisiacal simple life. It’s the adventure of her lifetime. To us, it is much more.

It is a story of exploitation. Ariadna’s development job brings her to a poor community which ekes out a living from indirect sexual tourism, as shown in Chapter III. Far from finding a developmental solution for it, she willingly participates. Impoverished by colonial and post-colonial exploitation, disenfranchised by the very field established to help it “develop”, the village of Puerto Viejo is left with nothing but paradisiacal beaches and village youth. Jonás and his friends resort to sex in exchange for gifts from tourists lured in by the pristine nature of this “developing” country. As shown in Chapter II, this uneven exchange is the result of the intersection of travel and globalization and is strongly linked to global economic disparities. Since the stated objective of development is to level these disparities, a high-ranking development official’s misuse of this structural

inequality for her personal gain is precisely the type of situation that serves as an example of neocolonialism. Far from helping to “develop” those in need of being “assisted”, Ariadna exploits both them and development for her own gain, and the author doesn’t sanction her for it.

Of course, Mendiluce does not fashion Ariadna overtly as a sexual tourist, but rather as a girl in love. Nevertheless, he also does not craft her to be the same type of ardently-devoted development practitioner as Jaume, Vicky and Alba. In Chapter III we showed that the authors of the stories we are analyzing have used the colonial tropes of the *explorer*, the *missionary* and the *survivor* to construct their modern reformulation. None of these apply to Mendiluce’s story—at best, Ariadna could be considered a *survivor* of a transracial bond in a *savage* land. The trope of the *white savior* does not form part of her story. Mendiluce’s novel accesses a different area of colonial travel literature: the sentimental “sex and slavery” theme, as shown briefly in the previous chapter. These types of novels explore transracial love in the colonies. Let us now take a closer look at this theme.

In fact, the novel *Pura vida* is a strikingly perfect representation of this type of novel, fulfilling all of its requirements, on the level of the plot of Ariadna’s love story: the colonized subject is mixed (Jonás is mulatto, rather than black) and enjoys the status of a “prince” (Jonás’s unparalleled attractiveness and popularity make him the king of Puerto Viejo). Another feature of this type of plot, as Pratt points out, is that the colonial subject is not shown as enslaved, rather merely objectified and dominated through relations, which are consensual. This is also fulfilled in Mendiluce’s novel, since Jonás is one of

those playboys who participate willingly in the sexual tourism in his town. As one of the stars of the sexploitation, Jonás is shown enjoying a life of pleasure for himself and the tourists who buy him things. In this way, a sense of equality seems to be established in the uneven relationship. Nevertheless, this is false, as Pratt explains: “If the transracial love plots articulate ‘the ideal of cultural harmony through romance,’ to use Hulme’s well-chosen words<sup>172</sup>, what makes the ideal an ideal is ... the mystique of reciprocity.” (94) In this way, European supremacy is upheld but reimagined: “sex replaces slavery as the way others are seen to belong to the white man; in which romantic love rather than filial servitude or force guarantee the willful submission of the colonized.” (94) This is precisely what happens in *Pura vida*.

The novel presents Ariadna and Jonás’s love story as a reciprocal one. However, in reality it is not one of equals. Along with other tourists, she has the liberty of movement assured by the possession of money. It is her choice to stay in her “Orient”, which is there to serve her. Meanwhile, the only option the Jonáses of Puerto Viejo have is either to oblige or to reject the call to servitude. Hence, for Puerto Viejo, tourism is a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it provides its inhabitants with the opportunities they would not have otherwise. On the other, it does this on the terms of the visitors, leaving the former with no choice but to participate in the game of serving the needs of the latter. The situation described is neocolonialism, and one endorsed and propagated by the field of development.

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<sup>172</sup> Pratt refers to the following work: Peter Hulme. *Colonial Encounters*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.)

In *Pura vida*, there is no reciprocity in the “contact zone” (Pratt) forged between Ariadna and Jonás, no matter how strongly the novel tries to make this seem to be the case. Pratt’s concept has a negative nuance to it as it sees it as a place “usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” (8) This becomes abundantly clear when Ariadna disposes of Jonás: he is no longer needed when she becomes pregnant and decides to clean up her body and life from drugs and sexual excess. Knowing Jonás would not abandon their lifestyle of hedonism, she throws him out of her home and leaves the country. While she acts from a position of power, he does from one of powerlessness. Having first taken possession, she disposes of him as if of property—the colonized subject of sentimental novels is discarded when no longer needed by the colonizer, Pratt shows. Furthermore, her return to Barcelona is another key characteristic of the “sex and slavery” theme this novel embodies: the colonial sexual exploiter returns home alone since there is no place there for his/her colonial sex provider. The “Oriental” subject’s place is in his own realm, as not to contaminate the purity of the “Occident”. In fact, it is best if he/she is obliterated altogether. Thus, also this final requirement of the “sex and slavery” theme is fulfilled in *Pura vida*—Jonás is killed.

