

TOURISM AND THE UNIVERSAL DRAMA OF WORK

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Almost fifty years since the publication of Dean MacCannell's seminal work *The Tourist*, this article revisits one of the developments addressed in his book, namely the fact that the work of others has become a tourist attraction. The article critically reexamines MacCannell's claim that a work display enables the industrial man to adopt a synthetic social perspective and experience his role in the universal drama of work. I argue that a work display has a conservative function as it compels the tourist to remember that she might become part of a work display, not as a spectator but as a low-paid worker on display. It is precisely a work display, the article claims, that reveals precarity to be the fundamental feature of the universal drama of work. I demonstrate that the deculturization of the workplace, on which MacCannell's analysis of work display is based, has been reversed and brought to its ultimate conclusion in the emergence of workplace culture. This, in turn, requires us to reevaluate not only our understanding of work display, but also of work and tourism. Elucidating the relationship between work and tourism as symbolic systems, the article fully acknowledges that both sustain the contemporary symbolic order.

Keywords: neoliberalism, tourism, tourist, precarity, work display

INTRODUCTION

In *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1999), Dean MacCannell opened discussion of the tourist as a subject but, above all, examined the role of tourism in structuring contemporary society.¹ Studying tourism, in other words, MacCannell wanted to arrive at a better understanding of how postmodernity operates. As he puts it in a recent interview: "The central thesis of *The Tourist* is that 'sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society [...] a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity

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of [post]modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience” (MacCannell in Castro and González 2023: 10). One such attempt at incorporating the fragments of postmodernity into a unified experience is a work display – a tourist attraction in which the work of others becomes a tourist attraction: “The worker was integrated *as worker* into industrial society. The worker is integrated into modern society as tourist and as tourist attraction (work display), as actor and spectator in the ‘universal drama of work’” (MacCannell 1999: 63). A work display is therefore about more than work and tourism. It is what incorporates the tourist into the hegemonic system of meanings, which nowadays happens to be neoliberalism.

This article extends the inquiry into the phenomenon of work display by, first, critically exploring MacCannell’s claim that a work display brings us together in the universal drama of work. Second, departing from MacCannell’s analysis of work display, I make it clear that a work display also serves to warn the tourist that she might end up in a work display if she does not establish the appropriate relationship with work. A work display reminds the tourist that the universal drama of work is based on the threat of precarity, and that she is always at risk of becoming “the ‘precariat’, those living through unstable and insecure labour, in and out of jobs, without an occupational identity, financially on the edge and losing rights” (Standing 2021: lxxxv). The article, third, argues that work and culture have merged into the concept of workplace culture, while the contemporary tourist seeks a break from being integrated all too well in the universal drama of the workplace. Work display, as a tourist phenomenon that showcases precarity, strongly suggests to the tourist that workplace culture as an organisational practice is a privilege. Fourth, and finally, I show that tourism and work both function as symbolic systems that come together in the neoliberal symbolic order, whereby a work display is meant to instil in the tourist the importance of being passionate about one’s work and content with the *status quo*.

While doing so, the article learns from MacCannell’s (in Castro and González 2023: 9) reflection on the reception of his work: “For the most part, *The Tourist* is read as a study of tourists and tourism. I tried to make my intent clear to write an ethnography of ‘post-industrial modernity’. I.e., ‘post-[industrial] modernity’. If I had aimed to write only about tourists and tourism, it would have been a very different book.” Writing about tourists and tourism, MacCannell has been writing about postindustrial modernity. The most productive work on tourism is indeed that which manages to address the question of social change, thereby transcending a narrow focus on tourists and tourism. With this in mind, and while offering an analysis of work display as a tourist attraction, I strive to expand our understanding of how contemporary society is reflected in the universal drama of work.

ALL CULTURE AND NO WORK

In 1976, when *The Tourist* was first published, MacCannell was early to note that the work of others acts as a tourist attraction. The fact that the work of others acts as a tourist attraction, however, is far from self-explanatory. There seems to be nothing immediately

appealing in the sight of others at work and, if anything, one might expect work to be precisely what tourists, being away from their workplace, would *not* like to see. Have they not had enough of their everyday lives?

