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Sociospatial Sublimation: The Human Resources of Love in Sandals Resorts International, Jamaica

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Interactions between visitors and workers are central to tourism. In the Global South, this relationship usually consists of the spatial concentration and division of people with vastly contrasting economic resources and cultural identities. Research on the commodification of tourism in the Global South, then, focuses on the uneasy confluence of poor and dependent service workers who labor so that wealthy and privileged tourists can enjoy. Drawing on the work of Slavoj Žižek, this article argues that the current approaches to these interactions, although exposing the capitalist “contents” concealed behind tourism’s alluring commodity form, fail to examine the “secrets” of the form itself; that is, the enjoyment generated between workers and tourists. As a result, researchers have yet to fully explain how—with all its socioeconomic contradictions of smiles and servility, luxury and poverty—the commodity form of tourism in the Global South endures. To elaborate my argument, I use Jacques Lacan’s concept of sublimation and an organizational ethnography of the all-inclusive hotel company Sandals Resorts International, headquartered in Jamaica. I explore two ways through which sublimation, a place- and value-making activity par excellence, informs the commodified interactions between Sandals service workers and tourists: first, how management discourses “elevate” workers to the “place of the Thing”—a place that radiates sublime enjoyment; second, how workers avoid the dangers of overwhelming guests with too much enjoyment by following the practices of “love-sublimation” codified in the fantasies of “Guest Courtesy” and “The Sandals Customer Service Checklist.” *Key Words:* enjoyment, Jamaica, sublimation, tourism, work.

游客和旅游业工人之间的相互作用关系对旅游业是至关重要的。在全球化的南方国家，这种关系通常包括具有经济资源和文化身份巨大反差的人们在特定空间上的集聚。因此，对全球化南方国家旅游商品化的研究重点是这种令人不安的汇聚点，即贫困和靠人生活的服务业工人的劳作使得富人和特权游客得以享乐。基于斯拉沃热·齐泽克的研究，本文认为，目前对这种互动的研究方法，虽然揭露了隐蔽于旅游业具有吸引力的商品形式背后的资本主义“内容”，却未能调查清楚形式本身的“秘密”，也就是旅游业工人和游客所生产的享受。因此，研究人员还不能完全解释在全球化南方国家的旅游商品形式，伴随着微笑和奴性，奢华与贫穷等等社会经济矛盾，何以能够如此持久。为了阐述我的论点，我以国际凉鞋度假村，一个总部设在牙买加的酒店集团为例，使用了雅克·拉康的升华概念和组织人种论进行了分析研究。我试验了两种方法，借助这些方法，堪比出类拔萃的一个地方和价值创造活动得以升华，构成凉鞋度假村服务人员和游客之间的商品化相互作用：首先，管理部门如何表述“提升”工人们到“享乐之所”，一个散发出高尚享受的特殊地方；其次，服务人员如何避免因遵守那些被整理为“待客礼仪”和“拖鞋度假村客户服务手册”之类的空想原则，实现“爱升华”的实践，而对游客给与过多享乐的危险。*关键词：*享受，牙买加，升华，旅游，工作。

Las interacciones entre visitantes y trabajadores son un tema central para el turismo. En el Sur Global, esta relación usualmente consiste en la simultánea concentración espacial y división de gente con recursos económicos e identidades culturales vastamente contrastados. Entonces, la investigación sobre la commodificación del turismo en el Sur Global, se enfoca sobre la incómoda confluencia de empleados de servicios pobres que trabajan para que los turistas ricos y privilegiados puedan pasarla de maravilla. Basándonos en el trabajo de Slavoj Žižek, en este artículo se arguye que los actuales enfoques sobre estas interacciones, aunque exponen el “contenido” capitalista que va oculto detrás de la forma de mercadería seductora como se ofrece el turismo, falla en examinar los “secretos” de la propia forma; esto es, el goce generado entre trabajadores y turistas. Es por eso por lo que los investigadores todavía tienen que explicar de manera total cómo perdura en el Sur Global esta forma de turismo comercial—con todas sus contradicciones socioeconómicas de sonrisas y servilismo, lujo y pobreza. Para elaborar mi argumento, me baso en el concepto de sublimación de Jacques Lacan y en una etnografía organizacional de la ponderada compañía hotelera Sandals Resorts International, situada en Jamaica. Exploro dos rutas a través de las cuales la sublimación—por excelencia, actividad fabricadora de lugar y valor—ilustra la interacción comodificada entre los trabajadores de servicios de Sandals y los turistas: primero, cómo se “eleva” a los empleados con discursos sobre

manejo al “lugar de la Cosa”—un lugar que irradia goce sublime; segundo, cómo deben evitar los empleados los peligros de saturar a los huéspedes con demasiado goce siguiendo las prácticas de “amor-sUBLIMACIÓN” codificadas en las fantasías de “Cortesía para el Huésped” y la “Lista de Servicio al Cliente de Sandals.” *Palabras clave:* *placer, Jamaica, sublimación, turismo, trabajo.*

The sign shown in Figure 1 is located near the Human Resources Office in the Jamaican all-inclusive hotel Sandals Negril Beach Resort & Spa Resort (hereinafter Sandals Negril). The sign’s aphorism, originally coined by former Tupperware Plastics Co. Vice-President Brownie Wise, might strike us as rather odd. Unlike the conventional saccharine management discourses that appeal to workers’ self-interests exemplified by corporate Successories® “motivational products” that declare “TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More” and “Opportunity is around every corner,” the sign candidly promotes disavowal. That is to say, the sign urges workers to obey the following directive: “I know very well that my life and job is difficult, but all the same I will sing.” Even more peculiar is the sign’s glorification of a masochistic “economy of passions” (Amin and Thrift 2004, xxvi) whereby Sandals Negril’s workers are instructed to convert their pain into pleasure. As if to temper the unsavory consequences of workers’ masochistically acting out, just around the corner, adjacent to the entrance to the guest area, boldly beams a gigantic yellow smiley face emblazoned with the following appeal: “Put This on for Everyone.” This sign, however, is even more bizarre than the first. What could be a greater impediment to happy smiles than a harsh injunction to smile?

These tense and sprawling paradoxes of pleasure and pain, duty and joy, are central to what Žižek (1994) called the “metastases of enjoyment.” Blending the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan with the dialectical-materialist theories of Marx and Hegel, Žižek (2002), alongside many other Lacanian social theorists (e.g., see Copjec 1994; T. Dean 2000; Salecl 2000; Declercq 2006; Stavrakakis 2007; Glynos 2008), asserted that enjoyment is a crucial yet neglected “political factor” that infuses the social spaces of, for example, ideology (Žižek 1989), nationalism (Žižek 1994), religion (Žižek 2005b), commodification (Žižek 1997), violence (Žižek 2008), and financial meltdowns (Žižek 2009).

Briefly, enjoyment is Žižek’s translation of what Lacan calls *jouissance*: a fundamental and multifaceted concept in Lacanian psychoanalysis that is based on Freud’s notion of “libido” and Marx’s notion of “surplus-value” (Lacan 1998; see also Zupančič 2006; Kingsbury 2008). There are three key and counterintuitive aspects of a Lacanian understanding of enjoyment. First,

enjoyment cannot be equated to happiness. Enjoyment is a surplus remainder (Žižek also uses the terms *stain*, *smear*, and *by-product*) of what Lacan calls the “Real”: a dimension of socio-psychical life that constantly menaces and threatens to dissolve (e.g., via anxiety or enjoyment) what Lacan calls the “Symbolic”; that is, discursive worlds of rules, manners, and language, each composed of differential units, as well as what Lacan calls the “Imaginary,” or illusory, domains of misrecognition of a secure sense of an embodied self or “ego,” idealized or dreaded imagined scenarios, as well as rivalries or compacts with other people. Consequently, enjoyment is an obdurate yet fleeting, exquisite yet threatening, agonizing pleasure comparable to “an excessive quantity of excitation” (Evans 1996, 148). Second, enjoyment is not an intangible psychological phenomenon that takes place inside individuals’ heads. Rather, enjoyment is “embodied, materialized, in the effective functioning of the social field” (Žižek 1989, 36) in ways that consolidate and divide social groups through modes of rapture, antagonism, and sacrifice. The problem with enjoyment is not that we can’t get enough of it but rather that we can’t escape its onerous bombardments. Finally, and related to the previous point, enjoyment is not a wholly random or spontaneous phenomenon. Whereas Freud (1961) theorized how social relations emerged from the superego’s (the socio-psychical voice of conscience) prohibitions of enjoyment, Lacan (2007) contended that capitalist



Figure 1. Promoting disavowal in Sandals Negril. Source: Author.

social relations were bonded through the superego's injunctions to "Enjoy!" that promise yet ultimately deprive people of enjoyment and satisfaction (see also McGowan 2004). The superego's commandment to "Enjoy!" is cruel, obscene, and senseless because it is an "agency of law exempted from its authority: It does what it prohibits us from doing" (Žižek 1991, 159).

