Unmasking Whiteness in Honeymoon Advertisements: Narratives of Race, Class, and Empire

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines narratives of race and colonialism in honeymoon advertisements. Borrowing from the conceptual frameworks of Barthes (1972), O'Barr (1994), and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), I undertake a textual analysis of Sandals' advertising images. Sandals is a leading resort chain operating in the Caribbean that makes use of visual advertising to promote couples-only romance in tropical settings. I situate these honeymoon advertising images within the political spheres of international tourism and the North-American wedding industry. In closely analyzing the visual advertisements of Sandals, specifically the 'luxury-included' honeymoon, I argue that Sandals' advertising campaign perpetuates racialized hierarchies between tourists and local peoples, cultures, and spaces, as well as discourses of class and empire. Sandals' myth of the ultimate luxury honeymoon emphasizes a larger narrative structure of contemporary racial hierarchies in the realm of tourism in the Caribbean. Sandals' images sugarcoat modern-day racialized discourses of power and inequalities and sell such imbalance of power to a vast North-American audience.

Acknowledgments

This project started long ago, in 2009. At that time, I was a hardworking graduate student finishing up my degree in media studies. I had managed to write up the first draft of my thesis. Then, slowly but surely, life happened. I married my life partner. We moved out of our respective nests and started a family of our own. Domestic bliss. Two children later (ages 2 and 4), I worked on my thesis whenever I found the time and the emotional openness to write. My supervisor, Yasmin Jiwani, has been present every step of the way, encouraging me with kind words and challenging me with constructive feedback. Yasmin, I am sincerely grateful for the generous attention and patience you have given me through your detailed revisions and emails. Your assistance throughout this journey has been invaluable to my growth as a student and woman. Also, I would like to recognize the support from the graduate committee and the communications department, notably Eve Girard, who has helped with the logistics surrounding my works as a full-time mom and student. Your swift replies via email have kept me calm amidst the chaos of writing, editing, and caring for my family. I would like to thank Monika Kin Gagnon for her encouragement during my initial thesis proposal. Your critique and comments have contributed to my research and writing. A very special thank you to my parents whose unconditional love and acceptance have helped me become a confident and kind human being. My thriving in graduate school was possible because you worked so hard so I did not have to worry about food on the table or a roof over my head. You have made my academic career a little easier. Finally, this work is made possible by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC): somewhere in the committee was a feminist scholar whom believed that the subjects of race relations, colonialism and honeymoons are worthy of critical dialogue. Thank you.

Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to my husband and partner in crime, Joseph Ojeil. You accept my strengths and weaknesses and encourage me to grow stronger even when my confidence as a writer is low. You do not ask that I be perfect. Instead, you motivate me to embrace my true self and surrender to the wonderful and exciting chaos that is life. To my kids, Juliano and Angelina, you are life. You are a part of my being. You cry. I cry. You laugh. I laugh. Mommy is a warrior. It takes a village to raise kids. It takes a village to create a piece of writing. Off to the next adventure …

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The advertising images listed above are purposefully used in this thesis for academic criticism, which falls under "fair dealing". Figures 1-3 are scanned copies of advertising images found in magazines, and Figure 4 originates from Sandals.com website. The sources of these images are clearly noted in the thesis. The images play a significant role in this academic work as the latter describes, reviews, and critiques the ads in question. The Concordia University's *Copyright Guide* clearly states:

> Using images in student papers: Fair dealing … allows you to make copies of images that are copyright protected for the purposes of research, private study, criticism, and review. (http://library.concordia.ca/help/copyright/index.php: accessed February 2015)

Introduction

As I prepared my own wedding back in 2009, I came across a multitude of honeymoon advertisements in the travel section of wedding magazines. These ads lured my attention to the visual storylines of couples engaging in romantic gestures towards one another. But what also caught my attention was the opulence of the settings and spaces that surrounded these couples. It was the luxurious sea-front suite that made my eyes twinkle with desire. At the time, my partner and I were students who could only dream of such a luxurious vacation and spend our first days as husband and wife in a tropical paradise. The reality was quite different. After spending most of our savings on our actual wedding, we were left with little. Instead of the lavish hotel resort in St-Lucia, we escaped to a charming cottage in the nearby Eastern Townships of Quebec. Looking back, I am grateful that we spent our time as honeymooners where we did. Our first days as husband and wife were not dictated by advertising images selling luxury honeymoons to young brides and grooms. Our honeymoon was our own: personal and quaint. The choice of topic for this thesis is influenced by my own experience in engaging with honeymoon advertisements in wedding magazines. Since most of the courses I took during my years as a graduate student focused on racialized representations and visual discourses in popular media, magazine ads depicting luxury honeymoons in the Caribbean seemed like a perfect fit. My interest in such fields forced me to investigate the manifestation of discourses of race, class, and empire in contemporary travel advertisements, specifically the tropical honeymoon images of Sandals Resorts.

The writing for this thesis began in 2009. Six years have passed since I wrote the first sections for this project and selected the corpus for this thesis. Within the last years, I have been hard at work as a mom, caring for two small children under the age of four while simultaneously learning to live with a mental disorder. Now that I have more time and energy, I can finally channel my efforts in finishing up this project. Importantly, although time has passed between then and now, the advertising campaign selling Sandals' "luxury-included" honeymoons continue to prevail in wedding magazines (as shown on Sandals.com). The salience of the topic has not diminished within the last years. Rather, I would say that it has kept its momentum in popular media as well as in contemporary North-American culture.

Sandals Resorts: A Company Profile

Honeymoons have a performative quality (Bulcroft et al 1997). They are socially formed rituals that imply particular narratives of romance and exoticism, which in turn, are performed by a specific consumer group: newlyweds. Since the 1990s, "honeymoons have become a major part of the tourist industry, adding to the economic sectors of not only America but many island and tropical economies," write Bulcroft et al. (485). This leads one to think about the interconnection between honeymoon advertisements and the pervasiveness of colonialism – and racialized hierarchies of power – in international tourism.

Contemporary tourism and honeymoon industries generate billions each year and include a wide selection of popular literature which promotes their messages of escape and romance. Playing a fundamental role in these industries, Sandals has been attracting couples worldwide. Founded in 1981 by Jamaica-native Gordon "Butch" Stewart, Sandals has been participating full-force within the Caribbean's all-inclusive resort market (*Travel Weekly* 2005, 6). Generating one hundred million dollars (U.S.) in sales each fiscal period, Sandals is one of the leading resort chains in the Caribbean, according to Hoovers (2012). The resorts attract annually over 500 thousand tourists – of whom 40 percent have already been to a Sandals vacation. Room occupancy averages 90 percent per year (Kingsbury, 2011: 653).

Sandals is part of the larger group, Sandals Resorts International, which includes three other resort brands: Beaches, directed towards family holidays and activities; Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts, promoting a casual lifestyle amidst tropical landscapes; Fowl Cay Resort, emphasizing exclusivity on a private island in the Bahamas; and finally, Private Villas of Sandals and Beaches showcasing four luxurious villas which are privately owned by Sandals Founder and Chairman Gordon Stewart. Sandals Resorts International is a privately-owned company which features among the big names of international, all-inclusive tourism. Its competitors are Club Med, Carnival Corporations, and Disney Parks and Resorts – to name a few (Hoovers 2012). Sandals qualifies itself as the epitome of "luxury-included" beach resorts which primarily targets couples as its main market, as indicated on Sandals.com. This chain includes over a dozen resorts in the Caribbean: seven are found in Jamaica, three in St-Lucia, two in Bahamas, and Antigua holds one resort. Two main themes shape this resort chain: "luxury-included" – as the company describes itself – and "couples-only." Sandals' advertising campaigns use a variety of

media channels to reach audiences: bridal magazines, wedding showcases, wedding websites, such as TheKnot.com or Weddingbells.com, television commercials, billboards, and Hollywood films – including the 2007 production *License to Wed*.

Although this research deals specifically with advertisements presented in bridal magazines and on Sandals.com, it is interesting to think about the various media vehicles used to promote the Sandals brand within the spheres of tourism and weddings. Considering that such channels are very much about weddings, Sandals is able to sell Caribbean destinations to a growing bridal market. Not only is the company targeting couples in general, but it significantly seeks out soon-to-be married men and women, thus tapping into the larger arenas of romance and conjugal sexual activity. The extensive scope of such advertising campaigns emphasizes the cultural significance of images in maintaining romance discourses in travel narratives. Importantly, Sandals' honeymoon advertisements work within the larger ideological sphere of heterosexual romance – clearly alluding to Harlequin storylines and wedding consumer culture.

Sandals and the Concept of All-Inclusiveness

Sandals proudly promotes the "all-inclusive". The company puts effort in emphasizing the "all-leisure, worry-free" qualities of its resorts (Issa and Jayawardena, 2003, 169). From the meals and drinks to the accommodations and outdoor activities, such as scuba diving and golf, everything is included (Sandals.com). One does not even have to worry about taxes and service charges, according to the company's website. If a couple is interested in combining both wedding and honeymoon, Sandals offers the "WeddingMoon", a package that includes both wedding planning and ceremony. The entire event takes place on site. According to Otnes and Pleck:

> By 1994, Sandals was the world's largest independent resort group. It offered much more civilization, and indeed, luxury, than Club Med, although it simply borrowed the Club Med idea of the beach village as a retreat from civilization. But since there was always live entertainment in the evening, the all-inclusive combined distinctive regional music with the idea of the beach village. At an all-inclusive, the couple purchased lodging,

> transportation, meals, and as many rum punches and piña coladas as they might like, as well as use of all the facilities and access to entertainment on the premises. Like Club Med, one of the appeals of the all-inclusives is that the couple did not have to tip, carry around cash, or pay for extras. Being able to eat and have free drinks at all-inclusives led to the moniker 'the beach and booze honeymoon'. (2003, 153)

Such stress-free atmospheres reinforce the leisure quality of Sandals resorts. Vacationers, often traveling from work-crazed environments, expect their get-away to the Caribbean to be anything but worrisome. Sandals understands this request. *Travel Weekly* (2004, 8) has characterized Sandals as a home-away-from-home, a place where vacationers – including honeymooners – can expect to relax and unwind from their stressful jobs – or in the case of weddings, escape the chaos surrounding the entire planning process. Sandals works as a tropical haven enabling couples to laze around on white-sand beaches: "[The company knows] that for the guests the hotel is their home for a week or two. And that is what a holiday with Sandals … is all about - coming home" (*Travel Weekly* 2004, 8). Hence, what the resorts do is provide a safe and welcoming space where tourists can benefit from the tropical sceneries of the Caribbean, without thinking about their busy lives back home or the actual socio-economic struggles taking place in nearby quarters (Desnoes 2003). This is the type of imagery being depicted in Sandals' advertising campaigns. Thus, the concept of the all-inclusive suggests that most of the activities that the company offers to its guests are covered by a single price.

Interestingly, this concept of all-inclusive also implies that the vacationers – along with the activities that they take part in – are to be contained within a space designated by the resort. Consequently, in the context of the Caribbean, there is a clear demarcation between the area labeled "tourist" and the area labeled "non-tourist". The first space often includes actors who benefit from a certain degree of privilege, mobility, and economic capital; whereas, the second space often entails actors who play the roles of hospitality, service, and courtesy (Strain 1996). It is within these distinct spaces that actors circulate, performing their respective roles – either dominating or dominated, as outlined by O'Barr (1994). As I show in the following chapter, Sandals' honeymoon advertisements overtly supports such relationships thereby contributing to and reinforcing the power divide between tourists and locals.

Situating the Thesis

William M. O'Barr (1994), Stuart Hall (1997), Jeffrey Auerbach (2002), and Roland Barthes (1972), among others, encourage one to look beyond the descriptive layer of advertising – narratives of romance in paradise islands – and search for storylines of power and ideology. In this case, advertising is perceived as a vehicle sustaining existing structures of power concerning race and sex. (O'Barr 1994). Since advertising often depicts hierarchical relationships between people, I am interested in investigating the manner through which Sandals' honeymoon advertisements establish power relationships between Western honeymooners and Caribbean landscapes, as well as the local inhabitants (O'Barr, 73). Sandals' advertisements do not simply invoke romanticized imageries; they position such visual narratives within the on-going history of colonialism and empire (Pratt 1992). Consequently, one central line of inquiry guides my thesis: ***How are whiteness and colonial relations of power reproduced in this particular field of advertising?*** For the purpose of this cultural investigation, I must emphasize that the concept of "whiteness" does not solely refer to the colour of one's skin, but rather, it signifies a status of dominance, one that is normatized, particularly when speaking of colonial relations of power (Dyer 1997; Jiwani 2006).

Essentially, this textual analysis of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements works as a tangible means to investigate the larger arena of honeymoon/tourism advertising *in relation to* racialized representations and colonial discourse, which, according to O'Barr (1994) and Auerbach (2002), sustain hierarchies of power between Western tourists [read *white*] and "toured" cultures, peoples, and landscapes [read *of colour*]. Strikingly, this structure of power *continues to dominate* in contemporary society. Although this thesis deals with a Caribbean-based resort chain and provides an overview of the Caribbean tourist locale, it mostly directs attention to the way in which honeymooners/tourists are continuously depicted, through advertising, as *superior to* the cultures and peoples of the hosting countries. In other words, this research investigates the discourses of power – concerning sex and race – that are embedded in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements.

Honeymoon narratives of "paradise love" belong to the long tradition of colonial travel and thus work to sustain and normatize politics of difference – between guest and host cultures explains Ellen Strain (1996, 77). "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" (Paul Kingsbury 2011, 652). In this sense, Sandals positions its honeymooners as colonial travelers benefitting from the Caribbean lands and peoples. The workers of these gated resorts – notably, the bartender, the chambermaid, the butler, the cook, the entertainment staff, are categorized as "domestics" whose principle goal is to serve privileged tourists (Kingsbury, 652). More importantly, writes Kingsbury, Sandals positions its men and women workers as objects of mass consumption, in that they are an intrinsic component of "the exotic" landscape and are a significant part of the Sandals experience. The images featured in this thesis testify to that. The workers presented in the ads play the role of "the help", and consequently by that very role, emphasize the commodification of Caribbean lands and peoples.

Looking into the political economy of tourism in the Caribbean, more specifically Jamaica, one recognizes the invaluable role of tourism as an economic sector. According to the *World Factbook* (2001), since Jamaica's independence from the British Empire in 1962, tourism has grown into a leading economic sector comprising more than half of the national GDP. Over 60 percent of Jamaica's labor force belongs to the sphere of service and hospitality. Although Sandals is Jamaican-owned, the company's founder is from the island, many all-inclusive resorts belong to non-Caribbean owners. Erik Cohen (1984, 376) explains that the economic dependency of "peripheral" countries [read Developing nations] on "metropolitan" countries [read First World, Western nations] echoes colonial hierarchies of power whereby empires dictate the economic exploitation of its colonies. Moreover, according to Kim Robinson-Walcott (2009, 109), many "peripheral" countries that heavily rely on tourism, like Jamaica, are composed of a "very small elite upper class … still decidedly nonblack, and still, …predominantly white – though the definition of *white* has become increasingly elastic over the years," signifying the color of one's skin *as well as* the status of power and class one occupies. Interestingly, Sandals belongs to the elite class: not only is the founder a white man in the Jamaican context, the resort chain, along with its visitors and alluring advertising campaign, occupy a position of power in relation to Jamaican black workers (Robinson-Walcott, 109).

In international travel, whiteness and power as concepts have *real* repercussions. The importance of investigating whiteness as system of power shaping real lived human experiences

taking place in all-inclusive resorts is clearly important in light of the contemporary globalization of capital and the transnational links between diasporic communities and their respective homelands. What happens in the (post) colonies also influences what happens here. However, considering the limits of my role as a graduate student in contrast to the vast scope of such a research topic, I chose to focus on the power relations represented in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements. These make up one – of the many – instances in which hierarchies of power deriving from the legacy of colonialism in the Caribbean shape the power structure in today's tourism practices.

