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"TRAVELING TO DANGEROUS AND FAR-FLUNG LOCALES":

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "OTHER" IN WEB-BASED TRAVEL JOURNALISM

by

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B. A., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

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This thesis entitled:
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has been approved for the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Palmer, Lucia (M.A., Journalism and Mass Communication)

"Traveling to Dangerous and Far-Flung Locales":

Representations of the "Other" in Web-Based Travel Journalism

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Shu-Ling Chen Berggreen

International travel and tourism has increased dramatically over the past sixty years, causing it to become one of the largest global commercial industries. An increase in the prominence and quantity of travel journalism across various media platforms has accompanied the rise of the activity of international travel. This paper examines the discourse on "Other" cultures constructed through rhetorical strategies and representations in a web-based travel show, *The Vice Guide to Travel*. Although most travel research comes from an industry and market-driven point of view, there is a large body of research that critiques the implications of travel-related media, in particular the representations of "non-Western" people and places in travel journalism. This paper is informed by this critical body of research that comes from a postcolonial, cultural studies, and feminist perspective. *The Vice Guide to Travel* is an episodic web series that is targeted at a global youth and counterculture viewers. Although the series is produced by Vice Media, a commercially-driven transnational media corporation, its position as a niche media form directed at a specifically politically progressive audience allows it to push the boundaries of the travel television genre. Through a discursive content analysis, this paper critically analyzes *The Vice Guide to Travel* as a text produced within hierarchical society and industry structured by inequitable global power relations. It questions the show's ability to create subversive and alternative discourses, and the possibility of breaking free of hegemonic colonialist discourses when representing historically marginalized nations, cultures and people.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

International tourism has rapidly increased over the last six decades, becoming one of the largest global economic sectors (Fürsich, 2002b). Travel has become a global practice that materially impacts societies worldwide politically, economically, culturally and socially. As the number of people traveling internationally increases, audiences in search of travel-related information and entertainment grows and diversifies. This swell in audiences has led to the greater profitability, production and visibility of travel-related media (Fürsich, 2002b).

The travel genre spans various media forms: advertising (print, commercial, etc.), guide books, travel writing in newspapers and magazines, television programs and specials (Fürsich, 2002). Travel media have even gained enough popularity to support an entire cable channel, The Travel Channel, which is devoted entirely to the subject and broadcast in various countries across the world (Fürsich, 2002).

Although journalistic professionals have traditionally framed the practice and products of journalism as objective reflections of the "Truth", various forms of critical theory - a paradigm in media studies concerned with analyzing symbolic and linguistic forces in discourses and their ideological impacts on societies (Hall, 1982) - have argued that complete impartiality is impossible (Baker, 2008; Couldry, 2008; Hall, 1982). Travel journalism is a niche genre within journalism as a broad categorical identification of

media characterized by its claims of veracity and realism (Fürsich, 2003), and is produced within a society and industry that are infused with inequitable hierarchies. Thus the genre works within frameworks of rhetorical strategy and representational conventions that are embedded with power relations (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Working within relations and conventions that are inescapably embedded with power, travel journalists' work becomes problematic as they act as interpreters of foreign cultures. This becomes especially dicey when audiences use these texts as sources for building shared perceptions of the represented people and places (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Travel journalism has been criticized for its tendency to "Other" (Aitchison, 2001; Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Fürsich, 2002, 2003; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Hanusch, 2010), a process that occurs when Eurocentric discourses construct a sense of self and group identity defined by its comparison and differentiation from an inferior and foreign "Other". Representations of "Other" cultures through travel journalism must therefore be critically analyzed to interrogate how this genre constructs knowledge about "non-Western"[1] peoples.

Academic interest in travel journalism has been largely critical of journalists' representations of peoples and cultures not belonging to the "West" – a discursively-formed ideological construction that describes societies with particular characteristics normatively associated with Western Europe and the United States (Hall, 1992). Textual analyses informed by cultural studies and postcolonialism have criticized the reification of difference and reductive homogenization that results from "Othering" discourses operating through travel journalism. The values placed on "non-Western" cultures are

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[1] Throughout this research project, I refer to the "non-West", "non-Western", the "West" and "Western" in quotation marks in order to highlight their socially-constructed and invented nature.

assigned within a comparative framework that privileges the "West" as the model of progress, and modernity as the productive driving force of history along a teleological timeline (Bhabha, 1983; Chakrabarty, 1992; Hall, 1992; Said, 1989, 2003). Travel journalism is critiqued for reinforcing colonialist discourses that maintain and reinvent inequitable global relations between former colonial powers and formerly colonized nations and peoples. Media globalization has exacerbated these colonial tendencies in travel journalism, as media producers must adhere to commercial logics that privilege non-risk approaches (Fürsich, 2003). In creating media products to appeal to diverse audiences in various global locations, media producers tend to adhere to generic conventions with broad appeal and proven past commercial success. In the context of travel journalism, this strategy tends to draw from long-established narrative devices, rooted in a history of colonial travel writing, that reinforce Eurocentric and "Othering" discourses (Fürsich, 2003). The long history of European and United States colonialism has generated standards and methods of speaking about and conceptualizing (now formerly) colonized peoples. This colonial discourse, effectively defining formerly colonized peoples as inherently inferior, functions to reinforce entrenched global inequities and legitimate the relationships that maintain power imbalances privileging former colonizers (Hall, 1992; Said, 1989, 2003).

There is little research on the potential of travel journalism produced outside of mainstream media to counter and question colonial discourse. *The Vice Guide to Travel* is a web-based travel series produced by Vice Media, whose brand is intentionally counter-cultural. Although the production company responsible for *The Vice Guide to Travel* is located in the United States, the show has a global scope and a distribution strategy aimed

at international youth subculture, and thus may be expected to contain instances of counter-hegemonic representations of "non-Western" cultures and established global power relations. By targeting subcultural youth in diverse situations and positions across the globe, *The Vice Guide to Travel* may contain modes of representation that are purposefully counter-hegemonic in order to appeal to audiences that are skeptical of dominant ideological discourse. In doing so, the series may effectively challenge "Othering" strategies often utilized by mainstream travel journalists. However, due to *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s need to maintain commercial viability in order for it to ensure its long term survival, it is also possible that the potential for the series to produce counter-hegemonic discourses may be undermined by its dependence on corporate financing and necessitations of broad appeal.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the potential of and limits on the subversion of hegemonic colonial discourse in travel journalism. The analysis and methodological strategy are rooted in a critical theoretical background informed by cultural studies, postcolonialism and feminism. The focus of this analysis are the 31 episodes of *The Vice Guide to Travel*, (varying in length from three minutes to over an hour) available via online video streaming on Vice Media's website, Vice.com.

Through a discursive critical content analysis of *The Vice Guide to Travel*, I hope to situate the text symbolically and historically in the context of the travel journalism genre, the globalized media industry, and sociopolitical and economic global power relations that maintain entrenched inequalities. The theoretical foundations in critical theory are used to elucidate the rhetorical and representational strategies employed in the

media texts, and their interrelations with colonial and/or "Western" hegemonic discourses.

The guiding question in this research project is whether it is feasible to produce knowledge about the "Other" – a discursively constructed subject used to define the "Western Self" (an ideological concept based on European Enlightenment ideals of progress and civilized society) through contrast - that can escape and/or undermine colonial discourse and "Othering" processes in travel journalism. Is it possible for a media site to create representations that undermine colonialist, "Othering" discourses about the "non-West" that is also profitable and popular with its audiences? Does *The Vice Guide to Travel* contain representations (images, signs, narrative devices, etc.) that maintain or reaffirm hegemonic stereotypes of the "non-West", and does it contain representations that are subversive of these stereotypes? How are these representational devices employed, and to what end (commercial gain, brand promotion, destabilization of the status quo) are they used?

The overarching goal of this study is to contribute to the growing body of critical research on representations of the "non-West" in travel journalism. In doing so, it is my hope to broaden the scope of the research to include investigations of niche media products outside the mainstream that have grown in cultural significance as a result of innovations in information and communication technologies and networks.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

MODE OF ANALYSIS

The methodology in this research is heavily informed by postcolonial and cultural studies scholarship that is concerned with exploring the *how* and *why*, rather than just the *what*, of representational practices. Homi Bhabha (1983) argues that analysis of "Othering" representations should focus on not just the representations themselves, but on the "processes of subjectification" that enable the representations to produce "Otherness". Normative assessments of colonial discourse prevent recognition of the "ambivalence" in its representational operations (Bhabha, 1983). Thus, an analysis of colonial discourse should investigate its "regime of truth":

> In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of 'truth', not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgment. Only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of those limits from the space of that otherness. (Bhabha's emphasis, 1983, p. 19)

Stuart Hall (1997) similarly recommends a discursive approach informed by poststructuralist theory, primarily the work of Michel Foucault. While semiotics is preoccupied with how language itself creates meaning, discursive analysis studies the constitutive role of broader discourses in a particular culture at a historical moment, and the connection of these discourses to the relationship between knowledge and power (Hall, 1997). Discourses provide frameworks for constructing knowledge about a particular topic that in turn delineate ways of thinking and acting in relation to this topic (Hall, 1997). For Foucault, knowledge cannot exist free of power. Thus, the "truth" of a

body of knowledge is less important to investigate than the effectiveness of its construction of identities and norms that guide social relations and activities (Hall, 1997). Hall argues that all social practices necessitate the interpretation and creation of meaning, and therefore all social practices have discursive features and operate within systems of knowledge and power (Hall, 1997).

A methodological approach rooted in this theoretical background recommends a critical discourse analysis aimed at understanding the power dynamics operating in cultural texts (Caton & Santos, 2009). This analysis is therefore directed towards examining the links between the rhetorical strategies of representation employed in *The Vice Guide to Travel* and larger social and historical contexts in which colonial discourses function, rather than the ontological validity of these representations. Although the accurateness of these texts are a concern of this analysis, questions of accuracy are addressed not to dispute the truthfulness of the text's representations but rather to question the limits on communicating a material reality within the generic conventions of travel journalism. Further, as a researcher I lack the intimate knowledge of each location visited to confidently assess the text's correctness, and therefore concentrate primarily on the discursive practices at work in *The Vice Guide to Travel*.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Conducting an analysis that deals with sociopolitical and economic disparities in postcolonial societies must use awkward analytical categories to describe forces of domination and subordination. Dichotomous groupings such as "First/Third World" and "developed/developing" nations imply relations of superiority and inferiority, while classifications such as "West/East" and "Global North/Global South" are problematic in

their geographical inaccuracies. Moreover, any attempt to categorize diverse peoples and cultures based on global power relations will inevitably be reductive and homogenizing.

Chakrabarty (1992) describes "Europe" (as an analytical category) as a "hyperreal" term because it refers to a place with material presence in reality, but whose identity is primarily an imaginary formation. Although the term "Europe", as an imagined entity, is subject to contestation, this does not dissolve its influence or tangible force (Chakrabarty, 1992):

> …just as the phenomenon of orientalism does not disappear simply because some of us have now attained a critical awareness of it, similarly a certain version of 'Europe,' reified and celebrated in the phenomenal world of everyday relationships of power as the scene of the birth of the modern, continues to dominate the discourse of history. Analysis does not make it go away. (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 2)

Chakrabarty advocates "provincializing Europe" – a critical practice that questions the universality of modernity, and demonstrates history as heterogeneous and contradictory (1992). This does not call for an outright and total rejection of modern liberal values of science and reason, but rather for detailing the historical processes through which these values were universalized (Chakrabarty, 1992). This means recognizing that ideals of equality, citizenship, and rights have empowered marginalized groups, but it also entails making visible the often tragic confrontations that came out of modernity's global expansion (Chakrabarty, 1992).

Stuart Hall (1992) argues that "the West" can be a useful generalization for analytical purposes, but it must be understood as a symbolic concept that refers to multifaceted and complicated ideas that have no straightforward meaning. Conceptualizations of "the West and the Rest" are not chiefly ideas about geography, but rather describe a type of society that is defined in terms of fulfilling modern ideals of

capitalist economic development, liberal nation-statehood, and scientific and technological advancement (Hall, 1992). Therefore, although "the West" (as a concept used to characterize an identity, group, and culture sense of self versus "Other") originated in Western Europe, it now can be used to describe societies in various parts of the world that are not considered geographically western, such as Japan and Australia (Hall, 1992). Hall contends that conceptions of the "West" have always had elements of myth from its origins in the medieval period (1992). The "West" was historically constructed in relation to the "Rest", which was essential in its self-definition by providing a conceptual framework for comparison and differentiation (Hall, 1992). The "Rest" represents everything that the "West" is not: economically and politically "undeveloped", "primitive", "superstitious", etc. Therefore the rise of the "West" as a conceptual formation was a global, rather than internal, process:

> The West and the Rest became two sides of a single coin. What each now is, and what the terms we use to describe them mean, depend on the relations which were established between them long ago. The so-called uniqueness of the West was, in part, produced by Europe's contact and self-comparison with other, non-western, societies (the Rest), very different in their histories, ecologies, patterns of development and cultures from the European model. The difference of these other societies and cultures from the West was the standard against which the West's achievement was measured. It is within the context of these relationships that the idea of 'the West' took on shape and meaning. (Hall, 1992, p. 278)

"The West and the Rest" discourse creates positions that must be occupied in order to make sense of itself (Hall, 1992). Anytime we engage in this discourse we must speak from within its logic, which organizes a hierarchy that privileges the "West" (Hall, 1992). Therefore, even if we ourselves do not consider "Western" society to be superior, when discussing "the West and the Rest" we cannot escape speaking from a position that presumes the inferiority of the "Rest" (Hall, 1992).

While Hall's discussion of the "West" and the "Rest" as discursive formations is useful in describing long histories of global inequities associated with the valorization of modernity, it is nonetheless reductive. Although using the "West" and the "Rest" as terms of analysis may be useful in describing broad patterns of power relations, these concepts are incapable of drawing attention to the particularities of certain localities and the complexities and contradictions in the functioning of these power relations. Although Hall makes note of internal contestations and discontinuities within both the "West" and the "Rest", using these terms makes it difficult to account for the ways in which varied groups and individuals within these categorical assumptions function. For example, Latin America as a region is categorized as belonging to the "Rest", but in many Latin American nations elites have historically cooperated with both internal groups (military and/or bureaucratic state institutions) and external "Western" (United States, Western Europe) states and international interests (transnational corporations as well as international regulatory bodies) to maintain their own privileged status within their country (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1993). Within many of these nations, there are internal processes of "Othering" that work to marginalize groups such as laborers, indigenous and peasant communities, women, etc. (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1993) that are obfuscated by an analysis that focuses solely on simplistic relations between the "West" and the "Rest." Further, these groups actively contest their peripheral status against both broader global forces and internal national, regional and local mechanisms of oppression (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998; Burman, 2011; Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993). Using the "West" and the "Rest" as analytical terms positions a monolithic "West" as a subject that

acts against a passive "Rest" as an object. The relationship of the "West" versus the "Rest", wherein the "West" is the sole actor, is an inaccurate descriptor of multilayered and contested relations of power.

This research project is conducted within a scholarly discipline and historically constructed body of knowledge that is part of the modern project. Although my goal is to question Eurocentric models of progress, I must acknowledge my own position within United States academia and note that my work operates within a context of knowledge and logic built on European Enlightenment ideals of rationality and science. In my analysis, I am obliged to use generalizations of "Europe", the "West", and the "Rest" to describe broad global power relations. Although situating "Western" and "non-Western" societies along a hierarchical scale that favors the "West" is contrary to the goals of this analysis, it cannot be entirely avoided due to limitations in the available vocabulary and my own situated position within the history of modern thought and academy. While problematizing these categories does not resolve this dilemma, I hope that an awareness of the difficulties of these simplifications will provide this research project with a critical consciousness and self-reflexivity that questions the reductive analytical terms of the "West" and the "Rest".

ARRANGEMENT OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into three chapters: the introduction, the literature review, and the findings of the study. The first chapter includes an introduction to the topic, explanation of the purpose of the study, and notes on methodology, terminology, and background assumptions.

The second chapter is the review of the literature and description of methodology. This includes a discussion of the postcolonial, cultural studies and feminist theory that provide the foundation of the thesis research. It begins with an overview of the activity of travel and tourism in an international context. The discussion then turns to postcolonial, cultural studies and feminist theory on discourse on the "West" and the "Rest", processes of "Othering", and colonial and postcolonial divisions of global power. This continues into a summary of postcolonial, cultural studies and feminist perspectives on representations of the "Other" in tourism media and travel journalism, and then proceeds into recurring colonialist themes and rhetorical devices utilized in travel journalism. The genre of travel journalism is situated in a global context through a reflection on research and theory on media globalization, with concluding suggestions for journalistic strategies to undermine colonialist discourse. Finally, I discuss my methodological choices and process in analyzing *The Vice Guide to Travel*.

The third chapter contains the findings of the study, including a discussion of the critical discursive analysis of *The Vice Guide to Travel* as a cultural text. This consists of considerations of points of resistance and subversion, as well as moments that retain hegemonic meaning formations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following chapter is a review of research on international travel and tourism, media globalization, and travel media. This includes a discussion of postcolonial, cultural studies, and feminist theory addressing representational practices and colonial discourse as it applies to travel journalism.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AS A CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Modern forms of travel as tourism are tied to the custom of English gentlemen touring abroad as part of their educational development (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Current understandings of the meaning of travel are rooted in discourse on European travel beginning in the eighteenth century with the "Grand Tour" for young male members of the English aristocracy, where travel was constructed as a gendered and classed activity (Grewal, 1996).

Travel as a contemporary sociological phenomenon has evolved from its aristocratic origins into a practice closely connected to modernity. Tourism travel is a form of travel whose purpose is vacation and entertainment rather than occupational or emigratory; it is part of leisure as a sphere of activity, defined and made possible as a separate space from labor and workplace activities by modern ideologies (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). The search for authentic experiences is a driving motivational factor in the practice of travel, and is predicated on modern notions that authenticity exists outside of modernity, in past historical time periods and lifestyles that are closer to nature

(Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). The desire for the exploration and discovery of authenticity in the practice of tourism travel reveals underlying forces that are shaped by the modern impulse for conquest (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

International tourism has become one of the world's largest industries (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001), generating one trillion U.S. dollars worldwide in 2011 (UN World Trade Organization, 2012). Tourism travel is an activity that is no longer exclusive to elite classes or to "Western" societies, becoming a global cultural practice (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). According to the UN World Tourism Organization, tourism has undergone continued growth and diversification since the 1950s, making it one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally (2012). In 2011, international tourist arrivals reached 983 million, and are expected to reach one billion for the first time in 2012 (UNWTO, 2012).

Destinations in what the UN World Trade Organization names "emerging economies" (i.e. primarily postcolonial states in Latin America, Asia and Africa) are increasing rapidly, and are expected to grow at double the rate of destinations in "advanced economies" (i.e. North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia) between 2010 and 2030 (UNWTO, 2012). The marketing for tourism in formerly colonized nations is becoming more common due to official development of tourist industries in connection with nationalistic goals of modernization and economic development (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

Much of the research and discourse surrounding the worldwide growth of the tourist industry interpret these developments as exclusively positive and beneficial, ignoring some of their questionable impacts. The tourism industry is one of the most sex-

segregated service industries (Aitchison, 2001) and brings to light feminist issues in women's labor, development, and sex work (Grewal, 1996). Economic reliance on international tourism also often effectively reinforces structures of dependency (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

Tourism is becoming an increasingly prominent activity worldwide, and as such should be critically investigated with an awareness of its ambiguous and complicated implications. As a cultural practice, tourism is "an institutional site where meaning is created and where a collective version of the 'Other/We' is negotiated, contested, and constantly redefined" (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001, p. 67).

COLONIAL DISCOURSES AND GLOBAL POWER RELATIONS

Colonial discourses are the languages used by processes of colonization, and which are produced by and productive of historical colonialism (Spurr, 1993). The representational devices employed in colonial discourse construct a constellation of images of a homogenized "non-Western" world that reflect a "Western", white, male point of view (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). Via these value-laden representations, the "West" is able to contrast itself as dynamic and developed against an imaginary "Rest" that is static and backwards (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Hall, 1992).

COLONIAL DISCOURSE DURING THE HIGH EMPIRE

Direct European colonial rule broadened so profusely during the nineteenth century that by 1914 Europe controlled 85-percent of the earth's surface and had a presence in every continent (Said, 1978). During Europe's period of conquest beginning in the fifteenth century, Europeans collided repeatedly with foreign cultures and societal structures. To make sense of these interactions with the unfamiliar, Europe used its own

conceptual frameworks to normatively interpret these people and places according to European standards of civilization (Hall, 1992). The position of power that the Europeans as conquerors occupied in confrontations with the "non-West" influenced what they observed, what observations were explained as difference, and how these differences were translated into "Western" thought (Hall, 1992). While these interactions were not simplistic relations between an active "West" and a passive "Other" (even during the age of High Imperialism, colonized peoples contested their subordination and exploitation), these colonial encounters produced a body of knowledge in Western Europe and the United States that (according to a Modern ideological standard of judgment) privileged the "West" as more "civilized" than the "primitive" cultures they colonized. The resulting representations in colonial discourse constructed European knowledge formations about the "non-West" that legitimated colonial expansion and power (Hall, 1992). Discourse and the knowledge it creates are always connected to relations of power (Hall, 1992). Knowledge is an instrument of power that can be "exercised over those who are 'known'," and that has material effects when adapted into practice (Hall, 1992, p. 294). In the execution of discourses on "the West and the Rest", Europe had substantial interests (initially economic gain and the spread of Christianity, but later also morality-based civilizing missions) in maintaining and justifying its colonial domination (Hall, 1992). Colonial discourse constructed the colonized as inferior (mentally, morally, physically) based on their racial and ethnic difference, which was used to establish and legitimate colonial structures of administration and supervision (Bhabha, 1983).