The main thesis of this article is that a Lacanian theory of enjoyment in social bonds, by challenging the usual understandings of enjoyment in tourism as an unproblematic, desirable psychological phenomenon relevant only to tourists (see Kingsbury 2005), can enhance our understandings of commodification in tourism. For some readers, especially those used to critical political economic approaches to commodification, a psychoanalytic approach to tourism in Jamaica might seem dubious. Let me briefly address these concerns at the outset. A psychoanalytic approach to tourism does not sidestep questions about the harsh socioeconomic realities in Jamaica or elsewhere but rather (echoing ideology critique) inquires into "how something like 'reality' constitutes itself in the first place" (Žižek 2006, 3). Put differently, if tourism repeatedly generates harsh realities of poverty, sexism, racism, and so on, then Lacanian psychoanalysis asks this: *Why* should and *how* can such stubborn and harmful realities (or symptoms of the Real) return with such regularity throughout tourism's many diverse geographical and historical (symbolic and imaginary) contexts? Moreover, psychoanalysis alerts us to the psychical returns or intangible payments of enjoyment that structure and (re)produce exploitative social bonds. The racial and colonial inscriptions of enjoyment and servility informed, for example, a 1968 Jamaican Tourist Board advertisement of Jamaican villas that were "[e]quipped with gentle people named Ivy or Maud or Malcolm who will cook, tend, mend, diaper, and launder you. Will 'Mister Peter, please' you all day long, pamper you with homemade coconut pie, admire you when you look 'soft' [handsome], giggle at your jokes and weep when you leave" (quoted in Pattullo 1996, 151). Although some modes of psychoanalytic inquiry are rightly criticized for advancing the power and knowledge for and by its predominantly white, straight, male, Northern, bourgeois, imperial, colonial, and even racist proponents (e.g., see Deleuze and Guattari 1983; Brenkman 1993; Derrida 1998; Nast 2000), psychoanalysis is invaluable because its proponents write against and beyond such hegemonies (e.g., Fanon 1967; Theweleit 1989; Bhabha 1994; Copjec 1994; T. Dean 2000; Plotkin 2002). To be sure, this article is just one among many other psychoanalytic

accounts of the uneven and unequal power structures in (post)colonial social economies such as tourism in the Global South (see McKlinton 1995; MacCannell 1996; Lane 1998).¹

Drawing on an "organizational ethnography" (Del Casino et al. 2000) conducted during the summer of 2002 that consisted of structured and semistructured interviews, participant observation, as well as discourse analyses of documents and the built environment, this article investigates where, how, and why enjoyment helps inform the commodification of interactions between service workers and tourists in one of the largest tourism corporations in the Caribbean: Sandals Resorts International (hereafter Sandals), which is composed of fourteen all-inclusive hotels located throughout the Caribbean.² My organizational ethnography of Sandals consisted of daily visits to Sandals Negril, weekly visits to other Sandals properties such as Sandals Inn, weekly participation in Sandals's community outreach programs (e.g., food and drink donations to children in an infirmary), and weekly visits to its corporate headquarters based in Montego Bay. I tape-recorded and transcribed (or took extensive notes whenever recording was not permissible or possible) a total of ninety-eight formal and informal interviews that varied in length from ninety minutes to ninety seconds. Interview subjects included upper level managers, waste disposal workers in Sandals Negril, Sandals and non-Sandals tourists, locals employed by tourism, and locals vehemently opposed to tourism, as well as Sandals's operations.³

Sandals's all-inclusive hotels with their enclave-style gates and patrolled perimeter walls are an integral part of tourism in the Caribbean (Pattullo 1996; Sheller 2003; Potter et al. 2004; Pugh and Momsen 2006). I focus on two interrelated spaces of commodified enjoyment in Sandals: first, management's planning discourses that are coordinated by the Sandals Training and Development Institute (STDI); and second, workers' interactions with tourists as part of what Britton (1991) called the "dual position" of workers who are both providers of labor services and part of the consumed product.

To explore these overlapping spaces of work and enjoyment, I draw on Lacan's notion of sublimation. Sublimation can help address MacCannell's (2002, 146) observation that the "[f]actors that motivate tourist desire are mysterious and illusive, even to the tourists themselves. We know little about what it is that tourists consume." In addition, sublimation can help tackle the paucity of research on the factors that incite workers' desire in tourism.⁴ Echoing the dual position of workers,

sublimation mainly consists of the dual movement of, on the one hand, the “elevation” to what Lacan (1992, 140) called the “place of the Thing”; that is, a psychosocial place that is permeated with intense enjoyment and, on the other hand, the “condescension” (Lacan 1963) from the heady dangers of enjoying too much to the more mannered; that is, “humanized” realms of desire. Sublimation overcomes the problem of idealism that lurks in Britton’s depiction of the workers’ dual position. For Britton (1991, 459), workers’ “personal qualities” and the “quality of service” are elements that “cannot be reduced to tangible elements.” Lacan’s concept of sublimation, however, by affirming the material and sociospatial dimensions of enjoyment, love, and desire, provides insight into how personal and service qualities are eminently tangible; that is, embodied and enacted as part of the commodity form. Given its unparalleled theoretical inquiries into the uneasiness inherent in loving, as well as the Jamaican Tourism Board’s motto “One Love” and Sandals’s company mission of “striv[ing] to keep the romance in our resorts,”⁵ which are advertised as places “Where Love is All You Need,” psychoanalysis is more than capable of enhancing our understandings of the commodification of tourism in Jamaica.

To elaborate my argument, the structure of the article is as follows. In the first section, I provide background on Sandals and its role in shaping Caribbean and Jamaican tourism. In the next section, I evaluate the literature on the commodity form of tourism in the Caribbean. Here, I critique the pervasive assumption in tourism studies that states workers’ “personal qualities” and “quality of service” are intangible. I then outline how Žižek’s spatial rethinking of the commodity fetishism can allow us to go beyond these theoretical shortcomings. The third and main section explores what I call *sociospatial sublimation*, a process that consists of, on the one hand, management discourses that “elevate” workers to the “place of the Thing”—a place that radiates sublime enjoyment; and, on the other hand, workers’ attempts to avoid the dangers of overwhelming guests with too much enjoyment by following the practices of “love-sublimation” codified in the fantasies of Guest Courtesy and the Sandals Customer Service Checklist. I conclude by discussing the tangible paradoxes of the Real on and off the shores of Jamaica.

Sandals Resorts International

Founded in 1981, Sandals is a privately owned, all-inclusive hotel company headquartered in Montego

Bay, Jamaica. The company consists of fourteen beach-side Sandals resorts on the islands of Jamaica (seven), St. Lucia (three), Cuba (two), Antigua (one), and the Bahamas (one; see Figure 2). Described by Sandals’s white Jamaican-born founder and current Chairman, Gordon “Butch” Stewart (a prominent figure in Caribbean tourism and owner of numerous Jamaican companies, including Air Jamaica), as a “straight case of niche marketing,”⁶ Sandals caters to “Two People in Love” or adult couples with “Luxury Included” vacations and “Weddingmoon” packages that enable them to get married and honeymoon on its properties.⁷ With room rates ranging from US\$267 to US\$1,460 per night,⁸ Sandals markets itself as a place “Where Love Is All You Need and Everything Else Is Included” and as an “ultra-inclusive,” whereby guests staying at one resort get full access and privileges to all the other Sandals resorts. Sandals also owns four Beaches all-inclusive family resorts that are separate from Sandals hotels and cater to couples, singles, and families.

Sandals has profoundly influenced the form and magnitude of tourism in the Caribbean (Pattullo 1996; Issa and Jayawardena 2003). During the early 1980s, in response to widespread civil unrest in Jamaica, Sandals and its competitor Super Clubs invented and refined the concept of the all-inclusive hotel. These guarded resorts where the cost of unlimited food and drink, accommodation, entertainment, airport transfers, and gratuities are all prepaid and included in the total cost of the vacation have become extremely successful because they give visitors a sense of both security and luxury (Momsen 2005; Kingsbury 2006; see Figure 3). Considered a crucial innovation in the Caribbean hotel sector, the all-inclusive vacation is now emulated throughout the Caribbean and the world (Pattullo 1996). In 2006, Sandals had a total of 2,292 rooms and suites in Jamaica and approximately 7,600 nonunionized employees located throughout the Caribbean. Sandals’s annual operating budget is in excess of US\$300 million and it regularly attracts approximately half a million guests each year. With year-round occupancy rates of nearly 90 percent and a repeat-guest factor of 40 percent, Sandals is considered one of the most successful companies in the highly competitive Caribbean all-inclusive market. Sandals has a long-standing reputation among international tourism corporations for its relatively high wages, high levels of employee satisfaction, and low employee turnover rate in the Jamaican tourism industry (Stone 1991; Kingsbury 2006). Sandals’s commitment to its employees is part of its corporate mission statement that aims to