Three premises direct my work. First, I position Sandals' advertising images within commodified travel and international tourism. Second, I recognize that international tourism, which includes tropical honeymoon destinations, is part of a colonial tradition – past and present (neo-colonialism). Third, most honeymoon images advertising tropical locales sustain whiteness as a standard and "natural" position of power. These presuppositions ultimately frame the manner in which I carry out the textual analysis of Sandals' advertising images.

The Theoretical Perspective

Sandals' advertising images, I argue, stand as "texts" made up of sexualized and racialized rhetorical narratives, marketed to a predominantly white audience, that contribute to the pervasiveness of a colonial discourse in contemporary society (Long and Robinson 2009, 104; Brummet 2008, 1-3; Barthes 1977). By focusing on these advertising images, which, according to Hall (1997, 17) work as "systems of representation" interpreting the Caribbean locale *as serving* Western tourist culture, I have the opportunity to explore the discursive construction of colonialism *in representation*. Hall (1996) writes,

> My own view is that events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that *it is only within the discursive*, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, *do they have or can they be constructed within meaning*. (443) (my italics)

Although my research does not focus on the lived social, economic, and political realities and experiences taking place within Caribbean destinations – which remain important areas of research – it does attempt to highlight the way in which these actual realities are *framed out* of popular visual discourse (Jiwani 2006) surrounding honeymoons and tourism, thus maintaining a hierarchy of power. Importantly, ads are social texts in which power is highly invested. Yet despite this reality, studies in tourism rarely focus on the manifestations of power in travel literature and media (Hall 2010, 199). This research peels back the layers of this so-called power and puts forward a progressive argument in regards to mainstream advertising, specifically in the sphere of honeymoon advertisements.

As a result of my interest in deconstructing the various discourses of power reproduced and sustained in and through Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, I situate this research within a constructionist framework (Hall 1996, 1997; Barthes 1972, 1977; O'Barr 1994). The textual analysis that I undertake works in parallel to the theoretical discussions presented in Barthes' *Mythologies* (1972) and O'Barr's *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (1994). Both of these works encourage one to thoroughly investigate the various discourses of power embedded in this particular sphere of advertising and the manner in which these narratives of hierarchy are legitimized.

Barthes (1972) argues that "[myth] is a *second-order semiological system*" in which a sign, included in a previous system of meaning, is transformed into a signifier (114). He further adds that:

> … in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call the *language-object* ...; and myth itself, which I shall call *metalanguage*, because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first. (1972, 115)

Such a conceptual framework pushes one to think about the visual signifiers included in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, which make up particular narratives of romance, as well as the location of these storylines within the wider sphere of colonial history. According to Barthes,

the concept of myth is an interesting tool to study the different layers of meaning presented in advertising: on one hand, one faces a micro-level of signification [read: romance, escape, and marriage] which is specific to a particular advertisement – the compositional elements; on another, one recognizes a macro-level of meaning, in which the ad itself – along with its various signifiers – allude to wider discourses pertaining to empire, colonial travel, whiteness (1972, 115). Thus, one is encouraged to navigate between both layers in order to better decipher the storylines promoted in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements.

Similarly, in his analysis of tourism advertisements, O'Barr demonstrates that through "the secondary discourse" – which echoes Barthes' concept of myth – one can start unmasking the ideologies embedded in visual ads, as well as, the overall power structure in which these images are situated (1994, 73). Interestingly, O'Barr pays a particular attention to the *relationship* between American tourists – the way they view themselves in relation to *Others* – and local populations living in tourist destinations (73-75). What form do such relations take? How does power fit within this equation? Therefore, two fundamental questions surface when speaking about Western tourism in *foreign* locales: (1) regarding the layer of myth, what ideologies are constructed as legitimate and normal; (2) what *types* of relations between Western tourists and locals are marketed as true (Barthes 1972, 115, 142; O'Barr 1994, 73-75)?

Referring to the critical analyses of international tourism undertaken by Crick (1989), Strain (1996), Desnoes (2003), Simmons (2006), and Tucker and Akama (2009) as well as using Barthes' notion of myth, I emphasize that advertising, in this case honeymoon advertisements depicting the Caribbean locale, puts forward a rather "depoliticized speech" involving relations between people that traditionally involve hierarchies of power (Barthes 1972, 142). In other words, in the name of profit and rhetoric, Sandals' honeymoon advertisements conceal histories of colonial struggle and racialized representations through the guises of romance and luxury. Yet, in the very act of doing so, these images reaffirm the heritage of colonialism by making "the world [appear to be] at the West's disposal for colonialists, travelers, capitalists, and popular consumers alike" (Strain 1996, 75). In contemporary honeymoon advertisements, the Caribbean locale remains *at the service* of Western leisure culture and its participants.

Within this frame of thought, two concepts carry significant weight: the "tourist gaze" (Urry 1990, xi; Long and Robinson 2009) and "whiteness" (Dyer 1997; Brewer 2005; Martinot

2010). According to Urry (1990, 1), the gaze of the tourist – or honeymooner – is "socially organized and systematized" in accordance to a context. In the case of Sandals' advertisements, the situation is *the Caribbean honeymoon*. What practices of looking are involved in the images? Who is looking? Who/What is the object of such look? Foucault (1981) would suggest that one must acknowledge that looking processes are a type of language that entails discourses of power. The gaze itself is an actualization of power (67). Elaborating on the honeymoon narrative, I discuss the manner in which colonial discourse seeps into visual storylines of romance. What does this process say about privilege?

As a concept, whiteness forces one to pay attention to the manifestation of power within racialized representations. As was mentioned previously, one should look beyond the idea of skin pigmentation when speaking about whiteness, and start questioning its role as a social formation and position of power, according to Jiwani (2006, 4-5). This particular line of inquiry entails that one problematizes and dismantles "the invisibility of whiteness" – its status as *reference point* (Dyer 1997, 3; Martinot 2010). Such is the motive guiding this research. Hence, in the case of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, what do the different layers of meaning reveal about whiteness and its social position? Considering that Sandals' advertising images often stage *white couples* in so-called romantic settings, how then is whiteness manifested and reproduced?

Methodology

In *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006), Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen put forward a "social semiotic approach" which positions a visual text within the social fabric in which it was produced, thus allowing one to acknowledge the text's ideological and political weight (13). In other words, advertisements are not void of history; rather, they are embedded within a particular historical context and belong to a particular historical tradition (13-15). Such a methodology emphasizes the socially constructive quality of advertising images. Similarly to Barthes (1972) who encourages one to investigate the myths promoted in advertisements, Kress and van Leeuwen call for an analysis of the overall compositional structure, the *grammar* or *order*, of a "multimodal text": the accumulation and interrelation of various signifiers, both visual and written (2006, 20). This process is a means to dig up the

narratives that are normatized and naturalized within advertising texts, and consequently, deconstruct their ideological and power structures. In this case, the emphasis is put both on the codes and signifiers presented in the advertisements, which make up the visual discourses promoted in/through the ads, and the advertising images themselves, working as social constructs.

Consequently, in order to conduct an effective and thorough textual analysis of Sandals' advertisements, I draw upon Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) conceptual model, which, as mentioned previously, allows one to historicize and politicize the visual advertisements through a "social semiotic approach". This analytical process also echoes the works of Barthes (1972) and O'Barr (1994) since its main focus is to situate Sandals' honeymoon ads within the larger sphere of Western honeymoon and tourism cultures, as well as the history of colonialism. What visual discourses and myths are promoted through Sandals' advertising images? Through which codes, visual and written (Blair 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), are these narratives reproduced?

The corpus selected is composed of four advertisements promoting Sandals' "Luxury Included Honeymoon". As mentioned in the opening section of this introduction, these advertisements were selected in 2009. Importantly, the theme of luxury presented in the ads still prevails today, and Sandals resorts epitomize luxury romance in popular media more than ever before. Three advertisements are located in different Canadian wedding magazine issues, the first two in *Mariage Québec* (Fall-Winter 2008 and Spring-Summer 2009), and the third in *Weddingbells* (Spring-Summer 2009). In the first two issues, the advertisements run two pages long; whereas, in the third issue, the Sandals advertisement takes up four pages. The fourth advertisement, "Honeymoon Luxury Package", was found on Sandals' promotional website. I chose to focus on the company's "Luxury Included" advertisements since they occupy the most space in popular media – present in both magazine and website genres. Sandals does offer "Romance" and "Adventure" packages as well on its website; yet, these are not promoted as much in Canadian bridal literature. The cross-genre aspect of this research allows one to recognize the widespread distribution of Sandals' honeymoon messages.

Finally, since this investigation deals with advertising, it is important that I pay attention to the elements of persuasion within Sandals' "Luxury Included" advertisements. Through what process does the Caribbean resort company sell its narrative of romance to Western audiences?

Although this research does not focus on audiences' reading practices in regards to Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, it does somewhat consider the intended audience in order to discuss the rhetorical feature of the images (Blair 2004, 52-53). This is where the position of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements *in* bridal magazines becomes an interesting subject of inquiry.

Chapter Breakdown

This thesis is composed of three interrelated chapters that attempt to deconstruct the power discourses entrenched in advertisements marketing Caribbean honeymoons. In Chapter 1: Wedding Bells, A Critical Examination of the Wedding Industry, I explore the contemporary wedding industry in North America and the way in which tropical honeymoons fit within this industry of excess. I pay close attention to the marketing of an "invented" tradition and the power relations that are embedded within this marketing process. Chapter 2: The Exotic Locale: Honeymoons and Tourism, examines the visual culture of tourism and honeymoons and questions the relations of power embedded within these two interconnected fields. Here, I concentrate on the visual and relational aspects of travel images, and on the way power manifests itself via these two components. I then contextualize Sandals Resorts' "luxury-included" campaign within the larger fields of international tourism and honeymoons. Chapter 3: Reading Sandals' Honeymoon Advertisements, provides a detailed textual analysis of the four selected Sandals' advertisements through a "social semiotic approach" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). In this case, the visual signifiers included in the advertisements are analytically discussed in terms of their relevance to larger social spheres of representation: racialization and colonialism. Finally, I also discuss the manner in which the selected advertisements reproduce whiteness and colonial relations of power and the implications that such discourses generate. This is where the conceptual theories of Barthes (1972) and O'Barr (1994) work as ways to discuss the visuals presented and their various layers of signification. More precisely, it is within this final section that I thoroughly discuss the myths of race, empire, and Otherness reproduced through Sandals' honeymoon advertisements. Indeed, the chapters making up this work build on one another. Therefore, this thesis is as much an investigation of a specific topic as it is a critical story about racialized representations in honeymoon advertisements.

Significance of Research

This research is of a particular interest to me since it was through a personal exploration of wedding magazines that I started noticing the widespread distribution of honeymoon advertisements, which, if one takes a closer look, contribute to the normatization of racialized hierarchies (Jiwani 2006, 6-7). Most importantly, the fact that such processes often go unquestioned is another reason justifying the importance of this cultural investigation (Hall 2010; Long and Robinson 2009; Tucker and Akama 2009; Edensor 2009; Robinson and Jamal 2009). Hence, there is need in critically analyzing these advertisements promoting romance in tropical settings since they perpetuate issues of race and sexuality (O'Barr 1994). Consequently, Sandals' honeymoon images work as a tangible means allowing me to take a closer look into the discursive sphere of tourism and honeymoon advertising.

Due to its multi-disciplinary feature, this thesis contributes to the fields of visual culture as well as critical studies in tourism, race, and culture (Long and Robinson 2009). It also provides room for further critical research in wedding and honeymoon advertising. The main goal of this thesis is to scrutinize a micro-level instance – hence the examination of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements – within the larger case of racialization in tourism advertising. On this note, I wish to re-state the line of inquiry that motivates this analysis: How are whiteness and colonial relations of power reproduced in this particular field of advertising?

Chapter One:
Wedding Bells, Critical Examination of the Wedding Industry

This chapter explores the wedding industry and its implications concerning advertising, target audiences, cultural traditions, and finally honeymoons. In so doing, the chapter serves as a scaffold upon which I situate my case study of Sandals. Since Sandals' honeymoon ads are prevalent throughout current bridal literature and wedding showcases, I begin this analysis by contextualizing the popular wedding industry in the North American setting. My research draws heavily from three valuable sources: Chrys Ingraham's *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (1999), Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck's *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (2003), and Vicki Howard's *Brides, Inc.: American Weddings and the Business of Tradition* (2006). Each of these sources provides interesting insight into the wedding industry and allows me to critically explore the industry's relationship to advertising. The chapter thus includes: (1) a general overview of the wedding industry; (2) a critical exploration of wedding magazines and the manner in which they work as advertising avenues for the industry; (3) a concise examination of the industry's target audience; (4) the marketing of tradition in the industry; (5) and finally, a look at honeymoons within wedding markets.

The Wedding Industry and Advertising

To speak of weddings in a consumer-oriented context is to speak of renowned wedding consultants, gift registries, a series of gowns and tuxedoes, bird-cage versus cathedral-length veils, limousines, reception halls, and pricey photography and videography which serve as memory tokens *after* the Big Day. The diamond ring sparkles over the entire experience. It is safe to say that weddings are big business and generate 70 billion dollars each year, as noted by Howard (2006, 1). Consequently, weddings do not only work as cultural rituals uniting two individuals together in front of family and friends, they are part of a larger industry which can be described as an amalgamation of a variety of services and trades – including department-store shopping, religious or civil ceremonies, dining and lodging services, transportation, fashion and

design, media records, and finally, travel practices. Howard (2006, 29) labels this "a conspiracy of trades" in which case, various businesses, each interconnected to one another, form a network, carefully targeting brides and grooms-to-be. By attending a bridal showcase, such as the Montreal-based exhibition *Let's Get Married*, one experiences such a "conspiracy" first hand. These shows manifest the interlocking relationship between different trades: from white gowns to tropical honeymoons. Walking in the aisles of the salon, one comes face-to-face with wedding decor merchants, disc jockeys, entertainers, bridal boutiques, and a never-ending list of honeymoon packages, including Sandals resorts. Interestingly, the salon also has its own wedding magazine featuring the many businesses that were present at the live showcase. Not only does one experience the "conspiracy of trades" at the actual exhibition, but one can also experience it repeatedly via the pages of the *Let's Get Married* magazine.

One of the many trades that make up this industry is the diamond ring. Although this chapter does not focus on the diamond ring specifically, it is important to note that such a luxurious commodity reveals the quality of grandeur associated with the contemporary North-American wedding industry. Ingraham (1999) emphasizes the significance of De Beers' role in situating the diamond ring at the center of the industry. With its slogan "Diamonds are Forever", De Beers, the world's most prominent diamond company, which is based in South-Africa, allocates $57 million each year on marketing the diamond ring via a multitude of advertising channels. Most importantly, the company has set a spending standard for purchasing this ring: the latter "should cost at least 'two months' salary' for the groom," as cited by Ingraham (1999, 51). Interestingly, the diamond ring is perceived as an invaluable aspect of the wedding sphere despite its high cost. The commodity has taken on the role of necessity. These details highlight the overall quality of excess that frames the wedding industry and consequently the honeymoon and travel practices that are part of this sphere of consumption.