The story of global history universalized by the "West" is a transition narrative that conceives of all societies as evolving along a linear trajectory of progress, moving

towards goals of modernization, development, and capitalism (Chakrabarty, 1992).

Europe becomes the central subject, and the histories of all other cultures and nations

become variations on Europe's ruling historical narrative (Chakrabarty, 1992). In this

narrative, the colonized people are figures of lack and embodiments of failure who are

not yet capable of citizenship (Chakrabarty, 1992). If native peoples were not able to

become citizens qualified to govern themselves, then at least through colonial rule they

could become subjects of a civilized society (Chakrabarty, 1992). Although this

teleological narrative has historically been used to prolong colonial governance,

colonized (and more recently formerly colonized) peoples have also been able to

effectively use Enlightenment rhetoric to highlight their own oppression, question

European rule, and demand more equitable relationships (Chakrabarty, 1992).

Additionally, postcolonial scholars have questioned the dominance of European models

of thought based on ideals of rationality and modernity and attempted to incorporate

more diverse methods of thought and bodies of knowledge (Mohanty, 1988; Pratt, 1992;

Smith, 2008; Spurr, 1993).

In European colonial discourse, the "West" was historically represented as

advancing and improving, while the "Rest" was presented as backwards, inert, and often

in a state of decline (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). Representations of the "non-Western

Other" as inferior were naturalized and seemingly interest-free, effectively sustaining

processes of discrimination and oppression (Bhabha, 1983). Centuries of colonial

discourse produced knowledge about the "non-West" as primitive and uncivilized, which

created a common sense system of meaning, wherein the representations that positioned

colonized peoples as inferior became understood as inherent differences. This hegemonic

system of meaning fabricated through colonial discourse was the foundation for inequitable global power relations that continue today. However, colonial discourses and their associated regimes of knowledge were and are not the only discourses surrounding the encounter between formerly colonized peoples and former colonial powers. Additionally, even colonial discourse was not exclusively carried out by colonial powers and colonizing peoples; the "West" and the "Rest" are enormous abstractions and it should be noted that "Western" actors were not the only agents in the colonial relationships that produced situations of colonial oppression. Often in discussion of postcolonial theory, the concrete relations and internal contradictions are obscured and describe simplistic subject-object theorizations of the colonial encounter. It should be noted that there are those with power who benefit from oppression and those who are marginalized by colonial relations on all sides of these global relations, and this should not be ignored. However, it is also important to recognize the hegemonic force of colonial discourses and the potent capacity of representations of the "Other" to maintain power relations and processes of dominance and subordination.

THE POSTCOLONIAL LEGACY

Colonial discourse remains one of the most influential processes affecting the "West's" perception of and relationship with formerly colonized people and cultures (Caton & Santos, 2009). Although direct colonial rule is over, imperialistic power imbalances persist, largely due to surviving discursive practices of colonialism that grant the "West" a dominant position as the central force in knowledge production (Caton & Santos, 2009). Now colonialism does not just describe straightforward political governance, but also economic, political, and ideological structural domination.

Postcolonial legacies of marginalization and dependency persist in formerly colonized

nations, maintained in part by representational practices that reinforce processes of

modernity benefiting the "West" (Spurr, 1993).

Postcolonial theory intersects with cultural studies in their use of poststructuralist

theorists, predominantly Foucault and Derrida, to investigate the discursive processes of

"Othering" in culture (Fürsich, 2002). Stuart Hall (1997) argues that culture is created

through shared meanings:

> Culture, we may say, is involved in all those practices which are not
> simply genetically programmed into us – like the jerk of the knee when
> tapped – but which carry meaning and value for us, which need to be
> *meaningfully interpreted* by others, or which *depend on meaning* for their
> effective operation. (Hall, 1997, p. 3)

Objects, events and actions are given meaning by frameworks of interpretation, their

integration into daily practices, and their *representations* (Hall, 1997). Things acquire

meaning through their descriptions, stories, images, and associations - by how they are

discursively represented (Hall, 1997). Like language, all methods of communication

depend upon "systems of representation" that classify concepts, giving meaning to

individual ideas by establishing their relative similarity and difference to other ideas

(Hall, 1997). Relationships of similarity and difference are essential operations in identity

formation, where a concept of the "Self" is constructed through its comparison to the

"Other" (Hall, 1997).

From this constructionist perspective, true, natural and universal meanings are

impossible. Instead, meaning is a product of historical processes that arbitrarily tie

together the signifier and the signified (Hall, 1997). This is not an argument that there is

no material reality, but rather that material reality can only be understood through

systems of representation that interpret the world in meaningful ways (Hall, 1997).

Therefore, knowledge and truth are not transcendent and uncontestable objects, but rather

are continually built upon, amended and re-established. Meaning is never final, but is

sustained by cultural codes and therefore is always partial and incomplete (Hall, 1997).

However, as power circulates through discourse, it reinforces hierarchical relations by

fixing preferred meanings through their naturalization as hegemonic common sense

(Hall, 1997).

Social constructionist approaches argue that representation is a primary process in

the constitution of material reality (Hall, 1997). Meanings organize society by

establishing norms that regulate social conduct and practice (Hall, 1997). Discourse

determines how an object of knowledge can be meaningfully discussed, and how it is put

into practice (Hall, 1997). Meanings and practices are inseparable because the symbolic

and the material are mutually constitutive (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998). Because

meaning formation is an essential motivating force in the actions, values and beliefs of

people, power is intimately connected to discursive practices (Hall, 1997). Groups must

fight for control of meaning production in order to influence their material social worlds

(Hall, 1997).

A discourse does not operate alone, but in relation to several discourses that

belong to what Foucault calls a "discursive formation" (Hall, 1997). These discourses

provide frameworks for understanding the same object with interrelated representational

strategies that reinforce and refer to each other (Hall, 1997). Foucault argues that

discursive formations work within a "regime of truth" that establishes the knowledge

generated through discourse as true (Hall, 1997). Because hegemonic discursive

formations are designated as objective truth and/or common sense, the effective production of resistant discourse is difficult. Discursive power operations are never issued from a single starting point, but flow through web-like articulations of meaning (Hall, 1997). No one exists outside of power relations; value-laden discursive processes affect both the dominant and the oppressed (Hall, 1997). All social beings form their identity through contrast, including nations and cultures (Hall, 1992).

Thus, the "West's" sense of identity was not assembled exclusively through interior processes. Rather, it was defined and produced as a category of society through its representations of difference in "Other" cultures and peoples (Hall, 1992). Likewise, modernity did not simply arise on its own within Europe from ideals of the Enlightenment, but fundamentally depended on the supposed superiority of "Western" knowledge and epistemologies in relation to all other knowledge formations (Hall, 1992). This process of differentiation was a central representational procedure in the discursive formation of what Hall terms "the West and the Rest" (Hall, 1992). Discourse of the "Other" first dramatically simplifies diverse people and cultures into a symbolic figure (a stereotype), and then splits this figure into good and bad attributes where the good is assigned to the "Self" and the bad to the "Other" (Hall, 1992). Thus, in "Othering" colonial discourses, the world becomes divided into the civilized "West" and the uncivilized "Rest", defining the "Rest" as that which the "West" is not (Hall, 1992).

Influenced by Foucault, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is a foundational work for postcolonial thought. Said uses the term "Orientalism" to refer to the "Western" discursive formation that systematically constructs the "East" as an object of knowledge that can be described, imagined and put into practice (1978). The discipline of

Orientalism and its body of knowledge builds an imaginary of the "Orient" that structures vocabularies available for talking about and interacting with the "East" (Said, 1978). This Orientalist system of knowledge frames the "Orient" as a subject, so that no one in the "West" who tries to represent, think or act on the "Orient" does so free of the limitations imposed by Orientalism (Said, 1978). Thus the "Orient" is continually reproduced in "Western" thought and action as an essentialized entity fixed in time and space, whose characteristics, represented through Orientalist discourse, serve "Western" imperial interests (Said, 1978). Orientalism forms an archive of ideas and values that explain the "Orient" and allow its heterogeneous peoples to be dealt with according to regular "Oriental" traits (Said, 1978). Orientalism as a form of knowledge gave Europeans the power required for maintaining their systematic dominance through colonialism. As European colonial power increased, so did the need for knowledge, creating "an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control" (Said, 1978, p. 36).

As objects to be known, "Orientals" and the "Orient" are distinguished by their elemental "Otherness" as defined by the "West" (Said, 1978). "Oriental" characteristics included gullibility, lack of initiative, deceit, and circuitous speech; deviations from these qualities were explained as exceptions to the rule rather than as evidence that these stereotypes were inaccurate (Said, 1978). This discursive "Othering" of the "East" was most actively developed during the peak of European colonialism, but has carried into postcolonial periods where assumptions of innate "Oriental" inferiority remain productive in "Western" thought and practice (Said, 1978).

Old colonial knowledge is consistently retooled to maintain social hierarchies in the contemporary world, and colonial discourse continues to shade "Western" images of

itself and "Others" in reinvented forms (Said, 1978; Hall, 1992). Arguing that colonial discourse still operates in global relations today does not mean that a specific set of concepts about the "non-West" are simply replicated again and again ad infinitum, but rather that colonial discourse provides a malleable framework for designing and reacting to present reality in the interest of preserving structures of power (Spurr, 1993). Hegemonic imperialism continues to function through ideological and institutional interactions between the "Western" military-industrial complex, "Western" cultural authority, and scientific and technological development (Mohanty, 1988).

GENDER IN COLONIALISM

Homi Bhabha argues that colonial power manifested through discourse requires descriptions of sexual, as well as racial and ethnic, difference (Bhabha, 1983). Racial and sexual signifiers are crosscutting articulations that infinitely interact and diverge (Bhabha, 1983). "Othering" colonial discursive processes are conducted in gendered terms that feminize, and thus reinforce the inferiority of, colonized peoples and places. Colonial narratives of exploration and discovery were embedded with gender formations that authorized European imperial expansion (Grewal, 1996). Places yet to be explored by Europeans (namely the New World and Africa) were frequently allegorized as women, depicted quite literally as a fertile female body waiting to be conquered by male European adventurers (Hall, 1992). Colonial discourses implied that only through masculine European economies of order and reason could an exotic and untamed land could bear the fruit of her natural potential.

The impulse to possess was extended to women in the "non-West", who were portrayed as either the embodiments of free sexuality, or as confined by religious

traditionalism. Colonial discourse on the "Eastern Woman" interpreted her as imprisoned by her husband and religion, representing ultimate female submission and repressed sexuality (Grewal, 1996). This discourse became the grounds for reformist and moral colonial missions in the nineteenth century that treated "Eastern" women as objects of debate rather than as acting subjects (Grewal, 1996). Further, this colonial fantasy constructed the "Eastern Woman" as an unattainable and mysterious figure to be penetrated by colonial power and probing knowledge (Grewal, 1996).

Interactions with women from colonized nations were not exclusive to male colonizers; encounters between European women and colonized women were vital in the formation of "Western" feminism and feminist subjects (Grewal, 1996). European feminist discourses defined their identities as empowered through a discursive comparison of the "Western" feminist "Self" with the victimized "non-Western" female "Other" (Grewal, 1996; Mohanty, 1988). Feminism in the age of imperialism depended on the constitution of the "female individualist", excluding the "native female" from this subjective norm (Spivak, 1985). Feminist discourse was universalized as transcendent and all empowering, but "Western" feminism was constituted in relations of power that endowed a historically specific version of feminism with an authoritative hegemonic position (Grewal, 1996; Mohanty, 1988). This allowed for the homogenization of oppression according to "Western" feminist concerns, and the production of the "Third World Woman" as an essentialized subject who is the victim of monolithic patriarchal domination (Mohanty, 1988).

Chandra Mohanty (1988) critiques "Western" feminism's use of the "Third World Woman" (a reductive aggregate "Other" produced by representational discourse) as a

category of analysis, rather than focusing on women of the "Third World" (material

subjects who are historically and socially constructed) and their localized and situational

forms of oppression. The use of "Woman" as a category of analysis presupposes that,

based on sexual difference, all women belong to an identifiable group with common

forms of oppression prior to their entry into societal structures and relations (Mohanty,

1988):

> The 'status' or 'position' of women is assumed to be self-evident because women as an already constituted group are *placed* within religious, economic, familial and legal structures. However, this focus on the position of women whereby women are seen as a coherent group across contexts, regardless of class or ethnicity, structures the world in ultimately binary, dichotomous terms, where women are always seen in opposition to men, patriarchy is always necessarily male dominance, and the religious, legal, economic and familial systems are implicitly assumed to be constructed by men. Thus, both men and women are always seen as preconstituted whole populations, and relations of dominance and exploitation are also posited in terms of whole peoples – wholes coming into exploitative relations. It is only when men and women are seen as different categories or groups possessing different *already constituted* categories of experience, cognition and interests as *groups* that such a simplistic dichotomy is possible. (Mohanty's emphasis, 1988, p. 77)

The use of "Woman" as a category for analysis assumes that all women in postcolonial

nations share similar interests with each other as well as with "Western" women, and

prohibits a nuanced examination of the specificities of oppression against women in

particular locations (Mohanty, 1988). Women are socially constructed as women through

the class, cultural, religious, familial and ideological institutions within which they act,

think, create identity, and reproduce or resist frameworks of power (Mohanty, 1988). The

reduction of the particularities of "non-Western" women's lives through the category of

"Third World Woman" colonizes their daily existence and varied experiences and

interests (Mohanty, 1988).

The "Third World Woman" is constructed in "Western" feminist discourse through an articulation of their gender difference and their difference as members of the "Third World" (Mohanty, 1988). This creates an image of the typical "Third World Woman," who is sexually restrained (based on her gender), as well as victimized by her traditionalism, poverty, lack of education, religiosity, and domesticity (based on her position in the "Third World") (Mohanty, 1988). The ideological figure of the "Third World Woman" is used as a contrast to "Western" feminist self-representations as secular, educated, free, and sexually empowered (Mohanty, 1988). This binary comparison replicates the logic whereby the "Western Man" constructs himself as the center and "Woman" and the "East" as peripheral "Others" (Mohanty, 1988).

Mohanty (1988) argues that these reductive analytical strategies impede coalitions among women across the world by setting the agenda for mobilization based on "Western" feminist interests. Instead, she calls for "careful, politically focused, local analyses" (p. 73) where women are viewed as productive subjects with contradictory lives, moments of resistance, and political agency (Mohanty, 1988). An example of such an analysis, which acknowledges women's agency and situatedness in specific contexts, is Sarah Radcliffe's (1993) work on Peruvian women and their diverse political reactions to state-endorsed hegemonic gender norms specific to certain time periods, political regimes, and geographical, ethnic and class locations. In comparing *"campesina"* (indigenous female peasant) gendered political participation to both *"campesino"* (indigenous male peasant) and urban female political activities, she is able to illustrate the varied and complicated ways in which indigenous Peruvian women act within their particular experiences of marginalization and discrimination.

In discussing gender in the context of postcolonialism, it is crucial to deconstruct a unitary vision of feminism while understanding that oppressive gendered discourses are not executed exclusively by the "West", but also work within diverse regions and peoples that are often simplistically grouped together as the "non-West" or the "Rest". In Latin America, for example, Westwood & Radcliffe (1993) argue that colonizing gender discourses are not the province of the external "West" alone, but also are powerful operations within dominant classes and the state:

> The discourses that construct the European ideal and, with this, distance from the ideal are not, however, the exclusive property of the West, for, like capital, they have been globalized and have been appropriated by sections of the Latin American white population. Imperial culture formed cultural configurations in Latin America which generate a play between the processes of 'Otherization' in Europe and its transposition to Latin America, and the outcome of processes of 'Otherization' in the Latin American states. But, increasingly, this does not go unchallenged. The new social movements, generated in the last twenty years, of minority groups, peasants, women and low income groups, have challenged the patterns of emulating Europe which have perpetuated their subordination. (Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993, p. 3)

These complex internal relationships involved in legacies of colonization and gender politics are lost when using sweeping generalizations like the "West" and the "Rest," and thus must be actively reclaimed in discussions of feminist postcolonial theory.

REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICES IN TRAVEL JOURNALISM

In the context of this research project, travel writing refers to a centuries-long body of accounts (in various mediated forms such as novels, magazine features, anthropology, etc.) by individuals from colonizing states (predominantly Western Europe and the United States) of their experiences traveling in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Frequently, the areas they describe are (or were previously) colonized, and have historically been constructed in "Western" knowledge via travel writing as exotic,

primitive, wild, etc. depending on the specific area traveled (Grewal, 1996; Hall, 1992;

Pratt, 1992; Said, 2003; Spurr, 1993). This body of travel writing, produced in the "West"

predominantly during the age of European and United States imperialism, is associated

with colonial discourse and knowledge and has been critiqued by numerous postcolonial

scholars (Grewal, 1996; Hall, 1992; Pratt, 1992; Said, 2003; Spurr, 1993). Travel

journalism is a genre of journalistic activity, including various media types (video, audio,

print, etc.), designed to provide an entertaining and factual description of a journalist's

travel experience in a location that is foreign to his or her audience. Although a member

of any nation or culture in the world may create travel journalism, the focus of this

analysis (*The Vice Guide to Travel*) is produced by primarily "Western" journalists[1] and

thus will focus on the history and practice of travel journalism in the "West" (chiefly

Western Europe and the United States). While travel journalism is a genre that does not

necessarily belong to the body of colonial travel writing, "Western" travel journalism has

generic and representative conventions that are rooted in colonial travel writing

(Aitchison, 2001; Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Fürsich, 2002, 2003;

Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Hanusch, 2010; Spurr, 1993).

Journalism is a media form that is defined through expectations of accurate and

objective accounts of historical realities, and is considered by the majority of its

audiences to be more truthful than other media forms (Fürsich, 2002, 2003; Fürisch &

Kavoori, 2001, Hanusch, 2010). However, journalism shares with fiction a reliance on

myth, metaphor and other symbolic rhetorical devices to create meaning (Fürsich, 2002,

2003; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Spurr, 1993). As mass media products, journalism texts

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[1] The *Vice Guide to Travel* hosts are mainly from North America, Western Europe, and Australia. The
series itself is produced by Canadian Americans living in the United States.

are fields where representational systems are generated and maintained. Journalists are not neutral conduits of value-free information, and journalistic discourse frames civic dialogue and common sense (Fürsich, 2002). Journalism is not simply true, but rather is a cultural practice that intends to count as true (Fürsich, 2002). The association of journalism with truth gives it authority in the production of knowledge, and therefore its representational strategies are important to investigate (Fürsich, 2002).

How "Western" travel journalists represent and explain the unfamiliar in the "non-West" to audiences and the cultural assumptions they use to do so should be questioned (Spurr, 1993). Most critical approaches to studying the representational practice of travel journalism come out of cultural studies (Hanusch, 2010), and are concerned with situating mediated representations of the "non-West" within broader colonial and discriminatory social processes. From a postcolonial cultural studies perspective, the ideological formations in travel journalism discourse provide a framework for comprehending and interacting with formerly colonized nations and peoples (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Travel journalism is a key arena where conceptions of the "non-West" are formed through representational contrasts with the "Western Self" (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Travel journalists occupy a border position as cultural interpreters of diverse societies and peoples, and as such their work is particularly definitive in constructing identities and knowledge about foreign cultures and peoples (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Approaching travel journalism media products as objective descriptions of facts rather than as historically constructed knowledge forms that are ingrained with power mimics imperialist acts of unreflective anthropology (Grewal, 1996).

While a number of media forms contain "Othering" discourses, travel journalism is unique in that its primary goal is to represent the "Other" (Fürsich, 2002). The main task of a travel journalist is to create a narrative that focuses on the uniqueness of the destination and its people. This in itself is not problematic, but discursive frameworks for understanding the "non-West" have been constructed over the centuries by colonial interests. "Western" travel journalists covering places outside the "West" must comprehensibly describe the "non-West", and thus tend to tap into these archives of already established representations. The result is that "Western" travel journalists often reproduce colonial discourses situating "non-Western" people and cultures in an "Othered" position of marginality in comparison to the central "Western Self" (Caton & Santos, 2009). Colonialist representations, such as descriptions of the stereotypical "non-Western Other" as mysterious, sensual and primitive, are therefore common in travel journalism (Caton & Santos, 2009).