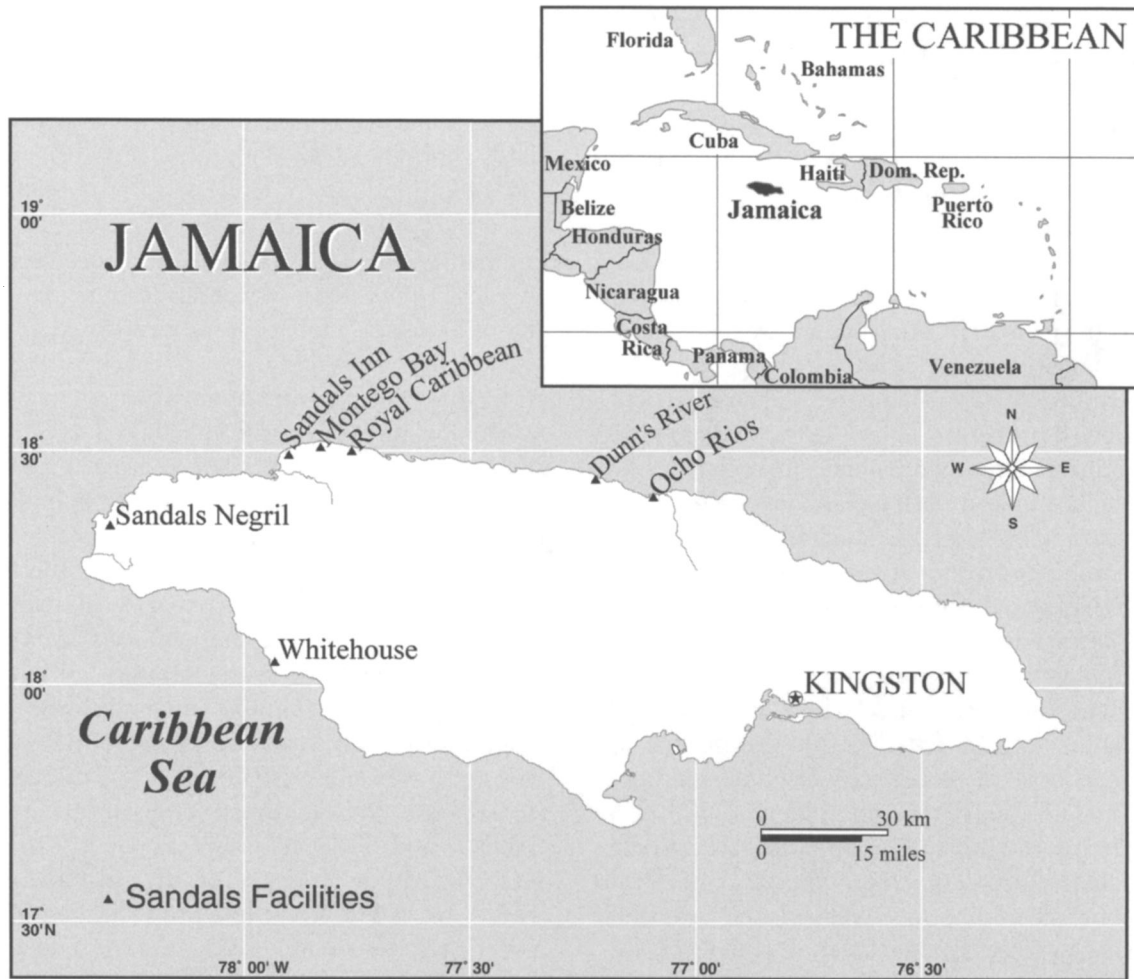


Figure 2. The location of Sandals hotels in Jamaica. *Source:* Dick Gilbreath, Center for Cartography and Geographic Information, University of Kentucky and John Ng, Department of Geography, Simon Fraser University.

offer the ultimate Caribbean vacation experience by innovatively, reliably and consistently providing the safest and highest quality services and facilities to guests, while attaching a premium to our human resources and being amongst the most environmentally responsible and community friendly groups in the hospitality industry.

The mission statement's reference to the socioenvironmental components of its business is not incidental. Sandals exemplifies one of the most recent and important transformations in international tourism: the adoption and adaptation of alternative (i.e., ecologically sustainable and socially responsible) policies and practices by commercial mass tourism corporations. In 1998, Sandals Negril became the first all-inclusive hotel in the world to be certified to the Green Globe 21 Company Standard for its environmental policies, management, and operations.⁹ According to Richard May, Sandals's Group Director of Environmental Af-

fairs, Sandals Negril's acquisition of the Green Globe certification posed major difficulties for management to familiarize its employees with the concept and practices of sustainability. Sandals overcame these challenges by educating its staff about sustainability through the creation of a "Green Team" as part of the STDI—the department charged with managing and training all employees. By 2008, all fourteen Sandals resorts had received Green Globe certification.

The Sandals Training and Development Institute

The Green Team's strategies to cultivate green employees and green thinking were informed by and integrated into previously established labor management schemes coordinated by STDI (see also Jabbour and Santos 2006). The STDI, founded by Sandals's current Group Director of Training Dr. Ben Henry, consists



Figure 3. Sandals Inn, Montego Bay. Source: Author.

of thirty partnerships with Jamaican and international training institutions and is widely considered to be one of the most comprehensive human resource development programs of any corporate entity in the Caribbean. According to Henry, between 2002 and 2007, the company invested US\$30 million in employee training programs. Today, nearly 10 percent of Sandals employees are enrolled in diploma, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. Each year, all employees are required to complete a minimum of 120 hours of training related to their particular job function. In addition, following the Sandals Quality Advantage Program, supervisors and managers are required to allocate fifteen minutes of each working day to discuss one of the Sandals customer service basics with their staff. According to the *Sandals & Beaches Team Members' Handbook* (2003; hereafter *Handbook*), the goal of STDI is to ensure that its "current and future workforce has skills, knowledge and attitudes to provide internationally competitive service.

Systems (e.g., standards, training, and certification) are in place to support job creation, career development, and lifelong learning" (3). Sandals states that it invests in human resources because the "reasons are simple: a thoroughly professional Sandals workforce will ensure quality service delivery and therefore satisfied guests at our hotels. This in turn will mean a healthier Sandals" (*Handbook* 2003, 24).

The STDI, like other staff training and human resources facilities in Caribbean tourism and other tourist sites throughout the world, is a crucial site for the (re)production of planning discourses such as "sustainable development" and the formation of identities such as "green employees." Yet there is a paucity of research on the planning and labor management cultures in Caribbean tourism (but see Baldacchino 1997; Baum 2006) and other developing countries (Liu and Wall 2006). In addition, in-depth theoretical and empirical examinations of how labor is commodified

in Caribbean tourism corporations are extremely rare.

Beyond the Intangible Coalface of Tourism

But the idea that the surface is the level of the superficial is itself dangerous . . . for it is on the surface that depth is seen, as when one's face breaks out in pimples on holidays. (Lacan 2002, 229)

Studies on tourism in the Caribbean, as well as other regions in the Global South, frequently view tourism as a phenomenon haunted by and hemmed in a series of unbending binaries: paradise–hell (Taylor 1993), love–money (Pruitt and Lafont 1995), problems–prospects (Milne and Ewing 2004), and pious hope–Trojan horse (Butler 1990).¹⁰ Most researchers argue that these contradictions emerge from capitalistic commodity fetishism; that is, processes that attempt to hide (e.g., via aestheticization) social relations of exploitation. Thus some researchers have called for studies that can “get behind these surface appearances and unveil the fetishism of the commodities . . . the fetishistic ‘mist’ that enshrouds, masks and objectifies labour” (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 67).

The calls to “get behind the veil” (Harvey 1990, 423) contrast with the work associated with the “new geographies of consumption” (Goss 2004) that favor (following Taussig 1992) “getting with the fetish” (see Goss 1999; Jackson 2002; Cook 2004; Cook, Crang, and Thorpe 2004). The latter studies do not dismiss commodity fetishism as mere ideological illusion but rather seek to affirm and understand the importance of the social work of commodity fetishism. To get with the fetish is to acknowledge that Marx's notion of fetishism does not simply imply an analytical strategy of unveiling (Goss 2004). Also, the veil is not a homogenous entity: It is “prone to mundane rupture and recombination in the everyday lives of consumers and business personnel” (Cook, Crang, and Thorpe 2004, 174). Although recent studies of tourism acknowledge the complexities of fetishism in tourism by exploring the landscaped, embodied, and performed activities in tourism (Crouch and Desforges 2003; Sheller and Urry 2004; Cartier and Lew 2005; Goss 2005), few studies attempt to get with the fetishism of labor in tourism.

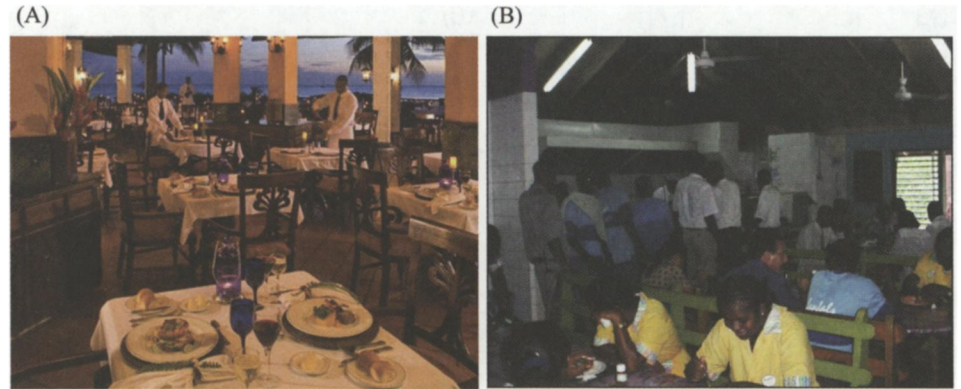
Many spaces of fetishism of labor in tourism are composed of interactions between service workers and tourists. These spaces comprise what Mowforth and Munt (2003, 63) called the “coalface of tourism: the relationship between tourists and those they are visit-

ing.” For Mowforth and Munt, conventional political economy analyses of tourism *qua* empiricist studies of international airlines, tour operators, and hotel chains have blinded commentators to the study of this fundamental relationship in tourism. Yet Mowforth and Munt's (2003, 63) description of this relationship as the “helpful, smiling and servile tourism class, serving the interests and economic preferences of business and local elites” does little to disrupt binary thinking or diminish the obscurity of a coalface that ostensibly consists of gloomy servility and spurious smiles.