When it comes to weddings in North America, *bigger is better*. Research (Ingraham 1999; Otnes and Pleck 2003; Howard 2006) stresses that the wedding industry makes use of multiple media channels to attract its key clientele: women more generally, brides-to-be more specifically. Howard's concept of "conspiracy of trades" does not solely refer to the actual trades that constitute the larger industry, but also includes the vehicles promoting these trades to future brides. One can easily name a list of popular Hollywood movies selling the dream of the "white

wedding" (Ingraham 1999, iii and 8), such as for example, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), *Monster-in-Law* (2005), *License to Wed* (2007), and *Bride Wars* (2009). Importantly, these movies do not work alone. They work in concert with other forms of media such as television shows (Ingraham 1999), popular children's books and toys, fairytales, wedding websites, and bridal magazines. According to Howard,

> Throughout the twentieth century, bridal magazines have done more than just tell young women what to buy – they have made consumerism itself a traditional part of American wedding culture. With the appearance of publications like *Bride's* (1934), *Wedding Belle* (1948), *Modern Bride* (1949), *Bride-To-Be* (1955), and *Bride and Home* (1956), the idea of tradition became a marketing tool. These magazines played a central role in the rise of a national wedding industry. They consolidated and expanded the wedding-related advice, information, and advertising that had long been a staple of women's magazines. Part of a general shift toward market segmentation and advertising-driven publications, bridal magazines gave advertisers a 'must-buy' market unlike any before. (2006, 71)

In other words, not only do different services and businesses work together to make up the web of the wedding industry, these actual trades are promoted in and through popular bridal literature.

Similarly, Ingraham (1999) presents the wedding industry as composed of a series of different markets, each sustaining the "white wedding" as the epitome of romantic love [signifying white, heterosexual, and middle-class values and consumers]. These markets can be divided into three separate groups: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The first market can be understood as a network of companies that have a *direct relation* to weddings (Ingraham 1999, 33). Here, the author speaks of wedding gowns and bridal boutiques, event planners, and honeymoon resorts (34, 56 – 59). Each of these elements plays a central role in constructing the "white wedding" as an ideal towards which men and women should aspire to be a part of. In other words, romance is never complete without the stylish white dress and the black tuxedo. As for honeymoons, wedding getaways are never simple outings; they symbolize romantic love at its finest state: two people, holding hands, walking towards a warm and inviting sunset. The imagery appears repeatedly in popular culture via feature films, children's toys and storybooks,

as well as in music videos. One can often recite "the script" even before the actions are played out by the leading actor and actress (Bulcroft et al., 1997); "Happily Ever After*"* is a story often told too many times (Ingraham 1999, 64).

The second category is composed of businesses that draw upon "white weddings to sell products that are only *indirectly* related to them", according to Ingraham (1999, 62, my emphasis). What do property insurance, Barbie, and Disney films have in common? All three, according to Ingraham, are somewhat linked to the spheres of weddings and marriage. In the case of insurance companies, these target newlyweds as potential homeowners in search of property insurance. In the case of dolls and children's media, these position young girls as future brides-to-be, thus reproducing the "white wedding" as the ultimate goal for women, explains Ingraham (1999, 62-64). The myth of the white Disney princess comes to life.

Finally, the third layer "is made up of those companies that have little or no relationship to the wedding market or to newlyweds but make use of wedding imagery to capture the imagination of potential consumers" (Ingraham 1999, 67-68). Here, the author refers to the many depictions of the "white wedding" in popular advertising campaigns. She names a series of companies – a few among many – that promote such imagery through advertisements: "Aetna Retirement Services, Buick, One-A-Day Vitamins, Pepto Bismol, and Estée Lauder perfume" (Ingraham 1999, 68). Indeed, the list goes on and on.

Significantly, Ingraham's process of conceptualizing the industry as a web uniting different layers of wedding markets enhances Howard's notion of "conspiracy of trades". Yes, different businesses do work in concert to legitimize and sustain the "white wedding" as a normative social event. However, their distinct positions in the overall industry – thus their relationship to wedding markets – work in gradation to one another. Referring back to Ingraham's discussion of primary, secondary, and tertiary markets, one can say that whereas the first works as a blueprint that is meant to be reproduced, reconstructed, and revised, the latter two perform the act of reproducing, reconstructing, and revising that actual blueprint. A wedding dress or a honeymoon is never *just* a dress or a vacation; rather, it implies Barbie's Wedding Dress or The Ultimate Tropical Honeymoon. By carefully exploring the interconnectedness between the different layers of markets, hence further understanding the "conspiracy of trades", one moves one step closer towards Barthes' idea of myth (1972, 129), which in the cases of the

wedding industry and advertising, works as a useful tool allowing one to dismantle the larger architecture of "white weddings" – and in the specific instance of this research, Sandals' honeymoon advertisements.

Wedding Magazines as Advertising Channels

As Howard observes (2006, 71-73), wedding magazines are the successors to the etiquette books of the late 19th century and early 20th century, carefully informing women of the dos and don'ts of a formal event: from the proper wording for invitations to the actual speeches given at the reception. However, wedding magazines do more than just inform, they openly target women in choosing a specific style of wedding – what is fashionable versus what is considered a wedding disaster. They position various businesses side-by-side, as though suggesting to future brides that an elegant affair necessitates a particular music band or disc jockey, a specific set of roses or calla lilies depending on the season, a brand new piece of jewelry versus a family heirloom. The limousine companies work as business partners to reception halls, wedding photographers, or hairstylists. So goes the wedding network. Similar to women's fashion magazines, strategically presenting a series of high-end couture labels such as Chanel, Gucci, and Louis Vuitton in relation to one another, popular bridal literature displays *in sequence* a variety of goods and services – as though each of these items is deeply connected to the next. As Howard explains (2006, 78-81), bridal magazines work within an already existing literature positioning *women as key consumers*:

> From the very beginning, the magazine defined the commercial concerns of the wedding industry. Following a format that changed little over the decades, the magazine's advertising and advertising tie-ins focused on etiquette, beauty, bridal fashion, the trousseau, gift-giving and receiving, housewares, and entertaining. (81)

Bridal magazines, as Howard (2006) and Otnes and Pleck (2003) indicate, are predominantly composed of advertisements dealing with the many specifics of the "white wedding". Flipping through the pages of these magazines, one recognizes that more than half of the total number of

pages displays some sort of advertising. These ads are separated in accordance to different subheadings. In the case of *Weddingbells* magazine (Spring-Summer 2009), the themes go as follows: "wedthings"(an exploration of various wedding items and ideas), "beauty"(a series of tips on makeup and hair), "fashion" (images portraying gowns for the bride and bridal party), "weddings" (a look at actual weddings taking place across Canada and overseas), "living" (an exploration of trendy household items), "travel" (honeymoon ideas and travel packages), and "wedding planner" (a list of wedding merchants specific to Canadian cities and neighborhoods). Interestingly, the section "living" includes a small advertising booklet promoting the Sears gift registry (located between pages 146 and 147 of the magazine). The brochure is entitled "Today, Tomorrow, and Forever" and depicts a white young bride, dressed in her wedding gown, raising her arms and head towards a blue sky clearly suggesting happiness: she is not only getting married, but she is also registered at the *best* wedding registry in Canada and will therefore receive all the household items that her heart desires. It is not enough that the magazine presents more advertisements than editorial content, but it also includes an actual advertising leaflet elevating domesticity and traditional gender roles, ultimately positioning women as passive consumers (Ingraham 1999).

White Middle-Class Women as Target Audience

Although men marry as well – and often contribute to the planning of the event in partnership with their fiancés – they are not treated as the main audience towards which wedding advertising is directed. They are pushed aside, absent from most magazine covers (Howard 2006, 94). For example, all three issues that have been selected for this research depict a rather young white bride smiling as she wears a bridal gown. These issues work as examples demonstrating the larger sphere of wedding magazines. As Howard emphasizes, this type of division between men and women in the market enhances traditional gender roles, whereby women are perceived as the main organizers of the domestic sphere – in which case, wedding and marriage stand as the epitome of such arena – and men are presented as concerned with *more important things*, not with lace, ruffles, and pearls (2006, 94).

The North American bridal market also excludes other social groups, notably the working class, people of colour, and queer couples (Ingraham 1999; Otnes and Pleck 2003; Howard 2006). In regards to heteronormativity, the dominant bridal market, which is predominantly manifested through the large amount of wedding magazines available on public shelves and popular media, defines heterosexual couplehood as normative and ideal. Importantly, however, homosexuals have also been targeted as a key audience in the wedding industry via wedding websites and other popular media such as TheKnot.com and Gay.com (Howard 2006). Such websites legitimize queer couples as a category of potential buyers. Positioned as such, queer couples become main players within the sphere of the "white wedding" in that they represent middle-class ideas of consumption.

Since the "white wedding" is predominantly defined as a middle-class social event, supporting mass consumption and indulgence over modest and intelligent spending, less-privileged social classes, often labeled as Other due to their inability to meet so-called standard spending practices, are cast aside, absent from wedding advertising (Ingraham 1999, 31-32; Otnes and Pleck 2003, 9, 37). Interestingly, Ingraham writes,

> Among those earning minimum wage or living near or below the poverty line, marriage disqualifies many for the benefits they need to survive. The risk is that even a working husband's earnings may be "too much" for him to qualify for a host of programs including food stamps, school meals, and child care but not enough to lift the family out of poverty. As the 1997 census data indicate, an increasing number of couples are choosing to live together without 'benefit' of marriage in order to avoid losing these programs, Social Security income, and some tax breaks. Ultimately, then, marriage only privileges those who already have the earnings to stay out of poverty. This means *marriage primarily benefits groups that are not disproportionately represented among the poor and that are able to secure and maintain goods and property*. (1999, 32, my emphasis)

Indeed, to speak of the wedding industry is to speak of a highly middle-class to upper-class sphere of consumption. Although Otnes and Pleck (2003, 10) do specify that the working

class somewhat participates in this arena, it is not the main target of the industry. In other words, it does not represent the ideal situation for the "white wedding". Economic capital is thus a central component in the wedding industry. The average cost for "white weddings" in Canada goes well above twenty thousand dollars, according to MyCanadianWedding.com. Such a financial cost works as a clear indicator separating the haves from the have-nots, thus accentuating middle-class status as a normative position of power.

Working in tangent with such consumer culture, the whiteness of the "white wedding" is another marker of exclusion, whereby white women continue to be depicted as the *ideal* brides of the wedding industry, and in contrast, women of colour remain absent from the pages of wedding magazines. Howard (2006, 96), Otnes and Pleck (2003, 31) and Ingraham (1999, 31) stress this last point, arguing that the "white wedding" translates into white femininity. Ingraham explains, "Wedding marketers are aware that white middle-class women are more likely to consume wedding products than any other group [since they often benefit from class privilege], and so they target their marketing campaigns to white women" (1999, 31). This is not to say that women of colour do not get married and do not wear white gowns for their ceremony and reception. Rather, wedding advertising, including bridal magazines, often exclude women of colour from their images. For instance, how often does one see a black or Hispanic woman on the cover of *Weddingbells* or *Mariage Québec*? It is apparent, therefore, that in relation to the wedding industry (as in other sectors of consumer culture), a process of racialization is already embedded within bridal magazines.

Racialized representations are very much a part of wedding advertisements, including both pre- and post-marital images. Who is this *ideal* bride, all dressed in white? If one is to refer to the social imagination of North Americans, often shaped by Disney's rendition of Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, she is *white*, preferably with *light-colored hair* and *pale eyes* (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 27-28 and 31; Ingraham 1999, 36). Her locks are neatly pulled back in a classic chignon, or otherwise, gently cascade over her delicately-defined shoulders. Her dress is *white*. Her shoes and gloves carefully complement her attire. She is virginal, pure, untouched. She has the white veil and gown to prove it. She blushes as she walks down the aisle of the church. The diamond to be found on her gold band is clear and bright, *not coloured*.

However, whereas the white bride is represented as passive in regards to the white groom, she is perceived as superior to the bride of colour – who according to the many magazine covers in the wedding industry – is alienated from the respectable sphere of "white weddings." Fellows and Razack (1997-1998, 347-348) argue that "respectability" plays an important role in the making of the middle-class. It acts as a process of categorization, whereby certain groups are positioned as respectable and others as non-respectable. The authors emphasize that respectability is often manifested through women. They become the subjects through which the middle-class is defined. In the case of the North-American wedding industry, the inclusion of white women, and consequently, the exclusion of women of colour in visual literature positions the former group as respectable subjects belonging to the sphere of "white weddings," and consequently, the latter as subjects excluded from that same sphere. Hence, under the umbrella of middle-class, white women and women of colour are set up as "competing marginalities," in which case, the power attributed to one group benefits from the disempowerment of another (335).

As O'Barr (1994, 83) clearly indicates, what is included in the frame is as important as what is excluded from it. In the case of wedding magazines, the bride of colour is rarely named, depicted, or referred to. And in the few instances where she is represented, she is either portrayed as an exotic bride – such as is the case in the "International Passport" magazine spread found in the Spring-Summer 2009 issue of Weddingbells which presents "global bridal style", from "Spanish Señorita" to "Indian Princess" – or positioned as "ethnic" and "multicultural" (Weddingbells Summer-Spring 2009, 118-125).

Marketing Tradition in the Wedding Industry

Social rituals play a significant part in this industry. It is safe to say that these events are often the central point around which the entire commercial sphere revolves. In the case of the wedding industry, these rituals are understood as the engagement proposal, the civil or religious ceremony, wedding photography sessions, the reception, and finally, the honeymoon. These elements work in concert in forming the overall wedding industry. Rituals habitually involve some sense of tradition or historical lineage whereby they imply the participation of members of a particular

community – or family – in creating a so-called significant social event. Nevertheless, the concept of significant social event is always at work in a historical context. Here, I speak of the North-American context. I argue that weddings, along with the purchase of the bridal gown, the selection of a wedding photographer, and romantic honeymoons, are highly constructed events that are sustained by both corporations and community members alike. The former act as the overall architecture in which social activities or rituals are carried out by various community members. Importantly, since the wedding industry primarily focuses on bringing together various trades and businesses that specifically deal with the reproduction of social rituals, including the "white wedding," its main goal remains the marketing of "tradition" (Howard 2006, 29 and 34).

"Tradition" works as an advertising tool, stresses Howard (2006, 34). The success of such cultural practice can be observed in the making of so-called natural rituals – from the wedding ceremony to the honeymoon. Often, these social events, including the "white wedding" and everything implied, which remain unquestioned by their very participants. Then, to speak of "tradition" is to speak "invented tradition", according to Eric Hobsbawm (1992, 1), who posits that:

> 'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a *suitable historic past.* (My emphasis)

Thus, traditions are socially constructed events or ways of doing which *appear* as a natural part of a unique cultural heritage; rare are the occasions when the actual formation of these events or ways of doing, often by powerful social agents such as the many corporations sustaining the wedding industry, made visible for all to see and critique. Importantly, as Hobsbawm stresses, naturalization and power influence the way in which one discusses traditions – for the latter can no longer be discussed as natural and apolitical (1992, 1).

In the case of the "white wedding," traditions are celebrated, re-invented, and sold to brides, according to Howard (2006, 34). A more recent example is the 2012 book entitled *Style*

Me Pretty by Abby Larson, which is destined to help women design their own custom wedding according to different styles, colors, feelings, and genres. In other words, brides have templates to follow when it comes to their weddings and honeymoons. The "white wedding" has its own "structure of feeling" (Williams 1977), which includes luxury and female beauty. Yet, it is never presented as constructed or serving middle-class ideals of consumption. Such action would only dismantle the very purpose of the "white wedding": to act as the all-time dream of every little girl, from dressing up Barbie (Ingraham 1999) in her white gown to the fantasy of sharing a romantic gateway with Prince Charming (Otnes and Pleck 2003). Interestingly, "traditions" in relation to the wedding industry, as Howard indicates (2006, 69), are socially constructed rituals and events that stem from a history of commercial marketing. In other words, traditions are in fact "invented traditions", echoing Hobsbawm (1992). They should not be considered as natural events, void of cultural production and ideology.