"Western" travel journalism traditionally functions within a colonial ideology that tends to draw binary distinctions between the "West" and "non-West" (Aitchison, 2001). This historically constructed simplistic dichotomy between the "West" and the "non-West" reflects divisions between the "Self" and the "Other", a duality that Judith Butler argues belongs to a "masculinist signifying economy" (Aitchison, 2001). Colonialism and sexism have a cooperative relationship that is reinforced in the tourism industry through masculinist "Othering" processes that produce simultaneously sexualized and racialized representations (Aitchison, 2001). Gendered power formations are crucial forces in shaping cultural tourism, where an "Other" is discursively constructed for consumption through the eroticization and exoticization of the "non-West" (Aitchison, 2001). The

formation of an "Other" depends on the codeterminous constitution of the "Self", where the Self is given greater power and status than the "Other". Gender is determinative in this "Othering" process, reinforcing the inferiority of the "Other" by endowing it with feminized attributes (Aitchison, 2001). This is part of a broader historical "Othering" of women in "Western" Humanist discourse, whereby women are constructed as "Other" to the idealized man through their irrationality and embodied abnormality, signs of their inherent inferiority (Aitchison, 2001).

Tourist destinations are gendered as sites to be looked at, explored and discovered (Aitchison, 2001). This is particularly true of the people and land of "tropical paradises", frequently portrayed as unspoilt, passive and alluring (Aitchison, 2001). The attractiveness of exotic and virginal imagery appeals to the traveler's desire for discovery and authenticity, which is an urge rooted in imperial impulses for conquest and consumption (Aitchison, 2001). But this authenticity is a fabrication - the materialization of a colonial fantasy (Aitchison, 2001).

Gender constructs are also crucial in conceptualizations of "home" and "away", which are fundamental concepts for European forms of exploration and travel, as well as national identity (Grewal, 1996). "Western" ideas of "home" are tied to liberal divisions between masculinized public and feminized private spheres, wherein home belongs to the latter (Morley, 2000). By extension, travel is a gendered activity. If in "Western" thought travel is conceived of as the journey away from home, and home belongs to the feminine private sphere, then travel becomes a masculine activity existing in the public sphere (Morley, 2000). In global relations, "Western" discourses of home are extended to national identities and become mechanisms of exclusion (Morley, 2000). Here, the

female homeland/nation becomes something to be defended against "Others", and mobility outside of these borders is an activity allotted normatively only to "Western" white males (Morley, 2000).

Because travel journalism exists with the express purpose of representing another culture to be consumed by an audience, the travel journalist must transform the people and places into signifiers that are consumable (Aitchison, 2001). This requires translating complex and heterogeneous realities into familiar representations of the "non-Western Other" as exotic, authentic, stagnant, primitive, etc. (Aitchison, 2001). The dilemma of representation creates a loop, wherein colonial stereotypes are reproduced over and over again in travel journalism discourse (reinforced by analogous representations in other media forms such as film, television, novels, and art) until they become part of the systematic language of travel (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). A dialect between tourists, travel journalism consumers, and travel journalists encourages this loop, wherein tourists and audiences expect texts and experiences that reinforce their preconceived notions of a destination (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). When encountering something new, people tend to refer back to familiar experiences and wisdom, including archives of images and concepts acquired from mediated information (Said, 1978). In this way, a discursively constructed body of knowledge (such as colonial travel writing and "Western" travel journalism) can attain greater authority than the actual reality it details (Said, 1978).

It should be noted, however, that representational practices such as travel journalism do not occur in a linear relationship, wherein the "Western" travel journalist is the sole subject that acts upon a "non-Western" object. This is a reductive perspective that collapses entire heterogeneous cultures into singular active or passive actors, and

ignores internal divisions based on class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Further, the people living in the represented places and cultures are neither unaware nor passive in the process of their representation via the journalist's work (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Pratt, 1992). Individuals acting within these representational activities purposefully represent themselves, their culture, and their locale in particular ways shaped by their interests and the dialectical relationship with the journalist (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Pratt, 1992). However, it is nonetheless crucial to understand that representational practices in travel journalism, from all sides of the equation, are exercised within relationships of power shaped by colonial history. Additionally, in the final stages of producing the travel journalism text, the journalist and his or her media organization have the final word in presenting the topic. The nature of how work in this genre is created (through production processes and content editing) may present the text as truthful objective reality, but nevertheless travel journalism texts privilege the experience of the traveler (and thus the mobile culture). Travel journalism is, at its essence, a communication of how the journalist understands the world and, importantly, how he or she (and the production company he or she works for) *wants* to portray the world.

Representing a person, place or culture has become a complex undertaking because there is no subject position to speak from that exists outside colonial power, whose legacy of domination and oppression continues today (Said, 1989). A travel journalist can either speak from a location based in former colonizing powers or formerly colonized nations, there is no objective vantage point exterior to these relations that would allow for value-free evaluations of other cultures (Said, 1989). Thus, it may be impossible for a "Western" travel journalist, operating within generic conventions and

discursive knowledge forms shaped by historical colonial power imbalances, to escape problematic stereotypical representational practices when covering unfamiliar people and places.

COLONIAL PATTERNS OF REPRESENTATION IN TRAVEL JOURNALISM

Certain representational devices that support and maintain colonial authority recur over the history of colonial travel writing and continue into contemporary "Western" travel journalism (Spurr, 1993). Rhetorical strategies in colonial discourse are predicated on processes of stereotyping, whereby heterogeneous aspects of a subject are collapsed into a simplified characteristic (Hall, 1992). Travel journalism frequently uses this reductive process by essentializing "non-Western" people and cultures that result in their presentation as inferior (Caton & Santos, 2009). Although journalists do not intentionally use power-infused "Othering" strategies, these modes of description are woven into the language of representational systems of the "non-West" and are part of "the landscape in which relations of power manifest themselves" (Spurr, 1993, p. 3).

"Western" travel journalism is often told from the point of view of the host or writer, recounting his or her experiences and comparing the journalist and "Western" society with the people and places encountered (Hanusch, 2010). Although telling the story from the point of view of the travel journalist allows audiences to identify with his or her travel experiences, this also results in a self-centered narrative of travel that peripheralizes and "Others" the destination rather than engaging with its people and culture (Hanusch, 2010). The standard of journalistic travel description that orients all that a journalist encounters in relation to his or herself is a process akin to the colonial

discursive strategies of constructing the "Western Self" through its opposition to a "non-Western Other".

According to Stuart Hall, some prevalent repeated themes in the discourse of "the West and the Rest" tie "non-Western" people and places to descriptions that present an image opposing modernity, progress, science and development (1992). "The Rest", in Hall's analysis, is represented as paradise, the simple life in a state of pure nature, lacking advanced social organization, open sexuality, and containing beautiful and scantily clad women (Hall, 1992).

Myths of other cultures being "unchanged", "unrestrained", and "uncivilized" are persistent in travel media (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). The "myth of the unchanged" (normally associated with "Oriental" cultures in the Middle East and Asia) secures a culture in the past, containing exotic ancient structures juxtaposed with peasant lifestyles (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). These representational strategies imply a trip backwards in time, suggesting that in contrast to the constant advancement of the modern world, the represented culture is in a state of deterioration (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). The "myth of the unrestrained" (typically applied to tropical and island locations) presents a destination as a paradise where a tourist can indulge and relax (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). This sustains colonial binaries of advancement/stagnation, discipline/unruliness, and civilized/uncivilized (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). The myth of the unrestrained is also a sanitized portrayal of a locale as unspoiled, distorting the development that constructed it as a paradise for consumption while concealing the poverty outside its designated tourist areas (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). Finally, the "myth of the uncivilized" (predominantly Latin America and Africa) situates the destination in a primitive position outside of

history, with savage natives and untamed nature waiting to be discovered (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). The desire for expedition is informed by a romantic reminiscence of colonial era exploration (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). The key to these tropes is the problematic dichotomy between modern and traditional associated with the "West" and "non-West" that frequently goes unquestioned in "Western" travel journalism.

The fixation of other cultures outside of modern history (in a stagnant paradise, the ancient past, or the ahistorical wild) implies that progress can only come out of "Western" intervention. Ignoring the modern elements of the daily lives of "non-Western" people discursively situates them as traditional and anti-modern, thus dependent on the "West" for advancement (Caton & Santos, 2009). Travel relies on destinations remaining authentic, which means being untouched by modern processes and other cultures (Caton & Santos, 2009). But this nullifies the impact of centuries of historical cultural encounters, confrontations, and migrations, and effaces "Western" culpability in inequitable power structures today (Caton & Santos, 2003).

The "non-Western Other" is often represented in colonial travel writing in terms of absence and emptiness, a strategy that David Spurr calls "negation" (1993). The portrayed absence of order, society, morality and history is evidence of the colonized people's non-existence, thus justifying colonial expansion (Spurr, 1993). Nothingness can be alluring in the colonial imaginary when characterizing land and peoples as territory to be explored (Spurr, 1993). The colonial impulse for "Western" expansion into the unknown lies not just in the interest of conquest, but also in the desire to rescue the "non-West" from lacking form and presence (Spurr, 1993). In this context, colonialism represents the bringing into being of a society that once lacked history, culture, and

science – the driving forces of modern progress (Spurr, 1993). When "Western" science, technology and organizational methods fail to propel a non-existent society into a nation advancing on a path towards modernity, it is interpreted as a result of the colonized people's inadequacies. Here, nothingness is transformed from a promising empty space waiting to be filled into a postcolonial void – a sign of inferiority and disappointment (Spurr, 1993).

The desire for transcending the material realm through a spiritual quest is another colonial rhetorical device described by Spurr as "insubstantialization" (1993). A common motivation for travelers is a spiritual journey and encounter with their inner being through losing themselves in strange "Other" cultures (Spurr, 1993). But rather than the immersion of the "Western" subject into the "Other" being a true and equal cultural interaction, the traveler uses the colonial situation as an opportunity to liberate the self from time and space (Spurr, 1993). The visited locale becomes an incorporeal "backdrop of baseless fabric against which is played the drama of the writer's self" (Spurr, 1993, p. 142). Further, this surrender to the "Other" is represented as a treacherous defiance of the boundaries separating the "West" from the formerly colonized world (Spurr, 1993). The spell of submission to the "Other" is portrayed as leading to madness and death through travelers' accounts of disorientation and losing perception of time, reality, and self (Spurr, 1993). Colonial travel writing tropes of "negation" and "insubstantialization" have carried over thematically into "Western" travel journalism.

Foucault analyzed the role of the female body in "Western" discourses on sex, arguing that the feminine body was imbued with sexuality in order to define her appropriate place and actions in society (Spurr, 1993). Composing woman as a discursive

figure through her body and its sexual functions determines the feminine role within apparatuses of knowledge and power (Spurr, 1993). This process of discursive eroticization can be extended to discourse that constructs the colonized world as feminine by its characterization through terms normally associated with the female body (Spurr, 1993). Colonial gestures of appropriation and possession are akin to representations of masculine sexual desire, and come into play in the metaphorical transformation of colonized nations into female form (Spurr, 1993). The eroticized colonized nation, like the eroticized woman, is evidence of irrationality and impulsivity; thus regulative colonial rule may be interpreted as beneficial:

> The erotically charged language of these metaphors marks the entrance of the colonizer, with his penetrating and controlling power, as a natural union with the subject nation. Colonial domination thus is understood as having a salutary effect on the natural excesses and the undirected sexual energies of the colonized. (Spurr, 1993, p. 172)

Representations of feminine derangement are applied to colonized peoples in tales of hysteria, uncontrolled nature, emotional excess, etc., which is contrasted to masculine principles of reason and order (Spurr, 1993). Thus colonization and power imbalances are naturalized in relation to assumptions of gender difference (Spurr, 1993).

Colonial discourse associates nature with "non-Western" peoples while opposing nature to civilization, thus implicitly opposing the "non-West" to civilization (Spurr, 1993; Hall, 1992). At the same time, colonial discourse bestows the right of dominion over the natural world to advanced civilizations that can best employ its resources in order to produce profit and stimulate development (Spurr, 1993). In this way colonial discourse naturalizes imperial conquest and domination as the "West's" responsibility to improve the natural world and civilize its peoples (Spurr, 1993). The colonial tradition of

viewing indigenous peoples as continuations of nature was adapted in the postcolonial world to interpret the violence and political upheaval in formerly colonized nations as the natural behavior of less civilized cultures (Spurr, 1993). Contemporary journalistic portrayals of civil conflict in the "non-West" tend to focus on images of chaotic unrest and disorganized mass protest, classifying the events as part of a natural order of the "Third World" (Spurr, 1993). This constructs the violence and conflict as mythically apocalyptic rather than situating it historically in a global context of continued marginalization (Spurr, 1993).

Attributing savagery and moral degradation to "Other" societies reinforces "Western" civilization and its Enlightenment ethics (Spurr, 1993). The individual weaknesses of the native (deceit, lassitude, superstition, etc.) are mirrored by the flaws of their society as a whole, characterized by corruption and tribalism (Spurr, 1993). Evidence of the "non-West's" moral inferiority is represented through signs of physical filth and bodily waste contrasted against the "West's" cleanliness (Spurr, 1993). Moral degradation is also evident through representations of colonized people as savage, violent, licentious and mad (Hall, 1992). Postcolonial scholars often cite Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1902) as the embodiment of colonial travel writing's characterization of the "non-Western Other" (in particular the African) as savage and brutal (Spurr, 1993). These images of barbarism are all concentrated into the horrifying figure of the cannibal as the ultimate indicator of the inhuman and cruel nature of the native (Hall, 1992). Contemporary problems in postcolonial nations – health, poverty, population growth, disease, and famine – are associated with their presumed degeneracy (Spurr, 1993). Suffering in these nations is associated with their lack of civilization and

dependency on the "West" for advancement rather than on legacies of historical oppression (Spurr, 1993).

However," non-Western" peoples were not only constructed as depraved and destructive. Colonial discourse also contains heroic representations of the "Noble Other" (Hall, 1992). The figure of the noble savage originated in Enlightenment discourse that celebrates liberty and the natural rights of man (Hall, 1992). Rousseau devised the natural man as living in a pure state of nature, free from destructive societal constraints of law and social division (Hall, 1992). Although this rhetorical device critiqued European society, the idealized savage does not effectively subvert colonial and capitalist ideology (Spurr, 1993). Rather, the figure of the "Noble Other" fits comfortably into "Western" value systems and functions not as an alternative philosophy, but instead as a means for the "West" to converse with itself and reformulate its own ethics and ideals (Spurr, 1993).

All of the discussed colonial conventions of representation hinge on the presupposition that human society progresses along a linear line of increasing societal complexity, leading ultimately to humanist and capitalist civilization. Enlightenment thinkers saw history as holding one path to civilization, with science and reason as a propelling force of development (Hall, 1992). A universal model was conceptualized that enabled all human societies to be judged along a hierarchical scale according to their similarities and differences to the privileged social organization of Europe (Hall, 1992; Spurr, 1993). This was contingent on the "non-West" being understood as representing various positions at the opposite end of the spectrum, ranked by degrees of social complexity as defined by "Western" organizational ideals (Hall, 1992; Spurr, 1993).

Classification, especially of people, is always a value-charged practice executed within power relations that determine who has the authority to classify whom (Spurr, 1993). The arrangement of societies along a scale benefited colonial interests by justifying the practice of colonization as a catalyst of progress that would in the long run benefit the colonized peoples (Spurr, 1993). Today, the ideologies of modernization and development have succeeded Enlightenment ideals of civilization, but the logic of classification remains (Spurr, 1993). In "Western" popular knowledge, societies are still judged along a universalized scale of progress, where the ultimate stage of social evolution is modernity (Spurr, 1993). When formerly colonized nations cannot achieve "Western" modern standards, it is they who are to blame rather than processes of modernization (Spurr, 1993). This conceptualization of development is faulty, as colonization and continued dependencies from developmental strategies have actually strengthened barriers to development and exacerbated poverty (Hall, 1992). The systematic demolition of alternative social organizations has resulted in the tyrannical regimes of elites, military groups and dictators (Hall, 1992). As the cost of modernization becomes more evident, the assumption of a singular path to civilization is questionable (Hall, 1992), yet journalistic writing still recites the normative conception of civilization that dates back to high colonialism (Spurr, 1993).

The above strategies and rhetorical devices employed in colonial discourses and travel writing are not antiquated relics of an imperial age. Rather, they have been revitalized, reinvented, and rearticulated in contemporary discourses in the "West" (Hall, 1992; Spurr, 1993). In particular, these conventions of representation have been translated into "Western" travel journalistic practices that appeal to colonial desires for

conquest and exploration (Aitchison, 2001; Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Fürsich, 2002, 2003; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Hanusch, 2010; Spurr, 1993).

TRAVEL JOURNALISM AND MEDIA GLOBALIZATION

Scholarly reactions to media globalization have varied from ecstatic celebration of the global village, to outright denunciation as domination from global elites (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). Overall, however, there is a consensus that media production and consumption have become more global in scope. Despite their positions of power and authority in global communications, "Western" media[2] are not immune to the effects of globalization processes. Media globalization is a phenomenon that has affected the aesthetics, values and motivations of media production in all regions and nations, including those in the "West" (Fürsich, 2003).

Media globalization over the last several decades has risen in conjunction with various interrelated global processes. After "Western"-based media corporations (primarily in the United States) were challenged by the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1970s as part of an effort to make global communications more equitable, NWICO failed due to internal conflict and multi-faceted ideological assailments from the United States (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). NWICO's project was superseded in the early 1980s by United Nations development strategies aimed at dispensing "Western" communications technologies accompanied by professional journalistic training to "developing" states (Zhao & Hackett, 2005).

Media globalization has also been greatly affected by the rise of market liberalism as an economic ideology, leading to the global spread of market-driven communications

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[2] By "Western" media, I mean media that is produced by individuals or companies based in Western Europe, North America, and Australia. This includes transnational media corporations and international media producers who have roots in these regions.

systems (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). Neoliberal logic of deregulation, privatization and commercialization began to acquire strength and momentum in the early 1980s, and has led to unprecedented removal of constraints on national and international media systems (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). In addition, advances in digital communications and information networks and technology have accelerated the global development of market-driven media systems, while at the same time lowering production costs and enabling increasingly diversified actors to enter the field of media production (Zhao & Hackett, 2005).

However, an increased heterogeneity of media flows does not necessarily usher in an age of media democratization (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). A major impact from media globalization is the dominance of transnational media corporations, most of which are based in or have ties with the "West" (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). As a result of liberal deregulation, waves of mergers over the past three decades have created colossal and powerful media conglomerates that grew from their "Western" beginnings to becoming global in scope (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). Although the reach of the transnational corporations is not completely ubiquitous and ownership is more varied (regional production centers are increasingly prominent), it is important to recognize that United States corporations are still disproportionately influential worldwide (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). The dominance of a group of transnational media corporations in global media flows has also led to the expansion of commercialized media production and distribution (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). Although this might suggest an ominous trend towards elite domination of the media by a select number of transnational corporations, media globalization has also enabled "globalization from below" (Zhao & Hackett, 2005). The

dominance of mainstream media is being actively contested by diverse media organizations and practices, able to disseminate contradictory messages and experimental techniques through an ever more networked world and increasingly available media production technologies (Zhao & Hackett, 2005).

Within this context, journalism has had to adapt to new market demands and audience expectations. Fürsich uses the term "global journalism" to emphasize its globalized situation, wherein journalism has become a more fluid genre that is increasingly commodified by transnational media corporations (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Fürsich, 2002; Fürsich, 2003). Its need to be marketable in an atmosphere of commercial logic requires global journalism to become increasingly aware of a global audience and include an entertainment aesthetic, while retaining its claims to truth-telling (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Fürsich, 2002).

The flow of uniform "Western" media into foreign markets in the 1960s and 1970s met resistance from cultural imperialism critiques, governmental opposition, and localized audience indifference (Fürsich, 2003). This forced transnational media corporations to rethink their television programming strategies, and adapt their products to more regional tastes (Fürsich, 2003). Globalization created a television market for programs with international subject matter that is sufficiently neutral to attract global audiences (Fürsich, 2003). Within this context, a genre of "nonfiction entertainment" arose and quickly grew in prominence due to its high value in a globalized television market (Fürsich, 2003). Fürsich describes nonfiction entertainment as programs that retain journalism's textual claims to truth, but that is driven by entertainment goals rather than ethics of investigation or informing the public sphere (Fürsich, 2003). These

television programs are popular for transnational media corporations because they are inexpensive to produce and globally yield decent ratings and profits (Fürisch, 2003).

Travel is a well-received nonfiction entertainment television subject, as travel and tourism are attractive topics to global audiences (Fürsich, 2003). The popularity of travel journalism in global television production has been supported by the massive growth of the international tourism industry, which has produced a large audience of travelers or want-to-be travelers interested in visiting other cultures (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). However, in order for nonfiction entertainment travel shows to be lucrative in diverse cultural markets across the world, the subject matter must be non-offensive and celebratory in order to avoid local resistance (Fürsich, 2003). This can construct problematic sanitized representations of other cultures and the practice of tourism.