The smile is arguably the tourism fetish insofar as it deceitfully conceals the dirty secrets of socioeconomic hardship. The conviction that the truth of tourism is located behind a smiling commodity form informs many studies on Caribbean tourism. For example, Gmelch's (2003) study, *Behind the Smile*, is “an inside look at the world of Caribbean tourism—specifically Barbados—as seen through the working lives of twenty men and women” (emphasis added; see also Ness 2003). Significant socioeconomic disparities certainly do exist between workers and tourists in the Caribbean, but conceptualizing this relationship as merely one-sided is problematic. Such an approach evinces a “failure of dialectical thinking” (Goss 1999, 48) insofar as it risks “arrogating . . . a privileged understanding” (Goss 1999, 49) of labor in tourism as something that is entirely manipulated and superficial.¹¹ Workers might smile in servility, but money or power cannot always be the sole determinants for people going to work because the “intrinsic quality of the work itself and the social relationships of the workplace” (Sayer 1997, 21) are also significant. And, in the context of the Caribbean, “even menial hotel work [with its] pleasant air-conditioned environment . . . may be more attractive and pleasurable (and possibly safer) than the conditions of work in field or factory” (Momsen 2005, 213).

When studies do take smiles seriously, the smile usually dissolves into an intangible entity that resists and forfeits empirical and theoretical analysis. Exemplary here is Britton's (1991) groundbreaking article on the geography of the “capitalistic nature” of tourism. Britton noted that in tourism the “problem for labour lies in the fact that many tourism products involve the production and consumption of social experiences; these cannot be reduced just to tangible elements” (459). According to Britton (1991, 460), the intangible elements are as important as physical labor and consist of the “behaviour,” “personal qualities,” and “quality of service” of the “waiter, room service person, tour guide, or steward” that are codified in “[m]anagerial expertise

Figure 4. Advertisement of Sandals Negril's main Bayside restaurant versus workers' Penthouse rooftop café. Source: <http://www.sandals.com/index.cfm> (last accessed 2 February 2009) and author.



and systems of staff training, which in turn determine all the intangible qualities of the 'experience' associated with the brand name." Britton noted, however, that we know very little about this so-called intangibility.

Aligning the fetishism of labor in tourism with superficial and intangible processes is inadequate because it equates the truth of a space with what is concealed. This interpretative procedure falls into the fetishistic trap of revealing the content of truth hidden behind by a form, in this case the commodity form of tourism. In short, this approach reduces "form to the essence, to the hidden kernel" (Žižek 1989, 15). The reduction of form to essence is a conventional maneuver in studies of fetishism in tourism. Using the empirical example of Sandals Negril, such studies would aim to reveal how lavish guest restaurants, which realize surplus value, hide cramped "backstages" that reproduce workers' exploitation and alienation (Figure 4); how a

giant shrub, which consists of digital pixels and sits in the corner of a desolate (read private) beach, airbrushes and blinds brochure readers to the harsh realities of local craft vendors (Figure 5); and how superficial sustainable practices such as sandbagging, which aims to prevent beach erosion, hide or "green wash" the hotel's negative environmental impacts including beach erosion caused by drainage pipes (Figure 6).

This approach might succeed in making visible Sandals's contradictions (although many are already clearly visible to workers and tourists), but it cannot explain why the work that makes up the tourism product of Sandals Negril "assumed the form of the value of a commodity, why it can affirm its social character only in the commodity-form of its product" (Žižek 1989, 11). In other words, why, despite all the socioeconomic and environmental problems, does the commodity form of tourism with its juxtapositions of smiles and

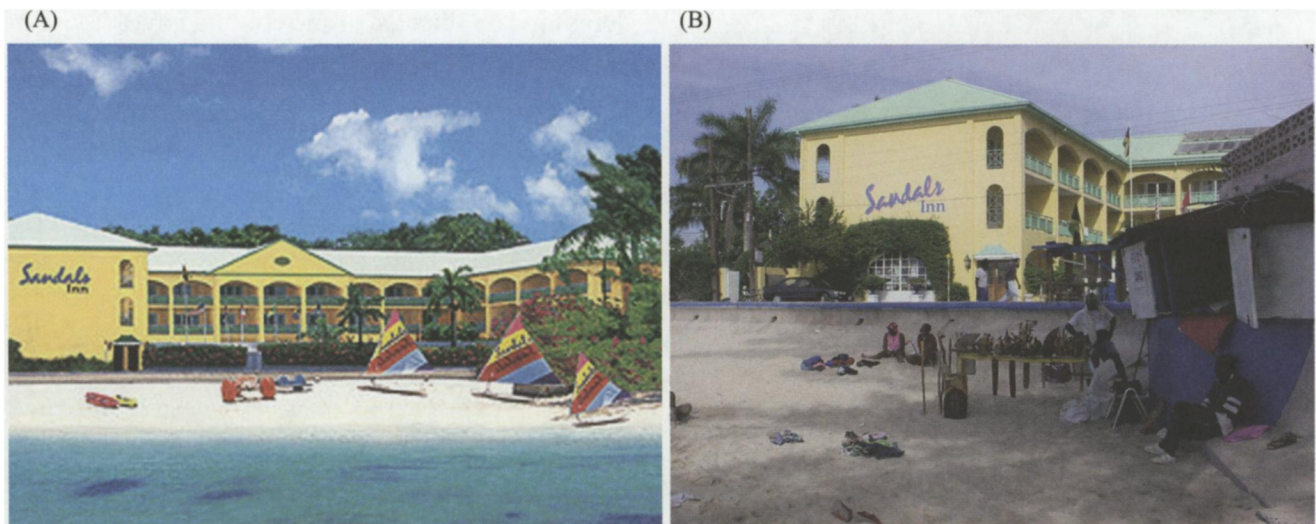


Figure 5. Advertisement of Sandals Inn versus locals and craft sellers on Chatham Beach, Montego Bay. Source: <http://www.sandals.com/index.cfm> (last accessed 2 February 2009) and author.

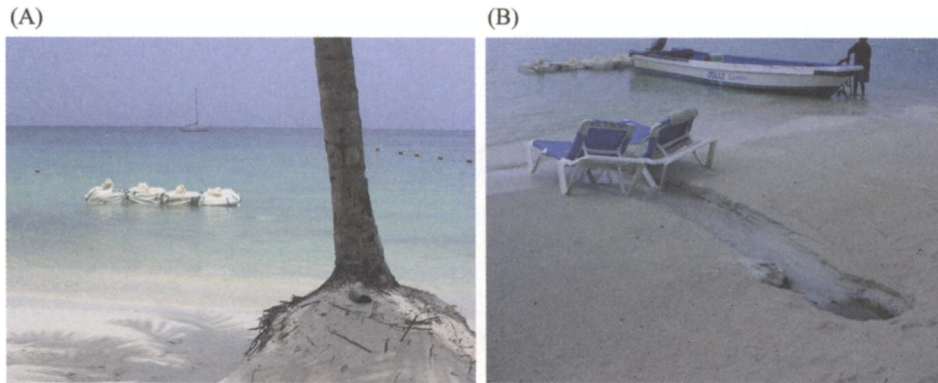


Figure 6. Sandals Negril's sandbags versus beach erosion. Source: Author.

servility endure and hold together in the first place? Many tourism workers in Jamaica need to sell their labor to buy life's necessities, but why and how does this phenomenon endure as part of Sandals's commodity form, especially amidst the all-inclusive hotel's spatial concentration of people with vastly different economic resources and cultural identities? Lacan's concept of sublimation, which rejects the reduction of the smiling form of workers' labor to the essence of servility, can be of considerable help in answering these questions. My argument is that many of the "secrets" of Sandals's commodity form are associated with the management and practices of workers' dual position, which is at once sustained and threatened by the enjoyment borne out of workers' and tourists' interactions.

Sociospatial Sublimation

Sublimation is not, in fact, what the foolish crowd thinks; and it does not on all occasions necessarily follow the path of the sublime. (Lacan 1992, 161)

Carter's (1997) *Why Workers Won't Work* investigates low labor productivity and workers' resentment toward managers in Jamaican organizations. In a section entitled "Psychic Pay," Carter notes that numerous supervisors and junior managers "actually cried in my presence" (33) during discussions of problems with their "power pay"; that is, the psychological payoff for having exclusive responsibility over work. For Carter, changing the behavior of workers requires uniting motivation "to performance in the worker's mind" and influencing "their perceptions and attitude clusters" (34). Carter's study echoes Freud's (1961, 30) observation that work, the social activity par excellence that "attaches the individual so firmly to

reality," as "a path to happiness . . . is not highly prized by men [sic]" but can nonetheless be a "source of special satisfaction . . . by means of sublimation." Furthermore, sublimation not only provides Sandals workers' with a special satisfaction, but it is also an important labor management strategy through which the STDI attempts to reinforce workers' attitudes toward their job, as well as psychically to fuse motivation with performance.