In regards to the wedding industry, many traditions that originated in the Victorian era – such as the use of heirlooms as opposed to newly purchased goods and rustic and familial honeymoons versus lavish tropical getaways – were not intended as profitable ventures (Howard 2006, 34; Otnes and Pleck 2003, 135). Thus, in the name of consumerism, these traditions needed to be converted into more profit-oriented "invented traditions". As Howard puts it,

> Like the jewelry industry, other commercial enterprises also needed *a modern, flexible idea of tradition* in order to attract new markets and stay profitable. As jewelers had done with wedding and engagement rings, an increasingly broad range of businesses developed methods to expand all types of wedding consumption and bring consumers to their doors. Through their efforts, marriage came to mean registered wedding gifts, purchased goods for a new home, ready-made wedding clothes for the bride and her pageant of bridesmaids, a flower-bedecked ceremony, a lavish much-photographed reception with food, drink, and dancing, and honeymoon to follow. Although separate and diverse businesses with a variety of functions provided these wedding-related goods and services, they came together in the pages of the new bridal advertising magazines that began appearing in the 1930s and 1940s (2006, 69-70) (my emphasis).

Central to this transformation is the notion of the modernization of traditions, whereby the latter enter the arena of post-industrialism and high-consumerism. In other words, the wedding industry needs "tradition" to be *re-invented* in order to frame rather excessive spending – for one day – as legitimate and natural. And, as was mentioned previously, wedding magazines are the channels through which such doctrine propagates itself in the North American wedding landscape.

Tropical Honeymoon as "Invented Tradition"

As discussed earlier, honeymoons work within the "primary wedding market" in that they *directly* deal with the bride and groom and the overall sphere of weddings (Ingraham 1999). Importantly, they symbolize the ultimate after-wedding event. The honeymoon is thus a cultural ritual often associated with sexuality, gender roles, and the establishment of domestic and public spheres (Bulcroft et al., 1997). According to Bulcroft et al., honeymoons are "socially constructed [customs] that [reflect] the larger sociocultural context, and our present-day emotional experiences, as played out in the context of intimate heterosexual relationships" (1997, 463).

As, "symbolic representations of the experience", honeymoons are visually and semiotically conceptualized as depicted *in advertising* (Bulcroft et al. 1997, 463). In the case of this research, it is not the actual lived experiences of those engaged in such rituals that are of central interest – although these do necessitate academic investigations – rather it is the media representations of these experiences that remain key to this particular exploration. Thus, honeymoons are to be considered as one of the many significant "invented traditions" making up the larger wedding industry. More specifically, considering the popularity of tropical honeymoons in the contemporary North American context, such rituals need to be addressed directly, and most especially, the ways in which they are portrayed in wedding magazines.

Otnes and Pleck (2003) provide a concise explanation of "the honeymoon" throughout history. Yet, before discussing their analysis, I wish to make reference to the authors' description of the term "honeymoon", as it was first used. They write,

> The word 'honeymoon' first appeared in English in the 1500s. It referred to a period lasting approximately one month after the wedding, to be filled with honeyed affection. After this period, the emotional climate of the couple supposedly underwent a change, just as the full moon appears briefly and then begins to wane. Thus, the word 'honeymoon', a sardonic and cynical term, made no reference to travel or a holiday. Indeed, the assumption was that the couple would simply remain in one place and perhaps drink honeyed nectar for a month to ease their inhibitions prior to having sex. (2003, 134)

It was in the early 1800s that travel practices became associated with honeymoons. Otnes and Pleck (2003, 135) claim that such cultural rituals, "English and elite in origin," stemmed from the Victorian era. Couples from the upper classes travelled to the countryside, enjoyed the pastoral landscapes and sights. Although honeymoons first developed as communal rituals, in which case family members accompanied the newlywed couple on their honeymoon, visiting relatives in the countryside, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, honeymoons became much more intimate events that were intended to be shared by the newlyweds alone. Consequently, the social ritual slowly became associated to romance and sexual *apprentissage* – between husband and wife (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 135). Originally, honeymoons were intended to "[reaffirm] the emphasis society placed on the ideal of privacy for a newly married couple"; to "[prepare the bride] to be deflowered by her groom; and finally, "to initiate the husband and wife into their proper sexual and gender roles" (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 135-136). Accordingly, another objective of honeymoons in history "was to express the language of romance through spending on souvenirs, tickets, and meals":

> Like the wedding itself, a honeymoon was also purchased, and as such it incorporated elements of consumption such as novelty (a place never before visited), luxury, and choice of destinations, accommodations, and activities. (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 137)

Now, although most brides and grooms are not virgins on their wedding nights, the elements described above still resonate with the contemporary honeymoon context (Otnes and Pleck 2003). In regards to this research, one of the many important elements remains: "purchasing

entry into a dream world, a paradise, a special place reached through a journey, a distinctive and special experience, and a return home" (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 139). In other words, honeymoons act as "scripts", constructed in previous centuries, enabling newlyweds to follow a step-by-step plan on how to experience intimate and sexual relations within married life as well as romantic love, write Bulcroft et al. (1997, 463 and 467; see also Edensor 2009).

Similar to weddings, honeymoons advertisements primarily target women, although initially men were perceived as the main organizers of the ritual since they were assumed to play the role of the family breadwinner (Bulcroft et al. 1997, 463; Otnes and Pleck 2003, 138). Hence, even within the sphere of travel, women are positioned as a strong consumer group. With this in mind, many ads promoting honeymoon imageries refer to "luxury, lavishness, and love" to attempt to sway their target audience (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 264). Therefore, honeymoons are not only "invented traditions" formed in the Victorian era infiltrating the contemporary cultural landscape, they are deeply embedded within the larger sphere of weddings and excessive spending practices. In the following section, I take a closer look at what is being sold in and through honeymoon advertisements, which in turn, reflects the larger sphere of the wedding industry.

Honeymoons: "Luxury, Lavishness, and Love"

Otnes and Pleck (2003, 265) argue that lavishness has been "democratized" throughout the past decades. This is partly due to the rising popularity of celebrity culture – including celebrity weddings and excessive lifestyles – the presence and increase of disposable income, and consequently, the infiltration of consumer culture into every facet of life. As Howard (2006, 236) mentions, "[i]nventing traditions and promoting new professional services *as essential* for the traditional wedding, the wedding industry expanded the material outlines of the marriage ritual [including honeymoons] and linked it, seemingly inextricably, to a modern consumer ethic" (my emphasis). In other words, the luxurious 10-day vacation in St-Lucia has become an intrinsic part of the "white wedding." The cabin-lodge no longer suffices; it does not articulate luxury in comparison to the all-inclusive, five-star treatment at a hip St-Lucia resort (Otnes and Pleck 2003).

> The overriding theme in all honeymoon planning, regardless of sexual preference, is that luxury travel is an opulent way to express romantic love. Just as the lavish wedding offers guilt-free consumption, so, too, expensive post wedding travel is seen as the trip of a lifetime, or at least a very special and very expensive vacation. (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 149)

Therefore, excess is part of the language of romance. Regarding contemporary honeymoons, this excess is legitimized through the all-inclusive trip to a tropical destination, where husband and wife can experience true hospitality, while carelessly lounging by the sea (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 149-150). Consequently, excessive spending is constructed as acceptable and is valued by the wedding industry since it is positioned as signifying unconditional love between two individuals, even if this spending practice is *just for a short time-period*. Today, honeymoons have a sexual and romantic appeal. They connote eroticism in an exotic, tropical location. They work as myths, carefully shaping popular imagination about romance. Within this myth, romance is placed side-by-side with luxury and lavishness (Otnes and Pleck, 2003).

The wedding industry does not act alone. To propagate the "white wedding" as an ideal – complete with *legitimized and normatized* excessive spending – the industry works in collaboration with tourism markets. In so doing, it places honeymoons in the same consumption category as the "white wedding": "luxurious, lavish, and romantic". The structure of appeal lies in the promise and possibility of transcending the ordinary, of making an occasion stand out in the sense of its "specialness." As Otnes and Pleck remark,

> But under a lace veil, behind a 20-pound beribboned cake, in the reflection of a flawless two-carat round diamond solitaire, or hand in hand on a beach in Aruba, the lavish wedding may be the one time when true transformation and transcendence of the ordinary seems not only possible but also, to those who embrace the tenets of romantic consumer culture, well deserved. (2003, 280)

How does Sandals work to sustain such cultural practice? How is romance depicted in its advertising images selling the "ultimate luxurious honeymoon"? In the following section, I push these inquiries further, exploring Sandals as a company, the context of international tourism, and conceptual tools that I use in decoding Sandals' honeymoon advertisements.

Chapter Two:
The Exotic Locale: Honeymoons and Tourism

Apart from being ensconced in the ritual of the wedding, the honeymoon, as social practice, is simultaneously linked to two different types of industries: weddings and tourism. It acts as the intersecting point between the wedding industry and international tourism. It is not uncommon for soon-to-be brides and grooms to flip through the pages of travel magazines as they prepare for the much-anticipated "white wedding." According to Bulcroft et al. (1997), honeymoons are "scripted" practices, which in this contemporary North American setting, often imply traveling to tropical destinations. Considering the affordability of such destinations for Northern middle-class honeymooners, it is safe to say that they are quite popular within the wedding industry.

Many wedding magazines refer to Caribbean islands as ultimate honeymoon sites. In other words, the Caribbean's lush landscapes become the backdrop to many honeymoon advertisements depicting husband and wife calmly strolling on a white-sand beach. In the context of this research, I argue that Sandals cultivates this advertising rhetoric. In fact, as I show in the following chapter (Chapter 3), the company reproduces such a social imagination – of the romantic white couple benefitting from the warmth of Caribbean landscapes – through its advertising campaigns. However, before beginning such exploration, I first discuss the international tourism industry *in relation to* Sandals' "luxury-included" honeymoons. By positioning Sandals' advertisements within the larger industry of tourism "down south," I can better demonstrate the manner in which the company contributes to the racialization of tourism locales in the Caribbean.

I begin this chapter with a critical analysis of tourism as it pertains to the field of advertising. My aim is to interrogate the inter-relationship between these two spheres. Two main concepts cohere this discussion: "visuality" and "relationality." Since tourism in general is often promoted via visual advertisements, it is essential that one problematizes tourism's visual culture. Who are the target audiences of these advertising images? How are their gazes being evoked? What is being shown? In reference to the second concept of relationality, one needs to critically explore the actual relationship between the various actors who constitute this visual culture – including the actors depicted *in* the ads, as well as the actors who comprise the audience

– those whose position of power is informed by their status as white middle-class North-American tourists or honeymooners. Hence, tourism advertisements are not solely discussed in terms of their internal narratives of places and peoples, but also in terms of their relation to their target audience (Long and Robinson 2009). This two-tiered investigation allows one to engage with advertising images and situate these visuals within the larger sphere of tourism.

The concepts of visuality and relationality are central to the analysis of tourism as a process of consumption, possession, and colonization on the part of vacationers (Kim and Chung 2005). The act of gazing at a distant people or landscape from a position of privilege – which in the case of this particular research is qualified as North-American, middle-class, and white – sustains a certain power relation between "the tourists and the toured," whereby the former are continuously situated as *dominant* and the latter as *inferior* (Strain 1996, 72). Thus, the term consumption not only signifies the action of purchasing goods, but also connotes the way in which toured peoples, landscapes, and cultures are exhibited for tourist consumption and possession. Kim and Chung (2005), O'Barr (1994), Strain (1996), and Tucker and Akama (2009) would likely describe such cultural practices as re-invented forms of colonialism, in which case the relationship between "the colonizer and the colonized" is played out by specific actors: respectively, North American honeymooners and the peoples and landscapes of tropical destinations (Memmi 1965, xxi).

The contemporary industries of international tourism, more generally, and honeymoons, more specifically, participate in this process of colonialism. Kim and Chung (2005, 68) advance the idea that North American advertisements – including tourism images – "are usually based on gendered and racialized reflections of global culture that draw on resurrected themes of colonialism and American Orientalism." In the case of tourism advertisements that sell sunny locales to privileged white North Americans, colonialism manifests itself within the actual relationship between the culture that has the opportunity to benefit from the advertising image – positioning itself as the traveler or explorer – and the culture that is forced to take on the role of service and hospitality. Importantly, this dichotomy of power is sustained in the very act of representation; this is where Orientalism comes into play. In the context of international tourism, this concept refers to the visual representations of tourist locales – and their peoples – produced by and directed to privileged North Americans. These advertising campaigns contribute to the

domination of Southern (or Eastern) places and peoples by the First-World. Power, in this case, works visually, in the narratives and compositions of tourism images. *Difference* is sustained and reproduced in and through advertising visuals promoting Caribbean all-inclusive resorts to Northern tourists. It is the actual images that are of importance here. They act as channels through which resort companies, catering to a white, middle-class audience, define, and ultimately categorize, Southern locales and peoples as Other. The North/South divide is made apparent for all to see. Advertisements selling tropical honeymoons play a significant role in this process since they overtly embrace the idea that Caribbean destinations should work as the stage on which heterosexual love can be performed. Therefore, to problematize international tourism means that one needs to bring up a specific set of interrelated topics such as: capitalism, race, representation, and class (Fellows and Razack, 1998). These complex concepts are intrinsic to the critical analysis of the tourism industry; without them, one cannot fully explore the field.

In her essay, "Marketing Paradise, Making Nation" (1995), Colleen Ballerino Cohen draws from Cynthia En Loe in observing that,

> As a manifestation of sexual desire for an exotic other, tourism is not just about escape; it is also about power. Not only is tourism embedded in the economic inequalities between the countries from which tourists originate and the countries of their destinations, but the sexual ideology underlying tourism's representations of destinations such as the British Virgin Islands draws its effectiveness from notions of the naturalness of sexual difference and inequality. (1995, 406)

Thus, to carefully examine the tourism industry – as it pertains to honeymoons – one needs to discuss the field in terms of its visuality and relationality, and consequently, its role within the history of colonialism and oppression. To speak of tourism is to speak of power.

Tourism and Honeymoons as Visual Culture and Relations of Power

In the following section, I utilize the two concepts described in the introductory section: visuality and relationality in terms of the different manifestations of the gaze in tourism advertising and the

various relations of power that take place in tourism advertising. Importantly, power is a recurring concept that interconnects both themes.

Tourism is mostly experienced through photographs and visual advertising. Since contemporary honeymoons often involve travelling to paradise destinations, it is safe to assume that they too entail a particular visual culture. Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard (2003) argue that advertising is critical to the successful promotion of international tourism since the latter is an industry that sells "services" and "experiences" to audiences. Ultimately, tourism and leisure are ephemeral products that are in constant need of promotion. Morgan and Pritchard write, "Leisure and tourism experiences are literally constructed in our imagination through advertising and the media" (2003, 10). Therefore, the tourism industry includes a distinct series of images that are produced with the intent to capture foreign lands, peoples, and cultures through visual apparatuses, and consequently sell these so-called objects to privileged audiences – who have the necessary economic capital to travel with ease. In the case of this research, I speak specifically of middle-class and upper middle-class North America.

In terms of visuality, it is interesting to think about the actual *framing* of tourist destinations (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride 2011). Desnoes (2003, 311-322) stresses that advertising images construct a "pseudo-reality" when representing tropical locales. Many of the images sell the sun and sea, yet the economic and political conflicts of a region remain overshadowed or are absented altogether. In other words, human struggles are *bad for business* when it comes to tourism advertising. Such processes of representation, claims Desnoes, regulate popular perceptions of Caribbean locales (310-311). Bridal magazines speak of such locations in terms of their warm climate, spectacular beaches, and hospitable locals. Politics are *framed out* of the discussion. In parallel, O'Barr (1994), in his analysis of contemporary advertising, emphasizes the importance of examining the narratives that do not appear in popular tourism advertisements. In doing so, one can start acknowledging the different types of power relations that are embedded in and evoked by the *imaginaire populaire* of tourism in Northern countries. These are the same narratives that maintain the North/South divide as a standard – whereby Northern powers benefit from the disenfranchisement of the South. Furthermore, the representation of the North as *strong* and the South as *weak* prevails in bridal literature. The latter, often produced in Northern countries, speak directly to a privileged Northern female

audience. In the act of targeting such readership – via honeymoon advertisements promoting the Caribbean – they continuously depict locales of the tropics as *hot* and *steamy*, places that allow one's most intimate fantasies to come true.