MacCannell (1999: 35–36) offered his explanation of this development, and he took it seriously into account, going so far as stating that a display of others' work marks the beginning of modernity:

Industrial society bound men to its jobs, but because of the extreme specialization and fragmentation of tasks in the industrial process, the job did not function to integrate its holder into a synthetic social perspective, a world view. As a solution to the problem of culture, industrial work is a failure. It repulses the individual, sending him away to search for his identity or soul in off-the-job activities: in music, sports, church, political scandal and other collective diversions. Among these diversions is found a cultural production of a curious and special kind marking the death of industrial society and the beginning of modernity: a museumization of work and work relations, a cultural production I call a *work display*.

Seeing other people at work, for example workers in a slaughterhouse or tobacco factory,² is thus one of those activities that divert tourists from the fragmentary character of industrial society, permitting them to adopt a broader view of their existence. It allows the synthesis of disparate industrial processes, enabling tourists to see beyond the extreme specialisation of their everyday lives. Tourists, by visiting a work display, do get a break from their everyday lives as they see work, which is indeed already all too familiar to them, from a new perspective. In a work display, work appears as something that we all do and as such it presents nothing short of a manifestation of a collective identity. It appears not primarily as on-the-job activity but as a collective diversion from the fragmentary.

When a tourist visits a work display, her sense of self is, in a way, transformed. As MacCannell (ibid.: 63) puts it, “the worker is integrated into modern society as tourist and as tourist attraction (work display), as actor and spectator in the ‘universal drama of work.’” A work display, therefore, achieves something impressive: it makes work a more meaningful activity, one in which we all partake not solely for the money but for the sake of our collective. As an actor, that is as a worker, the collective dimension of work eludes her but as a spectator, that is as a tourist, it suddenly becomes visible.

A work display, according to MacCannell (ibid.: 35), corresponds to a particular need, created by the way work is organised in industrial society: “Industrial society elevates work of all kinds to an unprecedented level of social importance, using as its techniques the rationalization and the deculturization of the workplace. As this new kind of rationalized work got almost everyone into its iron grip, culture did not enter the factories, offices

² MacCannell (1999), along with this article, focuses on displays that show workers doing their jobs in real time while serving as tourist attractions. His examples of such work displays include, among others, a slaughterhouse, print shop, tobacco factory and a telephone company. For discussion of the museumization of work, the reader is advised to see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) or Hewison (1987).

and workshops.” In industrial society, following this reasoning, the workplace is purged of culture. The collective impetus, furthermore, does not stem from industrial society. Rather, it is a fundamentally modern movement that corresponds to the need created by postindustrial modernity:

Modern social movements push work and its organization to the negative margins of existence, and as our society follows these movements ever deeper into postindustrial modernity, the more widespread becomes the idea that not merely play and games but life itself is supposed to be fun. The world of work has not mounted a counteroffensive. It responds by shriveling up, offering workers ever increasing freedom from its constraints. (ibid.)

And this freedom has found its expression in, among other activities, tourism and, among other tourist attractions, in a work display. But, and this is where I part ways with MacCannell’s understanding of work display, I claim that the world of work has not shrivelled up in contemporary society. The world of work, let us not be naïve, would not allow itself to be pushed around. Fun could not relegate it to the negative margins of existence.

The world of work *has* mounted a counteroffensive. A counteroffensive that indeed may not appear as such but is for that reason no less effective. Providing a certain leeway by loosening some of its restraints, the world of work has ensured its continuing importance or, to be more precise, its hegemony. By shrivelling up, somewhat paradoxically, it has radically expanded. Loosening its constraints, it has ensured that workers cling to it more firmly. Ever increasing freedom from work constraints has its limits and, as we can see about fifty years since MacCannell has written the above, it has not resulted in all play and no work. Work is a social movement *par excellence*, which is precisely what a work display teaches us and, as such, it has found its own way of dealing with culture; workplace culture.