Sublimation is not only a theory about the formation of the social subject but also a theory about how desire and enjoyment emerge as such and become established in social contexts. For Freud, sublimation acts as a "socially acceptable escape valve" (Evans 1996, 198) that rechannels excessive libidinal pressures associated with the drive into socially valued or "higher psychological activities" (Freud 1961, 51; see also Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 431–34; Žižek 1994, 96). The drive (the translation for what Freud called *Trieb*) is a concept that refers to how human subjectivity and sexuality are not entirely determined by biological and cultural forces (see Kingsbury 2010). Whereas food and water can satiate the instincts of hunger and thirst, "a drive is not a primordial positive force but a purely geometrical, topological phenomenon, the name for the curvature of the space of desire, i.e. for the paradox that, within this space, the way to attain the object (*a*) is not to go straight for it (the safest way to miss it) but to encircle it, to 'go round in circles'" (Žižek 2005a, 193). The drives take place as the "topological 'distortion' of the natural instinct that finds satisfaction in a direct consumption of its object" (Žižek 2005a, 193). A person becomes submitted to the swerve of the drives when he or she engages in an activity (e.g., procrastination, postponement, dodging) that perpetually curbs, inhibits, or prevents the reaching of its goal (see Kingsbury 2010). The drives, then, approximate to activities that are excessive and

repetitive because the drives have “no goal, but only an aim, this is because its object is no longer a means of attaining satisfaction, it is an end in itself; it is directly satisfying” (Copjec 2002, 38).

Lacan’s (1992) most extensive discussions of sublimation are in the seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959–1960*. Here, following Freud, Lacan regards sublimation as a process that is related to the drives and “creates socially recognized values” (Lacan 1992, 107). Lacan’s account of sublimation differs from Freud’s on several key points (see Evans 1996, 198–99). First, Lacan asserted that sublimation is not confined to intellectual or artistic realms because it can take place in everyday “domesticated spheres” (Lacan 1992, 118) such as home decoration and hobbies (Lacan 1992, 114). Second, for Lacan (1992, 293), sublimation does not redirect the drive to a different object but rather involves a “change of the object in itself” because—and this is Lacan’s canonical definition of sublimation—sublimation “raises an object . . . to the dignity of the Thing” (Lacan 1992, 112). What is the distinction between an object and a Thing? An *object* is an ordinary entity such as a process, event, word, idea, meaning, person, animal, activity, or an everyday thing (small *t*) such as a cup, hat, or pen. A *Thing* is a *sublime object* wherein an ordinary object is transubstantiated into some-Thing (capital *T*) that is profoundly alluring, fascinating, precious, or terrifying as a result of sublimation. For Lacan, sublimation “raises” or “elevates” an object to the “the place of the Thing” (Lacan 1992, 140). Specifically, sublimation transforms (e.g., via identification and signification, see later) an everyday object’s “position in the fantasy space” (Žižek 1991, 84); that is, the socio-spaces (e.g., landscapes, bodies, representations, streets, homes, built environments) where people’s desires are organized. How and where sublimation transforms an everyday object’s position in fantasy space is a key focus of this article.

The place of the Thing is an alluring, sometimes threatening, even deadly (when people sacrifice their lives for their Thing) socio-psychical place that is “irradiated by the drive, bathed in *jouissance*, transfigured, spiritualized and resplendent” (Kay 2003, 53–54). The Thing belongs to the register of the Real; that is, the Thing pertains to phenomena such as rapture, anxiety, and enjoyment that disturb the Symbolic and Imaginary registers (see earlier). For Žižek, the coherence of social groups cannot be entirely explained by reference to Symbolic rules, customs, and laws and Imaginary differences, scenarios, and rivalries. Rather, what grips and moves members of a community is

their “shared relationship toward a Thing, toward Enjoyment incarnated” (Žižek 1993, 201). The Thing can unite a community via, for example, a nation such as Jamaica and a corporation such as Sandals through the surplus enjoyment generated by the practices of singing, eating, dancing, worshipping, consuming, working, and so on. Thus, from a Žižekian perspective, a nation or corporation cannot be adequately understood as simply a biologically determined (i.e., racial) or a geographically and historically contingent social construction. The corporation, for example, also takes place as a corporate Thing (e.g., a Sandals Thing, an Apple Mac Thing, a Microsoft PC Thing, etc.) that is substantialized through the singular ways its members (and consumers) enjoy their specific ways of life.¹²

That corporations should demand and incite so many inglorious sacrifices (e.g., long hours, physical toil, feigning happiness) is indicative of the dangerous (e.g., exploitative, painful, alienating) allures of enjoyment. Crucially, Lacan (1963) contended, “only love-sublimation can make *jouissance* [enjoyment] condescend to desire” (also see Zupančič 2003, 165–81). In other words, sublimation enables people to maintain a distance from the alluring yet psychically overwhelming enjoyment that permeates the place of the Thing. Sublimation, then, consists of Symbolic and Imaginary social activities—especially those triggered by desire (see later)—that deviate from the seductive pleasurable pains of the Real obtained from rallying around, submitting to, and even sacrificing one’s life for a collectively treasured object of enjoyment such as the nation Thing (e.g., Žižek 1993; MacCannell 1996). Desire differs from the gripping allures of enjoyment because desire is forever restless: It “crawls, slips, escapes like the ferret” (Lacan 1977, 214). When a person desires, they do not aim to satiate an appetite but rather aim at something more, something bigger, something better, something worthier, something somewhere else, some other, perhaps any other nonempirical “X” (Lacan calls this elusive entity the “*objet petit a*”) that is always to be found elsewhere.¹³ From this perspective, desire is “contentless”: Objects incite rather than contain desire. And when people desire they do not attempt to obtain an object of desire, but rather aim at desire itself: to ceaselessly keep desiring wherein desire’s main target is desire itself (see Žižek 1991, 1997). Desire, then, is quite unlike the fixative or mesmeric enjoyment garnered by the dogged pursuit of possessing or protecting the allegedly unique, pure, and threatened qualities of the Thing.

The main differences between the Freudian and Lacanian approaches to sublimation can be clarified by recalling the slogan “Remember the steam kettle; though up to its neck in hot waters, it continues to sing.” A Freudian reading of sublimation brings to the fore the ways in which Sandals workers redirect libidinal tensions into “higher,” socially valued acts such as singing. A Lacanian understanding of sublimation is concerned with the following two processes: first, where and how workers are elevated by management discourses (e.g., signs, training manuals, and company newsletters) to the sublime place of the Thing that is capable of dazzling guests, workers, and managers; second, where and how workers can avoid the dangers of enjoying too much (e.g., overwhelming guests with enjoyment) via the desiring practices of “love-sublimation” (Lacan 1963) coordinated by guest courtesy and the Sandals Customer Service Checklist. In the former, I explore how workers are elevated to the place of the Thing via the socio-spatial practices of identification and signification. In the latter, I explore how workers avoid the painful perils of narcissistic enjoyment (ordered by management’s discourses) by following the practices of desire outlined by Sandals’s guest courtesy and Sandals Customer Service Checklist.

Elevation to the Place of the Thing

Identification

The *Handbook*, compiled by the STDI, is a glossy booklet that outlines company policies, mission statements, and safety regulations. The *Handbook*’s images of Sandals resorts are similar to its tourist brochures except for one crucial detail: Workers rather than tourists enjoy. Clerks jubilantly arrange gift shop souvenirs, builders beam with delight while adjusting leveling instruments, and spa attendants revel in arranging rose petals in a Jacuzzi. Enjoyment is not an incidental or fortunate by-product of working at Sandals. Rather, individual and collective forms of conspicuous enjoyment of labor are key to establishing a successful career at Sandals. Enjoyment is the very measure through which workers and their work become visible and spatially defined. For example, the section, “How to Build a Successful Career at Sandals,” states:

First impressions are important on the job because they often have a lasting effect. Team members you meet for the first time appear to have little radar sets tuned into your attitude. If your attitude is positive, they receive a friendly,

warm signal, and they are attracted to you. If your attitude is negative, they receive an unfriendly signal, and they try to avoid you. . . . Co-team members like you when you are positive. They like to be around you because you are fun. This makes your job interesting and exciting, because you are in the middle of things and not on the outside complaining. (*Handbook* 2003, 60)

Valorizing the positive team member illustrates Lacan’s definition of sublimation as an activity that “creates socially recognized values” (Lacan 1992, 107) by “raising” or “elevating” an everyday object to the dignified place of the Thing. The *Handbook* sublimates workers through identification: the process through which people’s identities are adopted, adapted, and reproduced by assuming the attributes of images and people. By staging numerous scenarios, characterizations, and scripts that fuse enjoyment and work, the *Handbook* gives workers two places for identification: a place where Sandals workers would like to find themselves and a place where they can impress other people. For Lacan (1992), these two places correspond with the *ideal ego* and the *ego ideal*. On the one hand, the ideal ego designates the process of Imaginary identification through which people identify with an idealized self-image so that they can appear likeable (a happy and successful employee). On the other hand, the ego ideal comprises symbolic identification and is “the very place from where we are being observed, from where we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love” (Žižek 1989, 105). In Lacanian theory, then, there is not one (as is usually assumed in tourism studies) but there are two types of gazes that result from a gap between the Imaginary place from where people see themselves as likeable and the Symbolic place from where they are being gazed at so as to appear likeable to themselves.