Since Ariadna and Jonás belong to two different worlds, their love story is transgressive, and as such, can be only lived out in his context, not hers. The colonial “sex and slavery”-themed novels never allow the integration of the colonial subject into Europe. In the same way, *Pura vida* does not permit the two lovers to reunite once relocated into their respective contexts. Jonás’s efforts to claim his piece of the

“Occident” (Ariadna’s love) are punished by death, in this way reestablishing the status quo of each world remaining in its own place. Acting from the position of powerlessness, his efforts are doomed from the start. Meanwhile, acting from the position of power, Ariadna is able to import her piece of the “Orient”—her unborn child—to her context. However, the stay is brief (until birth) and unwelcome, as her mother objects: “otro mundo en casa. Algo no funcionará.” (244) The “Third” world doesn’t belong in Barcelona. Feeling guilty for having ripped out of a piece of “el Sur” from its roots, Ariadna takes her son back to Costa Rica, in an act that expunges the proof of the transgression and guarantees the racial “purity” of the “First” World, just as Jonás’s death does. The status quo is preserved, as it must be—the division between the “First” and the “Third” worlds, the “developed” and the “developing, is absolute.

Preserving the status quo is also the reason she does not denounce her field’s failures: she needs everything in “the Orient” to remain “Oriental”, that is: “underdeveloped”, exotic and, thus, exploitable. Hence, since her “Orient’s” key component is poverty, and the paradisiacal nature of Puerto Viejo is made possible specifically by virtue of its isolation and lack of “development”, it must remain poor. For that reason, Ariadna laments the arrival of electricity in the town: “Todos ilusionados con la novedad. Sin conocer o importarles que la energía eléctrica ha destruido y destruye pueblos, territorios, ilusiones y promesas.” (Mendiluce 153) Nature in her “Orient” needs to preserve its paradisiac essence for her use. She covets the hidden jewel possessed by “underdevelopment”, precisely because her “developed” world has destroyed its own in the process of achieving progress (while enjoying the benefits that come with it). As its



resident, Ariadna's lamentation at the future destruction of the secret "paradise" to which she has been granted access, as one of the few lucky ones, is the Western double standard and its colonialist feeling of superiority. Moreover, as a representative of development who has come to this "paradise" to "develop" it, her stance is, again, incongruous with her field's "narrative discourse". As before, her statement is not a denouncement, rather a call for preserving things the way they are and another proof of Mendiluce's endorsement. It is also an example of Renaldo's "imperialist nostalgia".

Preservation of the status quo also pertains to her beloved and his living conditions. Since Jonás's erotic appeal is rooted in his economic powerlessness (played out in the context of the exquisite nature and coupled with his negritude), Ariadna is not bothered at all by the "conditions approaching misery" in his "Third World" which her graduate studies in development have taught to reject, nor by the "primitive and stagnant" economic life (Truman) of Puerto Viejo she has been trained to "develop". She is an agent of colonialism (in its modern version) and as those a century before her she does not denounce it because nothing can be done to change the situation as long as she is exploiting it, as shown by Escobar's analysis. As long as she idealizes poverty (just as the colonizers did) and does not see it as a problem to be fixed (as development does), she continues to act as an agent of neocolonialism and as such, prefers the "Third World" "underdeveloped" (for her use).

Even when her naïve idealization of poverty gives way to a change in perception upon her pregnancy, it does not alter her positioning as an agent of power-exploiter and with it, her need to maintain the division. The initially admired simple life of Jonás gives

way to viewing these qualities in negative terms as “lazy and irresponsible”—traits placed as the basis of constructing the “Third World” in the 1950s. Ariadna undergoes the same shift in the concept of poverty as the post-colonial world does: from naïve idealization to a problem to be fixed and a threat to world order (“infantilization”), as shown by Escobar. Development was invented as a solution to these problems of the “Third World”, but in the case of Ariadna there is no development proposal for Jonás (just as there is none for the people in her project), only abandonment (just as in the case of banana cooperatives). First, he was “Orientalism” incarnated. Later, he is only a problem, but a problem that she refuses to fix. The treatment he receives in the end is the same as one suffered by the “assisted” in her project—in either case, she has no desire to deal with their situations. Having used him (and Costa Rica) for her personal gain, Ariadna departs (with his child) to the comfort of the “First World”, leaving him in a state of decay and misery (treatment identical to one awarded to the ex-colonized, and later to the recipients of “development” initiatives). The relationship is analogous: when the objectives of the exploiter change (both Ariadna’s and those of the American giants operating in the country), so do their needs for the exploited. In either case, there is no importation of the “First World” into the “Third”, neither of the neocolonial subject nor of his kin, as Pratts’ “sex and slavery” theme shows. Neocolonialism needs each one to remain in its (assigned) place.

### **Conclusions**

Thus, *Pura vida* fails as a denouncement, after all. Rather than an *intrepid white savior*, it depicts a *white exploiter*, but regardless of its negative portrayal, it contributes to the creation and maintenance of the discourse of international development, just as the

“testimonios” do. *Pura vida* does not reject the rhetoric of neo-colonial appropriation and exploitation. It reproduces the racial alterity of colonialism. Together with the “testimonio” travelogues (albeit in a different way), the novel actively underwrites its practice by endorsing the preservation of the *status quo* of neocolonialism inherent to the field of development—to the detriment of the “Third World” and for the (guilt-free) benefit of the “First”.