Traditional journalistic research tends to view travel journalism as an inconsequential subject. However, as a globally meaningful textual system, travel journalism discourses are important arenas for knowledge creation and cultural encounters (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). The genre's intention of providing entertainment and travel information differ from traditional journalistic reporting ethics in the public interest, making travel journalism a particularly relevant topic of study for contemporary journalistic research (Hanusch, 2010). Rarely incorporating a critical and investigative eye, mainstream "Western" travel journalists speak to their audience as consumers rather than as citizens (Hanusch, 2010). These are important considerations as travel media becomes an increasingly prominent source of information for potential travelers (Hanusch, 2010), as well as for broader social perceptions of other cultures (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

Postmodern thought supposes that globalizing processes lead to the breakdown of national borders and the acceleration of mobility and fluid identities (Aitchison, 2001). However, because travel journalism's "raison d'être" is the portrayal of experiences with cultural difference, travel media discourses fortify rather than dissolve gendered, class, and racialized frames of cultural identities (Aitchison, 2001). Although travel journalists traverse national borders, the effect of their work does not destabilize these boundaries but rather reasserts Otherness (Aitchison, 2001). Thus, it is imperative to problematize the discourse constructed out of representational practices in travel journalism (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

LIMITS OF THE GENRE OF GLOBAL TRAVEL JOURNALISM

Transnational corporations produce travel television shows with economic investments in the program's success, and as a result commercial factors directly influence the content (Fürsich, 2003). From an optimistic point of view, this could lead to less demeaning representations of other cultures because the show's producers must take into account non-Western audiences in order for it to be globally profitable (Fürisch, 2003). However, the potential for subversive representations is also limited by commercial logic that favors non-controversial entertainment, deterring travel journalists from undertaking a critical perspective (Fürsich, 2003).

The conglomeration of the global media industry has created a "hypercommercialized" media climate that commodifies information and ties journalistic concerns to commercial interests (Fürsich, 2003). Travel journalism content is frequently intimately connected to advertising and the tourism industry, which have interests in portraying destinations with essentialized and positive representations, rather than

presenting the people and places as complex, diverse, and historically situated (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001). Advertisers are likely to prefer travel programs with foreseeable and stable audiences, and thus media producers tend to reuse variations of already established topics and narrative structures (Fürsich, 2002). These shows tend to contain risk-averse, uncomplicated content and avoid discussing troublesome political and social issues affecting the travel destination (Fürsich, 2003). Journalistic strategies that critically examine the sociohistorical and politico-economic context of a place would risk a television show's viability in mainstream media flows (Fürsich, 2003).

Beyond industrial and economic limits of the genre, the potential for constructing non-colonial discourse in travel journalism is inhibited by ideological boundaries for meaning creation. To communicate with each other, we must use common representational systems and share approximately the same conceptual maps in order to create comprehensible meanings (Hall, 1997). Although the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, it must to some degree be fixed in order for us to understand each other (Hall, 1997). Codes and conventions used for meaning creation are not agreed upon consciously by members of a culture, but rather are naturalized as individuals become socialized into a society (Hall, 1997). As these representational systems are internalized, they become formative in how social agents think, speak and act, and thus are difficult to escape (Hall, 1997).

In order to create meaning, a speaker must use a language that is embedded with historical meaning forms from past discourses (Hall, 1997). Language can never be value-free and will always alter what we mean to say through infinite spirals of associative connotations (Hall, 1997). Said argues that even inventive writers are forced

to navigate through "learned grids and codes provided by the Orientalist", restricting their ability to speak about the "Orient" (Said, 1978, p. 67). Historically, colonial discourses have created narrow frameworks for understanding the "West" and the "non-West" that excludes other ways of talking or thinking about these entities (Hall, 1997). Even travel journalists who actively confront the complex political, historical, economic and social realities of postcolonial nations must communicate using conventions that have roots in imperial travel writing (Spurr, 1993). How, then, is it possible for travel journalists to produce counter-hegemonic media texts in a neoliberal context guided so heavily by standards of brevity and profit?

POSSIBILITY OF ANTI-COLONIAL TRAVEL JOURNALISM?

Spurr argues that although journalists can never be completely free from colonial conventions of representation, criticism can help upset colonial discourse by revealing its power-infused consequences (Spurr, 1993). Power and knowledge are bonded through discourse, but this binding is neither invincible nor total (Spurr, 1993). Even though we can never escape discourse that works to reinforce power, this discourse can also be a tool of resistance (Spurr, 1993). As colonial discourse outlines acceptable frameworks for interpretation, it also exposes its limitations and historical specificity (Spurr, 1993):

> Just as law establishes itself by defining the outlawed, so the very nature of discourse as a framework involves principles of limitation and exclusion and therefore creates the possibility for alternative ways of speaking. The critique of colonial discourse is thus made possible by those aspects of the discourse that lend themselves to a pattern formation – to a structuring and hence limiting view of the world. (Spurr, 1993, p. 184-5)

Hegemony is not all-powerful and impervious to critique, and thus is not inevitable (Caton & Santos, 2009).

All travel media are produced within power structures, and therefore will always be affected to some extent by dominant discourses (Caton & Santos, 2009). Yet there is room for resistance even in commanding hegemonic formations like colonialism, and if alternative discourses are powerful enough they can chip away at dominant knowledge forms (Caton & Santos, 2009). As Stuart Hall (1997) points out, subversive discourses may not be able to topple an entire hegemonic regime wholesale, but are nonetheless capable of questioning its foundational assumptions. For example, demonstrating that indigenous women in Latin America are politically active in various segments of society (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998; Burman, 2011; Radcliffe, 1993; Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993) may not send colonial discourses toppling to the ground, but it may destabilize the assumption that the "Third World Woman" (Mohanty, 1988) is not monolithically oppressed by tradition and universal patriarchy. Although hegemonic common sense may not be wide open to contestation, it is nonetheless vulnerable to subversive discourse because it must constantly adapt and update itself to remain relevant (Hall, 1986). Counteracting colonial discourse does not mean removing colonial ideology as a whole and replacing it with a completely novel system of meaning; this would be impossible (Hall, 1986). Rather, oppressive ideologies must be gradually changed through collaborative critical discourses that question the authority of established ideological systems (Hall, 1986).

In order for colonialist representations to be problematized in travel journalism, journalists should question established production methods and search for new strategies of representing the "Other" (Fürsich, 2002). Fürsich suggests looking to ongoing debates in visual anthropology over the problem of representing other cultures (Fürsich, 2002).

Anthropological critique of representational strategies argue that representation can only be fair if all parties, including those represented, are allowed equal input and the dilemma of representation is considered self-reflexively (Fürsich, 2002). This rejects positivist ideals of the objective external observer by attempting to place the observer in an equitable position of authority in relation to the observed (Fürsich, 2002).

Applied to journalism, this calls for "self-reflective, open and critical approaches" towards representational strategies (Fürsich, 2002, p. 58). Fürsich argues that the unique position of the contemporary travel journalist in a globalized media context destabilizes their audience's position as the "We" that is opposed to the "Them" in "Othering" processes (Fürsich, 2002). If travel journalism is directed at audiences worldwide, then who is the "Self" that the journalist refers to when describing the "Other" (Fürsich, 2002)? The dislocation of sites of production, distribution and reception may provide an opportunity for travel journalists to question and redefine traditional representational practices (Fürsich, 2002).

STRATEGIC SUGGESTIONS

Spurr argues that the first step in finding alternative representational processes for Western journalists and audiences is a critical recognition of the structures of colonial discourse that travel journalism operates within (Spurr, 1993). While this cannot free "Westerners" from the "West" as a discursive formation, an awareness of these frameworks enables the journalist and audience to find the fissures that open colonial discourse up for contestation (Spurr, 1993).

In ethnographic sciences, a critical understanding of the representational traps of Western colonial discourses has led to experimentations with new methods of

ethnography (Spurr, 1993). Dialogic ethnography makes an effort to undo inequitable relations between observer and the observed through dialogic processes of negotiation between the parties that will ideally lead to a shared perception of reality (Spurr, 1993). However, the ethnographer is still the one who represents the dialogue via written description, and thus remains in a position of power (Spurr, 1993). Polyphonic ethnography attempts to incorporate multiple voices through direct quotations, but again the ethnographer is the subject who finally chooses what to include and how to include these voices (Spurr, 1993). Although these experiments are imperfect, they are critical of the issue of authority and authorship and demonstrate progress in contesting colonial discourse (Spurr, 1993).

Journalists, like anthropologists, display acts of resistance through critical revaluations of their own representational practices (Spurr, 1993). This includes giving the opinions and perceptions of representatives of formerly colonized peoples the same weight as "Western" officials, especially when their views contradict dominant "Western" discourse (Spurr, 1993). Another strategy is journalistic interrogation of the negative impact of colonialism, not only on postcolonial societies, but also on the "West" (Spurr, 1993). Additionally, journalists resist dominant "Western" discourses when they self-reflexively question their own interests and culpability in the practice of travel journalism (Spurr, 1993). Spurr suggests representational strategies that seek openness to "non-Western" forms of interpretation (Spurr, 1993). He calls for a "guerrilla resistance to discourse" through intentional revaluations of "Western" categories, and a privileging of plurality and difference (Spurr, 1993, p. 195).

Fürsich examines the strategies of reflexivity in visual anthropology in order to extrapolate recommendations on representational practices for travel journalists (2002). In the last several decades, visual anthropologists challenged the hidden constructedness of documentary filmmaking that fabricates a sense of neutrality and realism (Fürsich, 2002). To counteract this deceptive tendency, visual anthropologists have tried to reveal the processes of film production behind the documentary through techniques that emphasize its own disreality via editing, nonlinear storytelling, and including the presence of the filmmaker and camera (Fürsich, 2002). Rather than telling the story exclusively from a disembodied and omniscient narrated voice over, anthropologist filmmakers included as many diverse and indigenous voices as possible (Fürisch, 2002).

From the efforts of visual anthropologists to critique anthropology as a subjective process, Fürsich argues that new strategies of representation for televisual travel journalism should include displaying the production processes to the audience, incorporating voices of the represented people, and a move towards flexible television logic (Fürsich, 2002). She argues that travel shows should widen its focus to include sociohistorical and politico-economic contexts (Fürsich, 2002). Additionally, Fürsich suggests that postmodern production techniques may help subvert reductive and totalized representations of other cultures by paying attention to hybridity and self-referentiality (Fürsich, 2002). This means working towards the "unpacking of cultures" by providing heterogeneous and complex representations of people from various segments of society, showcasing a culture's diversity rather than its authenticity (Fürsich, 2002).

These critiques of travel journalism and recommendations for new strategies of representation provide a basic blueprint for a critical analysis of alternative travel journalism.

<div style="text-align:center">METHODOLOGY</div>

Can a media site contest problematic representations of the "Other" and still maintain cultural relevance and audience appeal? To answer this question, I conducted a critical analysis of *The Vice Guide to Travel*, a web-based show focusing on international travel produced by a media site that purposefully disseminates anti-mainstream cultural messages. Originally a "fanzine" distributed for free in the 1990s, *VICE Magazine* has evolved into Vice Media Inc. with an online magazine (Vice.com) geared to a counter-cultural international youth audience. Its news coverage is unabashedly politically progressive, positioning itself as a counter-culture news source. *The Vice Guide to Travel* is a popular episodic web show that has been produced by Vice.com since 2007. As a media text with global reach and popularity and an explicitly counter-hegemonic intent, *The Vice Guide to Travel* provides an opportunity to investigate the extent to which media can subvert dominant colonialist discourses while producing content within "Western" generic conventions and institutional constraints.

Quantitative analysis alone will not suffice for understanding mediated representations within a social and historical context and as part of a larger discourse on the "Other" (Berg, 2002). In order to avoid the quantitative tendency of "spotting the stereotype" (Berg, 2002, p. 3), I conducted a qualitative content analysis rooted in critical theory. This included qualitative strategies of semiotic and discursive analysis in order to situate the text symbolically and historically. My literature review of critical theory

(seated in cultural studies, postcolonialism, feminism, and critical analyses of travel media) was designed to enable an analysis that recognizes hegemonic colonial forms of representations and their interrelations, as well as those that are subversive to colonialist discourses. Additionally, an important element of my methodology was a political economic examination of the series designed to position *The Vice Guide to Travel* within a historical, social, political and economic context of contemporary media globalization and neocolonialism.

Postcolonial and feminist theoretical works tend to critique methods of representation for being discriminatory and privileging a Eurocentric interpretation of the world that functions to maintain status quo power relations. However, the very act of representing itself is a process that requires the interpretation of a complex phenomenon or entity, filtered through a lens that has been shaped by an individual or group's particular position in the world and the various competing discourses to which he, she or it has been exposed. Representations, therefore, cannot be completely unbiased or objective. Is it therefore possible for a western media producer to create representations that are truly subversive of Eurocentric colonial hegemonic discourses? In my analysis I hope to answer several research questions:

- Is it possible for a media site that intentionally attempts to produce counter-hegemonic messages to create discourses that undermine colonialist, "Othering" discourses about the "non-West"? If so, is it possible for this subversive content to be profitable and popular with audiences?

- What representations (images, signs, narrative devices, etc.) are present in *The Vice Guide to Travel* that maintain/reaffirm "Western" colonialist stereotypes of the "non-West"?

- What representations are present in *The Vice Guide to Travel* that subvert "Western" colonialist stereotypes of the "non-West"?

These research questions guided the qualitative discursive analysis of the episodes of the Vice Guide to Travel, and the discussion of its findings. My critical analysis included the entire 31 episodes of *The Vice Guide to Travel* series (as of October 2012). I considered sampling certain episodes based on geographical region, time frame, popularity, or subject matter, but the individual episodes contained such a diversity of perspectives, themes, and topics that concentrating exclusively on a fraction of the series seemed incomplete and unrepresentative. I finally concluded that the only comprehensive method would be to include the full series, which was feasible due to the small number of total episodes produced.

The geographical regions this sample covers include diverse locales, predominantly in areas discursively constructed in "Western" colonial discourse as belonging to the "non-West." Importantly, a large number of these regions are former colonies or former socialist states that have been historically, socially, politically and economically marginalized globally. This includes locations in Qatar, Pakistan, Peru, Indonesia, the Balkans, Siberia, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Libya, Mongolia, Russia, Poland, India, nations in the Congo, Mexico, Liberia, North and South Korea, the Philippines, Paraguay, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, China, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. The sole location in the "West" was an episode on a marijuana festival in Australia, although

occasionally the episodes featured the hosts in their home countries prior to or after their travels. Due to the frequency of the hosts visiting the "non-West" and the relevance of these encounters to my research questions addressing colonial discourse in the context of travel journalism, these texts are the focus of my analysis.

The length of each episode was equally diverse, the shortest episode being only a few minutes and the longest being well over an hour (divided into smaller parts, each between 10 and 20 minutes). Some episodes were short features on topics such as cuisine and shopping, whereas others were lengthy and pensive texts dealing with political, economic and social subject matter. Therefore, my final analysis focuses greater attention on certain episodes over others due to the amount of material each presented, as well as the specific episode's relevance to my research questions.

The terms I used in formulating my analysis were drawn from postcolonial theory and proved difficult to operationalize. How does one transform abstract and reductive concepts such as the "West" and the "Rest", the "Other", and "colonial discourse" into practically useful terms viable for analyzing material texts? I attempted to do so by interpreting the tropes and stereotypical representations critiqued in the reviewed literature (such as savage, wild, untamed, and exotic) as I understood them, and applying them to the particular images and narratives presented in *The Vice Guide to Travel*. This operationalization is subjective, and is thus limited by my own situatedness as a white, middle-class female in United States academia. It was important in operationalizing these terms to avoid enormous generalizations of the "West" and the "non-West" and their relationship. I hoped to avoid an analysis that simplified the "West" as a monolithic cultural agent that acts upon the "non-West" as a homogeneous passive category. In order

to do so, I endeavored to localize and contextualize the postcolonial terms within the specific locations, cultures and people covered by the Vice journalists. This meant addressing concrete relations between actors (both specifically between the journalists and their subjects, and broadly in the context of global relations) and internal contradictions of the situation.

I conducted a discursive textual analysis by watching each episode and taking notes on its semiotic elements (themes, representational strategies, narrative devices, production techniques, etc.) that were relevant to my research questions. After having viewed and taken notes on all the episodes, I reviewed my notes and formulated patterns and tropes I believed were pertinent to my analysis. I then went back once again and conducted an analysis discussing the semiotic discursive components of *The Vice Guide to Travel* that would address my research questions on the potential of producing anti-colonialist counter-hegemonic discourses in travel journalism. The following is a discussion of this analysis.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following is a discussion of *The Vice Guide to Travel* as a global travel journalism text. The web series is situated within the global media industry as a countercultural media product produced for a global audience by a transnational media corporation. Through a critical discursive analysis of the show's episodes, I argue that the series contains several well-executed moments of resistance to colonial representational systems. Yet despite its subversive efforts, the text is often restrained by the limits imposed by colonial discourse.

INTRODUCTION TO *THE VICE GUIDE TO TRAVEL*

The Vice Guide to Travel is a web-based travel show with a documentary ethic and aesthetic that was released by Vice Media Group in 2006 (VBS, 2012). According to Vice's website, "in The Vice Guide to Travel, correspondents from Vice are dispatched around the world to visit the planet's most dangerous and weird destinations" (Vice.com, 2012). The online series is produced as part of Vice's online television division, VBS.tv, which has been a heavily developed branch of the company. Vice is an interesting media company in its self-representation as an alternative media source, meaning that it provides news coverage and information that are intended to be anti-mainstream. Vice attempts to deviate itself from the norm of mainstream journalistic practice in its lifestyle, discussion of taboo topics, viewpoints that counter hegemonic "Western" discourses, and "coolness" among global subcultural youth audiences.

Although Vice was originally a print magazine, the media company is now primarily based in online media. The web magazine, which labels itself as "the definitive guide to enlightening information" (Vice.com), is a countercultural site that covers controversial, avant-garde and provocative topics. The sections of the web magazine include news, music, fashion, sports, "Not Safe for Work" (sex), tech, sports, and travel. Although these sectionals are relatively standard for a magazine, Vice focuses its attention on specifically unconventional, edgy versions of these topics. The music section focuses on underground bands, the fashion section largely pokes fun at the mainstream fashion industry, the sex section contains subjects like pornography and sex toys that are largely off-limits for traditional journalism. Even when dealing with established news interests like politics and sports, the coverage is unashamedly biased and uses irony and derisive humor to comment on an event while reporting. Its correspondents use snarky and often-arrogant tones, and frequently employ shocking language to undermine social norms. Vice is a company that produces niche media products to a very specific audience of young, hip, politically Left urbanites. Jason Tanz of *Wired* magazine described Vice magazine quite accurately as "the hipster bible that has defined urban lifestyle for the past decade" (2007).

Vice was founded as a free glossy magazine in Montreal in 1994 by Shane Smith, Suroosh Alvi and Gavin McInnes, all of whom still have an active presence in Vice Media. Despite its eventual success that led to a small media empire, the magazine had dubious and deceitful beginnings - cofounders Smith and McInnes financed the magazine by lying to the government to receive funding through a welfare-to-work program (Tanz, 2007). In order to garner investments, the cofounders also fabricated exciting and

dangerous interviews and lied about meetings with other investors that never actually happened (Tanz, 2007).

However, the magazine was able to carve out a successful place for itself with young audiences in North America through its opinionated, subjective and personalized storytelling about youth subculture (Carter, 2007). Its early content generated a cult-like following through its purposefully anti-bourgeois stance that celebrated topics like drugs, sex and class warfare (Tanz, 2007). The company maintained this countercultural sensibility as it expanded to various media platforms and audiences worldwide.

From its origins in Montreal, Vice Media Group became a global media company with offices in over thirty countries and varied media production and distribution strategies. Vice Media now includes a record label, book publishing, a marketing branch, and a television production studio. The print magazine currently accounts for less than five-percent of the company's annual revenue (Marshall, 2012). According to Vice's LinkedIn profile, their global network of digital channels claims to have 60 established online shows. Vice Media still has a cult following, with close to a million "likes" on Facebook and nearly 70-million views on its YouTube channel. Vice has websites for 20 different countries in several languages, enabling it to engage with audiences worldwide.

In spite of its popularity, Vice also incites a number of negative reactions. The print magazine became known for its politically incorrect humor, which often edged on racist and sexist (Levine, 2007). Vice Media has been condemned for advocating consumerist and superficial lifestyles, and encouraging sexual exploitation (Tanz, 2007). Cofounder Gavin McInnes in particular was responsible for often crossing offensive lines with ironic claims of "Western" and male superiority (Tanz, 2007). Although McInnes

argues that he was trying to unsettle and question these norms, critics and fans debated whether this form of humor worked for or against dominant stereotypes (Tanz, 2007).

As Vice has evolved as a global media company, it has wrestled with the extremity of its nihilistic persona (Tanz, 2007). After Vice started adding international editions and experimenting with other media platforms, Cofounders Shane Smith and Suroosh Alvi began to reformulate their goals as media producers. Smith and Alvi developed more serious investigative journalism carried out in their own sarcastic and overtly biased style, while McInne's role at Vice and VBS lessened (Tanz, 2007). Vice.com still covers sex, drugs, music and fashion, but it also has more somber and socio-politically aware coverage (Carter, 2007). Maintaining an iconoclastic perspective, Vice deals with international political, social and economic issues with a critical stance towards oppressive and exploitative global relations. This reinvention of purpose was concurrent with its move online and new focus on online video through its video production arm, VBS.tv (Vice Broadcasting System).