The *Handbook* stages these two gazes as follows: on the one hand, a place for workers to see themselves as likeable, for example, as employees enjoying the various demands of working in Sandals; on the other hand, a place for workers to look at themselves in a way that they can appear likeable to themselves in the guise of their ideal ego. What kind of Symbolic identification does the *Handbook* attempt to cultivate? From what point of view must workers look at themselves so that they shine as objects of delight rather than unfortunate carriers of labor who are servile to management’s expectations and locked in competitions with other colleagues on the rungs of a corporate ladder? From where and for whose gaze do workers see themselves being

seen as likeable? These images of work ask workers to symbolically identify with the gaze of tourists. Why? Because the group of people in a Sandals resort most concerned about taking seriously the attitudes of enjoyment and appearances of bliss so seriously to gain distance from the humdrum worlds of work are tourists. Following Žižek (2000a, 116–17), the tourists' gaze that is "ultimately fantasized" brings to the fore the

structure of interpassivity: I can be active [i.e., working in the world of Sandals] . . . only in so far as I identify with another impassive gaze for which I am doing it, that is, only in so far as I transpose on to another the passive experience of being fascinated by what I am doing, in so far as I imagine myself *appearing* to this Other who registers my acts in the symbolic network.

From a Lacanian perspective, subjectivity truly emerges not when an active agent (or agents) is engaged in a task (interactivity) but when agents are active, for, through, and in the stead of other agents (e.g., tourists can be relieved from the pressures of enjoying themselves when they sit around a pool bar and watch a bartender enjoying her or himself). Interpassivity is one reason why Sandals workers are rewarded with "Smile awards" when they successfully fascinate tourists; for example, when they do the work of smiling and laughing for tourists. In an issue of *Sandals Quarterly* (Show stoppers 2001, 6), "the magazine for Sandals family & friends," a section on "show stoppers" includes Stanford "Jonho" Johnson, a team member in Sandals Montego Bay's Water Sports Department, who was a

recent winner of the resort's most improved award. With a smiling face and helpful manner, Stanford captures the imagination of the guests, firmly establishing himself as a favorite among them. Little wonder his name is a "recurring decibel" on the resort's weekly comment card.¹⁴

Workers' symbolic identifications with the tourists' gaze are also reinforced by a sign attached to an entrance gate—clearly visible for tourists—at Sandals Inn, Montego Bay. The sign declares: "Sandals workers are the proudest and cleanest workers in all of Jamaica." Ratifying the hygiene of workers in a former British colony certainly echoes imperial discourses of cleanliness and purity (McKlintock 1995). The sign also evinces a Symbolic form of colonization by making a place for the position of the worker/Thing and work through signification.

Signification

For Lacan (1992, 99), "socially accepted sublimations operate" by "coloniz[ing] the field of *das Ding* [the Thing] with imaginary schemes." These Imaginary schemes include Sandals's magazines, handbooks, and signs wherein the worker is the object of "praise, of service, of devotion, and of all kinds of sentimental, stereotyped behavior" (Lacan 1992, 126). These Imaginary schemes colonize the place of the Thing via the "flocculation, the crystallization of signifying units" (Lacan 1992, 118). "Flocculation" and "crystallization" refer to how an everyday object can be elevated to the place of the Thing as a result of the sheer number of signifiers or duplication of representations. Simply stated, the opening up of the alluring place of the Thing via the proliferation of signifiers means that the more someone (e.g., a worker) or something (e.g., a role in a company) is talked about, the more fascinating that person or object becomes (see Wilde 1995). The "curds of signification" or the repeated representations of workers and work (e.g., a "recurring decibel") at Sandals, then, is key to assigning value to work and the workers themselves. This process is materialized throughout Sandals's built environment.

Sandals Negril's eight hectares of property are flanked by the gently curving and sloping white sands of Long Bay Beach and a narrow strip of asphalt called Michael Manley Boulevard. Across the boulevard, away from the main guest area, in the Engineering Department lurks a large sign partially hidden by a disused air conditioning unit that declares, "The employees are the illuminating batteries that energize all the departments at Sandals Negril enabling the hotel to stand out among the competition." The sign is notable for two reasons. First, it explicitly combines the logics of reification (the objectification of workers into batteries) and enjoyment (illuminating, energizing) much like the "remember the steam kettle" sign. Second, the sign's location, across the Michael Manley Boulevard in a restricted area for the maintenance of hotel machinery, is isolated from the smiling, service-oriented work of the guest area.

The sign, however, is not unique. There are many other similar signs, attached to walls, doors, and fences, throughout Sandals Negril's employee areas. In addition to the medium of the built environment, STDI uses photographs, comic strips, rules, signs, notice boards, uniforms, name badges, job titles, and other office Successories® to remind workers about the importance of their duties. The STDI's signs, images, and narratives elevate workers as sublime objects of enjoyment or

“recurring decibels.” The elevation of workers’ positions via the “small curds of representation” (Lacan 1992, 61) is not simply top-down hailing of workers by management. Managers themselves are also sublimated—raised up to the place of the Thing—by conspicuous and repeated signification. For example, displayed in the visitors’ waiting area at Sandals’s company headquarters in Montego Bay is a framed picture “from Burchell Henry and the Staff and Management at Sandi San Beach Hotel, 1994” that reads:

Business Aptitude: A gift from above.
 Understanding: The guide to a life of love.
 Talent at its highest.
 Courage to face hardships, when things seem blue.
 “Honesty of Purpose” which guides your pathway through.
 Success gained by fighting with all your might.
 “Teacher of a Nation,” developed through your insight.
 Excellence: A quality maintained to get things right.
 Wisdom to enhance a great Empire.
 Ambitions each one will always admire.
 Richness of spirit: A ready few can come close.
 True heartedness: the game you always choose.

The letter to Butch Stewart is an act of sublimation par excellence. Instead of simply stating “Thank you, Butch, for founding and growing this wonderful business,” the letter unabashedly elevates Stewart to the heady heights of a blessed, courageous, and virtuous national hero. He is lauded as a Thing of sublime beauty. Now, it is hardly a stretch to call this proclamation of devotion a love letter. In the world of Sandals, “where love is all you need,” many of the STDI’s human resources strategies exemplify a contemporary mode of courtly love (*l’amour courtois*). But “[w]hy talk about courtly love today, in an age of permissiveness when the sexual encounter is often nothing more than a ‘quickie’ in some dark corner of an office?” (Žižek 1994, 89). And why even assert that courtly love can contribute to our understandings of tourism’s commodity form? Because courtly love—“a paradigm, of sublimation” (Lacan 1992, 128)—illustrates how people can avoid the dangerous consequences of enjoyment. Specifically, the threats of enjoyment—a force that “*deconstructs* social relations and groups” (Declercq 2006, 75)—can be neutralized through the human resources of “love sublimation.” Love, rather than a force of exaltation that sublimates objects into repulsive or sublime Things, is a force that *desublimates*; that is, makes accessible or “humanizes” (Lacan 1963)—the Real (e.g., anxiety or *jouissance* [painful-pleasure]) of people’s lives.

Condescension from Enjoyment to Desire

Narcissism

Sandals workers’ narcissism, a “decidedly *impersonal*” (Copjec 2004, 62) mode of corporeal enjoyment, is a problem for Sandals managers because it can dissolve guests’ senses of security and comfort. Sandals employees belong to departments that consist of a supervising “team leader” and “team members.”¹⁵ One department, the Concierge Department, is the first formal point of call for newly arrived guests; its members are charged with handling guest reservations for the spa, restaurants, and off-property tours.¹⁶ During a Concierge Department team meeting in Sandals Negril, which I attended and at which I took notes, team members discussed the following passage in a handout entitled “The Success Steps for Handling Guest Requests”:

Actions speak louder than words, and a smile says, I like you, you make me happy, I am glad to see you. . . . Your smile makes you a beacon of light to the rest of the world. . . . Especially when someone is under pressure, a smile can help him realize that all is not hopeless—that there is joy in the world. . . . A *plastic smile, an insincere grin? No. That does not fool anybody. They know it is mechanical and resent it.* I am talking about a real smile, a heartwarming smile, and a smile that comes from the heart. . . . Assignment: Smile at someone every hour of everyday for a week, then come back next Tuesday and we will discuss the results.

A “plastic smile, an insincere grin” (note the Symbolic identification with tourists) evinces two components of the Thing. First, the Thing can become a place of threatening Otherness. Here, the Thing is permeated with “terrifying, impossible *jouissance*” (Žižek 1989, 71); for example, with “mechanical” or “insincere” enjoyment.¹⁷ In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the otherness of the Other is constituted by the Other’s strange modes of enjoyment; for example, the immigrants’ curious dress codes, smelly feasts, noisy songs, and so on (see Kingsbury 2007). But why exactly does enjoyment make the other Other?

Enjoyment is an “unsupportable support” (Copjec 2002, 7) that is bound up with the disturbances and anxieties of the Real. Enjoyment can be generated not only by mechanically faked smiles but also narcissism. By aligning narcissism with enjoyment, Lacan avoids an “unexceptional definition of narcissism” (Copjec 1994, 23). That is to say, Lacan goes beyond the usual understanding of narcissism as simply a matter of resemblance: a harmonious relation of loving oneself via a

visual image of oneself, as well as loving in another person a reflection of ourselves. For Lacan, however, “the subject’s narcissistic relation to the self is seen to *conflict with and disrupt* other social relations (Copjec 1994, 23). What one finds in the loved object is not an image of oneself, but the enjoyment of oneself. In other words, “the *jouissance* loving it [the loved object] affords a corporeal experience of the self” (Copjec 2002, 79). The social disruption of enjoyment qua the “un-binding force of narcissism” (Copjec 1994, 23) informs a trainee manager’s (a Canadian female in her mid-twenties) comments on the handling of team members (also known as “playmakers”) in the Entertainment Department whose job (according to the *Handbook*) is to “create and execute entertainment activities at the resort, which should incite excitement and stimulate participation, thus enabling guests’ enjoyment and satisfaction.” The trainee manager noted that the playmakers in Sandals Negril

have such long hours and they’re always together . . . being in that job they have to have huge personalities. And oftentimes with huge personalities you put them together and you’re bound to come up with conflict.