The separation between the “developing” and the “developed” worlds and of exploitation of one of them by the other must be maintained. In fact, it is this separation what allows the exploitation—neocolonialism (as colonialism before) cannot exist without a solid division between the exploiters and the exploited, the “subject nation” (Bhabha). The “developed” world cannot exist without the “developing” one, as it would lose its sense of superiority. As shown by Said in the case of the “Orient”, having constructed itself *vis-à-vis* those needing (the “assisted”), the “developed” world would lose its essence without the counterpart it created. As we pointed out in the previous chapter, the “modern” vs. “non-modern” division of the contemporary world is an important ideological and politico-economic structure of postmodernity—one that is needed by the moderns and therefore maintained by both “modern” and “non-moderns”.

However, the novel does make one new and important contribution to this study: its fictional form exposes the fallacy of the “testimonio” style narratives. We pointed out earlier the relationship between the form and the content of our development-themed fictions: while the “testimonio” style portrayals present development praxis as a success, the novel form shows the field as a failure, simply because it can. A fictional story, free

from the burden of veracity, is free to tell a story of “bad” development. In contrast, when the protagonist-author-heroes of philanthropy show their faces in the videos, interviews and websites to promote their projects, they are limited to showcasing only their successes. This selective process ostentatiously focuses on the *other* while hiding any motivations oriented towards the *self*—our real-life *intrepid white saviors* could not report any such hedonistic practices as those enjoyed by the fictional *white exploiter*. Thus, by means of contrast, *Pura vida*, with its skewed concern for the *self*, exposes the partial nature of the “testimonio” portrayals. All the protagonists examined in this study have touristic motivations, as shown, but they are hidden in the “testimonios”. In Chapter II we discussed how all protagonists use their development settings to fulfill their desire for adventure. While the form of these touristic adventures varies, the recipe does not—it is the poverty of the “developing” world that provides the necessary components for adventure travel to take place: *otherness*, *lawlessness*, and *danger*. We identified the various touristic practices as “slum tourism”, “volunteer tourism”, “immersion tourism” and several other touristic niches. Ariadna’s adventures are different because they are fictitious, and as such they are unambiguously presented as frivolities and pleasures. Jaume, Vicky and Alba’s touristic desires—exposed by us—are nevertheless hidden from readers’ views.

Moving beyond the ideological filters of development and of literature, we find one clear example of how Mendiluce’s fictional story unveils areas hidden by pseudo-autobiographical “authentic” stories of philanthropy written to garner donors. Tourism scholar Craik points to the link between the touristic niche called “Third World tourism”

and colonialism: “ex-colonies have increased in popularity with tourism and the ‘detritus’ of post-colonialism has been transformed into tourism sites.” (Hall and Tucker 122) All development projects depicted in this study’s narratives take place in the ex-colonies, with the exception of Nepal, which was never colonized but suffered territorial loss to the British. This imperial legacy gives our *adventure development tourists* another reason to deemphasize their touristic interests as they craft narratives of their stay in the ex-colonies. Furthermore, the adventures of a Spaniard in Costa Rica have an additional layer of meaning as many post-colonial islands, especially in the Caribbean, are described as “paradise”, Craik points out. This reinforces Western ideas of a romantic *other*. Erotically charged imagery may also be used to “exoticize” local people. (Hall and Tucker 122) In this context, Ariadna’s erotic exploits with a black man in his pristine touristic paradise acquire a dimension that would best be kept hidden if donors had to be garnered. Since Mendiluce doesn’t have that preoccupation, this context is showcased. Mendiluce’s fiction is the factor that serves as a tool in exposing the fallacy of the “testimonio”-type portrayals by unveiling the ugly face of development and its agent, the *white exploiter*. The novel presents more explicitly the imperialistic drives underlying both development and tourism.

Ironically, this very fictionalization simultaneously undermines the veracity of Mendiluce’s portrayal, thus preventing it from being perceived as a denunciation. Likely, for this reason, fiction does not appear to be the preferred form for narrating development stories—Mendiluce’s book was not a success, like Sanllorrente’s *Sonrisas de Bombay* has been. The book has not been reprinted 22 times since its publication; nor does it have

many reader endorsements online. The development narratives Jaume Sanllorente has manufactured since the publishing of his bestseller *Sonrisas de Bombay* as well as the story that won Plataforma Editorial's 2016 contest are "testimonio"-style narratives, as shown in the previous chapter. This is because there is no purpose to a fictional story of development, no need for it, since there is no NGO to sustain financially. There are no projects for the "voluntourists" to visit, no informational campaigns for them to run and no children to sponsor. Readers have no products to buy and no imagined community of fellow supporters to join. With no celebrity philanthropist to follow in the media and support, there is no *white savior* to admire. *Pura vida* is just a literary creation unconcerned with the objective of saving dark but worthy noble-savage children from their predestined misery. Furthermore, it is a story that is not true. Globally-conscious individuals from the global north need real stories of poverty. If they are going to be asked join the real community of philanthropic donors, they need authenticity—or at least the façade of it: a "good story" of "authentic" philanthropic heroism.