Vice's move to online video was largely mobilized by innovations in information and communications technologies that provided them with affordable video and editing equipment to produce video content less expensively, as well as new online media platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) to distribute their products to wider audiences (Marshall, 2012). VBS was created with the goal of creating a new brand of countercultural media discourses directed towards young audiences that would oppose typical celebrity-worshipping youth media (Carter, 2007). The name "VBS" was chosen explicitly to counteract Vice magazine's delinquent history so that the production company could earn a reputation as serious and thought provoking (Tanz, 2007).

In order to form VBS, Vice received funding from Viacom, the momentous media conglomerate responsible for numerous mainstream cable television channels such as MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, and Comedy Central (Levine, 2007). Viacom's MTV Networks were struggling with translating their pop cultural television success online, and investing in VBS provided the company with an inexpensive testing-ground for Internet video programming (Levine, 2007). However, cofounders Alvi and Smith maintain an active role in shaping VBS's content and style.

Seeking to be a vanguard of online video, VBS incorporated filmmaker Spike Jonze as creative director to help develop the site in a new, creative and innovative direction (Tanz, 2007). Yet VBS's philosophy remains rooted in the utter rejection of objectivity that the cofounders pioneered in the magazine. Cofounder Suroosh Alvi describes their ethos as "subjectivity with real substantiation" (quoted in Tanz, 2007). VBS's documentaries are shot guerrilla-style with a skeleton crew and low production values, giving their videos an unrefined aesthetic (Levine, 2007). The shows, which are often approximately an hour-long and divided into smaller sections, also break current conventions of online video journalism that recommend short-length and easily digestible pieces (Marshall, 2012).

Although VBS's documentaries are low-cost compared to most mainstream production models, they still require investment, and thus must be demonstrated by the media company as profitable for its survival (Marshall, 2012). Although quantitatively the unique website views of Vice.com are not greatly impressive, their cult following is an audience that is enticing to advertisers (Levine, 2007). Their youth image is used for branding strategies with advertisers to create a commercial model that generated over

$110 million U.S.D. in revenue in 2011 (Marshall, 2012). Although Vice has constructed itself as non-corporate and anti-mainstream, it is a company with commercial interests that necessarily affect the content it produces.

<div align="center">ANALYSIS OF THE VICE GUIDE TO TRAVEL</div>

Overall, *The Vice Guide to Travel* traverses numerous genres and changes tone from episode to episode. While some episodes focus on hard-hitting documentary-style investigations of the social and political issues of the visited area, others fit more into a model that focuses on encounters with foreign cultures and people. In general, though, the series maintains a youth-focused irreverent character that presents unsanitized portrayals of their destinations.

SOCIOPOLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Spurr argues that when melodramatic narratives are elevated over the event's historical dimensions in travel journalism, the story is abstracted away from real societal relations of power (Spurr, 1993). The abstraction of the suffering of people via its transference into a story removes Western historical culpability in global power inequities (Spurr, 1993). Frequently in travel journalism the focus is on the amusing customs and idiosyncratic characters of the people in the visited culture. Often even if social problems are addressed, they are done so only briefly and then dismissed with a positive resolution about development in the region (Spurr, 1993).

As a rule, *The Vice Guide to Travel* breaks these conventions by situating each place, event, or phenomenon it covers within its historical, social, political and economic context and discusses this context in depth. Often, contextualizing its topic is the main focus of the entire episode. *The Vice Guide to Travel* frequently presents complex,

localized and historicized representations of the places its correspondents visit and avoids

sanitized narratives about their travels.

Vice hosts Suroosh Alvi (the Pakistani-American Vice cofounder) and

Basim Usmani (a Pakistani journalist) investigate the sociopolitical context surrounding

the violence in Karachi, Pakistan in "The Vice Guide to Karachi" (2012). In an

expository voiceover juxtaposed with images of violence in Karachi, Alvi explains that

Karachi is one of the largest cities in the world with a population of 18 million. While it

is one of the most educated and diverse cities in Pakistan, says Alvi, it is also one of the

most violent. Alvi argues that contrary to Western perceptions of violence in Pakistan

being largely related to Islamic fundamentalism and conflicts with the Taliban, violence

is also problematic in urban centers:

> It's true, we hear about violence in Pakistan all the time. At least
> when it comes to the seemingly never-ending war against the Taliban and
> al-Qaeda. But in 2011, more than three times as many people were killed
> in Karachi than the number of people killed in American drug strikes in
> tribal areas…Why does that matter? Because Pakistan matters. Whether
> you're an American worried about the extremists, an Indian worried about
> the nukes, or an Afghan worried about Pakistan's ambitions, basically
> Pakistan is a powder keg. And Karachi is the detonator that could set it all
> off. (Alvi, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2012)

This voiceover questions North American assumptions about the Middle East as

characterized by tribal and religious violence, while challenging the privileging of United

States interests in media discourses by incorporating the concerns of Afghanistan and

India. Further, it places Pakistan in a web of global relations in which it is neither

peripheral nor defined exclusively through a comparison with the "West".

International journalism has long been critiqued for dwelling on the violent

elements of non-Western countries. "The Vice Guide to Karachi" focuses almost

exclusively on the ongoing violence in Karachi rather than discussing its diversity and culture. Does this reinforce the problematic Western journalistic tendency that constructs "non-Western" people as barbaric or victimized? Should journalists visiting violent places intentionally ignore brutal realities in order to avoid negative stereotyping? The issue is not as much about the coverage of violence itself, but rather the manner in which it is represented. Conventional journalistic coverage of international conflict and violence associates these phenomena with inherent inferiorities of the culture or state (Spurr, 1993). Therefore, the question of whether focusing on violence in Karachi is problematic in "The Vice Guide to Karachi" should consider whether the violence is naturalized as an inevitable outgrowth of the region, or is represented as contingent upon historical forces.

Throughout "The Vice Guide to Karachi," Alvi and Usmani position this violence and its impacts in a complex sociopolitical and economic situation influenced by interrelated forces of urban development, war, civil tensions, and corruption. The violence is not attributed to an essential Pakistani character or an inability to govern itself, but rather is associated with rapid urbanization. Alvi explains that the conflict is largely over land due to the exponential population growth in Karachi, forcing impoverished groups to battle over dwindling resources. This is an implicit critique of the forces of modernization and development, which are portrayed in this episode as not solely leading to progress, but also as contributing to densely populated cities with oppressive living conditions. The episode additionally investigates the impact of the U.S.-Afghanistan war that has driven Afghani refugees into Karachi, where they experience continued discrimination and marginalization.

"The Vice Guide to Liberia" (2010) investigates the social situation in Liberia after decades of civil war. Mainstream North American news coverage often associates the gruesome history of Liberia's conflict between its tyrannical president Charles Taylor and feuding warlords with broader discourses that attribute violence in Africa to its savage and uncivilized nature (Spurr, 1993). However, in "The Vice Guide to Liberia", host (and Vice cofounder) Shane Smith provides a historical background for the conflict, dating back to Liberia's origins as a colony of the United States. As Smith explains in an expository voiceover, Liberia was founded as a colony for freed slaves in the United States, who after returning to Africa discriminated against and dominated native Africans. This tension between repatriated slaves and native Africans continued into the twentieth century, and was influential in the conflict that led to its drawn-out civil war. Smith connects the warfare to the West by explaining the impact of colonialism as well as the connections between oppressive leader Charles Taylor and the United States, where he was educated. Although the episode portrays some grotesque acts of violence, its contextualization within global relations resists colonial interpretations of political unrest in Africa. The violence is not represented as a natural consequence of the innate barbarism of Africans, but rather as a tragic outcome of historicized political forces tied to a long past of colonial and postcolonial marginalization. By highlighting the United States' ties to Liberia's colonial history and contemporary tyrannical oppression, Smith draws the audience's attention to the United States' culpability in the horrific civil wars that terrorized millions of Liberians in the 1990s.

Travel journalism commonly portrays customs that are foreign to the "West" as quaint or bizarre, reinforcing the visited culture's "Otherness". However, *The Vice Guide*

to Travel frequently makes an effort to situate a seemingly strange practice or belief within a social and historical context. "The Holy Thugs of Venezuela" (2011) is an episode that covers the worship of Santos Malandros (Holy Thugs) – dead criminals who are elevated to saintly status – in Venezuela. Host Ryan Duffy travels to Caracas, Venezuela to investigate this phenomenon in relation to political and social problems in the country. Duffy argues that a legacy of poverty in the nation has led to an explosion of violence, which has made Caracas the city with the highest murder rate per capita in the world. In this milieu, a religion popular among the poorest segments of the nation's society (which is also the hardest-hit by the violence) evolved called Venezuelan spiritism.

Duffy interviews various spiritists who describe the reasons behind worshipping criminals, including a caretaker for Saint Ishmael's shrine. The caretaker justifies the appeal of Ishmael, who, like Robin Hood, stole from the rich and gave to the poor. A female spiritist at the shrine says:

> He was like us. But because of all the miracles that he has performed here on earth, people have made him into what he is today. He helps people who are in prison a lot. People often ask him to help get someone out of jail, to undo their chains so that they can be free. (Unnamed interviewee, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2011).

Duffy explains that for people living in this situation of poverty and violence, praying to "pure Catholic saints" is more difficult than believing in "more familiar and flawed figureheads like Ishmael." The show concludes with a quote from Venezuelan sociologist Tulio Hernandez, who explains that the Santos Malandros are means of coping with "this tragic moment that Venezuela is going through" that affects mostly young, poor men. Rather than portraying the worship of criminals as an odd or mystically quaint practice

exercised by backwards "Others", Duffy contextualizes the Santos Malandros and argues that their worship is perhaps more logical in this specific situation of poverty and violence than praying to idealized, perfect Catholic saints.

CHALLENGES TO "WESTERN" LIBERAL IDEOLOGY

Going beyond historical contextualization, at certain instances in the series, *The Vice Guide to Travel* covers methods of government, social organization, and points of view that challenge "Western" liberal notions.

In "Takanakuy" (2012), host Thomas Morton travels to Santo Tomás, a remote indigenous village in the Peruvian Andes, to participate in the custom of Takanakuy. Morton describes Takanakuy as an indigenous form of public justice in which grievances are built up all year, and then all cathartically worked out through a community-wide organized brawl on Christmas. The origins of the practice, explained through a combination of interviews and voiceovers by Morton, come out of resistance to colonial conquest. Morton explains that the people of the Chumbivilcas province are descended from the Chanka people, who resisted both the Spanish and the Inca empires. Interviewee Victor Laime Mantilla, a local Peruvian author, explains that, for him, participating in Takanakuy is about reclaiming the rights of the indigenous people.

In many areas of Latin America, indigenous rights movements have become organized and politically prominent. In Bolivia, for example, a new constitution implemented in 2009 explicitly recognizes "indigenous autonomy" and "communitarian administration of justice" (Burman, 2011). Central to the indigenous rights movement in Latin America is a project of decolonization to revalorize indigenous ways of life and forms of knowledge that have been repressed for centuries through colonial domination

(Burman, 2011). Often the primary goal for social movements of marginalized people is to recover their dignity as humans and establish their status as citizens with rights (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998).

Typical portrayals of rural communities in travel journalism evoke colonial representations of "peasants" as quaint, passive and stuck in the past (Echtner & Prasad, 2003), thus lacking historical agency. "Takanakuy" contradicts this tendency by focusing on the rebellious political actions of the people of Chumbivilcas. The custom of Takanakuy is not portrayed as bizarre, primitive or charming, but rather as a practice of resistance and self-empowerment. The people here are aware of and contest their marginalization by the Peruvian government in Lima, as Mantilla (the local author) describes:

> In the cities, the chumbivilcas are still seen as a savage culture, which is something we don't agree on. Nowadays, Lima decides everything in the country. What Lima says, the provinces and regions have to do. It's not like all around Peru is uniform. There are more than 42 cultures in Peru, and they all have different ways of understanding and seeing the world. (Mantilla, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2012)

This illustrates the limits of representative government when controlled by an oligarchy of urban elites in the context of Peru, and posits indigenous communitarianism as an alternative form of self-governance in the face of an oppressive bureaucratic political system. Further, the quote demonstrates Mantilla's awareness of his marginalized political position and a consciousness of how the perceptions of his community (as what he calls "savage") reinforce this marginalization. Here, Mantilla seems to be actively attempting to retool this image and the re-present himself and his community as independent, strong and rebellious.

This implicit critique of Western liberal notions of political participation and legal justice becomes explicit when Morton compares Takanakuy to the liberal court system:

> Their turnover rate for cases is extraordinarily quick; the results are immediate and satisfying for the winners. If you've got a problem with it, you can always go back in the ring for an appeal. The rest of Peru may look down on Takanakuy as a symptom of rural backwardness, but while they're sitting in a lawyer's office filling out reams of paperwork, the plaintiffs of Chumbavilcas already have their arm around the defendant's shoulder and are drowning their problems in beer. (Morton, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2012)

Overall, this is an interesting and arguably counter-hegemonic discussion of an indigenous cultural practice and form of resistance. In "Takanakuy," Morton provides a counterpoint to the discursively constructed conceptualizations of rural indigenous people as impeded by their traditional cultural forms and unable to reap the benefits of modernization. However, the comparison of Takanakuy to Western liberal political systems comes dangerously close to an idealization of the "Noble Savage", wherein the terms of the binary between the "West" and "non-West" are simplistically inverted without subverting the power-laden operations underpinning the hierarchy (Hall, 1992). Positioning Takanakuy in relation to liberal structures of justice may result in creating a dialogue between the "West" and itself about its own ideologies, rather than recognizing the potential for alternative political formations (Hall, 1992). In addition, the celebration of communitarian justice risks underplaying the material effects of continued governmental forms of oppression in Latin America.

In "Illegal Border Crossing" (2010), Vice directly confronts illegal immigration in the United States, an issue that is a prevalent topic of U.S. journalistic discourse, from a point of view outside of the "West". This episode tells the story of illegal immigration from the perspectives of several interviewed members of the peripheralized community

of El Alberto, Mexico. In order to provide means of income for its residents, the community created a profitable attraction called "Night Walk" where tourists are led through the desert to simulate the experience of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border on foot. The show's focus on this attraction allows *The Vice Guide to Travel* to address illegal immigration from the viewpoint that questions dominant "Western" interpretations of the issue. While discourse surrounding illegal immigration has evolved recently, there remains a protectionist discourse surrounding the issue that constructs Mexican immigrants as dangerous and deceitful "Others" (Berg, 2002).

"Illegal Border Crossing" features interviews with several members of the community who both justify and problematize the motivations for crossing the border. Schoolteacher Ponciano Rodriguez explains that life is difficult for the El Alberto community because there are few work opportunities. Although he tries to encourage his students to go to college and work within their own community, about half of them leave when they become teenagers. The episode also features local council member Felipe Garcia, who spent seventeen years working in Las Vegas until he saved enough money to return and help his community. Garcia claims that in El Alberto, a person can only barely make enough to live and therefore is unable to save money and better his or her life. The "American Dream" in Mexico, says Garcia, is to eventually return home with enough money to buy a house or start a business, and thus help develop the community.

The "Night Walk" tourist attraction is an entrepreneurial project that has benefited the area by providing jobs for dozens of its community members. In the episode, tour guide "Poncho" explains that the "Night Walk" is a socially conscious form of tourism that is not meant to train people to cross the border but rather to generate empathy and

respect for those who do. Rather than promoting immigration, Poncho says that he wants to "create the necessary conditions so that we can be self-sufficient." For him, illegal immigration is exploitation:

> It's just people exploiting other people. We've realized that with our work, we strengthen the monster. By letting them exploit us, we make them economically stronger. But we are hooked too. We need to find a balance, and realize that we have to build our own history here, instead of building our history in another country that is not ours. But we want to change that history, and not be migrants anymore. ("Poncho", quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2010)

This perspective presents a counter-hegemonic outlook that represents Mexican migrant workers as hardworking and ambitious people who, rather than wanting to take advantage of the United States economic system, hope to empower their community and families to become self-reliant. This also contradicts developmentalist discourses that interpret continued poverty as an indication of the need for top-down foreign assistance and monitoring. Additionally, "Poncho's" asserts that it is his community (and more broadly Mexico) that is being exploited rather than the United States in the illegal immigration equation. Like Mantilla in "Takanakuy", "Poncho" demonstrates the ability to understand the "Western" discourse surrounding his community, and actively reject and reinvent it in a purposefully counter-hegemonic effort to redefine the U.S.-Mexico relationship.

However, at times *The Vice Guide to Travel* maintains problematic colonial assumptions that equate progress to capitalist modernization. The most overt use of developmentalist conceptions of progress occurs in the episode "Prostitutes of God" (2010), where Indian devadasis, young girls who are dedicated to the goddess Yellamma and then forced into prostitution, are portrayed as victims of traditionalism. Host Sarah Harris opens the episode with a Eurocentric description of India:

> The first thing that strikes you when you come to India is a sense of extreme contrasts. While some people are still shitting off the sides of railway lines and eating from banana leaves, other people are drinking frappucinos and wearing Gucci sunglasses. Along with this feeling of progress and moving forward, there's still this undercurrent of tradition and religion and superstition, and an evenly more deeply ingrained caste system. (Harris, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2010)

This interpretation of Indian society replicates problematic colonial discourse that positions India/poverty/religion/traditionalism in a binary with modernity/consumerism/progress. By postulating that poverty is caused by "tradition and religion and superstition" and that progress comes from "drinking frappucinos and wearing Gucci sunglasses", Harris obscures relations of power and inequality within India and globally that exacerbate social ails. The episode is book-ended by this dialogue, concluding with another voiceover:

> India is a land of extremes, polarized by extravagant new wealth and ancient poverty. Everywhere you look there's a battle being waged between the traditional forces of religion, castes and superstition, and the inevitable force of Western capitalism. Nowhere are these clashes more evident than in the plight of the devadasis, where religious devotion has been exploited for commercial gain. Today, any remnants of the devadasi's cultural traditions have all but disappeared. All that's left is a system that turns children into prostitutes and their parents into pimps. (Harris, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2010)

Again, Harris lumps together religion, castes, and superstition as "traditional forces", and pits these against "the inevitable force of Western capitalism." She positions "new wealth" against "ancient poverty", implying that wealth is a recent phenomenon in India, and that India had previously been, until the intervention of "Western capitalism", abjectly poor. These dichotomies suggest a teleological line of progress, where the past, poverty, tradition and religion must be left behind in order to reach the desired end goal of capitalism and modernity.

SNARKY SATIRICAL HUMOR

Using satire in addressing a subject can be used as a means of engaging audiences and instigating critical thought and civic discussion (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). Although humor is often thought of as apolitical, laughter can be a means of examining and critically playing with something (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). In order for comedy to work, it presupposes a shared social system of structures and meanings to be mocked. Thus, to some extent humor always challenges social norms and rituals (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). As comedy pokes fun at norms, it allows its audience to become "defamiliarized" with this taken for granted social pattern (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). When the necessity of a norm is dislodged, the audience is able to view it from afar, assess it, and possibly challenge it (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009).

Satire is a form of humor that aggressively ridicules a historical actuality, where the goal is to make visible the absurdity of an established norm (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009):

> Satire's calling card is the ability to produce social scorn or damning indictments through *playful* means and, in the process, transform the aggressive act of ridicule into the more socially acceptable act of rendering something ridiculous. Play typically makes the attack humorous, in turn enlisting the audience in a social rebuke through communal laughter. (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009, p. 12-13)

Satire's skill for challenging power in a playful manner makes it an effective tool in provoking political critique (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). The humorous questioning of norms is a dynamic means of hindering its total naturalization into ingrained common sense (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009). As a form of political communication, satire allows people "to recognize the naked emperor and, through their laughter, begin to see realities that have been obscured" (Gray, Jones & Thompson, 2009, p. 16-17).

A common thread throughout *The Vice Guide to Travel* is a cynical and snarky sense of humor that uses humor to question historical situations. In "The Vice Guide to Karachi", Suroosh Alvi uses sarcasm and parody to question the practices of the Karachi police force when he accompanies them on a raid of a supposedly Taliban area of the city. The unsubtle raid consisted of hundreds of cops and dozens of media personnel driving into a predominantly Afghani neighborhood and questioning anyone who fit the cliché-Hollywood physical appearance of a terrorist. Poking fun at the incompetency of the police and the staged-for-the-media quality of the raid, Alvi compares the experience to a cheesy cop film by declaring to the camera "I feel like I'm on the set of a cop movie right now." The episode then cuts to slow motion shots of the Karachi police walking through the streets accompanied by generic funk music reminiscent of soundtracks from 1970s cop movies. Alvi describes their strategy as "no camera left behind," juxtaposed by a shot of a ridiculous cluster of cameramen huddled together focusing on something unseen, while a cop says (reinforced by subtitles picking this out of a cacophony of talking), "do a good search, you know they're filming." Finally, the raid is concluded when they come across a man with an unregistered weapon who they assume to be from the Taliban, described by Alvi as "right out of central casting… turbin and all."