The Entertainment Department is not the only department that aims to recruit “huge personalities.” According to Sandals Corporate Communications Director, Leo Lambert, Sandals’s policy is to “hire the smile—the personality—and we train the skill.” Note that Lambert’s statement disregards how smiles can also require training. That smiles might require training and personalities transformed into, let us say, “person-nellities” is evinced by the Concierge Department’s injunction that team members try smiling “at someone every hour of everyday for a week.” One practice that exemplifies how enjoyment can be modified to avoid social conflict is courtesy or, better still, courtly “love sublimation.” As Žižek notes, courtly love is “thoroughly a matter of courtesy and etiquette; it has nothing to do with some elementary passion overflowing all barriers, immune to all social rules” (Žižek 1994, 91). Social rules are fundamental to sustaining employee and guest interactions in the confined space of Sandals all-inclusive hotels. For example, the opening section in the *Handbook*, “Welcome to the World of Sandals,” emphasizes the Symbolic importance of manners as follows:

It is easy to learn the language. “Good Morning,” “Good Afternoon,” and “Good Evening.” “Please” and “Thank You.” “You are Welcome,” and “How may I help you,” are all phrases to be used every minute of the day. This is all part of a program that we call “Guest Courtesy.”

Simply put, Guest Courtesy is what each and every guest should experience from the time he and she enters our resorts to the time that they depart. Service, warm and genuine hospitality, attention to their needs, and the extra effort to ensure they will return. . . . Remember that it is our guests that make our livelihoods possible. Our guests create paydays for all of us!

My contention is that guest courtesy is an act of love sublimation that helps enjoyment “condescend to desire” (Lacan 1963). Courtesy is central to service industries such as tourism because the “customer may well experience the denial of that emotional joint product she or he counted on consuming” (Fraad 2000, 72). Courtesy is an act of desire through which workers can defend against the antagonisms of enjoyment: to maintain a “distance separating the Real from its symbolization” (Žižek 1989, 3). That is to say, courtesy enables workers to “work together as a team . . . with a minimum of frustration” (*Handbook*, 1) by allowing them not to get caught up in petty arguments and (recalling the first sign in the introduction) not to boil over with the stresses that emanate from their lives beyond the resorts’ walls. But how does someone condescend to desire? And what exactly is desire? Lacanian theory takes it as axiomatic that we are not born into the world with preordained natural desires. Rather, we have to learn how to desire through the logic of fantasy.

Fantasy

In tourism studies, *fantasy* usually refers to tourists’ and workers’ privately imagined scenarios that stage the fulfillment of a desire. From a Lacanian perspective, however, fantasy provides the very coordinates of tourists’ and workers’ desire and shields them from the traumatic intrusions of the Real. In Sandals, fantasy enables workers and tourists to negotiate (via desire and love sublimation) incompatible and potentially antagonistic modes of enjoyment. By defining sublimation as a place-making activity, it is important to remember the anti-essentialist

logic of the Lacanian object: *the place logically precedes objects which occupy it*: what the objects, in their given positivity, are masking is not some other, more substantial order of objects but simply the emptiness, the void they are filling out. We must remember that there is nothing intrinsically sublime in a sublime object. . . . It is its structural place—the fact that it occupies the sacred/forbidden place of *jouissance*—and not its intrinsic qualities that confers on it its sublimity. (Žižek 1989, 195)

Thus if there is nothing intrinsically sublime about those workers who occupy the place of the Thing, then much of the difference between their forbidden “in-sincere” enjoyment of the plastic grin and their sacred “heartwarming” enjoyment entirely depends on their “position in the fantasy space” (Žižek 1991, 84). One way the STDI “humanizes” (Lacan 1963) troubling enjoyment (e.g., the otherness of mechanical smiles, excessive singing, inappropriate jokes) to condescend to desire is through the fantasy of the Sandals Customer Service Checklist.

A Lacanian understanding of fantasy differs from a conventional understanding of fantasy in at least three ways (see Žižek 1997, 3–44). First, according to Lacan, fantasy is not an extravagant make-believe scene that realizes impossible or prohibited desires. Rather, “fantasy is on the side of reality” (Žižek 1997, 66) because fantasy sustains people’s “sense of reality.” Here, reality is a “fantasy-construction which enables us to mask the Real of our desire” (Žižek 1989, 45). Second, fantasy does not simply stage desire. Rather, fantasy coordinates or teaches us how to desire because fantasy “does not mean that when I desire a strawberry cake and cannot get it in reality, I fantasize about eating it; the problem is, rather, *how do I know that I desire a strawberry cake in the first place? This is what fantasy tells me*” (Žižek 1997, 7). Third, fantasy is radically intersubjective: Fantasy is not about what we want for ourselves but rather an answer to “[w]hat do *others* want from me? What do they see in me? What am I to others?” (Žižek 1997, 9). In providing an answer to the inconsistency or “lack in the Other,” that is, the idea “that the Other itself ‘hasn’t got it,’ hasn’t got the final answer . . . is itself blocked, desiring” (Žižek 1989, 122)—fantasy gives a “breathing space” (Žižek 1989, 122) for the subject to desire so that the threatening enjoyment of the Thing is “domesticated, ‘gentrified’” (Žižek 1989, 123).

The Sandals Customer Service Checklist (Figure 7) exemplifies a “social fantasy” (Žižek 1989, 124) because it instructs workers how to desire, how to relate to the world of the guests, and how to incite guests’ desires so as not to cause anxiety or trigger instances of the Real. The checklist mediates a world of vast socioeconomic difference: a world on the one hand where rooms start at US\$267 a night and, on the other hand, a world full of the pressures of (according to a bartender) “paying bills, bills for school because we pay school fees in Jamaica” (interview). Above all, the Sandals Checklist is a checklist of love sublimation because the prescribed acts of smiling, making eye contact, welcoming, appropriately introducing oneself, and politeness are no doubt



Figure 7. The Sandals Customer Service Checklist in Sandals Negril. Source: Author.

a key factor in the couples’ love lives in Sandals resorts. Or, at the very least, these acts of love sublimation were necessary signposts on the royal road of courtship that lead many guests to marry or honeymoon at Sandals. Whereas Freud (1962) argued that sublimation “in the direction of art” (22) “diverts” us from primal passions and sensations, for Lacan, “love-sublimation” purifies us from “fear and pity . . . emotions that facilitate our subservience to the superego and the imaginary ideals it sets up in order to berate us with our shortcomings” (Copjec 2002, 8–9). Through love sublimation, workers can distance themselves from the pressures of the superego’s imaginary ideals exemplified by the sign “It Takes Months to Find a Customer . . . Seconds to Lose One.” Similarly, through love sublimation tourists can be freed from the superego’s thousands of injunctions to “Enjoy!” (e.g., resort depictions in brochures, a DJ’s relentless commands to dance, overly friendly hotel neighbors, drinkers pressuring other patrons to chug beer or slam shots at a bar) or the convulsive suffering from aspiring to impossible states of smiley-happiness.

Conclusion

Drawing on Lacan’s notion of sublimation, this article has attempted to overcome a long-standing binary

strategy in critical tourism studies: pitting the realities of injustice against the idealizations of happiness. In tourism studies it is customary to acknowledge that workers' and tourists' lives are at odds with the idealized images of perfect resorts, flawless bodies, and unblemished environments. Apart from studies on the entanglements of representations and "realities" in tourism that construct identities and power relationships (see Morgan and Pritchard 1998; Del Casino and Hannah 2003), few studies explore how tourists and workers might or might not identify with images, as well as how "reality" as such is established in tourist spaces. Sublimation can be of considerable help in illustrating how tourism's realities combine both the everyday and the ideal. Here, sublimation consists of

the magic *combination* of the two dimensions [the everyday and the ideal], when the sublime dimension transpires through the utmost common details of everyday shared life—the "sublime" moment of the love life occurs when the magic dimension transpires even in common everyday acts like washing the dishes or cleaning the apartment. (In this precise sense, sublimation is to be opposed to idealization.) (Žižek 2001, 14)

I have argued that sublimation, which actively combines the magical and the everyday, is a key part of Sandals's commodity form. This product consists of the following: STDI's management discourses that elevate (through identification and signification) workers to the place of the Thing, a place of intense, conspicuously jubilant, and potentially narcissistic enjoyment. One way the STDI and Sandals workers attempt to keep at bay the antagonisms of enjoyment is through acts of love sublimation. These acts are coordinated by the fantasies exemplified by the Sandals Checklist and guest courtesy. Here, sublimation alerts us to the danger of opposing "reality" to fantasy. Psychoanalysis via

Freud does not set social reality—civilization—*against* the pleasure principle [attempts to keep levels of excessive "excitation" (enjoyment) to a minimum], but rather defines the former as a product of the latter. Civilization does not test, but realizes our fantasies; it does not put us in touch with Fate (the real), but protects us from it. The social subject is thus pictured as "a kind of prosthetic God," whose fantasmatic, artificial limbs substitute for the inferior ones Fate bestows. Civilization endows the subject with a fantasmatic body and fairytalelike powers. The subjects of modern cultures have telescopes, microscopes, cameras for eyes; microphones, radios, telephones for mouths; ships, trains, cars, and planes for legs; and all of these instruments-that-extend-our-grasp for arms. (Copjec 1994, 40)

From this perspective, interactions between workers and tourists are not an inauthentic relation of frustration wherein both parties flail in their attempts to mask the shortcomings of their social realities (e.g., delayed flights and late paychecks, jetlag, and boredom). Rather, tourism consists of "syncopated relation[s]" (Copjec 1994, 14) of the magical and the everyday, the sublime and the banal, the intangible and the palpable, enjoyment and desire. For example, Troy (a Jamaican male in his early twenties) is invited once a week onto Sandals Negril's property. He describes the act of carving and selling crafts as follows:

What goes through my heart is joy. You find these people who say, "You're amazing, you're great!" and that pushes me on to do greater work. Yah mon! . . . What I do is set my work in the water to keep it very shiny, keep it very neat and clean at all times that attracts people. Then I tell them about the woods, how I sand them, how I carve them, how I buy the polish and colors so they understand what you're talking about—that you've got to pay bills with it, you have to send kids to school because we pay school fees in Jamaica, buy foods for the house, you have to pay electricity, water rate, you know?