This brings us back to the idea of the "spectacle" and the superficiality of our lives that it represents. As Debord points out, there is one form of separation on the planet: capitalism. It is a form of economic domination and cultural imperialism: "Spectacle society dominates underdeveloped regions in terms of economic hegemony" by presenting and imposing "pseudo-goods" on them—"developed" world cultural, economic and social standards, in other words, the "developed" world's life-style and economic order. "Spectacle" creates an uneven power structure, but according to Debord, both sides are pawns in the system: "although these regions seem different and opposing,

they are simply playing their allotted roles within a global division of spectacular tasks.”

(57) The status quo we pointed out earlier is upheld as it is needed by “spectacle” of capitalism. Both sides accept the socio-political, economic and ideological order of international development as normal, and as the only desirable option: “developed” countries take as “natural” their roles as authorities that direct and rule the “developing” ones. They participate willingly because the discourse created by development is normalized and, thus, “development” is desired by them.

In this way, development is a spectacle, in the sense that it mediates social relations between people on both sides of the development binarism. It formulates, via representation, a non-stop discourse about itself, which includes both the stories of development we have been studying and the context of the White Savior Industrial Complex in which the stories are propagated. As Foucault, Said, and many others have shown, discourse is power because it is accepted as reality. Furthermore, given that reality is a social construct, as shown, representation always poses a potential threat. In *Utopia*, Thomas More defines power as the ability to impose one’s fictions upon the world: the more outrageous the fiction, the more impressive the manifestation of power (Greenblatt 13). Through its power to impose, development has been able to dominate the world since 1948, unquestioned until recently, and key to the persistence of its ideology has been representation in stories like those scrutinized in this study.

Cole ends his criticism of young American *white saviors*, who harness the “power of YouTube, Facebook, and pure enthusiasm to change the world”, by stating: “A singer may be innocent; never the song.” Travel literature has been singing the same song of

ethnocentrism and white superiority for centuries, to the delight of Western politics.

Today's version has simply added the *intrepid white savior* to its title.



## CONCLUSION

The research for this dissertation begun with two questions poised to development-themed travel narratives: What motivation is there behind traveling abroad to do charitable work? What motivation is there behind writing about these experiences? These questions were spurred by a handful of popular narratives written by authors who are unknown to the cannon of Spanish literature and who describe efforts to combat poverty in developing countries: *Pura vida* (1998) by José María Mendiluce, *Una maestra en Katmandú* (2002) by Victoria Subirana, *Sonrisas de Bombay* (2007) by Jaume Sanllorente, *Los colores de un sueño* (2013) by Alba de Toro. This study took a non-canonical approach to methodology by drawing from various disciplines: tourism studies, travel literature, and cultural studies, combining sociological inquiry with textual analysis. By bringing to the fore the connection between travel writing, tourism, and storytelling in the context of development, this dissertation showed the ideological presuppositions of development.

Several conclusions were reached in this dissertation. The analysis begun with present-day travel—the activity that enables development praxis described in the narratives in this study. Although they present themselves as depictions of development endeavors, this dissertation demonstrated that they are also stories of touristic exploits. Although the Age of Discovery and Exploration is well in the past, the desire for exploration and adventures has persisted until today. Travel writing has kept the myth of the heroic *explorer, missionary and survivor*, and his quests alive. It has found new forms

of expression (Chapter III), as modern life brought the separation of work and leisure time and tourism largely filled the latter. For the last few decades it has served as a means for satisfying the desire for the pursuit of adventures, thus becoming the most popular branch of contemporary travel (Chapter II). Since no tourist has ever wanted to travel in a touristic way, backpackers have continued to veer off the established routes in efforts to distinguish themselves from the hordes, searching for new thrilling ways to travel (Chapter II). The intersection of two coetaneous large-scale phenomena of the last century--mass travel and international development—have given some of them a new way of fulfilling fantasies of adventure and exploration: via philanthropy.

Moreover, postmodernist conditions—globalization, commodification and the perception of a society at risk—have created the mood of “global consciousness” (Chapter II). In tourism it has been referred to as “moral tourism” as it has assumed the form a wide array of touristic niches such as “responsible tourism”, “ecotourism” and “poorism”, etc. Many of these postmodern forms of travel fall within the ideology of development, such as “voluntourism” and “charity tourism” (Chapter II). This study has branded to this type of tourism as “*adventure development tourism*” in Chapter II. In Chapter I, it was concluded that traveler-philanthropists, such as Subirana, Toro and Sanllorente, enter development via tourism and, from that platform, they undertake their mission of correcting the ills of their chosen, mostly highly-exoticized touristic destinations, which, in their eyes, always turn out to be burdened with problems (Chapter II). The misery of their idealized touristic locales produces extreme adventure (experienced in terms of *otherness*, *lawlessness* and *danger*, as shown in Chapter II). This

branch of contemporary tourism gives the travelers the opportunity to become self-styled *saviors* of the worthy noble savages, as showed. These circumstances give them a chance to play the *explorer, missionary or survivor*, or all of them at the same time—in other words, the *intrepid white savior* (Chapter IV).