Here, humor is used to demystify the sensationalized violence in the news. By playfully ridiculing the strategy of the police as motivated by a desire to construct a story for primetime news programs, Alvi questions the supposed realism of television news. This in turn challenges the validity of prevalent journalistic discourses about violence and turmoil in the Middle East, as these discourses are formulated out of news coverage that is often little more than spectacle.

In "The Vice Guide to North Korea" (2008), host Shane Smith uses humor throughout the episode to highlight the absurdity of governmental control and hypocrisy in North Korea. Throughout his trip, Smith and his crew are escorted on strictly regulated state-sanctioned tourist trips. Smith repeatedly comments to the camera about the ridiculousness of the current situation beyond the hearing distance of his guides and guards, inviting the audience to participate in an inside joke that ridicules North Korean authoritarianism.

To introduce Smith's arrival into the country, the show sets up the city of Pyongyang through archival footage from North Korean state propaganda. This decades-old footage displays montages of large, shiny, modern skyscrapers while a voiceover praises Kim Jung Il as a genius. The show then cuts to the Vice crew's footage of contemporary Pyongyang, with crumbling buildings and smoke-filled skies above factories. This ironic juxtaposition pokes fun at the constructed image of North Korea broadcast by its government, while highlighting the very real oppression of the North Korean people.

Throughout the episode, Smith uses sarcasm and humorous disbelief to point to the hidden reality of North Korea that he and his crew are prohibited from seeing. In a laughably ridiculous scene, Smith is escorted to a banquet hall full of large empty tables for dinner. He and the numerous women waiting on him are the only people in the sizeable open room full of tables set for dinner. Wide shots of Smith eating entirely by himself emphasize the bizarreness of this event, while he explains in voiceover his gradual realization that no one else was coming to the banquet and his subsequent discomfort. Through voiceover, Smith humorously retells the display of massive amounts

of food at his dinner used as publicity to counteract the bad press North Korea has received for its famine, as we watch footage of the waitresses placing elaborate dishes out on empty tables for absent guests.

Later, when taken on tours to North Korean museums and monuments, Smith wisecracks about what he calls the "look how great we are tour." At the International Friendship Exhibition, a museum showcasing gifts that have been sent to Kim Jung Il as evidence of the world's approval of his leadership, Smith japes with the camera about the ridiculousness of the exhibits (alligators holding trays, dead stuffed animals, etc.) and names it the "International Insanity Museum." Later, during his tour of the government library, Smith is introduced to the desk that Kim Il Jung invented. In private, Smith makes fun of the fanatic celebration of the desk by the tour guide, mimicking her for praising it as "the best desk for readers ever because it's adjustable." This is comically paired with Smith sitting in the desk, unable to figure out how it works.

In the final scene of the episode, Smith is escorted to a karaoke bar. Although most of the songs are governmental anthems, Smith discovers that because the machine was manufactured in South Korea it has a few "Western" songs programmed into its database. In an uncomfortably funny scene of cultural awkwardness, Smith decides to sing the punk rock song "I am an Anarchist" to an increasingly bewildered audience. In voiceover, he describes the reactions of the people in the bar not as offended, but as confused because they had never before heard this style of music.

By continually exposing the absurdity and constructedness of his trip through humor, Smith is able to exposes what is not seen. The ridiculousness of him eating alone in a large room full of food emphasizes the suffering of the impoverished North Koreans

who are excluded from the meal. Laughing about the bizarre propaganda praising Kim Jung Il points to totalitarian and manipulative brainwashing of the North Korean people by their government. Finally, rebellious antics at a karaoke bar bring to light the extreme isolation of North Korean society from the rest of the world.

POSTMODERN STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Aspects of postmodernism can be used to challenge conventional travel journalistic strategies of representation that emphasize truth, authenticity, and objectivity. Postmodernism's features of kitsch, the hyper-real, and dissolution of boundaries question the assumptions of universal reality upon which established representational practices rely (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

Because the search for authenticity is a primary motive in travel, customary travel journalism ignores or hides evidence of a culture's interaction with the world (Spurr, 1993). Cultures should not be described as authentic or inauthentic based on their perceived adulteration through contact with other cultures (Spurr, 1993). It is only the representation of undiluted cultures that is itself inauthentic, because no human culture is ever truly disconnected from other people (Spurr, 1993). Instead, culture should be interpreted as a heterogeneous, contradictory and constantly transforming entity intimately connected to cross-cultural influences. An alternative to the common tourist quest for authenticity is "post-tourism" - a tourist practice that purposefully plays with the dynamics of inauthenticity in tourism (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001).

Frequently the hosts of *The Vice Guide to Travel* look for ironic instances of inauthenticity that challenge monolithic conceptions of cultures. In "Wodka Wars" (2010), host Ivar Berglin goes on a worldwide investigation into the history of vodka to

settle the dispute between Poland and Russia over where the drink originated. But rather than find any definitive answers, Berglin discovers that this issue of national pride is tied into a complex and interwoven sociopolitical history, and has more to do with present political relations between the countries than chronological fact. As his journey only serves to convolute rather than clarify his question, Berglin demonstrates that there is no discernible true or authentic national origin for vodka. This theme of inauthenticity is referenced repeatedly through the episode by drawing attention the commodification of Russian and Polish culture.

When Berglin first arrives in Moscow, he consciously acts according to tourist expectations by first visiting Red Square, saying in voiceover: "This was my first trip to Moscow, so like any good tourist I went straight to Red Square." There, he meets street entertainers who are dressed as clichéd figures of Russian history, Stalin and Lenin. After speaking with them briefly in English (this is one of the only time anyone speaks to Berglin in English while he is in Poland or Russia), he takes a stereotypical photo with the two performers. Rather than focus on the history of Red Square, its monuments, or its significance to Moscow, Berglin focuses on Lenin and Stalin imitators. This provides commentary on the process of packaging and commoditizing of cultures through tourism.

When visiting Poland, a historian takes Berglin on a tour of Warsaw. While walking through the streets, the historian points to an off-camera statue of Saint Florien, the Patron saint of firefighters, and explains its cultural significance. Berglin responds by pointing to something off camera and says, "And here we have a traditional Polish, uh…" The cameraman pans to focus on what Berglin is referencing, which is revealed as a person walking down the street in a bright, gaudy beer mug costume. The historian

responds: "Walking beer. Yeah." This humorous observation calls attention to the impossibility of discovering an authentic Polish culture untouched by modern processes and interactions with other peoples. The beer costume is a marketable play on Polish culture, made into a commodity for consumption by tourists visiting Poland. The episode concludes not with Berglin postulating on whether Russia or Poland was the true owner of vodka, but rather in giving up on his pursuit and discussing the current globally-influenced state of Polish society with locals he has met during his journey. Exhibiting that national cultural histories are inevitably shaped by exchanges with other nations and cultures through this case study of the history of vodka, Berglin destabilizes nation-based identities that draw lines between "Self" and "Other."

By showcasing the inauthenticity of the visited cultures, *The Vice Guide to Travel* blurs the boundaries between the reified "Self" and "Other" in "Western" colonial discourse. However, there is a risk of patronizingly implying that this inauthenticity is a phenomenon *imposed on* other cultures *by* the West. This is reminiscent of discourses of cultural imperialism that have been criticized for interpreting the dominance of "Western" cultural flows globally as a tyrannical invasion against passive, helpless societies. *The Vice Guide to Travel* is largely able to avert this tendency by emphasizing agentic cultural hybridity.

In "The Holy Thugs of Venezuela", the investigation of Santos Malandros portrays Venezuelan Spiritism as a hybrid religion composed of various elements of indigenous beliefs, African spirituality, and Catholicism. This is interpreted as an active negotiation by the most marginalized sectors of Venezuelan society of colonial influences (Catholicism from Spanish colonial rule and African spirituality from African

descendants brought to Latin America via the slave trade) and indigenous values to produce a new religion better suited to their historical situation. The worship of the Holy Thugs is understood as evidence that the religion is constantly evolving in relation to the social world, in this case to the proliferation of violence in Venezuela.

The episode "Jeepnys: The Rolling Carnival"(2007), hosted by Ivar Berglin in Manila, Philippines, brings the hybridity of cultures to the front and center of its narrative focus. Jeepnys are vehicles that are large, heavily decorated jeeps popular in the region. Berglin investigates this phenomenon by speaking with Toym de Leon Imao, a local visual artist and expert on jeepnys. De Leon Imao traces the history of the jeepnys back to World War II, when army jeeps were left behind by the United States to be used as temporary transport. Because of a transportation crisis, these jeeps were reconstructed by Filipinos to make the vehicles more sturdy and long lasting. Eventually, this evolved into a flamboyant, colorful and specifically Filipino style of ornamentation that has become a cultural icon. Throughout the episode, Berglin points to and praises different aspects of jeepnys: their bright colors, hand-painted decoration, interior ostentation, etc. Berglin and De Leon Imao concentrate on the innovation and creative processes involved in transforming an imported object into something that is distinctly Filipino, and celebrate the jeepnys as a unique cultural form. The focus on jeepnys as hybrid cultural inventions demonstrates the agency involved in appropriating elements of other cultures into local contexts and needs.

SELF-REFLEXIVITY

The position that enables travel journalists to look and speak about others is one of inherent authority and mastery over their subject (Spurr, 1993). The act of surveillance

gives the observer visual possession over that which is observed (Spurr, 1993). By occupying the role of the observer, a journalist enters an inequitable power relation that distances him or her from the examined culture (Spurr, 1993). This implicit privilege is rarely brought into focus in travel journalism (Spurr, 1993). This is not the case, however, with *The Vice Guide to Travel*, which frequently uses a self-reflexive storytelling strategy that brings attention to the difficulties in journalistic representation.

A common self-reflexive strategy that *The Vice Guide to Travel* uses is to invite the audience directly into the normally hidden process of constructing the narrative of an episode. The episode "PLO Boy Scouts in Beirut" (2007) opens with cofounder Shane Smith and Vice editor Jesse Pearson speaking with VBS Creative Director Spike Jonze in a lack-luster office while watching footage from Smith's and Pearson's trip to Lebanon. This allows the show's creators to discuss the complicated and disquieting intricacies of Palestinian child martyrs without naturalizing the journalists' interpretations of the topic as fact.

Smith and Pearson explain to Jonze (and the audience) that they went to Lebanon to investigate a Hezbollah-sponsored skate park for boys, but when they came home and translated the interviews they realized that they had misunderstood the situation. Smith and Pearson began to comprehend that their interviews with the youth leaders were actually about training the children as suicide bombers, and admit to Jonze that now they are unsure of how to grapple with their footage. This discussion is intercut with clips from the trip of the boys dancing for the camera, laughing, and singing: "In the name of the wound, in the name of the blood. Until we reach freedom. In your name, oh Palestine." Hezbollah representatives explain that child suicide bombings come out of

being left with no alternatives. Jonze's visible uneasiness grows as they watch the footage and comment on various parts. In one scene the crew visits the home of one of the youth leaders, where his family sits and has tea. The young children in the family begin to sing together: "Die, die Israel. Who told you, daughter of a dog to come to our neighborhood?" and everyone claps. The show then turns to a clip of an elderly woman stating to the camera that if she encountered an American she would "drink his blood," and then cuts back to Jonze in the office reacting with disbelief: "She said if an American comes she'll drink his blood? Narly."

The episode concludes with Smith and Pearson discussing their confusion about how to deal with such a delicate subject. The final note of the episode makes no attempt to resolve or clarify the issue, concluding with Pearson saying to Smith and Jonze: "There's no way to put a period on it. We don't have an end point for it, you know, I mean, because it's going to go on forever." By demonstrating the video producers' uneasiness and inability to entirely grasp the situation to the viewer, this episode highlights the subjectivity inherent in journalistic coverage.

Including the audience in this type of self-reflexive discussion of representational practices is also used in "Bulgarian Dirty Bombs" (2007), again hosted by Shane Smith. Here the show opens with Smith in the editing bay, explaining to the camera that their editor Jake was confused by the footage. The story is told as Smith goes through the footage with Jake, enabling the audience to see that the chronological structure of a film is not natural but rather manufactured through a reflective and deliberative process.

Smith begins by telling Jake that they were inspired to make this documentary by a French journalist who was able to buy a nuclear bomb in the Bulgarian black market.

He then guides Jake through their effort to find the arms dealer and speak with him, and their subsequent discovery that Osama Bin Laden had made a deal with the dealer to buy a warhead. Rather than being told through God-like voiceover narration, the story unfolds through the conversation between Smith and the editor. This allows for personalized commentaries from Smith and Jake that are demonstrably opinion and reaction rather than portrayed as objective fact. The show again ends without a cozy resolution. After going through all the footage, Jake asks Smith where the bomb is now, and Smith says that it is, as far as he knows, still hidden in the arms dealer's mother's backyard. The two sit in a moment of shock, then finally discuss the frightening reality that anyone could buy a nuclear weapon. The last shot of the episode is a close up of Smith's face as he says: "You know, it could be Osama Bin Laden, it could be some white supremacist from Arkansas, it could be some guy who hates your football team, whatever it is…Why don't we know this? Why aren't we being told this?" This unsettling question is an unconventional means of taking away, at least partially, the authority of the journalist to survey a position, judge it, and package it neatly and comprehensibly for audience consumption.

Another self-referential technique used by *The Vice Guide to Travel* is a critical examination of how the crew's media presence shapes the actions of those they are covering. In "The Vice Guide to Karachi", Suroosh Alvi again and again makes obvious the effect his crew and the media at large have on their environment. Alvi and co-host Basim Usmani go into an area that the media have been saying is the site of an out-of-control riot with ten people dead. Once there, Alvi and Usmani realize this has been largely fabricated and sensationalized by media misinformation. Instead of a wild and

dangerous riot, it is mostly young men running around in groups and throwing rocks. The co-hosts point out in voiceover that much of the protests they shot were actually the result of their guides running around and suggesting slogans for people to shout on camera. Rather than trying to make the riot seem more treacherous and exciting to heighten suspense via editing, Alvi intentionally calls attention to the event's fictitious elements. Additionally, this reveals how those who are being represented have agency in constructing their own representations. The protestors actively seek out the camera and attempt to insert drama into the riot in order to use the media to bring attention to their grievances. This technique is repeated throughout the episode, pointing to numerous different occurrences when subjects of the show were encouraged by interested parties to act in a certain way for the camera.

Throughout the series, the Vice reporters tend to approach their subject with honesty about their own ignorance of the situation they cover. Although they provide background research at the beginning of the episode, the large part of the narrative focuses on their encounters with a complex state of affairs that overwhelm their limited knowledge of the places they visit. This is portrayed with candor and transparency as the camera shows the hosts' confusion, discomfort, and amusement in meeting the unexpected. In "The Radioactive Beasts of Chernobyl" (2007), for example, Shane Smith is excited to begin his journey to Chernobyl, Ukraine to hunt animals that were physically mutated due to fallout radiation from the 1986 nuclear disaster. The episode begins with Smith and his co-host Pella Kagerman drinking alcohol and talking about the "three-eyed wolves" and "five-legged bears" amusedly, and then joking and partying on the train ride to Ukraine. This ends when they arrive in Chernobyl, where the reality of the nuclear

devastation and its long-lasting impacts sink in for Smith and Kagerman. By the end of the episode, the two haven't found any mutated animals, and leave feeling defeated and discussing the heavy impacts that have destroyed everything in the area. Smith calls it "some heavy, heavy, heavy shit" and walks off muttering to himself as Kagerman says to him, "it was a bit too much." The last thing Smith says before the camera fades out is "I've got to throw these shoes away, they might be radioactive," with a discernable undertone of apprehension in his voice. By including the complete shift in attitude from the beginning of the episode to the end, Smith provides a self-reflexive honesty to the episode that comments on his own arrogance while provocatively illustrating the devastation nuclear plants can cause.

Pointing to the disappointed expectations of the host when encountering something advertised through tourist discourse is another self-reflexive (and also postmodern) tendency in *The Vice Guide to Travel*. In "Mongolian Yak Festival" (2011), host Royce Akers travels to a remote area of Mongolia to attend the Second Annual Yak Festival. The main attraction for Akers was the advertised Yak racing, which was built up for the audience the entire show. In the build up to the event, Akers investigates the sociohistorical importance of the yak and its multiple uses (dairy, meat, beast of burden) for the Mongolian people. At the climax of the show, the race is portrayed through a humdrum montage of a few dozen people on yaks moving at a moderately quick speed. Akers comments: "It was pretty unruly, and a lot less epic than it sounded in the brochure. The riders found it tough keeping the yaks straight, and to be honest, they probably could've jogged faster." The festival was represented as contrary to the host's search for the bizarre and exotic, contradicting his expectations as a "Western" tourist. In

the end, the most interesting points of the show did not involve the advertised race, but Akers's coverage of the relationship between the Mongolian people and the yak.

GENDERED REPRESENTATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

As an integral part of colonialist discourse and Othering processes, gender is an important consideration when critiquing travel journalism. Despite *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s conscious effort to subvert established racial, ethnic, and postcolonial discourses in nearly every episode, the series frequently uses hegemonic gender norms uncritically and without irony. Carrying over Vice magazine's sexually exploitive tendencies, *The Vice Guide to Travel* interpellates a male audience through its use of masculine norms of speaking and acting. The series often produces a "boy's club" feel, joking with the audience in a manner that alienates women. Further, the show constructs its desired viewer as a male adventurer who embodies colonial desires for exploration and discovery into the seductive unknown.

"The Last Aryans of Paraguay" (2007) opens in the Vice offices in Toronto with host Derrick Beckles joking around with television star Johnny Knoxville about a woman's breasts in a magazine (possibly Vice magazine). A camera close up of the photo shows a woman naked from the top up and looking seductively at the camera. Knoxville and Beckles discuss how attractive her breasts are due to them being "natural". Beckles then pretends to be God drawing her breasts on the photo while singing: "I'm God and I'm fucking awesome, check out these tits that I'm making. Satin, fuck you, you cannot even begin to do this shit," and Knoxville and the crew laugh. Although this may be humorous, it unmindfully assumes a male audience and carelessly objectifies the female body. Moreover, this introduction has nothing to do with the topic of the episode, which

deals with German Nazi exiles living in Paraguay. Assumably this is meant to introduce the host as lighthearted and witty, but in effect it estranges female viewers who are forced to adopt a male gaze in order to relate to the host's bantering. Even more problematic, it reinforces oppressive representations that depict women as "to-be-looked-at" (Mulvey, 1975).

In another example of outright and condescending sexism, host Thomas Morton accompanies Serbian pop star Goga Sekulic to a dance club in "The Vice Guide to the Balkans" (2012), where he paints an image of the club by describing the women as "fake-titted." He makes no reference to the appearance or bodies of any of the men in the crowd, implying that women's bodies can be read as signs indicating the essence of a place and group of people. This recalls colonialist tendencies that associated women's bodies with colonized nations, employing feminized descriptions of places to indicate their need for imperial rule.

A pattern throughout *The Vice Guide to Travel* is the use of disproportionately male local informants unless the episode is addressing a specifically gendered issue. In "The Vice Guide to Liberia", *all* of the people who Shane Smith interviews and with whom he discusses the state of the country are men; the one exception is during their visit to a brothel, where they speak with female prostitutes. Investigating the gendered impact of poverty is crucial to any investigation of prolonged marginalization of groups of people, and Smith's coverage of the sex workers was well executed. However, the total exclusion of women as acting, speaking subjects outside of the brothel has significant implications. This narrow representation limits the image of Liberian women to oppressed sex workers defined by their bodies and sexuality. The camera shows women

in the background of the church, but they never speak. Some informants reference their female family members, but they are never materialized. At one point, Smith mentions that a staggering 70-percent of the female population in Liberia have been raped, but he never attempts to get a woman's perspective on this violent phenomenon. The epidemic of rape in Liberia surely has widespread impacts on the society as a whole, but this gendered dimension of violence is treated as merely a side note to cannibalism and child soldiers.

The habit of omitting the perspective of local women creates numerous missed opportunities to address gendered elements of the topic of discussion. In "Takanakuy", Thomas Morton's focus on indigenous rights and acts of resistance is a positive and counterhegemonic move away from Western journalistic neglect of this aspect of Latin American societies and struggles. However, it neglects the gendered dynamics of indigenous rights movements, where decolonization includes the effort to decolonize gender conceptualizations. Rejecting the colonial binary formulation of gender, frequently indigenous movements instead promote "chachawarmi" – a concept of gender based on complementarity, equality and fluidity (Burman, 2011). Not only does the concept of chachawarmi contest Western patriarchal norms, it also is a counter-narrative to Western feminist discourses of individualism (Burman, 2011). Further, indigenous peasant women in the Peruvian Andes have become progressively more involved in formal political movements since the 1970s (Radcliffe, 1993). Indigenous women are active members of unions and political parties, as well as participants in political protest aimed at reclaiming indigenous land and rights (Radcliffe, 1993). Historically, Peruvian indigenous women have been marginalized even in programs designed to benefit

indigenous communities, such as agrarian reforms meant to help indigenous (male) communities while excluding women from land ownership (Radcliffe, 1993). Peruvian state regimes have attempted to assimilate indigenous women in specifically gendered ways by advocating certain acceptable (and unthreatening) models of indigenous femininity, while indigenous women have rejected and reinvented these models in favor of their own formulations of gender identity (Radcliffe, 1993). Indigenous peasant masculinities and femininities have thus become pivotal points of contention in the battle for indigenous rights. So why, in this discussion of identity and indigenous culture, is there no discussion of women and gender?