Before I proceed with my analysis of postindustrial workplace culture, it should be noted that a work display, according to MacCannell, has a clear limit when meeting the tourist gaze. Analysing a print shop as a work display, MacCannell (ibid.: 66) argues that “the tourist comes away from the shop able to construct for himself a belief that he has gained some inside knowledge of the industry, but so long as he never meets the gaze of the worker, he need not carry away an impression of the worker’s actual situation.” In other words, all is good until the tourist meets the gaze of the worker. The gaze of the worker interrupts her in what, on one level, is a casual glimpse into the industry and its knowledge but is, on another level, a collective diversion that reminds us that we are taking part in the universal drama of work. The tourist, as a spectator, would very much not prefer the worker, as an actor, to catch her gaze. The reason for this, according to MacCannell (1999), is that the tourist would rather not be bothered with the worker’s actual situation. The situation that is, for example in a print shop, most probably not particularly creative and exhilarating but, more likely, quite gruelling and dull. Too much reality would ruin the universal drama of work for the tourist. It would be too close to being the universal horror of work and, for this reason, it must be edited. What is edited, therefore, is the worker’s actual situation.

This, however, runs against MacCannell's (ibid.: 58) argument that "as work becomes a 'mere' attribute of society, not its central attribute, the work display permits Industrial Man to reflect upon his own condition and to transcend it." If this was the case, that is if a work display were to offer the tourist as well as the worker a chance to reflect on their existence and transcend it, there would not be much need to hide the worker's actual situation. In the process of becoming the postindustrial man, the industrial man has not forgotten about the centrality of work. There was no such emancipatory moment that would make the industrial man see that the worker's actual situation is unacceptable, prompting him to deal with the source of his suffering without any further delay. On the contrary, its source, namely neoliberal modes of precarious work, seems to be well serviced by the postindustrial man, adding to the collective drama of work. As a former CEO of Gigwalk, a brand intelligence platform, pointed out: "You can hire 10000 people for ten to fifteen minutes. When they're done, those 10000 people just melt away" (Bahramipour in Standing 2021: 214). We melt in obedience to neoliberalism.

TOURISTS, BEHAVE! OR ELSE...

The phenomenon of work display also caught the attention of Renata Salecl (2004: 24–25), and she offered her perspective on the ideological importance of work display:

If one looks at the design of many new restaurants, one can see that the work process is supposed to be totally exposed to the public. Everywhere, one now finds restaurants which look like factories – when one walks in, one sees low-paid workers preparing the food, washing the dishes, etc. We observe these workers as decorative art objects and do not think about the hardship that these people might endure or how uncomfortable they might feel about being exposed as if in a zoo.

If we ignore the hardship that workers are most likely enduring, that is if we forget that we are seeing low-paid workers on display, a work display might appear as the triumph of work transparency. What you see is what you get, basically. Salecl (2004), however, argues that a work display might be understood radically differently, as a means of tackling the class divide. A work display, if "successful", hides the fact that material production exists and shows nothing but culture. It is a display of cultural capitalism, where cultural capitalism is perceived as all culture and no work.

To be honest, it would be a marvellous feat of work display to haze us so much that we forget not only about the worker's actual situation but also that the person on display is a worker. While a work display manages to hide the worker's hardship from tourists, I argue that it also conveys a more sinister message, which can help us to understand why "upper class tourists are more likely to seek out work displays (i.e., the work of others) as a form of entertainment" (MacCannell 2011: 197). In the same book in which she offers her take on a work display, Salecl (2004) argues that the middle class has become pervaded by the

fear of losing their jobs, which used to be the “privilege” of the lower classes, and that we are nowadays seeing middle-class writers willingly living as poor workers for a set period of time in order to write about their experiences of poverty. They are not becoming poor permanently but, as Salecl (ibid.: 40) neatly puts it, “write primarily about themselves and express their feelings about poverty from the distant point of view of an observer who is only taking a tourist trip to the land of the poor.” What the witness of poverty sees and aims to experience is the worker’s actual situation *but* this aim is always already frustrated by the fact that the experience is governed by the rules of a tourist trip. It is, most importantly, a temporary experience of the extraordinary; the writer will not become trapped in poverty. She is a tourist and, as such, always already distanced from what she is visiting. The experience of poverty, therefore, is not all consuming for the one taking a tourist trip.