Thus, *adventure development tourism* today is an important part of the depiction of development in the narratives studied. As for any tourist, travel allows *adventure development tourists* to come in contact with the *other*, thus allowing them to redefine themselves in relation to both, the host communities and their fellow travelers. It is in this “contact zone” that this formulation takes place, which is subsequently immortalized in text in a carefully crafted “authorized version” of identity (shown in Chapter IV).

However, while travel/tourism is an explicitly self-centered activity (the motivation is for the *self*), this study revealed that the textual self-fashioning of these development-themed narratives disguises this orientation. Given that these travelogues have the explicitly-stated objective of describing their development activity, the protagonists are fashioned as dedicated exclusively to work for the benefit of *others* and at the cost of the *selves*. While philanthropic work is made the focus of these narratives, the touristic travel adventures that form part of the experience of doing it abroad, specifically in a “developing” country, is deemphasized (Chapter V). As showed in Chapters I and II, there is a strong touristic curiosity that lies beneath the urge to leave home to help others. This study has shown philanthropists assume *touristic attitudes*—*assimilationist, missionary, relativist, cool indifference* and *aggressive entitlement*—during and in relation to their development work (Chapter I). In this way, the written text becomes the place where *adventure*

*development tourists* can present themselves as heroes of philanthropy—*intrepid white saviors*— in the style of adventurous *explorers*, *missionaries* and *survivors* from the past, drawing from traditional travel literature to construct themselves as modern-day versions of these well-known tropes (Chapter III).

Following travelers of the Age of Exploration and Colonization, today's philanthropic travelers cast themselves as heroes of philanthropy as virtuous knights-errant of romance fiction on quests overcoming monstrous adversaries. Chapters III and IV show how the development travelers portray the “developing” country others as dysfunctional, inept and inferior (as *noble savage*). Given that today's politically-correct world prohibits such overt and violent expressions of ethnocentric superiority as those of the colonial past, there exists a place for it in international development, as this dissertation has shown. Development praxis today serves as a perfect context for living out fantasies of both adventure and moral superiority. Moretti showed in Chapter V that what occurs depends on where it takes place, thus the contemporary *adventure development tourism* happens in a specific space (“developing” countries) and at a specific point in time (the inception of “global consciousness”) as was concluded in Chapter V. However, these are fueled by the past of travel literature (Chapter V).

Just as colonial adventure narratives energized the myth of the empire by reinforcing prevailing notions that the world was ripe to be conquered, so do the contemporary *adventure development tourists* make use of precisely this notion to stimulate interest in their stories of philanthropic deeds they write for their “globally-conscious” implied readers (Chapter IV). The desire to resurrect the imperial past has

continued until today. The development-themed narratives in this study evidence this by self-fashioning themselves into both intrepid adventurers and heroes of philanthropy in one—*intrepid white saviors*. As the individual *adventure development tourists* explore the “developing” world of misery, “bravely” overcoming danger and lawlessness, they project the feeling that this type of world is ripe to be conquered (Chapter V). It is there, awaiting their “developing” mission (like the “civilizing mission” of the colonial times), so that they can fulfill their self-assigned role of intrepid white savior, which—in their view—is sanctioned by destiny and authorized by the developed-vs.-developing-world structure (like the empire-vs.-colonies structure of the past). Just like explorers of the colonial past the *adventure development tourists* “brave” the dangers of the developing world’s poverty: slums, disorder, misery, death, poor sanitation and medical services (Chapter IV). This perilous context injects their work with a feeling of thrill, thus converting their development endeavors into extreme form of adventure (Chapter II). Writing about their own endeavors, *adventure development tourists* borrow tropes from colonial travel literature to mold themselves in the image of those classic heroes of exploration (Chapter III). In this way, travel, literature and development come together in contemporary discourse of development (Chapter V).

As none of this is evident, Chapter IV further de-masks these hidden motivations by examining the “testimonio”-style stories as *products*, and their readers as *customers*. By examining the materiality of the narratives in their social, corporate, publishing context their commodification is revealed. Seen as books, carefully crafted for specific *target audience*, their utility as marketing tools for NGOs they represent is evidenced by

means of analysis of the corresponding websites (Chapter IV). Subirana's, de Toro's and Sanllorente's websites reveal the need to tell a "good story" to their donors, a common necessity in development as shown in chapter V. All development relies, in different measures, on funding from individuals or large entities or countries, thus imposing an imperative of effective storytelling (Chapter V). The emotional responses of the interpellated readers, when presented in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility and the Fair Trade movement, points to a general mood that enables the transition from concerned readers to an *imagined community* of active donors (Chapter IV). The "globally conscious" individuals act on their altruistic impulses as part of their identity, a life style, thus getting individual donations today is much easier than several decades ago (Chapter IV).

However, in the postmodern "liquid" world these identities are fickle and can be easily discarded—to the detriment of the "developing" *others* and no cost to the "developing" *selves* (Chapter IV). This fallacy of development is represented in such "pseudo needs" such as Starbucks coffee or the four books under analysis themselves—they are designed to expunge the guilt of commodification, by dedicating a percentage of product prices to supporting "developing" countries (Chapter IV). This unequal relationship is representative of development, and disguised by means of carefully-crafted discourse (Chapter V). It is presented in Chapter V, from within anthropology, to show the neocolonial roots of the field. Development maintains the division between the "developed" and "developing" worlds—this binarism is part of the larger division of the contemporary world into "moderns" and "non-moderns (Chapter IV).