Simmons (2006) argues that travel literature in general – guidebooks, travel pamphlets, maps, and advertisements – contribute to the making of spectacle – in this case, an exotic spectacle. A locale is never just a geographical and cultural space with its own peoples and idiosyncrasies; it is always signifying – thanks to promotional literature – a "destination", welcoming tourists and newlyweds alike (2006, 54). Hence, not only are tourism locations positioned as destinations *for* Northern honeymooners, they are also categorized as exotic and sexualized spaces, unto which newlyweds can let their sexual imaginations run free. That said, one acknowledges the cultural significance of advertising images (Long and Robinson 2009). In Arturo Escobar's terminology, these texts belong to "regimes of representation" which contribute to the formation of Third World locales as tourist destinations (1995, 10).

MacCannell (1976, 110) problematizes the notion of representation in regards to the tourism industry. He argues that advertising images – whether they promote honeymoons in Jamaica or family vacations in Cuba – always act as "markers", *defining* the sights that enter popular consciousness whereby tourists are dictated on the manner of interpreting these locales: how to read them and what important details are to be taken in. Most importantly, these markers influence the discursive construction of tourism locales: what is shown; what is said. He thus defines such representative markers as:

> … any information about: a sight, including that found in travel books, museum guides, stories told by persons who have visited it, art history texts and lectures, "dissertations" and so forth. This extension is forced, in part, by the easy portability of information. Tourists carry descriptive brochures to and from the sights they visit. Some steal plaques and carry them off as trophies. (110)

Sandals' advertisements work as markers inciting couples to journey to the Caribbean. Such incitement outlines the tropical locale in terms of its natural setting, hospitality, outdoor activities, and lodging services. Each of these elements bears the signature name *Sandals*.

Hence, Caribbean islands, such as Jamaica and St-Lucia, are represented as corporatized, owned and sold by the resort mogul, Sandals.

As significant components to the "white wedding", tropical honeymoon narratives work within this sphere. Such cultural rituals are scripted (Bulcroft 1997, 463). They involve actors, plots, and scenes. Honeymoon narratives are promoted through advertising images since the latter appeal to the senses (471-82). The visuals are often colourful, vivid, and explicit in their messages of lust and love. Leonard (2005) highlights the significance of natural landscapes and wildlife when speaking of honeymoon scripts (43). Romance has become synonymous with exoticism. Indeed, not only is nature the backdrop to the honeymoon setting, it accentuates the exotic quality of the cultural ritual. In this way, a locale's natural landscapes are transformed into objects of visual consumption and fantasy (Leonard 2005, 43). Gersuny goes one step further by emphasizing the rhetorical feature associated to the honeymoon industry. It is not enough to merely describe narratives of romance. The honeymoon industry strives to persuade newlyweds to take part in the narratives it has constructed (Gersuny 1970, 261).

Consequently, the visual narratives depicted in many honeymoon advertisements contain a dual-layered structure of relation. On the one hand, there are the relations constructed by the actors in the image - newlyweds enjoying the sights of the tropics; on the other, there are the relations established by the actual advertisements and their readership, potential tourists or soon-to-be honeymooners who are in process of shopping for their honeymoon destination. Tourism advertising images thus work as visual means through which narratives of romance can be performed, as well as channels reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between privileged North American tourists and locales depicted as mere honeymoon destinations. As previously mentioned, visuality works in concert with relationality since the visual culture of tourism, especially its advertising images, are very much about power and its manifestation within the actual images, as well as in the relationship that is established between a potential Caribbean destination and prospective honeymooners.

Strain (1996, 72-77) argues that international travel practices stem from a colonial tradition. The acts of gazing, sightseeing, mapping, and entering a locale ultimately entail issues of cultural and class privileges, as well as, politics of difference. Such practices, explains Strain, resonate with colonialism. Similarly, David Spurr (1993, 13-19) writes that tourism's looking

practices are a Western formation. They seek to represent Third World locales to Western audiences. "But even where the Western [tourist] declares sympathy with the [toured], the conditions which make the [tourist's role] possible require a commanding, controlling gaze" (20). Spurr allows one to examine the position of North Americans in relation to international travel practices – including honeymoons. The tourist, like the travel writer, strives to characterize a locale, its peoples, its landscapes. This process of characterization exemplifies mastery (27). As the title of Spurr's book suggests, tourism implies *The Rhetoric of Empire*. This meta-narrative generates colonial practices, such as "surveillance", "appropriation", and "aestheticization", which in turn, contribute to *the West as reference point* (13, 28, and 43) (my emphasis). Whereas "surveillance" implies the gaze of the Western tourist, "appropriation" involves the occupation of land through discourse and representation. Finally, "aestheticization" accentuates the *foreignness* of a locale in relation to the Western tourist (13, 30, and 44). Each of these practices, set out by the tourist industry, is problematic, argues Spurr. They sustain the hierarchical relationship between powerful industries and Third World tourist destinations (47).

John Lea (1988) and Louis A. Perez Jr. (1975) emphasize that international tourism contributes to the dependency of developing regions. Despite the "development discourse"(Escobar 1995, 10) propagating ideas of economic growth and fair wealth distribution, Lea suggests that Third World countries are being *sold* and *controlled* by "intermediary agents", such as hotel companies and travel agents (1988, 10). Similarly, C. Michael Hall and Hazel Tucker (2004, 2) point out the power imbalance existing between "destination" countries and the international tourist industry. These locales are ultimately transformed into mere tourists sites. Working along the same lines, Malcolm Crick (1989) writes that tourism overshadows a locale's colonial history and its ongoing power struggles. What remains then, in advertising images, is the endless depiction of sun and beaches (321).

Interconnecting Visuality and Relationality within Travel Advertising

The arguments above echo Simmons' (2006) idea of travel locations serving *as a destination* for a privileged few. One can state that the visual signifiers included in tourism advertisements – specific to the Caribbean locale – are consciously chosen elements intended to position a travel

destination as an object to be gazed at and consumed by tourists. Hence, two systems of power are simultaneously at work here. A first power relation is established by the hierarchical positioning between the tourists – often originating from a privileged socio-economic milieu – and the actual travel destinations – which in the case of Caribbean islands, stand as less-privileged contexts intended to serve guests from foreign places. This first relation can be described as based on actual subject-positioning, whereby tourists play the role of capital-owning subjects that seek to benefit from the positioning of the Caribbean as an exotic destination. In this relation, the latter plays the role of object, catering to the desires of travelers. However, this rapport is also reinforced by the "tourist gaze" (Urry 1990, xi), a concept that introduces a second layer of power. Through the act of gazing – at either travel advertisements selling the Caribbean or actual lived spaces labeled "exotic" – tourists and honeymooners alike participate in the mastery of foreign places, peoples, and cultures.

According to Urry, the gaze of the tourist – or honeymooner – is "socially organized and systematized" in accordance with a context (1990, 1). In this case, the context is understood as the positioning of tourists as having *power* and the local landscapes and peoples subordinated to that gaze as having *less power*. The former works in constant relation to the latter. In this area of relationality, it is apparent that tourism's visual culture – including ads, travel and bridal magazines, and maps – accentuate the already existing hierarchy between travelers and host peoples, as Simmons (2006) explains. Visuality and relationality are interrelated in the case of international tourism. They work as interesting investigative tools allowing one to discuss the multiple layers of power taking place within advertisements as well as the role of these cultural products within the greater sphere of tourism and wedding industries.

Rachel Snow (2008) speaks directly about the interconnection between the "tourist gaze" and the power relationship between tourists and locals. Although her research deals primarily with tourists' photographic practices, it explores the notion of power in relation to tourism's visual culture – including travel advertising. Photography in tourism, similar to amateur photography in the context of tourism, attempts to "[transform] abstract and intangible experiences into tangible material objects that could be collected and owned" (Snow 2008, 8). In other words, the image of a tropical destination – whether it be a personal photograph or a visual advertisement – allows tourists to possess, in the palms of their hands, a far-off place. Thus,

when speaking of tourism in relation to visual culture and power, one ultimately speaks of consumption (Snow 2008, 8). Honeymoon and tourism destinations go through multiple processes of commodification and consumption. Snow adds,

> At the same time, making one's own snapshots allows a tourist to secure a privatized and personalized representation of the canonical, commodified site. When a tourist shares photographs with friends and family, he or she reintroduces these privatized documents back into the public sphere, where they contribute to the ongoing commodification of the site and allow the tourist to display a personal ability to consume. (2008, 8)

Hence, the Caribbean landscapes that are featured in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, including sand, sea, and vegetation, are transformed into commodities via three channels: (1) the actual exhibition of these landscapes in Sandals' advertising campaign; (2) the positioning of these natural settings as *serving* tourists and honeymooners; and, (3) the photographic practices that are performed by tourists and honeymooners visiting the tropical destination – assuming that the subjects take part in such activities (Snow 2008, 8). Again, visuality and relationality work together in shaping tourism as a cultural practice. Understanding tourism and honeymoons along these lines falls within the conceptualization of "tourism as a form of neo-colonialism," in which "'metropolitan' countries and tourism-receiving, 'peripheral' nations" are situated at opposing ends of a hierarchy structure – the first as dominating, the second as dominated (Cohen 1984, 376).

Honeymoon advertising images thus reproduce power relation between metropolitan and peripheral states. They do so via the actors and scenes that are depicted within their frames. Each of these visual signifiers participates within the already existing colonial discourse surrounding international travel – and honeymoons (Long and Robinson 2009). The following section explores the sphere of international tourism and honeymoons further by carefully analyzing Sandals' "luxury included" advertising campaign.

Sandals and the Concept of Luxury

Indeed, Sandals can be considered to symbolize all-inclusive resorts; yet, the company does not frame itself solely under the rubric of all-inclusiveness. Instead, its main objective is to be perceived as the ultimate all-inclusive, *luxury* resort chain in the Caribbean. According to *Hotels* publication, the chairman of Sandals emphasizes,

> This is a defining moment for Sandals Resorts. We have moved beyond the all-inclusive category and the often-maligned all-inclusive connotation. With ever-more spectacular suites, uncompromising service, enhanced food & beverage, lavish spas, [and] luxury amenities. We are the luxury-included vacation. (*Hotels* December 2007, 18)

This passage is clearly exemplified in the company's "luxury-included" advertising campaign, which dominates the travel sections of many bridal magazines. The concept of luxury is used as a tool to transcend the negative imagery concerning all-inclusive, as Stewart explains in the above citation (*Hotels* December 2007, 18). Referring back to the passage, it is clear that the company, through its ads, identifies the multiple hotel facilities and services that connote luxury: the butler service that accompanies many luxury suites, as well as the pampering experience made possible with Red Lane Spa, Sandals' private spa service. Each of these elements work as signifiers strategically positioned to re-label all-inclusiveness as *luxury*.

Honeymooners are frequently depicted as benefiting from a five-star service, in which case, a butler, trained according to the Guild of Professional English Butlers, caters to their every need and desire. According to *The Calgary Herald* (February 28 2009, F.3), Sandals' butlers are highly experienced employees – often native to the Caribbean – who welcome tourists with "beaming smiles, pleasing attitudes, and the desire to ensure every guest experiences a dream vacation". That is exactly what Sandals attempts to put forward in its advertisements. Thus, luxury does not solely signify an up-scale vacation, but also implies high-end room service, complete with "white-gloved hands" as well as "romantic candlelit bubble bath and flower petals sprinkled on the bed" (*The Calgary Herald* February 28 2009, F.3). In its effort to re-categorize the all-inclusive – considering that the concept is quite popular in hotel practices in the Caribbean – Sandals has chosen to associate specific themes, such as luxury and indulgence, with all-

inclusiveness. Butler service works as one of the many elements making up Sandals' "luxury-included" honeymoon.

Luxury as a theme is continuously being represented in the company's advertising images, especially those selling tropical honeymoons to future brides. With this in mind, one starts recognizing the manner in which Sandals' advertisements participate within the sphere of the "white wedding," underscoring excess, indulgence, and luxury, whereby heterosexual romance is associated to sunny destinations, butler service, spa treatments, and lazy days on the beach. Mediatized via bridal magazines and wedding outlets, Sandals' advertisements promoting the "luxury-included" honeymoon reinforce the "white wedding." In this case, the honeymoon serves as one of the many trades making up the wedding industry as a whole (Howard 2006).

In the following two sections, I take a closer look at Sandals' target audience and market. These elements play significant roles in the company's current advertising campaign – which participates within the sphere of North American wedding culture. By further investigating both elements, one acknowledges the ideal type of consumers towards which the actual advertising images are aimed at, as well as the manner in which honeymooners are positioned as a lucrative market such that the ideas of luxury and excess are deemed appropriate and normative.

Sandals and its Target Audience

As previously emphasized, Sandals' main target audience is heterosexual couples. The company's advertising campaign, which promotes the "luxury-included" honeymoon, attempts to attract middle-class to upper middle-class heterosexual couples via visual advertisements (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 148). This feature differentiates Sandals from other all-inclusive resorts that are established in the Caribbean since many of them target either families or singles. Sandals focuses on couples – both married or non-married. These men and women range "between the ages of 25 to 35," according to the *Travel Trade Gazette* (February 11, 2005, 48). The images discussed in Chapter 3 give evidence of such audience selection. Having carefully examined many of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, I find that the company puts emphasis on North American and Western-European audiences. Such observation is based on the company's effort to sustain

the "white wedding" and its tropical honeymoon, as a standard for romance and heterosexual couplehood – a Westernized social event, according to Howard (2006).

Honeymooners play a significant role in Sandals' "luxury-included" campaign. Sandals openly states in tourism publications that this specific grouping is indispensable to its financial success: "The honeymoon market has been extremely successful for us. It's the one time in the spending curve where people are willing to splurge," as outlined by Sandal's Chairman in *Hotels* (January 2005, 20). Such citation supports Otnes and Pleck's argument that "white weddings" are socially constructed events or traditions that excuse, and also encourage, excessive spending on the behalf of soon-to-be husbands and wives (2003, 9-10). In other words, the honeymoon market serves as a respectable area of consumption that allows extravagant spending practices to take place. Sandals feeds into this cultural sphere by carefully emphasizing the notions of luxury and excess in its honeymoon advertisements. This is where imageries of luxurious spa *rendez-vous* and butler service come into play. By strategically accentuating such elements in its advertising campaign, Sandals reinforces popular imagination of the tropical honeymoon, in which case newlyweds benefit from all the pampering and luxury that the Caribbean has to offer, and consequently return home rejuvenated and ready to start their roles as husbands and wives (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 150).

Finally, it is also important to consider that Sandals' advertising campaign emphasizing the "luxury-included" honeymoon primarily focuses on heterosexual couples. Although the company does not exclude same-sex couples from its premises, it does nonetheless excludes them from its visual advertisements. Sandals told *Hotels* publication: "Same-sex couples can come, but we're not interested in promoting it" (January 2005, 20). The publication reveals that after much contestation on the behalf of UK activists, Sandals lifted a ban prohibiting same-sex couples from attending its resorts. *Hotels* publication reports,

> While the company said the decision to end the ban had been under consideration for some time (and insists same-sex couples – as well as singles – have always been welcome at Beaches) that's not to say it has any plans, however, to promote its destinations to the gay community. As the company moves forward with a new imaging campaign aimed at elevating Sandals to the forefront of luxury travel, it remains committed to its core

> demographic honeymooners and those traditional couples looking for a romantic retreat. (January 2005, 20)

In the process of excluding the representation of same-sex couples from its honeymoon advertisements, Sandals sustains the narrative of heterosexual romance as natural and normative.