Salecl (ibid.: 39) reads this as the middle class’s attempt to cope with a new and growing sense of job insecurity, where “one way of tackling this insecurity is to observe the life of the poor in order to draw the conclusion: ‘This is not me! I am far better off than they are.’” This conclusion is quite a warning for the spectator, mind you. It is a warning that, if the tourist does not behave, she might end up being poor. Not poor as in visiting the land of the poor as a tourist but poor as in experiencing the actual hardship that characterises the worker’s situation. Not gazing on a life of poverty but actually living it, full-time and permanently.

There is no reason why Salecl’s take on the middle-class writers taking a trip to the land of the poor could not be extended to the tourist visiting a work display. There is nothing radically separating it from a work display apart from this brief segment of participation which, in a work display, happens in the tourist’s imagination. It is precisely imagining oneself as working in a display that conveys the message: “This is not me! I am far better off than they are” or, in less self-congratulatory and more petrified terms: “This better not be me!” A work display serves as a stern warning to the tourist: play your part well in the universal drama of work. Fail to do so, and the world of work will mount a counteroffensive. You *will* end up poor, perhaps even displayed as if in a zoo, among those whose gaze the tourist takes care not to meet. And this, *nota bene*, would not be anything extraordinary. After all, “open display conveys the impression that work in all its forms is normal and routine, that no matter how dangerous or foul it may be, there is, nevertheless, ‘nothing to hide’” (MacCannell 1999: 62). Being poor is indeed all too normal and common nowadays, so it is up to you, as an upper-class tourist, to decide what the feeling of seeing others at work inspires in you and to think twice about how you would behave in the world of work.

In this respect, the following insight, formulated by Adorno about half a century ago, is more relevant than ever: “Everyone knows that he could become expendable as technology develops [...] everyone senses that his *job is a disguised unemployment*. It is a support that has [been] arbitrarily and revocably pinched off something from the total societal product, for the purpose of maintaining the *status quo*” (Adorno 1973: 34, emphasis added). The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has made it abundantly clear what Adorno

meant when he said that everyone senses that his job is disguised unemployment. In the final instance – beyond cultural capital and other forms of privilege – if AI is making many of us expendable, what is it but arbitrariness to decide who will be left with a job and who without one? A job is disguised unemployment as it is, in effect, nothing but a support that one is provided with in return for perpetuating the *status quo*. The support that, however, *can* be revoked on a whim. It has been pinched off from the societal product, and it might as well be allocated to someone else. This, in turn, serves as a constant reminder that our protection from precarity and unemployment is always precarious.

It is precisely in this sense that “we could in fact argue that precariousness is the basic condition of everybody who depends on a wage for his or her survival” (Frayne 2015: 74). Precariousness is fundamental to the universal drama of work as it is the basic condition of contemporary capitalism, but this is not to say that we all share the same experience of precarity. The particular horror of work is experienced by those who have been deprived of a job that would ensure at least a somewhat decent barrier against experiencing precarity firsthand. And this withdrawal of support, again, is by no means rare or hidden – a work display shows it in plain sight. Moreover, a work display has turned precarity into a tourist attraction. Capitalism does not hide its brutality. It exhibits precarity for everyone to see, making it both soothing and terrifying. A work display is soothing as it reminds us that we are still receiving this coveted support, namely a wage, protecting us from precarity. On the other hand, it is terrifying as it prompts us to bear in mind that this support is revocable, and that there is nothing standing between us and precarity apart from this disguise. A disguise which is, mind you, melting away as “with decently paying manufacturing and service jobs a distant memory – exported, automated, or simply eliminated – forgoing a college degree dooms workers to a lifetime of extremely low-wage, largely contingent work and an overall existence defined by precariousness” (Tokumitsu 2015: 17). In such a situation, to secure her slice of the total societal product, the one who is kept at bay from precarity – and thus experiences it as a threat rather than her immediate reality – is well advised to excel in maintaining the *status quo*.