By establishing a dialectic between the two narratological modalities in the study—the self-authored “testimonios” and the novel—Chapter V evidenced the correlation between the motivation behind chronicling development endeavors and the narrative form. The semi-autobiographical accounts of individual philanthropists are a necessary choice of form, given that they rely on funding by their community of readers and online supporters, as was claimed in Chapter V. These narratives have a (concealed) imperative to appear “authentic” and heroic. Consequently, they craft their “good” stories for this objective, hiding what is inconvenient. Fiction possesses neither this limitation nor the objective, hence, it is able to show the pursuit of adventures in the development context overtly (Chapter V). Fiction is also more explicit in showing the exploitative nature of development, its white privilege and superiority. However, the fictional novel in this study stops short of being a condemnation of this practice. Thus, both types of narratives in the study conceals the present conditions of neocolonialism within development and uphold the continuation of the division between “developed” and “developing”. This is the because the “developed” world is needed for the pursuit of adventures which today can only be realized in “developing” world, as concluded in Chapter V. For this reason, as in colonial times “discourse of innocence” is needed today to mask the “developed” world’s guilt. In fact, it is required a lot more today given modernity’s greater need for a clean conscious as the “iron fist of colonialism” has changed to the “white glove” of economic supremacy.

Consequently, the preservation of the “developing” vs. “developed” world binarism is needed. Whether for adventures or other reasons, the “non-modern” world is

needed for the “modern” part of the world, as its playground for playing out its psychodramas. For this reason, neocolonial nature of development must be firmly hidden in stories such as those examined in this dissertation. The mechanism of the neocolonialist discourse of development can be reduced to the difference between solidarity vs. charity. While presenting itself as a horizontal relationship between the two ends of the “development” contact zone, one of equals, in reality it hides the real uneven vertical relationship between the powerful and the powerless. “Good stories” such as those examined in this dissertation—carefully crafted and authorized by the field of literature—uphold it firmly.

The narratives studied in this dissertation represent a point-of-view that is limited that of the so-called “First” world onto the “Third” world. This unidirectional orientation is one of the limitations of this study that could be explored; it does not take up the inverse point-of-view. There exists a rich history of reflection on this topic in literary studies, including those in Latin America. Consequently, an examination of narratives presenting the perception of the beneficiaries of development’s efforts would complement this dissertation’s focus. Future studies could try to take up this inverse point of view, however, as indicated in the introduction, this may prove to be challenging due to the scarcity of primary sources. Stories of the recipients of development aid are rare, in any language, Spanish included.

One other study complementing this dissertation would be an evaluation in similar methodological terms of the literary depiction of a field related to development: humanitarian relief. Here the scarcity of primary sources would likely be an issue—I was



able to find only one book on this topic, the story of Spanish Red Cross Workers. One way to counter this problem, for this one as well as all other future studies on development-related narratives would be to open up the corpus of primary sources to other European countries. Given the universality of this study's approach, texts in any language would be applicable to the ideas proposed herein. Ultimately, the scope can be broadly defined as "developed" vs. "developing" world.

The implications of this study are for the three fields involved, in varying degrees. For international development, the point of view in this dissertation aligns with that of the discussed anti-developmentalists and others like them. They have shown the neocolonial nature of international development from within their fields, and this dissertation evidenced it via literature. For tourism studies, the present analysis of development-themed travel narratives has to do with state of the contemporary tourism scene, which is subdivided according to interests and identities. This study has evidenced the existence of new travel niche—*adventure development tourism*. The contribution for literature is the greatest—this dissertation confirms its continued persistence of the classic tropes and rhetorical devices of colonial travel literature in this genre today. Their reformulation in contemporary popular development-travel literature as the *intrepid white savior* was shown. The utility of canonical literature to the money-generating objectives of popular literature was shown as well as the centrality of centrality of storytelling to both areas of literature, thus pointing out the nexus between them (much denied by the cannon).

The most valuable aspect of this dissertation has to do with its interdisciplinary nature, both of content and methods of analysis. In the intersection of development and

literature, this dissertation showed the narratives in this study as one of the forms of knowledge through which discourse on development comes into being. The NGOs described in them, together with their financial supporters, were shown as the system of power that regulates its practice. The narratives were shown as instruments of development discourse that uphold the “developed” vs. “developing” divide, allowing the readers to recognize themselves as part of the former. In this way, literature was shown to participate in creating, maintaining the official discourse of development, and in normalizing it. It was shown as upholding its inherent neocolonial nature, thus being complicit in maintaining the tight relationship between knowledge and power.