The syncopation of aesthetic and economic imperatives materialized in Troy's work highlights the wider contradictions in Caribbean tourism: the global activity par excellence that spatially concentrates and divides people with extremely contrasting economic resources and diverse cultural identities from various locations around the world. Understanding these contradictions, especially in the confined space of a Sandals all-inclusive resort, demands that we ask how and why in tourism such confluences bloom rather than whither. Too often, tourism researchers "proudly profess to be *illiterate in desire*" (Copjec 1994, 14) insofar as they do not take into account the delicate yet obdurate paradoxes of love, desire, and enjoyment. For Lacan, love, desire, and enjoyment "exist" because they are incarnations of the Real:

an entity which, although it does not exist (in the sense of "really existing," taking place in reality), has a series of properties—it exercises a certain structural causality, it can produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of subjects. (Žižek 1989, 163)

Just because something does not "exist" in concrete reality does not necessarily make it intangible. In fact, sometimes it is through a very lack of determinant existence that a thing can possess causal efficacy. Lacan's notion of the Thing qua a palpable void (as part of the Real) refers to such a phenomenon. The paradoxes of the Real are becoming increasingly prominent in

theoretical debates in tourism, planning, and organization studies (e.g., Hillier and Gunder 2005; Jones and Spicer 2005; Gunder 2006), as well as geographies of consumption (e.g., Page 2005; Kingsbury 2007). Žižek draws on the Lacanian category of the Real to rethink questions of commodity fetishism, ideology, and historicity. For Žižek, the Real avoids fixed binary social models of surface versus depth, universal versus particular, structure versus agency, fixity versus flow, and enjoyment versus servility. Crucially, the Real is not located beyond or above society, space, and time in terms of a “proto-transcendental pre-social formal a priori” (Žižek 2000b, 308). Rather, the Real is the very ground of historicity and sociality itself: “the Real is neither pre-social nor a social effect—the point is, rather, that the Social itself is *constituted* by the exclusion of some traumatic Real” (Žižek 2000b, 311). By asserting the importance of the Real—that is, by illustrating how enjoyment is not only a “political factor” (Žižek 2002) but also a geographical factor—this article hopes to convince researchers of the need to “remember the steam kettle”; that is, to acknowledge the extent to which the injunctions to enjoy not only pervade, but also help reproduce the everyday and often exploitative lives of people employed in tourism. Exemplary here is the portrayal of workers in a *Sandals Quarterly* article entitled “Full Marks,” Sandals Montego Bay’s “Laundry Department: A Sturdy Bunch”:

It requires a certain attitude to be able to put up with the conditions of Sandals Montego Bay’s laundry and still be able to offer a genuinely warm smile and assistance to people who work in air conditioned offices. It is hotter than a kitchen in hell, but the group of 15 who work with the kind of spirit that would rival a carnival. They dance while folding sheets, sing and whistle while folding hot towels and doing some of the many duties that are so essential, yet their importance is often overlooked. (Full marks 1992, 20)

The enjoyment produced by a “certain attitude” or “that extra kick *on behalf of which* we do our duty” (J. Dean 2006, xvi) evinces the extent to which workers’ lives are informed by enjoyment as the “paradoxical payment that the exploited, the servant receives for serving the Master . . . [and] keeps us attached to the Master—makes us accept the framework of the social relationship of domination” (Žižek 1997, 48). If we neglect this kind of enjoyment, if we forget why the steam kettle continues to sing, then our understandings of the inter-subjective dimensions of the planning and identities in

Caribbean tourism will continue to remain barely distinguishable from the capitalist models of subjectivity (e.g., Successories® products) that laud success, happiness, self-interest, and “self-actualization.” Paying heed to how, why, where, and when the Real takes place in sites such as Sandals—that is, taking into account the sublime jumble of the world’s fleeting yet tangible, painful yet pleasurable, and everyday yet magical Things—can radically reinvigorate Marx and Engels’s (2002, 223) famous description of bourgeois commodification as the place where “all that is solid melts into air.” After all, these words compose the elementary formula of sublimation.

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Notes

1. For an overview of the various psychoanalytic theoretical and methodological approaches in geography see Kingsbury (2009a, 2009b).
2. For an in-depth methodological account of studying enjoyment in Sandals see Kingsbury (2010; see also Proudfoot 2010).
3. Tom Klak and I address the methodological difficulties and opportunities of conducting research in Jamaica in Kingsbury and Klak (2006). For a discussion of the wider aims of my research on Sandals, see Kingsbury (2006).
4. For a more in-depth discussion of Žižek’s understanding of enjoyment, as well as its relation to geographers’ theories of space and society from Marxist and feminist perspectives, see Kingsbury (2008) and, from a poststructuralist perspective, see Kingsbury (2007).
5. See *Sandals & Beaches Team Members’ Handbook* (2003, 20).
6. The extent of Stewart’s influence was evinced by his actions in April 1992 when, at a crisis point for Jamaica’s exchange rate Stewart deposited US\$1 million per week into the island’s commercial banks at a rate four Jamaican dollars below the prevailing rate to help prevent the Jamaican dollar’s collapse (Pattullo 1996).

7. On 11 October 2004 Maggie Rivera, Sandals's director of public relations, formally announced that Sandals had rescinded its ban (in effect since 1981) on single-sex couples at its resorts. Until the policy change, Sandals advertisements had been banned in the London underground by Mayor Ken Livingstone and the company was a long-standing target for gay rights advocates and organizations such as Stonewall and the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association.
8. These figures are for the "average daily promotional rate" per night during the first week of December 2009. The former rate is for a "seaside deluxe" room in the Sandals Inn and the latter is for a night in the "William Jefferson Clinton suite" in Sandals Grande St. Lucian. The rates do not include airfare.
9. The Green Globe 21 Company Standard scheme, currently adopted in forty-eight countries, was established after the United Nations Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and launched in 1994 by the World Travel and Tourism Council.
10. Caribbean researchers also have to straddle another contradiction: doing difficult fieldwork in a region so often presumed and ridiculed by colleagues as paradise (see Kingsbury and Klak 2006).
11. For a very useful account of Žižek's relation to dialectical thinking and how it differs from the usual treatment of dialectics in geography see Secor (2008).
12. Other notable examples of the Thing in Žižek's corpus include the "inert presence" (1989, 71) of the *Titanic*; "the 'alien' from the film of the same name" (1989, 132); the character Judy/Madeline in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1991, 84); an octopus that appears graceful underwater but out of the water a "disgusting lump of slime" (1991, 84); and the "deep, dark pond . . . out of which strange roots sprout" (1991, 133) in Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Pond*. The Thing is closely associated with one of Lacan's many theorizations about the emergence of the social subject from the child-(m)other dyad. For a brilliantly incisive, clear, and in-depth account of Lacan's understandings of the Thing and its relations to psychoanalytic ontology and the Kantian sublime see Copjec (2002, 12–47).
13. The *objet petit a* is short for objet petit a(utre), literally "object small other" that contrasts to the "big Other" which refers to the Symbolic. The *objet petit a* is Lacan's preferred term for French and English. During the early-1960s, Lacan replaced the concept of the Thing with the *objet petit a* (see Evans 1996, 205; Kingsbury 2010).
14. The notion of a "recurring decibel" is exemplary of the Real and the Thing "that always return, to the same place" (Lacan 1992, 75).
15. Sandals's departments include the Grounds, Dining Room, Bar, Watersports, Housekeeping, Security, Maintenance, Stewarding, Kitchen, Front Office, Accounting, Concierge, and Entertainment.
16. On arrival, guests are escorted to the Concierge Suite whereupon they are routinely greeted with the following welcome: "We're your suite concierge and we're here to pamper you throughout your stay. Shall we start with some champagne?"
17. As a dangerous void of "incarnated, materialized emptiness" (Žižek 1991, 145), the Thing also embodies the

"lacks" in Sandals's hospitality (e.g., inappropriate or fumbled attempts to interact with guests). In these cases, Sandals workers resemble Lacan's example of the Lady in courtly love who occupied the place of the Thing: a site of disturbing Otherness "wholly incommensurable with our needs and desires; as such, she is simultaneously a kind of automaton, a machine which utters meaningless demands at random" (Žižek 1994, 90).

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