ALL WORK AND ALL CULTURE

The universal drama of work, however, has quite a few elements of horror. In his analyses, MacCannell (1999, 2011) has overlooked the fact that the world of work has created its own culture, namely workplace culture. The deculturization of the workplace, which MacCannell (1999) situates in premodern industrial society, has been reversed in the contemporary workplace, further complicating the relationship between work and culture.

The postmodern worker is not simply required to do her job and leave, with the option of seeking culture elsewhere in her spare time. Again, as I argued earlier, the world of work is not shrivelling up “the more widespread becomes the idea that not merely play

and games but life itself is supposed to be fun” (MacCannell 1999: 35). In contrast, it is making itself fun, offering workers not only work but also play and games. There is, strictly speaking, no need for the worker “to search for his identity or soul in off-the-job activities: in music, sports, church, political scandal and other collective diversions” (ibid.: 36). The workplace offers all this and more. This is precisely where the concept of team-building comes into the universal drama of work; your boss is literally offering you the possibility to have fun with your coworkers. Not merely play and games but work itself is supposed to be fun. The boss, moreover, is in such a structural position within the world of work that she is expected to offer a thriving workplace culture to her current and prospective employees. And more than just offering it, thus making it only a possibility, the boss takes great care that workplace culture is celebrated by all its employees.

The tourist does not need to leave her office to get a shot of culture. Her life is saturated by workplace culture. As Žižek (2009: 202) formulates it very well: “a ‘postmodern’ boss insists that he is not a master but just a coordinator of our joint creative efforts, the first among equals; there should be no formalities among us [...] We are not only obliged to obey our masters, we are also obliged to act as if we are free and equal, as if there was no domination – which of course, makes the situation even more humiliating.” This story is indeed widely known. The boss is your friend, your coworkers are your family, and together you cultivate the culture of your workplace. “Just” doing your work and leaving your workplace will not cut it today precisely because that would amount to the deculturization of the workplace and be dangerously close to pushing the world of work to the negative margins of existence. Not participating in workplace culture could be seen as subversive and would most likely catch the attention of the human resources department, which would not hesitate to bring you to your cultural senses. You are expected to participate in and enjoy team-building exercises, corporate retreats, and other activities designed as joint creative efforts in building workplace culture. No one wants a coworker that just keeps to herself.

Seeing this disturbing plot twist in the universal drama of work, we might even find ourselves longing for the deculturization of the workplace. According to Žižek (ibid.), “paradoxically, in such a situation, the first act of liberation is to demand from the master that he act like one: one should reject false collegiality from the master and insist that he treat us with cold distance as a master.” In his view, it is precisely the colonisation of the workplace with culture that makes it humiliating these days. The world of work has acted on our demand for more play and games by culturizing itself, hence restructuring its rationality to meet that demand in a way that allows it to prosper at our expense. At the same time, as postmodern employees, we are expected to show a certain level of enthusiasm for our workplace culture, thereby making it apparent that we do recognise it as an organisational practice accessible only to the privileged.

If you happen not to like the fact that work occupies the positive centre of your existence or you would like your workplace to be culturized by a radically different culture from the one that you are having the misfortune to experience, namely neoliberal culture,

just recall the last time you saw a work display. You have not really seen the work of AI engineers, investment bankers, software architects, hedge fund managers and people working in similar positions displayed there, right? Remember the message conveyed by a work display: “This better not be me!” Being a middle-class employee requires you to actively participate in neoliberal workplace culture. Yes, it is certainly very annoying, but it nonetheless protects you from precarity. After all, “the most pressing problem for most people is no longer exploitation, but the absence of opportunities to be sufficiently and dependably exploited” (Frayne 2015: 39). Be nice and show some appreciation – albeit, heck, gratitude would not kill you either – for the fact that you are being decently exploited! On the other hand, you might also choose to confront your boss and insist that she treats you with cold distance, as a master. That, however, would most likely not amount to all that much as such a request has no capacity to endanger workplace culture as it is. Your boss might even find you amusing and endorse you to pursue your little philosophical interest in restructuring the world of work, who knows? It might be quite a topic for your next team-building. Play and games are welcomed in the workplace.