Travel writings has always been implicated in imperial objectives and has often provided effective alibi for the perpetuation or installment of ethnocentrically superior attitudes to “other” cultures, peoples, and places (Holland and Huggan ix). This study showed that the praxis of travel and development are sublimated to the same fantasies and anxieties of those of the colonial past. They are kept alive in and recreated in today’s literature that shows development as the locum of the fulfillment of these desires. This study analyzed the structure of fantasy of the “Occident” vis-a-vis the of the “Orient”. In addition to showing continued neocolonialist power relations, it also revealed a desire to escape rigid parameters of modern subjectivity (Holland and Huggan ix). This escape—in the form of the desire for exploration and adventure--is fueled in part by literature and satisfied by contemporary tourism. This study also showed a preoccupation with the “developing” world, which is exoticized and seen as place for the fulfillment of the desires for adventure travel.

Said showed how the ideological aspects of West produced an exoticized “Orient” as a projection of all that is perceived to be lacking in the self-fashioned “Occident”. In the same way, development-themed narratives portraying adventure development travel are a reaction to the current state of the “developed” “Occident” (self-centered, commodified, powerful). It is a response to its guilt of its own past (colonialism) and present (wealth for selves at the cost of poverty of the other). That is why it is presented as innocence, veiled from plain view by means of discourse, or in other words, carefully-staged representation. In his seminal study on this topic, *Representation and the Media*, Stuart Hall points out that the byproduct of the process of signification is a stereotype. Thus, this study questioned the notion of the “developing” world not being able to develop on its own time, way, pace and thus needing the intervention of the “developed” expert. Hall shows that the act of fixing meaning is hidden within a representation. It is in the act of opening up the stereotype that the process is exposed and the discourse, subverted. This study has taken a step towards the de-masking of the stereotypes of furnished by development, by questioning its discourse by means of exposing the motivation for the *self* in narratives explicitly describing philanthropic deeds. Through focusing on popular literature’s use of classic tropes of travel literature also present today in cinematic genre and politics, this study offers a counter view of development, literature and tourism. It adds to the range of depictions of these fields, thus questioning the self-assigned power of representation / discourse.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### MAGDALENA MALINOWSKA

Birth date: 1974, Poland

Contact: Boston University, Romance Studies Department, 718 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA; mmalina@bu.edu

### EDUCATION

- Jan 2017      Boston University, Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature
- May 2006      Boston College, Master of Arts in Hispanic Literature
- May 1997      Boston University, Bachelor of Arts, Cum Laude, Dean's List

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE - LITERATURE

1) Fall 2013: Regis College, Weston, MA

Adjunct Professor during semester-long sabbatical-leave coverage at a small liberal arts college. Took over a full teaching load of literature and language courses (three). Adjusted syllabi and created several teaching materials for all courses. Conducted autonomous instruction, in Spanish.

Course I: Taught an independent-study literature course to an undergraduate student on Don Quixote de la Mancha by Miguel de Cervantes, a pivotal work in world literature. Developed the course syllabus, materials and evaluation tools catered to the student's interest. Led twice-weekly meetings to assess student progress in comprehension and writing, and to stimulate critical thinking via discussions. Guided and evaluated student's final research paper.

Course II: Taught a split graduate/undergraduate level literature seminar on XX Century Peninsular Spanish Literature, on key prose and fiction authors of the period. Led twice-weekly discussions, evaluated assignments, presentations and exams for students exhibiting two levels of comprehension and critical-thinking capabilities.

Course III: Taught an undergraduate-level introductory Spanish language course.

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE - LANGUAGE

1) 2010 – 2016: Boston University, Boston, MA,

Senior Teaching Fellow in Spanish in the Department of Romance Studies.

LS310 Spanish for Professions: Business & LS310 Spanish for the Professions: Medical—Taught an advanced-level elective Language for Specific Purposes course.

Coordinated student learning endeavors focused on writing and speaking related to business topics (marketing, advertising, organizational structures / practices of multinational companies) and the medical field (symptoms & diagnosis of maladies, tests and procedures, nutrition, ethics and polemical topics in medicine).

LS211, LS212, LS220—Provided instruction in grammar and reading to college students in intermediate and advanced Spanish courses, using short stories in the target language. Developed teaching / testing materials and share with other instructors and coordinator. Attend a department-run College Teaching Methodology classes and technology workshops.

2) Fall 2013, 2012, Summer 2011: Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, MA

Adjunct Lecturer of Spanish in the Foreign Language Department. Taught an introductory Spanish course to very diverse student group: age, cultural/ethnic background, working/educational status, intellectual capacities. Adapted course daily to fit all students' needs.

3) Summers 2012, 2011: Regis College, Weston, MA

Adjunct Lecturer of Spanish in the Spanish Language Department in a small liberal arts nursing college. Taught an intensive introductory Spanish course designed for Health Care Professions.

4) 2006 – 2009: Notre Dame Academy, Hingham, MA

Spanish Teacher at a private all-girls college preparatory high-school. Provided instruction for five Spanish courses at four levels (beginner to advanced), focused in varying degrees on grammar, conversation and writing. Developed all teaching materials. Proposed to department and created an original, advanced-level reading/speaking/writing-focused course focused on four cultural contexts. Developed the syllabus and all teaching / testing materials. Co-organized and chaperoned a class trip to Italy. Chaperoned a class trip to Spain. Contributed to department and school-wide curriculum development and assessment projects. Homeroom supervision and instruction on a daily basis to 24 students.