Sandals and the Tropical Honeymoon

The honeymoon as a cultural ritual has moved "from the Cabin to Cancun," write Otnes and Pleck (2003, 134). Regarding middle-class North America, the all-inclusive resort is a popular choice for a tropical honeymoon due to its rather affordable cost and worry-free philosophy. Since everything is included – from amenities to alcohol – the newlywed couple experiences the honeymoon stress-free (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 161). As mentioned previously, tropical honeymoons are to be perceived as scripted cultural practices, deeply embedded in the wedding industry, that enable newlyweds to release any anxiety caused by wedding preparations and actually practice their new roles as husbands and wives within an exotic setting (Bulcroft et al. 2007, Otnes and Pleck 2003).

> The tropical paradise offers a distinct form of experience – that of being descendents of Adam and Eve. In such lush locales, in the Western imagination, rules need not to be followed, food and drink are plentiful, and there are few hardships. […] The tourist business took the largely male quest for renewal and tamed it into tourism, which was repackaged as an activity for a couple, or occasionally a larger group. (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 150).

Indeed, when speaking of tropical honeymoons, one specifically deals with the imagery of the Garden of Eden, in which case sexual desires are permitted to run free, man and woman taste the fruits of passion – contained within the sphere of matrimony. Yet, this is not the sole characteristic of tropical honeymoons. Considering that today's honeymoons play an important role in the making of the "white wedding" – described by bridal advertisements as elegant and

luxurious – one can easily state that honeymoons too have been categorized within the sphere of lavishness (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 160). In other words, these journeys to the Caribbean often promote the concept of luxury. The marketing of such exoticism works in concert with the marketing of the luxurious "white wedding".

> The overriding theme in all honeymoon planning … is that luxury travel is an opulent way to express romantic love. Just as the lavish wedding offers guilt-free consumption, so, too, expensive postwedding travel is seen as the trip of a lifetime, or at least a very special and very expensive vacation. (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 149)

Through the use of titles, images, and written texts, the company promotes honeymoons as the *epitome* of paradise. Romance is thus associated to tropical destinations and indulgence. Interestingly, this construction of romantic love is confined to the limits of the all-inclusive resort. This specific architecture delimits a space labeled: all-inclusive, safe, romantic, respectable, and luxurious. Sexual practices go beyond the bedroom: on the seashore, in a private courtyard and pool; flirtatious actions take place at dinnertime, conveniently situated nearby the lush turquoise sea, at cocktail hour, as couples lounge carelessly on the beach, and during evening entertainment, martini in hand. According to Otnes and Pleck (2003, 162), these are scenarios that are highly preplanned and constructed by the tourist industry – Sandals works within this terrain.

> Having lost its function as travel for sexual initiation, the honeymoon takes its meanings from the languages of consumption and from tourism, the largest industry in the world. The honeymoon as part of the consumer rite of the wedding is an extension of magical moments into planned journeys and is now defined as recuperation from the stress of wedding planning. […] Besides the sexual element, the magic moments of the honeymoon tend to involve paid-for experience, which can only be realized by going to a special place. …Tourist industries hold out the prospect of paradise: the sex, the photographs, the souvenirs, the memories to last a lifetime. (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 162)

The authors make reference to the ideas set forward by Strain (1996), Desnoes (2003), and Simmons (2006) which stress that tropical honeymoons – set within the larger arena of international tourism in Third World destinations – are largely shaped in and through advertising. That is the visuality of tourism – honeymoons included.

On its promotional website, Sandals offers different honeymoon *packages* to prospective clients: "romance" and "luxury". In doing so, the company predetermines the choices available to tourists, thus directly constructing the dream vacation. Although I focus specifically on the "luxury package", it nonetheless apparent that regardless which choice tourists make, it will always be managed and administered by the resort company – especially in the case of all-inclusive resorts. Contemporary honeymoons work as carefully packaged products, determined by the very industry in which they are embedded, as emphasized by Otnes and Pleck (2003, 162-163). Sandals' honeymoon advertisements are the entry points into this particular travel experience. They are "markers," to borrow a concept from MacCannell (1976, 110), which categorize the Caribbean context into specific packages.

The advertisements presented in bridal magazines are composed of many interconnected visuals – which make up the story of the romantic heterosexual honeymoon in tropical paradise – that clearly sell the elements indicated above. As I demonstrate in the following chapter, each visual has its own scene; yet, each scene contributes to a larger narrative – the ultimate luxurious honeymoon. Indeed, the latter implies a whole series of ideological narratives that indicate power relations as "secondary discourse" (O'Barr 1994, 73). Finally, Sandals' promotion of honeymoons via advertising implies the physical and symbolic mastering of Caribbean landscapes that consequently cater to a privileged Western audience, as well as the capitalistic construction of romance discourse in relation to destinations labeled "tropical."

Couples [which can be read as heterosexual, middle-class, North American, and *white*] are the dominant target group in the case of Sandals' advertising campaign. Importantly, each of the above categories of subjectivity plays a significant role in constructing narratives of power *within* Sandals advertisements. This chapter highlighted tropical honeymoons as a dominant trade within the contemporary wedding industry. In so doing, it also serves as a scaffold for the following chapters, which deal directly with the visual narratives taking place in Sandals' honeymoon images. Hence, before attempting to *read* the selected advertisements, it is necessary

to keep in mind issues of power concerning multiple spheres of politics: the "white wedding", international tourism in the Caribbean, and finally, romantic, heterosexual love. These arenas manifest themselves through the advertisements, thus idealizing the imagery of the just-married couple, venturing to a paradise island, far from quotidian responsibilities, enjoying "luxury-included" service, and ending each evening with sweet rum and night-life entertainment (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 150 and 161).

Understanding that Sandals' advertising campaign promoting "luxury-included" honeymoons participates within the wider terrain of international tourism – and all the politics this implies – allows one to better start deciphering the narratives of race, empire, and otherness presented in the company's visual advertisements. Honeymoons in the Caribbean – similar to regular travel practices – reinforce relations of power between vacationers and locals.

Chapter Three:
Reading Sandals' Honeymoon Advertisements

In order to conduct a thorough analysis of Sandals' honeymoon images, I have chosen to draw upon "social semiotic theory" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) which allows me to investigate the visual narratives and signifiers included in the selected advertisements within the larger sphere of tourism and wedding industries. This chapter begins with a conceptual overview of Kress and van Leeuwen's understanding of "narrative representations," including "actions", "actors" and "settings," and then moves on to a detailed analysis of the advertisements in terms of their visual qualities and composition (45). This method of looking into ads and struggling with their ideological storylines echoes Bulcroft et al.'s analysis (1997, 463) which mainly focuses on the way in which Western honeymoons work as scripted rituals, intended to be performed by gendered and sexualized – and I would also add racialized – players. Similar to a theatrical script directing an actor's every movement, the popularized honeymoon, as depicted and promoted by Sandals, implies that honeymooners carry out their newly-married roles: putting into practice their gendered and sexualized roles. In other words, this chapter works as a social semiotic analysis of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements. I pay particular attention to the notion of "narrative action": who gazes at whom; who conducts the action; what is the setting; and how the honeymoon script reveals itself within the overall composition of the advertisement. This series of questions allows me to closely examine the multiple signifiers making up the images, as well as piece together a multiplicity of visual bits into a larger, more coherent whole, thus attempting to understand the *order* or *grammar* of the image as described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 20). For such discussion to effectively take place, I draw on Judith Williamson's description of the relationship between signifiers and signifieds.

According to Williamson:

> Signifiers are things, while form is invisible; signifieds are ideas, while content implies materiality. Furthermore, while form and content are usually seen as separable and their conceptual unity is one of opposition (form vs. content), signifier and signified are

> materially inseparable, since they are bound together in the *sign*, which is their totality. What is *meant* by a sign, signified, may be talked about separately from what means it, the signifier; but an understanding of this terminology involves the realization that the two are not *in fact* separated either in time or space: the signified is neither anterior nor exterior to the sign as a whole. (1978, 18)

The visual signifiers presented in the advertisements allow me explore the ads' overall constructed meanings and concepts. As visual components they make up the larger narrative of Sandals' "luxury included honeymoon."

Understanding Visual Narratives

I conceptualize Sandals' honeymoon advertisements as visual narratives since they each involve players, taking part in transactional relations with one another (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, 46). These visual "transactions" can be understood as "vectors," or linguistically speaking, as "action verbs." clearly illustrating the action of one participant *unto* another (46). Importantly, the authors emphasize that no action, no matter how minute or mundane it may seem, takes place without context, a stage-setting. They argue, "What in language is realized by locative prepositions is visually realized by the formal characteristics that create the contrast between foreground and background" (46). Such a framework enables me to work metaphorically, treating the selected advertisements as active sentences, complete with subjects, verbs, and objects. The active subject is an "Actor," a leading participant in a "transaction" who directs an action in order to reach or affect a "Goal," the object; Kress and van Leeuwen indicate that such transactions can either be "unidirectional," in which case an action is taken on by only one actor, or "bidirectional," in which case an action is sequentially or simultaneously taken on by two actors (or more) (63-64, 66). Hence, three main concepts need to be taken into consideration: (1) actor, (2) action, and (3) setting. Who does what, to whom, and in what context?

Importantly, narrative representations do not solely involve direct actions. As emphasized by Kress and van Leeuwen, they can also imply "reactional processes," whereby a "vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more of the represented

participants" (67). Whereas in the case of direct actions, one speaks of "Actors" and "Goals," in the occurrence of reactional processes, one deals with "Reactors" and "Phenomena" (67). For the purpose of this cultural investigation, the concept of "narrative" is a way of working with and interpreting the multiple signifiers composing the image and its overall grammar. Further, such narratives, including the processes of actions and reactions, as well as their contextualization within a staged setting, work within a larger compositional structure. This is exactly the case of Sandals' "luxury included" honeymoon advertisements, which present a series of images and written texts in order to promote the honeymoon myth.

Essentially, Kress and van Leeuwen claim that advertisements often work as "multimodal texts" made up of different types of signifiers – both visual and written (177). Therefore, it is in the actual exploration of the arrangement of these elements that the overall narrative structures of Sandals' images can be uncovered and discussed. By engaging in such a type of analysis, one attempts to link together individual signifiers, as well as positioning them within an advertisement's total architecture.

When speaking of composition in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements, three important themes need to be considered: "centre and margin," "salience," and "framing" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, 194 and 201-203). In regards to composition, the notion of "center and margin" is an interesting way to investigate the key signifiers in Sandals' ads, and their relation to other signifiers *located in periphery* to a centered visual (194). Interestingly, each of the selected advertisements present a main scene located at the *centre* of the layout surrounded by smaller, complementary scenes. This type of compositional display forms specific dialogues between the different images. The latter work dynamically to attribute an overall "information value" to the ad (177). In addition, the concept of "salience" allows one to explore the way in which visual elements are positioned in a particular hierarchy within a single advertisement (201). The idea of "framing" works as a tool enabling one to examine the manner in which signifiers are formally presented to audiences via the choice of colours and contexts (203).

Sandals makes use of photography to sell the "luxury included," hence further naturalizing the narrative of the ultimate honeymoon (Fowles 1996, 85-87). Indeed, there are written texts included in these ads that acts as scripts directing readers' interpretation of the ads

themselves, but it is the actual photographic quality of the advertisements that greatly contributes to the notion of luxury honeymoon as myth. Fowles refers to Barthes when he writes,

> [He] finds three message levels: the linguistic (the few recognizable words in the ad), the denotated image (exactly what has been photographed), and the connotative. Because 'all images are polysemous'..., the linguistic material serves to fix or anchor the imagery. Photography, as the mode of denotation, 'naturalises the symbolic message' ... by making it appear uncontrived. (1996, 169)

Interestingly, Sandals taps into the heritage of travel photography by using the latter as its prime mode of representation through which the visual narratives are exhibited and legitimized. The scenarios, which include the actions, actors, and settings, denote a certain level of realism and naturalness. Consumers can set aside their awareness of the production qualities that make up the ad and focus their attention directly to the visual story. The clear resolution of the images themselves – their sharpness and vivid colours – are all part of the staged truth that is myth.

Lastly, one must note the significant role played by the textual messages included in these "composite visuals, visuals that combine text and image" (177). These titles or headlines, as we might call them, help anchor the visuals in meaning – the intended meaning set up by Sandals (Fowles 1996, 84 and 169). According to Fowles, "[t]heir function is to constrain the range of possible meanings that might be found in the pictorial matter and to facilitate the transfer of meanings from the pictures to the product" (83). Yet, rather than treating the words and images of a "multimodal text" separately, Kress and van Leeuwen emphasize the importance of analyzing the dynamics of each of these interacting codes: "the parts should be looked upon as interacting with and affecting one another" (177). Similar to the images that create a visual dialogue amongst each other, written texts contribute to the overall textual interaction of the advertisement. They cannot be separated from the whole. Since Sandals makes use of written codes in its ads, it is important to include the analysis of such texts in the deciphering of the selected advertisements. These concepts – "information value", "salience", "framing", and the composition of a "multimodal text" (177) – contribute significantly to the overall idea of

narrative as a way to engage with visual advertisements and deconstruct their ideological messages, including the myth of the *ultimate "luxury included" honeymoon*.

Understanding Barthes' Concept of Myth

In his work *Mythologies* (1972), Barthes conceptualizes the notion of myth in great detail. He describes this concept as a "*second order semiological system*":

> That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second. We must here recall that the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. Myth sees them only as raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language. (114)

In other words, myth takes a sign and positions it as a simple signifier, which in turn, works in relationship with concepts or ideas – the signified – to make up a greater language or "signification" (115). Understanding the notion of "signification" is invaluable to a proper comprehension of myth and how it manifests itself in the field of advertising. If the signifier in this case is a form of communication, a message – an advertisement, for example – which contains meaning, the signified works as a concept that attempts to "alienate" meaning (122-123).

Barthes' defines the essence of the concept of "signification" in relation to the larger notion of myth in the following terms:

> I shall say that the signification of the myth is constituted by a sort of *constantly moving turnstile* which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form, a language-object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness. This alternation is, so to speak, gathered up in the concept, which uses it like an ambiguous signifier, at once intellective and imaginary, arbitrary and natural (123, my emphasis).

The metaphor of the turnstile aptly demonstrates the dynamics that exist between the form and the concept, which in turn make up the signification of myth.

The visual texts studied in this research have two particular forms; three are magazine-based and one is based online. Although the actual media platforms are different, the images themselves are similar. They are advertisements, a form of communication intended to sell a product or service to an audience. In these advertisements, one finds the visual narrative of the tropical honeymoon being played out. Repeated visual codes enhance this narrative: the Western couple, the local hospitality, the white-sand beach, the luxury hotel suite, the lavish resort, the lush vegetation, the vivid colours composing the image, and the written text overtly appealing to brides and grooms while simultaneously dictating the honeymoon script. These advertisements are about tropical all-inclusive honeymoons in the Caribbean and are destined to appeal to brides and grooms mainly situated in North America. Sandals' overtly prides itself of the luxury quality of its resorts. According to this company and its ads, the Sandals' experience is not just about honeymooning in the tropics; it is first and foremost about pampering the couple in tropical luxury. Excess is key here. This is the concept that takes over the form and that ascribes a new meaning to the signifiers that are presented in the advertisement. The signifiers and form (a language object and a metalanguage), together with the concept of luxury make up the myth.

What are the implications that arise when a concept such as the ultimate "luxury-included" honeymoon takes over an image that stages international tourism in the Caribbean? Barthes suggests that first and foremost a myth plays with reality by distancing or extracting history from the narrative it dominates: "it has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of its history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance" (142-143). The process of evacuating a message of its history is exactly what Barthes calls "the second-order semiological system" (114). The signifiers making up an image work in unison to compose a rather elaborate deformation of reality, one that erases history and its power systems. Hence, sand, sun, and heterosexual romance blind the histories of imperialism in the Caribbean and thus conquer the narrative in magazine spreads, winning the hearts of brides-to-be across North America. This is what Barthes calls "depoliticized speech" (142):

> What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality. (142)

It is useful to think of myth as a machine displacing history into clean, neatly packaged narratives. Histories of oppression are replaced by stories of tropical romance and luxury honeymoons. Thus, when dealing with myth, one needs not only to decipher the internal narratives presented in ads, but more importantly, place these storylines, along with the advertisement itself, within a larger social and political context – to undo the process of naturalization and legitimization. Referring back to Barthes, advertisements, such as the ones presented by Sandals, are made to appear "innocent" (143); yet, as any "reader of myth" (129) knows too well, these media forms and the messages they promote are always political, never harmless.