More realistically, fed up with the contemporary workplace, the worker will react by trying to take a break or, in other words, a vacation. Sure, taking a vacation does not push the world of work to the negative margins of existence. There are even, as we have seen with a work display, tourist attractions that reinforce the importance of work. But a vacation is what the worker has at her disposal, and it nonetheless provides her with some relief from the daily grind. In other words, as the workplace has become the intersection of the world of work and the world of culture, the worker is very much looking forward to finding a temporary way out of all this in being a tourist, that is in taking a break from her ordinary life.

NEOLIBERALISM *QUA* WORK AND TOURISM

Having said that, it should nonetheless be borne in mind that, as MacCannell (2011: 54) highlights: “We cannot simply declare, as some students have done, that work/leisure is a simple binary; that tourists construct their vacation experience in opposition to their workaday experience. Both work and leisure are equally symbolic constructs, radically heterogeneous to one another or not, and as symbolic constructs, both are equally habitable by fantasy.” Work and leisure, as all other symbolic constructs, indeed cannot form a simple binary. They can be radically heterogeneous to one another or not. In addition to this important point made by MacCannell, it should be added that work and leisure can be, at the same time but on different levels, both heterogeneous to one another *and* not.

On one level, and this is where I also agree with MacCannell (*ibid.*), “no type of activity can be used unambiguously to separate the pleasures of a tourist on tour from the pleasures of the same person at home or work. [...] nevertheless, everyone knows there is

a difference". Even with the rise of workations and the fact that contemporary technology makes us constantly accessible to our employers (Bassyiouny and Wilkesmann 2023; Kyra et al. 2022), the difference between work and tourism is still significant enough for us to know it by heart. We know when we are on vacation and would hardly swap a day of vacation for a day at work. The right to tourism is established and highly valued in neoliberal society (Moon and Cho 2023), and we are not giving it away easily. In this sense, work is surely heterogenous to tourism.

Having said that, work and tourism contribute towards the same aim, namely the perpetuation of neoliberalism. Both work and tourism are inhabited by neoliberal fantasy, to put it in different words. A vacation allows us to catch a break from workplace culture, reinvigorating us and making us more productive upon our return to the workplace. There is, on this level, nothing in tourism that would make it heterogenous to work: tourism and work are complementary.

Examining the interconnection of capitalism and tourism, Du Plessis (2015: 769) claims that "the vacation fantasy [...] enables the subject to accept the reality of a whole year (minus three weeks) of work. If this little nugget of mobile 'freedom' was removed from the workers, they would be confronted with the reality that they are first and foremost wage-earners." Tourism, from this perspective, is what helps us to endure our actual work situation and makes us tolerate our wage-earning existence – an existence that is much more difficult to change than taking the little nugget of mobile "freedom" the world of work provides us with to ensure that the population behaves and performs well in the workplace. Tourism could indeed be seen as a form of care that helps govern the population and supports its productivity. While it is true that "the vacation fantasy becomes an ideological supplement for capitalist modes of work" (ibid.: 770), it should also be recognised that, ultimately, *both* work and tourism serve as supplements for neoliberal ideology. In fact, it might be argued that "the caring and pastoral power over the lives of the population through tourism, as well as the individual subjects within it, was regarded as a prerequisite for the circulation of capitalistic economic relations throughout social life (Foucault 1990)" (Moon and Cho 2023: 1272).³ Work and tourism, as symbolic systems, come together in maintaining the neoliberal symbolic order, that is the *status quo*. This should not really surprise us as both tourism and work are grand social movements, and neoliberalism, as a hegemonic discourse, must have found ways to articulate both within its set of meanings.