5) 2004 – 2006: Boston College, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Chestnut Hill, MA

Teaching Fellow in the Romance Literatures and Languages Department. Instructor for two comprehensive year-long intermediate-level Spanish courses emphasizing comprehension, conversation and writing. Created daily lesson plans, designed activities and tests, in coordination with a team of fellow instructors and coordinators. Prepared presentations on methodology to teaching team.



## RELATED EXPERIENCE / UNIVERSITY SERVICE

1) 2013 – 2016: BU Center for the Humanities, Boston University, Boston, MA

Graduate Assistant for *Lectures in Criticism*, a year-long annual series of five interdisciplinary lectures, the center's flagship project. Sole responsibility for organizing all administrative, logistical and financial aspects of the series: media support, event reservations, reimbursements and honorariums, travel arrangements, catering, etc. Managed all aspects of publicity for the events (from advertisement creation (Photoshop) to distribution). Coordinated with program directors and grant administrator. Act as point of contact for guest speakers. Developed and maintained the program website, Facebook page and email database.

2) June 2015: College Board's 2015 AP® Reading, Cincinnati, OH

Spanish Language Reader for Educational Testing Services. Listening comprehension division.

3) 2011 – 2012: Instituto Cervantes—Aula Cervantes Boston, Boston University, Boston, MA

Graduate Assistant at a leading Spanish language and culture organization created to promote Spain abroad.

4) Spring 2012: Boston University Center for Italian and European Study, Padua, Italy

Graduate Assistant / Travelling Scholar at one of the BU Study Abroad Programs.

5) Summer 2011: Cengage Learning, Inc., Boston, MA

Content Writer (freelance) at a leading provider of innovative teaching, learning and research solutions for the academic, professional and library markets. Independently developed a set of 166 activities (Learning Style Worksheets) for kinesthetic learners, spanning the entire scope of Spanish grammar for a new college-level Spanish textbook. Activities used online and in print. Featured as a special contributor to the textbook's content.

6) 2004 – 2010: DoubleO Publishing, Inc., Aptara, Inc., Baseline Development Group, Inc., Cengage, Inc., Boston, MA

Proofreader, Editor, Writer (freelance) for leading educational publishing development companies. Executed subcontracted projects for top educational publishing companies in the U.S. elementary, secondary and college-level markets. Proofread and edited sections of textbooks, wrote grammar lessons and activities for bilingual education (Spanish—English) and secondary language acquisition (Spanish) textbooks.

7) 2004 – 2004: Vista Higher Learning, Inc., Boston, MA

Writer/Editorial Project Manager at a leading developer of Spanish language textbooks and learning components for the U.S. college market. Designed and wrote scripts for 76 animated grammar tutorials for an interactive university-level online course accompanying a leading Spanish textbook program (The Supersite for VISTAS textbook). Worked with a team of media developers and project resources to prepare tutorials for animation.

## CONFERENCES

1) November 2014: Boston University School of Communications / The Goethe-Institut Boston, Boston, MA

Conference Manager at the Labor in a Single Shot Conference, an international, interdisciplinary conference on the global video workshop curated by German filmmaker Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmman, organized by the BU COM Director of Film and Television Studies. Acted as a point of contact for the conference directors, participants and the co-organizing / sponsoring institutions (including BU Center for the Arts, Mills Gallery at the Boston Center for the Arts). Responsible for all administrative, financial and logistical aspects of organizing and hosting the three-day conference. (<http://www.bu.edu/com/labor-films/>)

2) July 2013: Regis College, Weston, MA (in partnership with Fitchburg State University)

Moderator, Assistant at XVIII Congreso de la Asociación de Colombianistas: La mujer en Colombia. Moderated one of the panels titled Mujer y conflicto. Assisted in all administrative and logistical aspects of organizing and hosting the four-day conference.

3) Summer 2011: STARTALK Turkish Teacher Training Program, Boston University, Boston, MA

Project Assistant for a conference sponsored by the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages and held annually by the Modern Foreign Language Department. Assisted in all aspects of organizing the conference. Developed the website. Served as point of contact.

4) Spring 2010: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC

Presenter at the Sixteenth Annual Carolina Conference on Romance Literatures: From Border Building to Border Hopping: The Shifting Nature of the Text. Delivered a paper in a panel on Epic and Satire in the Spanish American Colonies: 16th and 17th Centuries, titled “El “discurso indiscreto” de Juan del Valle y Caviedes: apuntes sobre incontinencias verbales, entre otras”.

## AWARDS

1) 2009 – 2015: Recipient of the Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Presidential Fellowship. Competitive fellowship, awarded to one cohort member per year.

2) Summer 2008: Recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Fellowship for high-school teachers. Applied towards a seminar organized by the University of Miami titled “Literary Pícaros and Pícaras and Their Travels in Early Modern Spain”.

3) Summer 2005: Recipient of the Center for International Partnerships and Programs at Boston College Summer Study Grant. Applied toward study of Central American and Literatures in the Universidad de Costa Rica.

### **RELATED QUALIFICATIONS**

Languages: Bilingual Polish—English; Spanish: fluent /near-native; Portuguese: fluent; Italian, Russian, French: proficient / working knowledge, Persian—beginner.