Asking how notions of gender play into acts of resistance in the Chumbivilcas community may have enhanced Morton's investigation and provided insight into the local culture. Instead, Morton casually mentions that women and children participate in this even as well as men, without questioning their role in this practice or attempting to obtain the perspective of a woman on this practice. One of his male informants tells Morton that in addition to Takanakuy being a rebellious act, it is also an arena to "prove your manhood." Why, then, do women participate? What do women stand to gain in the communal brawl? These questions are left unposed and unanswered by speaking exclusively with male interviewees.

My argument here is not that gender must be included in all investigations into everything in order to be anti-sexist. Rather, I argue that incorporating a gendered element can enhance journalistic work, and its absence is often due to the privileging of male political, social and historical issues as the norm. Additionally, including the perspectives of different genders and sexualities even in topics that have nothing to do

with gender (I would question whether such a topic really exists) creates a fuller, multifaceted telling of a phenomenon.

Despite its tendencies to speak from a masculinist point of view, *The Vice Guide to Travel* contains some notable instances where women's perspectives are actively incorporated. In "The Vice Guide to Karachi," most of the informants and subjects are still men, but the hosts interview women at key moments and point to their agency in Pakistani society. Co-hosts Suroosh Alvi and Basim Usmani are taken by a guide into an area that is governed by the Baloch brothers, who have been characterized by the government and mainstream media as mafia-esque criminals who exploit the people of their community. Alvi and Usmani explore the area, talking to people on the street to get a perspective outside of the official stance. One of their informants is a woman who tells them that the Baloch brothers have helped her community, in spite of what officials and the media may say. The inclusion of this agentic woman, who happens to be wearing a hijab, works to undermine "Western" stereotypes of the imprisoned veiled "Eastern" woman. The episode also features a group of women in Islamic attire protesting the latest murder charges against the Baloch brothers. This further asserts that, contrary to popular "Western" perceptions, veiled women can be both religious and politically active.

In "Jesus of Siberia" (2011), host Rocco Castoro travels to a remote area of Siberia where followers of the cult-like religion, the Church of the Last Testament, have created a "utopian" community. Not only does Castoro interview both women and men about the intricacies of the religion and the routines of the community, he also investigates a gendered aspect of the religion that augments his coverage. Explaining that the boys and girls are educated separately, Castoro visits the girl's school and speaks with

its teacher about the reasons behind this segregation. She responds that Vissarion (the cult's deified leader) ordains this separation in order to teach women how to behave with a man: "That's the key to their education. We communicate to the girls that man is a creator. He is a master. He must build a house and comprehend masculine professions… That's why we educate boys and girls separately." When Rocco asks if they have "strong girls that resist," the teacher replies: "A woman behaving as a leader and taking man's responsibilities leads to disharmony. If she rejects these rules, she puts her health at risk. The harmony will punish her with a woman disease." She then tells Castoro that he should bring his girlfriend to the school so that they can make her a "good assistant for him." As Castoro leaves the school, he quips in voiceover that: "As tempting as brainwashing my girlfriend into misogynistic slavery sounded, I had mountains to climb and deities to meet." Here, Castoro effectively uses humor to ridicule the localized sexism of this community and problematize broader patriarchal norms. Incorporating this gendered perspective into his coverage of the otherwise seemingly idyllic place aided in his subtle criticism of the community's practices and beliefs.

These instances indicate an awareness of gender and perhaps a move for the Vice production team to be more inclusive of women's voices. However, the largest absence of a demographic group in *The Vice Guide to Travel* may not be women but lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender peoples. While women are at least visible and referenced in most episodes, alternative sexualities and genders are entirely absent from all but two shows ("Prostitutes of God" and "The Warias", both of which are focused on specifically gendered issues).

In one notable episode, gender issues are not ignored but rather dealt with in a questionably Eurocentric manner. In "Prostitutes of God", host Sarah Harris takes a rigidly Western-biased feminist perspective of the phenomenon of the devadasi (young girls who are dedicated to the goddess Yellamma to become prostitutes once they reach puberty). Harris divides the options for Indian women into two dichotomous paths: the past/traditionalism/religiosity that monolithically oppresses women, or progress/modernity/commercialism that universally emancipates women.

Although Harris interviews devadasis from varied perspectives, she dismisses the viewpoints that contradict her interpretation of the practice. Harris allows the devadasis to talk and even defend their way of life at times, but subsequently uses her journalistic position of power to trivialize their voices through her more authoritative voiceovers. Throughout the episode, she writes over the subjects' agency by asserting that devadasis are the victims of religious, traditional, and familial structures.

Harris interviews Anitha, a brothel owner and NGO worker who argues: "I really don't think there is anything wrong in doing this work." However, immediately following this interview Harris asserts via voiceover that Anitha is atypical of devadasis, most of whom are forced into this work. Later, she talks with a teenage devadasi who was given no choice in becoming a prostitute. Yet, the young devadasi demonstrates a sense of pride in being able to provide for her family of five, who she stresses would starve without her income. Harris quickly counteracts any agency the girl has given herself by describing her as victimized and entrapped by her family. Harris also interviews Pandu, a transvestite devadasi who proclaims: "Nobody has a right over me. I can now boldly tell society, this is my life and I will live properly. Nobody will restrict me." Pandu even

expresses a desire to adopt a daughter and provide her with an education. After his segment, Harris once again insists that Pandu is the exception to the rule and that most girls are forced by their parents to become devadasis. Although her argument that most devadasis are oppressed, marginal, and forced into this work is undoubtedly true, her impulse to continually reassert this by overwriting the voices of her informants is an act that exercises power and control over this group of people.

My argument is not that devoting young girls as devadasis is a perfectly admissible practice that should not be criticized. Sex slavery, especially when involving children, is an incredibly alarming and oppressive practice and a clear human rights problem. Instead, I argue that Harris's framework for addressing devadasis is blinded to the localized and historicized nuances of the problem by her biased Eurocentric assumptions that equate progress with modernization.

Mohanty critiques "Western" feminist discourses that define "Third World" women as systematic prey for male dominance and sexual oppression (1988). Women become victimized "objects-who-defend-themselves" and men are transformed into "subjects-who-perpetrate-violence," creating a "simple opposition between the powerless (read: women) and the powerful (read: men) groups of people" (Mohanty, 1988, p. 67). In order to effectively organize against specific forms of gendered oppression, it must be made sense of in the context of particular historical, social, political economic and cultural articulations of power (Mohanty, 1988). The conventional analytical strategy of "Western" feminists is to conceptualize a social structure (religion, kinship, tradition, etc.) as a coherent and reified unity that is imposed on women as a separate, pregiven monolith (Mohanty, 1988). Not only does this obscure the complexities of the process of

oppression, it also formulates a paternalistic categorization of the average "Third World

Woman":

> …third-world women as a group or category are automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read 'not progressive'), family oriented (read 'traditional'), legal minors (read 'they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights'), illiterate (read 'ignorant'), domestic (read 'backward') and sometimes revolutionary (read 'their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war; they-must-fight!'). (Mohanty, 1988, p. 78)

This assumes that oppression in postcolonial nations results from "underdevelopment",

and that through the universal path of development these conditions can be improved

(Mohanty, 1988). This robs women in these "developing" nations of their modes of

resistance and diversity of experience (Mohanty, 1988).

At one point in "Prostitutes of God," Harris interviews a middle-aged woman and

her elderly mother about their harrowing experiences as devadasis. The woman tells the

camera that her own daughter became a devadasi as well, but died of HIV. Now the two

women are forced to take care of her children and beg for food, tearfully describing their

own situation to the camera as living like "dogs." Perhaps if Harris positioned stories

such as this (about the dark realities of devadasis) next to the interviews with devadasis

who express dissonant opinions, she would be able to convey her message with a more

nuanced and less controlling strategy.

The most questionable element of Harris's coverage is her Eurocentric and

reductive interpretation of the problem as a result of religion and tradition. She associates

the poverty and marginalization from which the practice emerges with a lack of modern

development. However, developmental processes have historically contributed to

continued abjection in many rural areas of India. Harris's one-sided and simplistic

interpretation of devadasis does little to clarify the issue and instead serves to reinforce

"Western" colonial discourses about progress. It is unfortunate that the complex and critical strategies that *The Vice Guide to Travel* has used in covering controversial issues such as child soldiers in Liberia and Islamic fundamentalism was not employed in "The Prostitutes of God."

However, there are a few episodes that do approach analyses of gendered topics with intricacy and delicacy. In "The Warias" (2012), host Hannah Brooks travels to Yogyakarta to investigate the relationship between Indonesian transsexuals, or warias, and the Islamic faith. Brooks begins the show by contextualizing the situation of warias by explaining that although Javanese culture conceives of warias as a third gender, they are ostracized in the predominantly Muslim society that only allows for two: men and women. But rather than simplistically focusing on the oppression of warias inflicted by Islam as a reified and tyrannical faith, she examines the complicated ways that Islam works for better or worse in the lives of warias in Yogyakarta.

"The Warias" is centered on the life of a devout Muslim waria named Maryani, who opened a boarding school for warias to be allowed to worship in Yogyakarta. As Brooks and Maryani sit on the floor of her school, Maryani explains how her faith enabled her to overcome her troubled past as a prostitute and drug user. She was motivated to create the school to help other warias who were forced to leave home and excluded from Islamic prayer at many Muslim schools and mosques. Maryani tells Brooks: "I want people to open their eyes and minds. Transvestites are humans. We are created by God and we must worship him." Throughout the episode, Maryani is not portrayed as either a victim or a hero, but rather as a complex person who is actively trying to negotiate her gender identity with her religious faith. Additionally, Maryani is

active in directing the focus of Brook's coverage in ways that communicate her message. Maryani decides where to take Brooks and whom she meets, steering her into situations that showcase the oppression of warias. Brooks accompanies Maryani to a waria funeral, giving Maryani the opportunity to discuss the HIV epidemic and high death rate of her community. Maryani introduces Brooks to her friends who were rejected by their families and are forced into prostitution. It is clear in this episode that the direction of the narrative is shaped by Maryani as well as Brooks.

Brooks uses a strategy in her coverage that differs from the snarky cynicism of most of *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s episodes. Her method could be described as a more feminine strategy[1] than is typical for *The Vice Guide to Travel*, which consists of building relationships and forming caring bonds with her subjects in order to structure a narrative based on intimate and empathetic representations. She deals with the waria community's stigmatization by traveling with the warias as they make money through street singing and prostitution, without condescendingly interpreting them as victims after the fact. Brooks problematizes the prevalence of prostitution amongst the warias by describing the physical abuse they face (Maryani speaks about being stripped naked and urinated on by the police) and the pervasiveness of HIV in their community. Yet, she also lets them tell their struggles, ambitions, and opinions without overriding their voice by interjecting her more authoritative assessment of their lives. Although in the end Brooks retains the position of journalistic power that allows her to select interview segments and structure the narrative, there is an observable effort to interact with and listen to her informants. This enables Brooks to construct a multilayered portrait of the warias as possessing

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[1] In saying "feminine strategy" I do not mean to imply a feminist naturalism that divides ways of acting and thinking into inherently feminine and masculine categories. Rather, that her strategy is rooted in what has been historically designated by society as feminine behavior: relationship forming, caring, empathy, etc.

agency and self-determination in spite of their marginalized position in society. As Maryani says during an interview: "We are not just street singers and prostitutes. We can influence our peers to worship God. And people who are guaranteed to go to heaven are Godly people."

Leading up to the conclusion of the episode, Maryani and the other warias laugh together as they dress Brooks up as a "sexy waria" in preparation for a party in celebration of warias. During this scene, Brooks asks Maryani about faith while speaking of her own agnosticism. Maryani responds by telling Brooks that she sees God as compassionate to the whole human race. By sharing a part of her own life, Brooks is able to create an interaction that is more akin to a interchange between friends than an interviewer interrogating a subject. Although this use of dialogue and care cannot entirely undo the inequitable power to represent between the two as journalist and subject, it does effectively challenge the convention of third-party objective observation in traditional journalism.

Another instance of careful and sophisticated coverage of gender issues is the episode entitled "The House of the Setting Sun"[2] (2010). With no host, the episode tells the story through interviews with the women living at the Casa Xochiquetzal in Mexico City, a house for elderly sex workers. The show focuses primarily on the lives of four women: Canela (75 years old), Paola (60), Lulu (61), and Reynita (who won't disclose her age, but appears to be in her late 70s). Although forgoing voiceover narration does not subvert the power imbalances in representation (the decision of what is included or edited out is not made by the women interviewed) and may create a false sense of realism

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[2] This title is a play on the American folk song "House of the Rising Sun," often interpreted as a song about a brothel in New Orleans.

that hides its constructedness, the method of interview-driven storytelling allows the women to provide a perspective on prostitution without editorializations from a voice of God narrator.

The edited interviews represent these women not as victims or slaves, but as people who were forced to engage in a difficult profession because of social, economic and political hardships. Canela tells the interviewer that she began when she was a teenager because her mother was sick and her family was poor and needed extra income. Lulu explains that she began sex work after being widowed and left without a livelihood or children. Paola even speaks of her occupation fondly, asserting: "How many years do I want to keep working? Oh, as many as I can! As many as God allows. I'll keep working well into my old age, as long as I can." When asked about her younger clients, Paola responds: "Oh, they're delicious!" and then laughs, effectively undermining commonly used condescending journalistic tones of pity for a victimized sex worker.

The episode also deals with the adversity poor sex workers cope with, facing violent threats of robbery, abuse, rape and murder. Lulu describes the devastating emotional toll that "kills you inside." However, even in describing their own oppression the women show agency and resistance. Lulu goes on to say: "But if I want to do it, I'll do it. If not, I just won't. If a client asks for improper things that I don't like… I just don't do them." In discussing the problem of AIDS amongst sex workers, Paola describes her firm stance on wearing protection. She recalls an instance in which a client offered her 1,000 pesos to use no protection, but she tells the interviewer that she insisted on it because money cannot save her from AIDS. Allowing the women to recount stories of

their fortitude and will provides an alternative representation of sex workers to mainstream portrayals of immorality, suffering and subjugation.

Overall, the representations of the women in this episode showcase their social capability and resilience to oppression rather than highlighting their victimization. In the last clip of the episode, Lulu tells the interviewer that it was a pleasure speaking with him, and then walks away saying: "Let me know what else I can offer you next time." Lulu and the crew all laugh at her insinuation, portraying her as not only a woman with agency but also one with self-confidence, intelligence, wit and personality. This is a representation that breaks the colonialist stereotypes of marginalized sex workers in the "non-West" as objectified visual symbols of abjection.

LOCAL INFORMANTS

Travel journalism has been criticized for including representations of locals that fit the image of the place packaged by "Western" discourse and the tourism industry, while purposefully excluding people who contradict expectations. In general, *The Vice Guide to Travel* avoids this tendency by interviewing and following various local informants from a variety of backgrounds. Moreover, the show tends to give the opinions of the locals respect and weight, allowing them to express their own interpretations of their environment. Although in the end the Vice crew (host, producer editors) are the ones who assemble together the interviews and create a representation based on their own perceptions, allowing heterogeneous people to speak provides a challenge to "Western" colonial discursive strategies.

Often the opinions of the local informants are treated as valid truth-claims even when they contradict established "Western" interpretations of reality. For example, in

"The Vice Guide to Liberia" host Shane Smith focuses a great deal of attention on three former Liberian warlords. These are individuals who were instrumental in the rape and gruesome murder of hundreds of thousands of people, and who have been portrayed as villainous monsters by international news organizations. In this context, it is at first slightly stunning for the viewer to watch Smith have an in-depth conversation with each of the warlords. Smith provides historical contextualization of the atrocities of their deeds through archival footage of terrifying acts of war, and thus does not condone their acts. However, Smith lets them speak without interjecting, speaking over or attacking the former warlords. This strategy allows for a more nuanced depiction of war than good versus evil, or in the case of the portrayal of Liberia evil versus evil. Instead of composing simplistic representations of these men, Smith composes a complex portrait of the former generals that represents them as social actors caught in a horrific reality, who are living with the legacy of their violence. Their humane portrayal is also a result of the informants' conscious efforts to portray themselves in a more positive light by asserting the horror of the context they were thrown into and their good actions after the war. This demonstrates the warlords' awareness of their image abroad, and an attempt to take control over their own representations.

Most notable is Smith's coverage of Joshua Blahyi, formerly the infamous General Butt Naked. Surprisingly, Blahyi is a charismatic, warm person who laughs and smiles a lot with the crew. Smith discusses his own confusion with the camera, situating these interviews and interactions alongside of footage from the war and Blahyi on trial admitting that his groups were responsible for the deaths of at least 20-thousand people. Blahyi speaks openly and remorsefully about his actions during the war, which included

training child soldiers, rape, murder, and cannibalism. Blahyi explains that he left the war after having a religious experience and becoming a born-again Christian, and that now he runs a mission to recuperate former child soldiers who were heavily traumatized by the war. He also takes Smith and the crew with him to church, and preaches to the congregation about redemption. Again, these are conscious efforts by a globally vilified warlord to recuperate his image. Towards the conclusion of the episode, Smith admits that he was drawn in by Blahyi's magnetism and actually started to genuinely like him. However, Smith prevents a neat and cozy resolution by reminding the audience that Blahyi was responsible for some of the worst human atrocities in recent decades, and that the people of Liberia live in an uneasy peace and face continued oppression. Through his representations of the warlords as complex and imperfect humans rather than mythically evil monsters, Smith challenges the distance that mainstream media coverage inserts between the West and unrest in Africa. The violent atrocities of war are not portrayed as natural consequences of the barbaric essence of the Liberian people, but rather as complicated, historical formations interwoven into legacies of colonialism and oppression.

Despite these intricate portrayals of informants in the episode, in two notable points in "The Vice Guide to Liberia" the inherent inequitable power relationship between the travel journalist and the locals is exacerbated by the extremities of poverty, and the boundaries become too great to overcome just by giving their voices equal weight. While covering the abject poverty in West Point, "the worst slum in Liberia," Smith encounters a twelve-year-old orphaned crack addict. The crew follows him as he gets high, and in a disturbing moment he talks nonchalantly about raping and robbing a

woman at gunpoint. The child is presented without commentary, leaving an ambiguous meaning that fluctuates between sympathy for the troubled orphan and disgust at his boasts about rape.

Later, Smith visits a brothel in West Point with a local journalist and talks to the women about their experience with oppression, in particular about the sexual misconduct of United Nations workers with small children. The interview is ended abruptly when one of the women begins to grow angry and shout demands at Smith for money, drawing the attention of others in the brothel. The crew is forced to quickly gather their things and flee from West Point for fear of being robbed.

Including these moments of uncomfortable and insurmountable inequities in the show is progressive, and might have been edited out or rationalized via voiceover in conventional journalism. However, the neutrality and total lack of analysis of these situations by the host misses an opportunity to draw attention to and thus destabilize the problematic power relations between the journalist and the subject. Smith's investigation of the processes and influences of poverty in West Point may have been enhanced with a self-reflexive commentary on the inescapability of these barriers of power and his own inability to place himself on an equal field with his subjects to truly understand their plight.

Despite frequent efforts to give weight to local voices, *The Vice Guide to Travel* also contains instances when the voices of the locals are not considered as authoritative (as in "The Prostitutes of God" that repeatedly dismisses what the informants say in interviews), or even are not heard at all. In "Last Dinosaur of the Congo" (2010), host Daniel Choe travels to the rainforest in the Congo in search of a legendary dinosaur

living deep in its recesses. During his trip, Choe interacts with numerous Africans, but only interviews two non-natives: a white American missionary and a white diplomat from the U.S. Embassy. The only time you hear an African speak is as untranslated background noise to Choe's voiceover narration about their actions. For instance, when Choe visits a village in the rainforest and participates in a ritual, the camera shows people talking amongst themselves and to Choe. But rather than allowing the audience to hear their actual voices, Choe condescendingly describes through voiceover the ritual as bizarre and backwards. In addition, Choe explicitly displays local Africans as objects to be observed rather than as subjects to interact with. The show begins with Choe in a hotel room playing bongo drums, while three naked African women dance on the bed behind him. The women are facing the opposite wall and the camera cuts them off at their necks, so the viewer is able to view the women only from their naked backs to their feet as they gyrate their hips behind Choe. Having nothing to do with the plot and positioned in the scene without any explanation as to their presence, the women act as props or decorations that symbolize the wildness and eroticism of a seductively exotic Africa. This is an overtly objectifying and misogynistic strategy of narrative construction that seems contrary to *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s overall objective.