The fact that tourism is not foreign to serving neoliberal means also sheds some further light on the appeal of work display. As I argued earlier, the mere sight of others at work is not sufficient for a work display to act as a tourist attraction. If work is what they are after, it could be argued that tourists might have just stayed home, witnessing this phenomenon

³ To avoid any confusion, it should be noted that Foucault (1990) did not mention tourism in the work that Moon and Cho reference here, namely volume two of *History of Sexuality*. This is their argument on tourism, that is based on their interpretation of Foucault's analysis of pastoral power, which is how their reference to Foucault's work should be understood.

firsthand. In most cases, particularly in a shared office, the work of others is just a tilt of the head away, if not immediately visible. We witness the work of others on multiple occasions during the day, as we commute to work, shop, drive and so on. Moreover, we do not need to wait for our vacation to appreciate work as a collective activity. What makes it more apparent that work is a collective activity than commuting on a crowded train or bus, where we are quite literally morphed into a collective, squeezed into one another? There must be, in other words, something about a work display that makes work appear different from our daily experience of it or, to put it in Urryian terms, extraordinary.

Well, the first and most obvious thing is that, in a work display, the work is on display. It is thereby displaced from the ordinary, thus fuelling our curiosity and allowing us to see work differently from how it appears in our office or on our way to the office. Second, while work displays mostly show low-paid workers, at least in some cases, the workers appear to be not only busy but also passionate about their work. It is the sight of passionate work that truly sets a work display apart from our daily experience of work. And, if a work display manages to convey passion, the tourist leaves with more than just the thought: “This better not be me!” A display of passionate (or “passionate”) work literally acts as a display for the neoliberal imperative: Do what you love! True, as critical theory of work teaches us, “DWYL exposes its adherents to exploitation, justifying unpaid or underpaid work by throwing workers’ motivations back at them; when passion becomes the socially accepted motivation for working, talk of wages or reasonable scheduling becomes crass” (Tokumitsu 2015: 7). But this is highly unlikely to be how a tourist would process a work display. Not because she is simple-minded but because the tourist has most probably not received extensive training in critical theory. Much more realistically, she would return home with the following thought: “Look how ungrateful I am! People there work hard and for not all that much, but they are still passionate about their work. I should really get myself together and start appreciating what I have, right here and right now”. A work display is, in this respect, a conservative sight. It does not encourage you to challenge precarity and the way it stages the universal drama of work. It reminds you that, this universal drama of work being what it is, you are in a good place. Sure, life is not perfect but here you are touring, enjoying your little nugget of mobile “freedom”. Things are fine.

CONCLUSION

At this point, one might be tempted to exclaim, along with Marx and Engels (1978: 500): “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!”, and to demand the abolition of tourism as merely an ideological supplement for capitalist modes of work. That, however, would be far too simple a conclusion. There is not much sense in abstaining from tourism, even if it is perceived as nothing but the little nugget of mobile “freedom”. The world of work would not find such a choice subversive at all. In fact, it might even celebrate it as a manifestation of your

passion for work; why take a vacation when your work is your passion? Why take a break from doing what you love? Do what you love and you will never have to work a day in your life, right? Abstaining from work, on the other hand, would be perceived seriously and dealt with accordingly; you would get fired and left without the financial means necessary for your subsistence. The little nugget of mobile “freedom”, that is your opportunity to tour on vacation, would disappear along with your work contract. There is something to be afraid of apart from losing your chains, as it seems that neoliberalism excels in uniting working men of all countries in perpetuating itself. What is at stake here is not really “the fear of unemployment, lurking in all citizens of countries of high capitalism” (Adorno 1973: 34). The unemployed are increasingly absorbed into the precariat and thus given work, *but* not decent work. It is, above all, a fear of scraping it from one gig payment to another or, in other words, the fear of precarity.

The aim of this article was not to disentangle tourism from the neoliberal symbolic order. It was, rather, to demonstrate how tourism is entangled in the current symbolic order and to foster our *understanding* of contemporary society. This was done by analysing the phenomenon of work display and elucidating how the relationship between tourism and work is articulated in the neoliberal symbolic order. A work display shows work out of its ordinary place and, as such, it fuels the tourist desire for the extraordinary. This, at least for Urry (and Larsen 2011: 15), is what tourism is all about: “potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life.” On our quest for the extraordinary, we come across work displays which offer us a chance to experience the universal drama (and horror) of work. A distinct pleasure indeed, as the article shows.