Analysis of Sandals' Advertisements

Each of the four advertisements that I have selected for this research originates from popular bridal literature, both Canadian wedding magazines and Sandals' promotional website, *Sandals.com*. Since this research began in 2008, I focus my attention on advertisements ranging from 2008 and 2009. It is however important to note that the visual codes presented in these advertisements are still present to this day. Although Sandals might have replaced one visual for another, the overall message remains the same. Here, I focus on three print ads, presented in the 2009 spring-summer issue of *Weddingbells* (Figure 1), as well as the 2008 fall-winter and 2009 spring-summer publications of *Mariage Québec* (respectively Figures 2 and 3).

Both magazines are published by St Joseph Media Inc., a subdivision of the larger corporate group, St Joseph Communications. Founded by Italian immigrants in 1956 (the Gagliano family), the Ontario-based organization acquired *Weddingbells* magazine in 2002. The magazine includes five editions, each representing regions of Canada, from British Columbia to the Maritimes. This research uses the Ottawa, Montreal and Atlantic Canada edition. *Mariage Québec* is a sister-magazine to Weddingbells and targets the French-speaking demography of

Quebec. Each magazine is widely distributed to young, modern brides and brides-to-be via newsstands, retail stores, and wedding fairs. In fact, the print copies that I used for this research were obtained free of charge at the *Lets Get Married* fair in Montreal in 2009. Sears and The Bay wedding registry departments often give out these publications to future brides after a registry sign-up. Although different in language, the magazines present similar advertisements promoting the many areas relating to the bridal sphere: from fashion and homemaking to wedding preparation and honeymoons.

The fourth image (Figure 4) was included in the company's website from 2009 to 2010. It works as a complementary image to the previous three. As mentioned in the introductory section of this research, the cross-media selection – including print and digital formats – underlines the pervasiveness of Sandals' "luxury included" package promoting indulgence-oriented honeymoons to North American brides and grooms. This campaign is the most widespread in terms of *presence* in bridal literature. Different packages, such as the romantic package, are also available on *Sandals.com*; yet, these are much less visible in popular wedding media. It is important to note that regardless of the media source that presents these ads, the latter stand out in the overall visual landscape of tropical honeymoons – hence the importance of thoroughly analysing the selected advertisements.

The following four advertisements are discussed both descriptively and analytically. I initially focus on the visual layout of the ads – composition, content, and overall *feeling*. Then, I interweave my analysis within these descriptive layers. I draw upon Kress and van Leeuwen's concept of "narrative processes" in order to unveil the series of visual discourses embedded in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements (2006, 45 and 59). I pay particular attention to the manifestation of "social actions," involving "actors," "vectors," and "settings," as well as the positioning of such activities within the advertisement as a whole (74-75). This is where composition comes into play: "centre-margin," "framing," and "salience" (210). Since many of the advertisements involve a series of different images, some larger and others smaller, I explore the way in which they each interconnect to one another, as well as their relation to the written texts.

Figure 1, *First Spread*: Sandals. The Luxury Included Honeymoon. Advertisement featured in *Weddingbells*. (Spring-Summer 2009: 168-171)

Sandals advertisement. Honeymoon collection. Reprinted according to fair dealing clause (Copyright Act, Section 29.1).

This first advertisement runs four pages long and is included in *Weddingbells'* "travel" section. The first two-page spread is entitled "Happily Ever Afters Begin in Paradise … and It's All-Included," whereas the second is labeled "Suite Dreams … Suite Dreams Are Made of These." My description of Figure 1 is twofold: an examination of the first spread, followed by an exploration of the second. The left-hand page of the first spread is divided into three main sections. On the left side, one recognizes a couple scuba diving in tropical blue waters. Sun rays light up the newlyweds, forming a halo around their heads. Their arms extend into the blueness of the sea, reaching into an unknown future. The right side of the page is largely composed of a written text highlighting the luxury and romance qualities of the Caribbean, most particularly Sandals' Caribbean:

> The perfect start to your perfect marriage begins at Sandals – *the most romantic place on earth for two people in love*. Here you'll slow down amidst the natural beauty of the tropics, and enjoy the *ultimate luxury* – doing what you please, when you please, ensuring that your dream honeymoon is exactly as you want it to be (Figure 1, 168; my emphasis).

Four smaller images accompany this written passage. One is neatly situated above the text, depicting a seaside dining place complete with white-covered, wooden tables, perfectly set up for two. The wine and food await the leading couple, who is about to experience true culinary finesse, *Sandals style*. The lower section of the page is made up of the remaining three images. The visual positioned at the far left is a full-shot of one of Sandals' resorts, including easy access to pool, beach, and sea. The intermediate image presents the same couple – nude! and intimate. He feeds his lady an exotic fruit, which she clearly enjoys. Palm trees are the backdrop to this scene. The black and white colour palette of this image conveys a sense of intimacy and lustfulness. The last image, located on the right, presents a dining scene, inviting couples to immerse themselves in Sandals' dining experience, filled with food, wine, and seaside breeze. A wooden canopy and crystal chandelier complete this scene.

The right-hand page of this first layout is composed of a single image depicting the same couple once again – who previously engaged in an intimate act of passion and fruit-tasting – enjoying a sunny day at the beach, comfortably attired in black, beige, and white swimwear, sitting on reclining beach chairs, and sharing an alcoholic beverage. A white linen tent, supported by four bamboo posts, frames this romantic scene. The leaves of a palm tree gently hover over the lovers, creating a sense of intimacy taking place on the Caribbean beach which acts as the stage for this narrative.

In the first two-page spread, the main "social action" depicted is located on the right-hand page. It is the most prominent one due to its larger size, taking up one full page. The man performs the role of *leading actor* since he is the one to have his body facing readers. He gazes into his lover's eyes. She *returns* the gaze. In contrast to the position of his body, hers is portrayed sideways. Her gaze does not face the audience. As Kress and van Leeuwen emphasize, such action can be considered as a "reactional process" since "the vector is formed by an eyeline" (2006, 67). He acts upon her, staring into her eyes, smiling at her. She takes on the role of "reactor," looking back at him, returning the smile. Clearly, this leading man acts as the *initiator* of the "social action," leading the way for his companion. A second vector is also present: It is formed by the joining of the couple's hands, in which case, each person holds what appears to be an alcoholic beverage. She serves him a martini that he evidently seems to enjoy.

Their festive, yet relaxed, attires work as signifiers suggesting that the couple is on holiday, away from the hustle and bustle of working life. However, the title of the ad, "Happily Ever Afters Begin in Paradise … and It's All Included," signifies an atmosphere of romance, stressing that this is not just a simple tourism advertisement marketing the Caribbean to a North-American audiences; instead, this ad epitomizes the "ultimate luxurious honeymoon gateway" (Figure 1, 168). The title echoes the fairytale narrative of prince and princess riding on a white horse into the sunset. In this case, the sunset takes place at Sandals "luxury included" resort. As the actors express their love to one another in the foreground of the image, the background, as well as the overall contextualizing elements, puts forward an "exotic" ambiance, composed of a series of signifiers connoting the tropics: palm tree, breezy white tent, reclining beach chairs, clear blue water, and a white-sand beach. These are the visual ingredients labelling the action as *relaxation and indulgence in the tropics*. Once again, Sandals' "luxury included" mantra comes to mind. This is also exemplified through the protagonists' act of enjoying martinis on the beach: without a worry in the world.

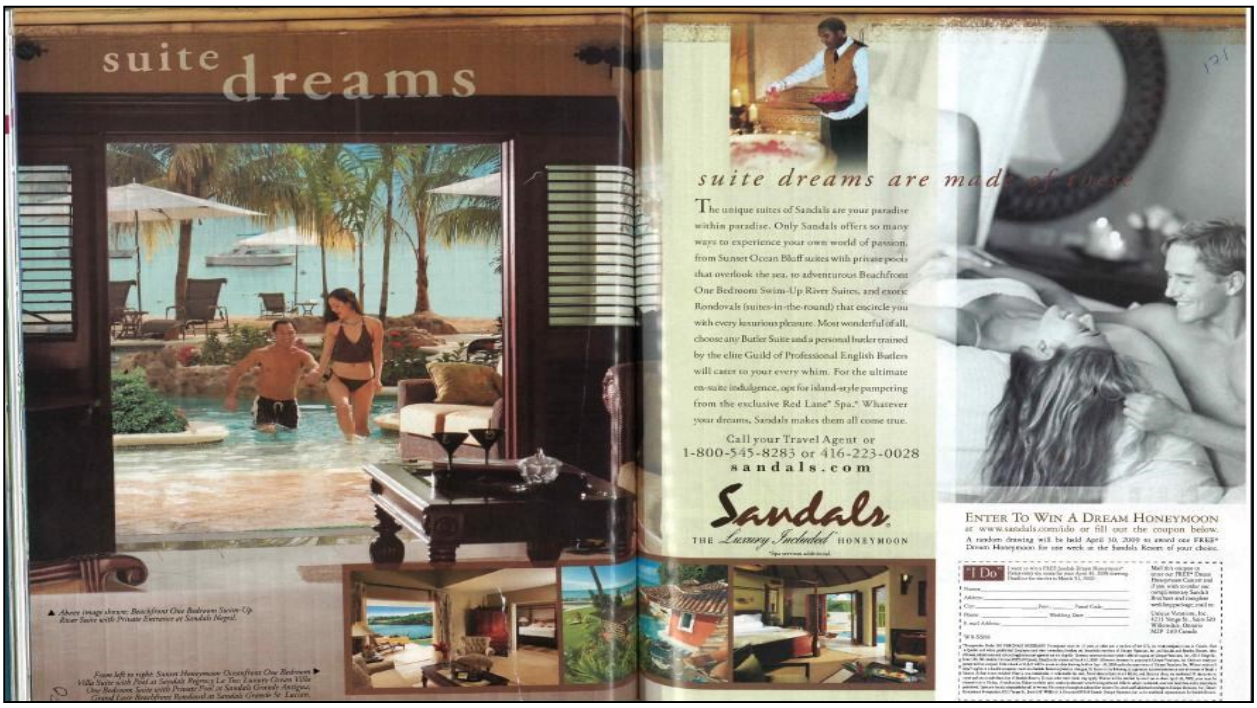
Although the main image is positioned on the right, and the complementary text and visuals are situated on the left, I still wish to speak of a "centre-margin" composition. My reason for doing so is justified by Sandals' attempt to present one predominant "social action" as reference point around which all other signifiers are positioned. The latter enhances the overall meaning of the predominant image: heterosexual romance in the Caribbean. The additional texts only accentuate what is already presented in the main image; however, they do so by creating a storyline of honeymoon romance in a luxurious tropical setting. The scenes depicted in the smaller images, all located on the left-hand page, allow readers to imagine themselves in exotic locales: swimming and scuba diving in clear blue water, dining by the Caribbean sea, enjoying exotic foods in an intimate context. Each activity is sprinkled with a touch of "luxury." In this case, Sandals puts at its readers' disposal, a series of "settings" – including tropical landscapes, the seaside resort and dining areas – ultimately inviting them to *inscribe* their own honeymoon scripts unto these spaces. Interestingly, three of the five complementary images put forward in these visual sets are devoid of any actors or "social actions." Moreover, not one of these images portrays a protagonist "native" to the Caribbean. One assumes that the focus point of these visuals remains mobile Northern tourists – privileged, they insert themselves into the picture.

The "settings" act as stages on which the latter can carry out their honeymoon performances. Such an idea is further emphasized through the written text:

> Laze on white-sand beaches where soaking up our glorious sun is an event in itself. Dive into the most comprehensive resort scuba program, or lounge beside pools as vast as the Caribbean Sea (Figure 1, 168).

Through such discourse, readers recognize that Sandals' "Luxury Included Honeymoon" works as a myth, a third-level meaning, as Barthes would say (1972, 115). Referring to Janis Teruggi Page's understanding of the concept of myth, this portion of Figure 1 does not simply "connote vacation"; "it [is] mythical [since it is] taken to mean the *essential*" luxury included honeymoon (2006, 99) (my emphasis). Here, the author refers Sandals' tropical honeymoons as myth. In other words, these are not meant to be understood as modest vacations; instead, they connote the *ultimate* – the mother of all luxury honeymoons.

Figure 1, *Second Spread*: Sandals. The Luxury Included Honeymoon. Advertisement featured in Weddingbells. (Spring-Summer 2009: 168-171)



Sandals advertisement. Honeymoon collection. Reprinted according to fair dealing clause (Copyright Act, Section 29.1).

Similar to the first two-page layout, the second is made up of a compositional structure in which a full-page image, this time positioned on the left side, is complemented by a written text and smaller exploratory visuals, mostly located on the right-hand page. The hotel *suite* – and all things implied – is pushed to the forefront. Here, I begin with a description of the image presented on the left-hand page. This full shot depicts a couple climbing out of a pool that is strategically located between the sea and suite. This is what Sandals calls the "Beachfront One Bedroom Swim-Up River Suite with Private Entrance." The couple is about to enter their master suite, complete with dark wood furniture, cocktails, and easy access to an outdoor lounge private pool, and exotic Caribbean scenery. As she holds his hand while stepping out of the water, she looks down at him and smiles. "That was a great day in the sun," she says gently. "I can't wait for what comes next."

On the right-hand page, a written text grounds the main image, as well as the smaller complementary visuals. Here is an excerpt:

> The unique suites of Sandals are your paradise within paradise. Only Sandals offers so many ways to experience your own world of passion…. Most of all, choose any Butler Suite and a personal butler trained by the elite Guild of Professional English Butlers will cater to your every whim. (171)

As with the previous passage, this one advertises ideas of indulgence and excess to future brides. The latter should expect everything to be at their disposal during their dream honeymoon at Sandals. Four smaller-scale images accompany this text. Starting from the lower section, one observes three visuals, each illustrating a particular luxury suite. Interestingly, all these images make an overt connection between exterior and interior spaces, as though claiming that each of these settings are *set up intentionally* for the lucky couple who has chosen Sandals as their dream honeymoon destination. The fourth image is located above the written passage and features a butler, probably native to the Caribbean, gently dropping pink rose petals in a warm bath, which he hopes that the couple will enjoy after a long lazy day at the beach. His formal butler's attire, complete with black tie, gold vest, and white gloves, enhances his role as "luxury service assistant" ready to *tend to* the newlywed couple's needs and desires.

The final image, illustrated in a black-and-white colour palette, depicts another couple carelessly lounging in a master bedroom. This one clearly suggests a lustful activity – yet this time, between the sheets. Topless, he carefully gazes at her as he gently plays with her long blond hair. She smiles. She has chosen to wear her lace camisole, which she believes, clearly accentuates her femininity. In the background, candlelight creates a soft glow. The mood is set for romance.