DEMOGRAPHICAL LIMITS OF THE HOSTS

A crucial question in investigating travel journalism discourses is who speaks and for whom. Even work that is purposefully anti-imperialist must use the voice of authority that enables the speaker to explore, analyze and judge (Said, 1989; Spurr, 1993). It is problematic, then, if the speakers are disproportionately from a specific demographic, particularly if this demographic is historically situated as a dominant group in relation to

the people they analyze. This is the case in *The Vice Guide to Travel*, whose hosts are lopsidedly males of European descent from Western nations. Most of the hosts (fifteen) are European American[3] males, and only one episode, "The Vice Guide to Karachi," features a host who is not from a "Western" nation (Pakistani Basim Usmani). Vice co-founder Suroosh Alvi is a first generation Pakistani-American and does provide a unique perspective as the host, but is only featured in three episodes ("The Vice Guide to Karachi", "Mecca Diaries", and "The Gun Markets of Pakistan"). All other hosts come from the United Sates, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Scandinavia, and Germany. Of these, all but three are of European descent[4].

Additionally, all but three of the hosts are women, who host a total of four shows. British Sarah Harris and Australian Hannah Brooks host shows that are specifically about gender issues ("The Prostitutes of God" and "The Warias"). Brooks also hosts "Nimbin Mardi Grass" (2007), where she participates in a marijuana festival in Australia - not one of *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s more hard-hitting episodes. Finally, German Pella Kagerman co-hosts "The Radioactive Beasts of Chernobyl", in which she and Shane Smith travel to Chernobyl and encounter the desolation left by the nuclear meltdown in the 1980s. While this is an investigatory piece containing serious social commentary, Kagerman is seldom presented talking and serves as little more than a reserved straight-man sidekick for Smith. As these women are all of European descent, there is a total absence of women from "non-Western" races, ethnicities, cultures and nations.

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[3] From the United States and Canada.

[4] Although their ethnicity and race are never referred to, two of the hosts, American Daniel Choe and Australian Royce Akers, appear to be of Asian descent. One, American Derrick Beckles, appears to be multiracial. The latter is referenced to as belonging to people of "other colors" by Johnny Knoxville in reaction to his desire to meet former Nazis in Paraguay in "The Last Aryans of Paraguay."

This problematic under-representation of non-European and non-male hosts constructs a common standpoint for *The Vice Guide to Travel* as a whole that issues out of a "Western" male point of view. Although this perspective is self-critical and makes a continuous effort to question the status quo, it provides an incomplete interpretation of complex social realities that are experienced and understood differently according to dissimilar subject positions. Postmodern feminist theory suggests that more complete and just knowledge comes from a patchwork of "partial, locatable and critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (Harraway, 2008, p. 349). Applied to travel journalism, this calls for historical and localized viewpoints from diversely situated (through intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, etc.) social actors. Drawing exclusively from the voices of "Western" white males makes *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s goals of countercultural social critique difficult to achieve.

GOING NATIVE

David Spurr critiques the use of themes of "insubstantialization" (the seduction and danger of loosing oneself within "Other" cultures and peoples) as a manifestation of colonialist fears of European degeneration (1993). The allure of "going native" is connected to threats of moral and intellectual degradation by entering into the dark and primitive realms of the "Other", thus becoming a basis for the condemnation and segregation of indigenous peoples (Spurr, 1993). In travel journalism, this trope is apparent in narrative patterns of the protagonist traveler experiencing feelings of mental disorientation, or more materially in his or her experimentation with mind-altering substances (Spurr, 1993).

Throughout *The Vice Guide to Travel*, the hosts habitually compare their encounters with foreign practices, places and people to drug use. For example, in "The Vice Guide to Liberia" Shane Smith describes his growing fondness for former warlord Joshua Blahyi in terms of seduction and loss of self. When Smith accompanies Blahyi to church, he is handed the microphone and asked to say something to the congregation. Smith stumbling says:

> I just want to say thank you for having me in your church. Uh, praise God, and I'd like to say thank you to Joshua Blahyi for all the good work he's doing. And hopefully we can help, and hopefully we can show what we're doing here in Liberia, what you're [points to Blahyi] doing in Liberia, and we can help make it better and bring some more awareness to what's happening here. (Smith, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2010)

This optimistic monologue is oddly disconsonant with the snarky cynicism of most of *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s discourse. In a voiceover, Smith almost apologetically explains that he wasn't aware of what he was saying, comparing his state-of-mind as in a drug-like state: "at that point in the trip I felt like I was on acid."

The most overt use of the theme of insubstantialization is in "Last Dinosaur of the Congo" when Daniel Choe participates in a village ritual that involves imbibing a mysterious hallucinogenic drink. After drinking the unnamed beverage, Choe says in voiceover that it "puts him on his ass right away," then cuts to a shot of him saying to the camera: "Wow, I feel really crazy right now, huh?" During the subsequent montage of fast edits of dark, ambiguous, non sequitur images, Choe describes his feelings of trepidation as the ritual progresses. A shot of one of his pygmy guides dressed in branches and partaking in the ritual is paired with a voiceover of Choe's describing his fear that the guide was reading his mind. The scene is stylistically dramatized to create a

constructed atmosphere of intensity and disorientation. This effectively reaffirms colonial fears about the hazards of the dissolution of the "Western Self" through the act of "going native."

ABJECT PLACES AND PEOPLES

Themes of abjection of non-Western people and places are common in colonial travel discourses, which naturalize the suffering and poverty of indigenous peoples as due to inherent primitivism (Spurr, 1993). These characterizations of cultural inferiority explain abjection not as due to historical global legacies of political, social, and economic subjugation, but rather to an intrinsic inability for a culture to civilly govern oneself. While it is important for travel journalism not to replicate reductive sanitized portrayals of destinations conforming to packaged tourist images, it is also imperative that investigations into the oft-ignored poverty and despondency of marginalized populations be carefully historically situated.

The Vice Guide to Travel frequently visits the most destitute communities of the visited places, revealing appalling levels of abject standards of living. In "The Vice Guide to the Balkans", host Thomas Morton travels to a gypsy refugee camp in Kosovo to examine the injustice faced by gypsy populations. Historically contextualizing the camp within longstanding discrimination against gypsies exacerbated by the Kosovo War, Morton explains that the refugee camp's occupants have been forced into permanent residency. In particular, the show focuses on the pollution that has led to the camp's children suffering from the highest levels of lead poisoning in medical history. Critiquing the United Nations for its lack of aid, Thomas argues: "The whole deal

underscores the fact that, for all its rhetoric, the UN's not primarily a humanitarian organization, it's a political one."

This historicization of abjection recurs throughout *The Vice Guide to Travel*. In "The Vice Guide to Liberia", "The Vice Guide to Karachi", and "Gypsies of Sophia" (2007), Vice correspondents report on unsanitary conditions and their health implications within the context of global power relations. The covered communities' suffering is not represented as distant and endemic events, but rather as the result of a population being disenfranchised and internationally ignored. *The Vice Guide to Travel*'s treatment of desolate conditions in the "non-West" is a reformist effort to demonstrate the "West's" culpability in extreme forms of oppression.

THE HEART OF DARKNESS

A common colonial theme in travel discourse is the portrayal of a place as dark and hellish. This is materialized through descriptions of savagery, violence, and wild and mad behavior (Spurr, 1993). This serves to rationalize the civilizing influence of colonialism (or today the continued "Western" supervisory intervention) in the "non-West" (Spurr, 1993). The ultimate symbol of this depraved native character is the cannibal (Hall, 1992).

In "Vice Guide to Liberia", Shane Smith focuses predominantly on the legacy of the country's violent civil war. This becomes representationally problematic in the reality of a war full of gruesome and brutal acts, including the very real practice of cannibalism. The dilemma here is reporting on the very material fact of cannibalism that arose in war-torn Liberia without referring to a colonial system of meanings that constructs this act as evidence of an innate African savagery.

In trying to explain the enduring impacts of the extreme violence of the Liberian War, it is necessary for Smith to emphasize the atrocities committed. Smith does this largely by concentrating on cannibalism. This includes including horrifying descriptions of cannibalism from former warlord Joshua Blahyi, who at one point tells Smith that his child soldiers "would drain the blood from an innocent child and drink it before going into battle." The tales told by the former generals about their war crimes are reinforced with archival footage depicting acts of cannibalism. At one point, a young rebel holds a bloody heart up to the camera, explaining that it was the heart of a general and that he plans to eat it. The episode also includes unsettling shots of child rebels saying: "If I grab you, I will eat you…raw" and "It tastes like real meat. Eat it everyday."

Smith would not be able to accurately depict the violence of the war and its contemporary implications for Liberian society without addressing the grotesque acts of cannibalism that were integral parts of the fighting. However, this necessarily references oppressive colonialist tropes of savagery in describing "non-Western" cultures. Smith (and "Western" journalists in general) may here be at an impasse - how can you communicate something as destructive and gruesome as the Liberian Civil War without calling upon colonial systems of meaning? Although Smith's coverage of Liberia is historicized and situated globally, his descriptions of cannibalism and murder during the war recall colonial constructions of savagery. Spurr argues that in depicting scenes of death and dying in formerly colonized nations, the journalist colonizes the victims by transforming them into a symbol of the fatalistic tragedy of the "non-West" (1993). Is it then possible to report on death, murder and war without colonizing the people suffering? In the context of dealing with cannibalism, "The Vice Guide to Liberia" illustrates the

limits imposed by colonial discourse on contemporary meaning formation, and thus on the ability of journalists to produce anti-colonialist discourses.

While "The Vice Guide to Liberia" is a thoughtful episode that reverts to colonialist discourse due to entrenched meanings attached to savage violence, "Last Dinosaur of the Congo" is an episode that replicates patronizing representations of Africa without any self-reflexivity or attempt to question stereotypes. The episode follows host Daniel Choe as he travels to the Congo in search of a dinosaur rumored to be living in the rainforest. Colonial travel discourses have fabricated an image of Africa as the central location for "disease, moral disorder and spiritual darkness" (Spurr, 1993, p. 89). Daniel Choe appropriates this myth by introducing his destination through blatantly colonialist rhetoric: "The Congo is the heart of darkness. There's an area of thick, dense, untouched rainforest about the size of Florida. It's the only area that survived the last Ice Age, and it's the last place on earth believed to have living, breathing dinosaurs." Here, Choe connects Africa to a primordial past, positioning it as a dark and mysterious place ripe for exploration. He then sets up his experience by "describing it as a hell ride," and signifying his arrival in Africa with a shot of him in his hotel room surrounded by naked, dancing African women. These women are used as visual tokens of the savagery and unrestraint of Africa.

Later, Pygmy guides lead Choe through the jungle to a village near to the supposed location of the dinosaur. Choe narrates in voiceover his experiences at the village, where he participates in a ritual the villagers tell him will enable him to see the dinosaur. After drinking a hallucinogenic drink, Choe describes his experience during a montage of the villagers singing and dancing:

They did not stop. Not to take a break, not to eat, and they just kept going and they just kept going. And then, like some kind of dream or something, this thing just came out and…[shot of a person in a costume running out from the jungle] the people just screamed and it was obviously a dude dressed up in something. He had all these leaves and you know, they were either saying it was an evil spirit or he was the dinosaur. And I'm like, oh, I guess that's the dinosaur. And as fucked up as I was, I was believing it at the time. I felt like there was a whole in my stomach, I kept staring at my feet. I thought of eating my own face and I thought of eating my own feet. I thought I was fucked, I knew I was fucked, while I was fucked. Laying there, going shit, this is going to be really bad. (Choe, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel*, 2010)

At the end of the voiceover, the episode fades to black and then cuts to another montage of frightening images juxtaposed with quick and disorienting edits. It is no longer day, but dark night, and the villagers are dancing wildly and singing. There are shots of African torsos rhythmically moving and illuminated by a floodlight, and shots of fuzzy out-of-focus objects. A light pans across the dark, revealing groups of African children eerily staring at the camera. The man in costume runs chaotically through the dancing villagers, who are wildly dancing and singing. This montage constructs a nightmarish scene, recreating the "heart of darkness" theme described by colonialist writers.

The next day, the camera follows Choe as he swims in a lake near to where the dinosaur has been sighted. He complains to the camera:

It's been so long since I've eaten anything, or showered, or anyone's spoken any word of English. You have to really be careful when you're in the jungle, you have to always, like, cloud your thoughts, because you never know where there's going to be a sorcerer or Harry Potter-type pygmy ready to scionicly mind-fuck you. (Choe, quoted from *The Vice Guide to Travel,* 2010)

These concluding remarks reflect the Eurocentric and sexist tone Choe employed in representing Africa as a dark and forbidding place inhabited by savages.

Choe's construction of African villagers is so extremely condescending that it is possible that it is meant to be a satire ridiculing "Western" narratives of exploration into the "heart of darkness" in Africa. However, given Vice magazine's history of prurient topics, glorification of drug use, and objectification of women, it is more likely that "Last Dinosaur of the Congo" is meant to be shocking rather that ironic. This demonstrates that a counter-cultural text does not always equate to progressive or subversive discourses.

CONCLUSION

Can the travel journalist escape colonizing discourse when representing others? In encounters with foreign people and places, is there a way for a "Westerner" to construct representations that do not draw from Eurocentric colonial norms privileging the "West" and reinforcing artificial boundaries between the reductive imagined "hyperreal" (Chakrabarty, 1992) formations of the "West" and the "non-West"? As socially-situated beings, no individual can fully break away from the limits of established meaning systems, and in speaking will always produce discourse shaped by hegemonic norms and conventions embedded with inequitable power relations. Further, the narrative of the encounter with the "Other" will always be controlled primarily by the mobile culture. If the mobile culture is bound within meaning formations that are formulated on assumptions of the superiority of the "Self", it is doubtful that a member of the mobile culture can ever fully shed these assumptions and recuperate the "Other's" side meaningfully. But does this preclude us from challenging our own discursive practices from within? Although the "Western" journalist must represent other people and places based on his or her biases from his or her particular situation, this does not mean that the journalist cannot question these biases while speaking from them.

Critical theorists and scholars have produced a large body of work that provides evidence of the power of colonial discourses in producing Eurocentric travel writing and travel journalism. How, then, could the practice of travel journalism improve? Some suggest providing space for "Other" cultures and people to speak (Chakrabarty, 1992; Haraway, 2008; Pratt, 1992; Smith, 2008; Spurr, 1993). But in a global media environment that is overly saturated with media products from transnational companies with roots in the "West" (predominantly the United States), how can a "Western" journalist make room for others to speak? Some theorists suggest that if the "Western" journalist self-reflexively examines the discourse he or she uses, problematizes the authority with which he or she speaks, and contextualizes his or her text within inequitable power relations, the hegemony of colonial regimes of truth can be gradually and partially eroded (Fürsich, 2002, 2003; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Spurr, 1993). The producers and journalists of *The Vice Guide to Travel* attempt to use self-reflexive techniques, question their authority as speakers, and situate their coverage within global sociopolitical context. However, they also use problematic tropes that leave colonial assumptions (in particular in relation to themes of modernity versus tradition and gender issues) unquestioned, reinforcing troublesome representational practices and undermining their counter-hegemonic intentions.

Westwood and Radcliffe (1993) argue that it is not only important to deconstruct "Othering" discourse and provide spaces for the "Other" to speak, but also to consider how this deconstruction will shape the way these spaces will be constructed. The spaces opened for "Others" must be critically investigated with awareness that this space exacts parameters on what is said and how it can be communicated (Westwood & Radcliffe,

1993). This is not only true for scholarly work, but also for journalistic work like *The Vice Guide to Travel*. The Vice producers and journalists challenge norms of Eurocentric discourses about "Other" cultures, but they also delineate new methods of speaking about heterogeneous people that are similarly limiting. It is jeopardous, then, when the producers and journalists from *The Vice Guide to Travel* speak with misogynistic undertones and unquestioningly use colonial discursive assumptions (such as binaries between modernity and tradition and characterizations of Africa as the "heart of darkness").

Throughout the series, the producers and journalists of *The Vice Guide to Travel* use narrative strategies and representational techniques that effectively challenge norms of mainstream "Western" travel journalism. A common thread in the series is the use of honesty and transparency about the limited knowledge of the host. By bringing the host's situated perspective and limited knowledge to the attention of the audience, the series creates a subversive pattern that questions Eurocentric journalistic tendencies of speaking with an all-knowing, universal voice. The topics are also more often than not purposefully situated within global power relations, and in certain instances the hosts point to the culpability of "Western" nations and institutions in the abjection witnessed by the audience (for example, describing Liberia's colonial history with the United States and reproaching the United Nations for the continued marginalization of gypsy populations). Contextualizing the covered location within a web of global relations unsettles hegemonic assumptions that "Western" intervention and forces of modernity have exclusively ameliorating effects. Overall, the self-reflexive and open-ended methods used in producing *The Vice Guide to Travel* cogently question universalized colonialist

interpretations of global relationships by acknowledging that there is no single transcendent and true reading of reality. By investigating oft-ignored elements of a toured culture and situating the people and places within a historicized sociopolitical and economic context, the series challenges standard representational strategies in travel journalism that effectively homogenize and essentialize diverse subjects as "Other". Through its overall emphasis on hybridity and depictions of agency in its informants, the series is able to challenge dominant travel discourses that package cultures as authentic commodities to be consumed. The Vice producers' and journalists' use of satire enables the series to ridicule tyrannical leaders, cultural stereotypes, and injustice, inviting its viewers to critically scrutinize structures of oppression throughout the world.

However, the show remains not bound solely by the perimeters of colonial discursive formations, but also by the limits from its very particular point of view. The hosts for *The Vice Guide to Travel* are disproportionately "Western" white males, with very few individuals who are "non-Western", female, or any ethnicity or race other than white. The complete absence of "non-Western", non-white females is conspicuous, and a surprising oversight by a company with offices across the world and websites for 21 nations other than the United States. Is this lack in diversity of hosts merely a gross pretermission by a company that purports to speak to a heterogeneous global youth audience? Or could it be a purposeful marketing decision chosen to appeal to the same audience that gave *Vice* magazine and Vice.com a cult-like following of hip urbanites? As I have not personally spoken with any of the producers from VBS, I cannot authoritatively speculate as to their choices. Nonetheless, the hosts of *The Vice Guide to Travel* remain glaringly white, male and from the "West", giving the show certain biases

implicit in speaking exclusively from such a particularly situated perspective. The result

is that the producers of *The Vice Guide to Travel* are crafting travel narratives intended

for an audience like themselves, which leaves deficiencies that allow for the replication

of colonialist and sexist representations in its coverage.

Although the show has a few instances of thoughtfully conducted investigations into

gender, ethnic and race issues, its overall utilization of a white, "Western" male

viewpoint alienates viewers who do not belong to this group. This exclusionary tendency

also causes the series to recreate the colonialist myth of the "non-West" being impeded

by its traditionalism and backwardness from procuring the benefits of modern expansion.

Additionally, the masculine tone of the overall series objectifies and alienates women in

ways that reinforce gender-based power imbalances. Because the series deals with

women (and alternative genders) from postcolonial nations predominantly in the context

of sex work ("Prostitutes of God", "Warias", "Vice Guide to Liberia", "House of the

Setting Sun"), *The Vice Guide to Travel* replicates colonialist representational practices

that deal with women in relation to their sexualized bodies.

If *The Vice Guide to Travel* were to actively include hosts from various ethnic and

racial backgrounds, women, alternative sexualities, and countries of origin, the show

might be able to achieve more in its efforts to uproot the status quo. Incorporating

diversely situated individuals as producers and hosts may enable the series to open spaces

not just for counter-hegemonic representations, but also for voices that come from

outside the "Western" white male norm in mainstream journalism.

The Vice Guide to Travel contains both colonial and counter-hegemonic discourses,

indicating that its producers are experimenting with the genre of travel journalism in

ways that begin challenge the hegemony of colonial discourse on the "Other". As it is, the series moves towards subversion without ever fully challenging the assumptions of the status quo. Although the Vice producers and journalists situate their topics in global politics, they often fail to implicate themselves as citizens of imperialistic nations (the United States, Great Britain, etc.) and as consumers in a neoliberal global economy that exacerbates postcolonial marginalization. Perhaps if they were to emphasize the culpability of themselves and the audience in the oppressive conditions *The Vice Guide to Travel* covers, the hegemonic superiority of the "West" could be more successfully displaced. However, this strategy of willfully unsettling its audiences may not be feasible due to its commercial inviability.

While *The Vice Guide to Travel* demonstrates an auspicious attempt at confronting hegemonic colonial notions of global relations and formerly colonized people and cultures, it does not entirely fulfill its ambitious goal of providing a counter-cultural discourse for a global audience. By using mainstream notions of modernity and tradition and speaking from a supposedly neutral white "Western" male voice, *The Vice Guide to Travel* reinforces Eurocentric discursive norms and biases. If the Vice producers and journalists were to attempt to upset colonial norms by questioning modernity and their own culpability in postcolonial oppression, as well as endeavor to incorporate diversified speakers, perhaps *The Vice Guide to Travel* could come closer to becoming a potent subversive travel journalism text.

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