Disentangling tourism from the neoliberal symbolic order would, strictly speaking, require dismantling neoliberalism. This, if considered to be desirable, would require a collective effort that clearly goes beyond this article. Let us also not forget that tourism would stay with us even if neoliberalism were to disappear from the face of the earth without leaving any traces. It is true that “we still don’t know with any precision how tourist desire differs from other desires” (MacCannell in Castro and González 2023: 10), but I am not sure that there is anything about tourist desire that would fundamentally distinguish it from other desires. Touring, in any case, is the subject’s attempt to satisfy desire and, as such, it can and did take place in a symbolic order other than the neoliberal one. To put it more bluntly, tourism is *not* exclusive to neoliberalism. Established in 1953, the journal *Tourism*, for example, was published for much of its history during the Socialist Republic of Croatia, and this is certainly not because tourism had been impossible in the socialist symbolic order.

Furthermore, at least some room should be left for the possibility of tourism altering our experience of ourselves beyond neoliberal discourse. There is, moreover, nothing in

tourism *per se* that makes it incompatible with conceptions of society that are not as work-centred as today's and in which precarity would be a matter of the past (Frayne 2015; Gorz 1999; Graeber 2018).⁴ A *critical* evaluation of this subject, which would entail not only a critique of the critical turn in tourism studies (Ateljević et al. 2017; Pritchard et al. 2011) but also a critique of the critique of the critical turn in tourism studies (Bianchi 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte 2013), exceeds the scope of the present article. I would nonetheless like to conclude by reminding us that the rules of discourse apply to tourism. The subject is constituted – but not determined – by (neoliberal) discourse (Butler 2011) and, likewise, the tourist is constituted – but not determined – by (neoliberal) discourse. Tourism, in other words, is situated in the neoliberal symbolic order *but* it is not exhausted by the neoliberal symbolic order. This, in turn, establishes the structural opportunity for tourism to occupy a discursive position beyond that of an ideological supplement in the universal drama of work.

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⁴ In the context of tourism's ethical or political capacity, particularly due to the article's engagement with MacCannell's work, *The Ethics of Sightseeing* by MacCannell (2011) ought to be mentioned. However, it should also be mentioned that, in the preface to *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, MacCannell (ibid.: xi) states: "Please note this is an ethics of *SIGHTSEEING*, not of *tourism*, a much broader topic that includes sightseeing. I anticipate it will be misread as implying more." Then again, on the same page, MacCannell writes: "My hope is the book will encourage more discussion and research into the ethics of tourism, creative ways of being a tourist, how tourists relate to social symbolism, and the subjectivity of sightseers."

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TURIZAM I UNIVERZALNA DRAMA RADA

Gotovo pedeset godina nakon objave kapitalnog djela Deana MacCannella *The Tourist*, članak se vraća jednom od fenomena obrađenih u knjizi, odnosno činjenici da je rad drugih postao turistička atrakcija. Članak kritički ispituje MacCannellovu tvrdnju da *work display* (izlog rada) omogućuje industrijskom čovjeku usvajanje sintetičke društvene perspektive i doživljaj vlastite uloge u univerzalnoj drami rada. Tvrdim da izlaganje rada ima konzervativnu funkciju jer potiče turiste da se prisjete kako bi i oni mogli postati dio jednog takvog izloga, ali ne kao promatrači, već kao loše plaćeni radnici u izlogu rada. Članak tvrdi da upravo izlog rada otkriva prekarnost kao temeljnu značajku univerzalne drame rada. Ističem da je dekulturnalizacija radnog mjesta, na kojoj se temelji MacCannellova analiza izlaganja rada, poprimila obrnuti smjer, što je naposljetku rezul-

tiralo pojavom kulture radnog mjesta. Navedeno zahtijeva da ponovno razmotrimo naše razumijevanje izlaganja rada, ali i rada i turizma uopće. Razjašnjavajući odnos između rada i turizma kao simboličkih sustava, članak pokazuje da oba održavaju suvremeni simbolički poredak.

Ključne riječi: neoliberalizam, prekarnost, turizam, turist, *work display*