In this second layout, the "central action" is situated on the left-hand page, and its periphery is made up of complementary images and a written passage. The main difference between the first and second spreads is the following: whereas the former focuses on *outdoor* actions and settings, the latter emphasizes narratives taking place *indoors*. In this case, the female actor performs the role of "leader," guiding her male companion from an outdoor setting –

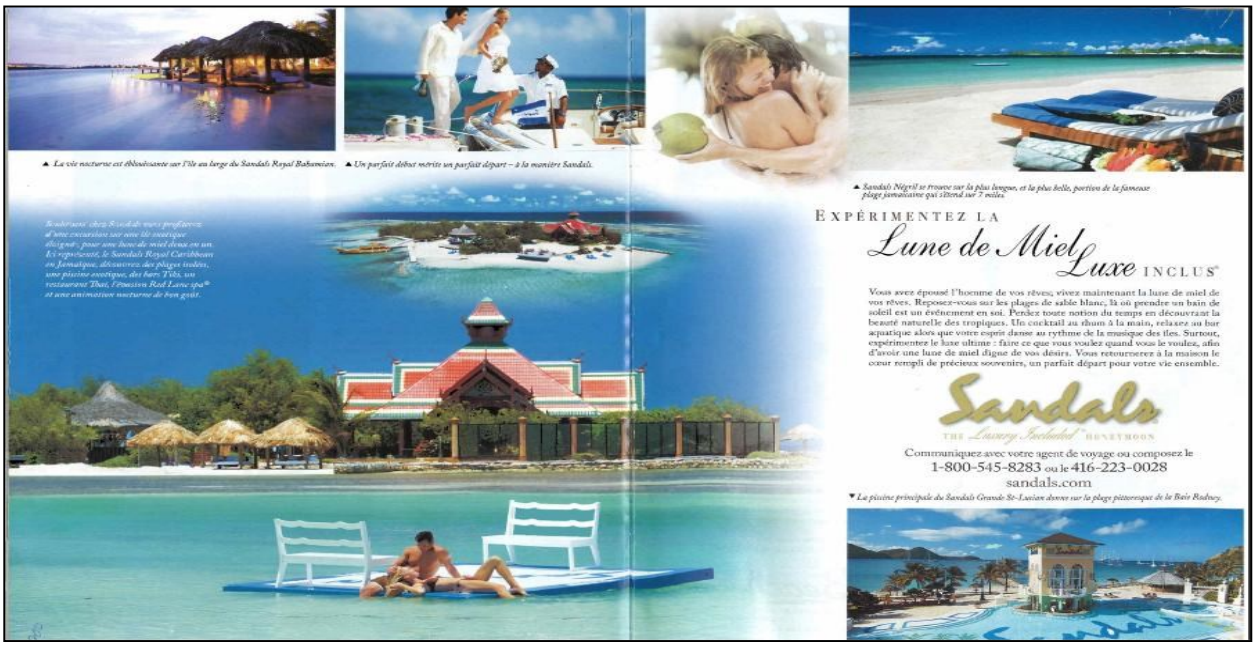
albeit intimate – into the privacy of the hotel suite. This "social action" is composed of two important vectors: on the one hand, there is a line of action made up of the actual holding of hands, which denotes the couple's connection to one another; on the other, the leading actor's movement towards the interior of the hotel suite draws a direct line between the "social action" taking place *outdoor*s and an imagined action that will be performed *indoors*. Importantly, the term "suite" works as a signifier connoting sexuality, therefore highlighting the sexualization of the characters presented in the ad and of the outdoor and indoor "settings," which are constructed as spaces in which sexualized activities can take place. The five additional images in this spread play on the idea of *suite as a sexualized space for heterosexual romance* since they each present a particular nook in which sexual practices can be performed – in complete intimacy, far from wondering gazes.

However, this narrative is not only about sex; rather, it situates heterosexuality within the larger discourse of indulgence and excess. Referring back to my description of this spread, specifically dealing with the image of the butler gently throwing pink rose petals into a bath filled with bubbles and making sure that the "scene" is complete with candlelight, the concept of "suite" implies *service*. To be in one of Sandals' Butler Suites is to benefit from full pampering and personalized assistance. The written text reads: "Most wonderful of all, choose any Butler Suite and a personal butler trained by the elite Guild of Professional English Butlers will cater to your every whim" (Figure 1, 171). A significant implication surfaces: who is worthy of service, luxury, and indulgence, and who performs the act of serving. Figure 1 positions Northern tourists as *receivers of hospitality* and Caribbean natives as mere *staff*, who *cater to* travelers' excessive needs.

In regards to "salience" and "framing," it is interesting to look at the way in which the main "social actions" are placed within the overall architecture of the advertisement. In both spreads, the key actors are situated within specific visual parameters. In the case of the first spread, these limits are formed by a "tropical tent"; in the case of the second, these are composed of a wooden door-frame. It is within these delimitations, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 203), that one can start noticing what "social actions" dominate a visual scene. Interestingly, in the case of Sandals' advertisement, the actors working within these limits are *foreign* to the Caribbean locale. One acknowledges such occurrence through the examination of

the written texts that echo the notions of holiday, temporariness, and international travel (Figure 1, 168 and 171). The actors' performances are strategically positioned within a context labeled "paradise" and ultimately characterized as a "leisure setting". These framed instances of "social action" also work as the most salient ones in the advertisement due to their larger size, as well as their vividness in colour composition. Here the tones of the Caribbean recur throughout the entire advertising structure: clear blues, turquoises, lush greens, and soft whites. The natural quality usually associated to tropical settings is evoked through specific signifiers such as the brownness of wood and the greenness of vegetation. Working in constant relation to the "social actions" portrayed in the ad, these compositional elements contribute to the characterization of the Caribbean, and its inhabitants, as *Other*. Therefore, the ad normatizes whiteness via the on-going presence of privileged white tourists actively dominating the Caribbean landscape. The paleness of their skin takes precedence over the coloured setting. The latter serves as a passive backdrop enabling honeymooners to imagine their romantic narrative.

Figure 2: Sandals. The Luxury Included Honeymoon. Advertisement. *Mariage Québec*. Fall-Winter 2008: 200-201.



Sandals advertisement. Honeymoon collection. Reprinted according to fair dealing clause (Copyright Act, Section 29.1).

This advertisement is made up of a full two-page spread included in the "Destination" section of *Mariage Québec's* 2008 fall-winter issue and is entitled "Expérimentez la Lune de Miel 'Luxe Inclus'" ["Experience the 'Luxury Included' Honeymoon*"*]. The central image, predominantly located on the left-hand page presents a couple lounging on a terrace, surrounded by clear, turquoise water. In the background, the resort Sandals Royal Caribbean stands erect on its own private island: lush greeneries are the gates to Sandals' hotel, pool, and exclusive beach. The couple knows that they are cared for. The island is *theirs*. Right above this image, one notices a smaller visual illustrating the entire resort map. The colours are exactly what one would expect of the Caribbean: tropical and vivid.

Five smaller images are located at the margins of the main visual. Working clockwise from left to right, one sees what the night-life looks like at Sandals Royal Bahamian. The soft sunset lights up the sea, which has been transformed into soft shades of purple. A series of bed-canopies await the lovers, who have not one worry in world. The second image depicts a just-married couple, all dressed in soft white clothing, embarking on their honeymoon. In this case, a loyal Sandals sea captain welcomes the couple into his boat. The husband did not forget to bring champagne to celebrate the occasion: the woman smiles. The third illustration shows the couple participating in an intimate affair. This time the image is made up of soft tones of beige, clearly highlighting the couple's skin colour. She laughs as he tightly embraces her. In his left hand, he holds a fruit, which he sure hopes she will enjoy. The fourth visual portrays an almost bare beach, with the exception of two reclining chairs that have been set up for Sandals honeymooners. Yet, that is not all. The scene is complete with two beach towels and cocktail glasses, as well as a full platter of fresh tropical fruits. All that is missing is the romantic couple. Finally, the fifth image is a full shot of Sandals Grande St-Lucian Spa and Beach Resort: large-scale pool and a striking view of never-ending blue sky. The entire scenery is carefully delimited by a series of tall palm trees. The brand name Sandals appears through the pool's clear blue water.

As a complementing element in the advertisement, the written text allows brides-to-be to imagine their fairy-tale honeymoon, filled with white-sand beaches, rhythmic Caribbean music, and tasty drinks: all within an ambiance of luxury and relaxation. It reads:

> Surtout, expérimenter le luxe ultime: faire ce que vous voulez quand vous le voulez, afin d'avoir une lune de miel digne de vos désirs. (201)
> [Above all, experience the ultimate luxury: doing what you want, when you want, in order to live your dream honeymoon].

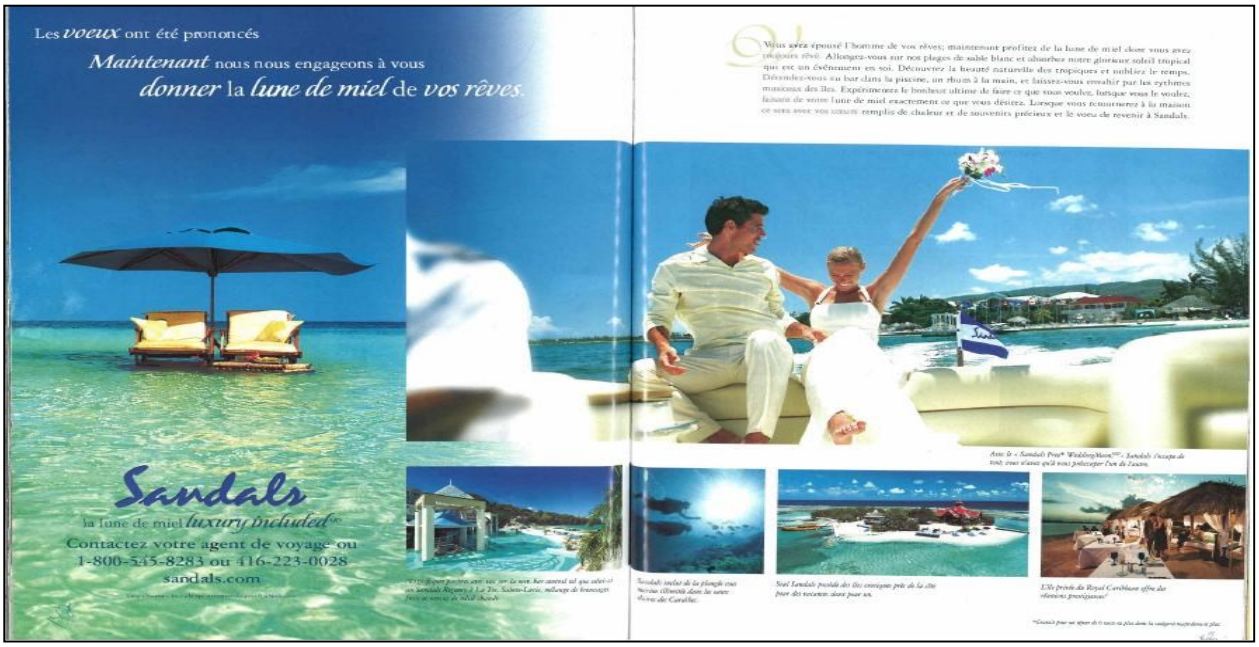
This passage adds to the advertisement's overall sense of worry-free romance and service-oriented hospitality.

This advertisement focuses on the honeymoon as ritual occurring *after* the wedding celebration. Due to its larger frame, as well as its high saturation in colour, the "social action" taking place on the left-hand page can be considered as the *central* narrative in the advertisement. The leading character is performed by the male actor, who appears to softly caress his female companion's hair. He *looks down* at her and stares into her eyes, executing his male dominance. In this particular instance, he plays the role of "reacter" since he is positioned above her, and the vector, which stems from his action, is made up of what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 67) refer to as an "eyeline". She, in contrast, plays the role of "phenomena," the mere object of the actor's gaze (67). Yet, what is truly striking in this scene is the "setting." Since this image is an establishing shot, the "social action" is positioned as taking place within a context that seems larger than life. Unlike Figure 1 that makes a transition between indoor and outdoor spaces, Figure 2 is only about exterior "settings," most particularly the tropical landscape of the Caribbean. Hence, the backdrop – composed of a crisp blue sky, endless turquoise water and verdant vegetation, and a resort located on a private island – *grounds* the central action. Such signifiers enable the exotic quality of Sandals' "luxury included honeymoons" to take over. The leading scene is as much about heterosexual romance, as is it is about excessiveness in tourism practices. Not only is the resort, along with its pools, suites, seaside dining spaces, and private courtyards, left at the full disposal of Northern tourists, but the actual natural landscapes and sites are presented as serving the gazes and actions of the privileged. Strain (1996, 77) argues that tourism, as a cultural practice, is mostly experienced through sight, the visual. Accordingly, the central image in Figure 2 works as a system reinforcing travelers' needs to live a tropical locale as *spectacle*, away from any political activity that actually takes place within it. The empty landscape in Figure 2 accentuates such cultural phenomenon, along with the written text that

accompanies the image. The latter positions the Caribbean locale as picture, marketing its beaches, drinks, and music as objects of consumption intended for the pleasure of Northern tourists, as a space to be occupied.

The texts located at the periphery of the central "social action" are placed in sequence, as though recounting a narrative, which itself is ultimately linked to the key participants and the setting in which they are positioned. Each smaller-sized image depicts visual signifiers highlighting the exoticness of the Caribbean locale. These are similar to the ones shown in Figure 1, including endless horizons of sea and sun, as well as the presence of countless palm trees, white boats, and romantic sunsets. Among these texts, one depicts an action involving tourists and a local staff member. In this particular image, the latter takes on the role of captain, inviting a newlywed couple into his boat. Two "vectors" are at play here. The first is made up of an "eyeline" generated by the leading actor unto his female partner. The second is formed by the action of the staff member helping the female protagonist unto the boat. Two ideological narratives are consequently reproduced in this "action setting": (1) the female character requires the assistance of both male actors; (2) both honeymooners, far from their everyday realities, are serviced by a staff member, local to the Caribbean context. Taking this idea further, especially in relation to gender and race, one recognizes that both concepts, although complex, work as visual signifiers in this particular advertisement. In connection to one another, the honeymooners are first and foremost *marked* respectively as white male and female. However, in relation to the Sandals staff member, their status as *white people* comes to the forefront, thus characterizing the worker as *of colour*. Therefore, in the case of Sandals' advertisements, one can say that the multiple players who are featured work in constant relation to one another. Referring back to the previous paragraph, one must not forget that such relationships are anchored in "settings", which in the case of Figures 1 and 2, give meaning to surrounding signifiers.

Figure 3: Sandals. The Luxury Included Honeymoon. Advertisement. *Mariage Québec*. Spring-Summer 2009: 182-183.



Sandals advertisement. Honeymoon collection. Reprinted according to fair dealing clause (Copyright Act, Section 29.1).

This last magazine-based advertisement is featured in *Mariage-Québec's* 2009 spring-fall publication. Located in the "Destination" segment, this ad spreads out across two pages and presents a main heading:

> Les voeux ont été prononcés. Maintenant *nous nous engageons à vous* donner la lune de miel de vos rêves (pp. 182-183) (my emphasis).
> [You've pronounced your vows. Now, **we promise** to give you the honeymoon of your dreams].

Below such a passage, one comes across two large images, as well as four smaller illustrations, each accentuating the overall meaning of the heading: the luxury quality associated with Sandals honeymoons. The "action" image, predominantly located on the right-hand page, depicts a couple – the same as the one shown in Figure 2 – celebrating their marital union. Dressed in her

wedding gown and barefoot, she raises her hands in the air and screams, "We did it!" He expresses a similar reaction as he seemingly gently strokes her thigh. The captain of the boat is depicted as out of focus, in the far-left section of the image. One can only recognize his captain's shirt and brown arm. The remainder of his body – including his face – is cropped out of the image. One can say that this is the same captain as the one featured in Figure 2. The couple in the boat makes up the foreground of the image. In the background, one notices a Sandals resort: palm trees, hotel, a series of international flags, and a white-sand beach.

Working in relation to the image described above, the second most prominent visual, positioned on the left page, portrays two reclining beach chairs, complete with bright yellow pillows, located precisely in the midst of clear turquoise water. A large blue umbrella covers the chairs from sunrays. This scene, bare of any human activity, welcomes honeymooners to imagine themselves lounging carelessly in a Caribbean paradise. The four smaller images are placed in sequence, as though recounting a honeymoon narrative. The first visual, situated on the far-left, portrays the Sandals Regency resort in St-Lucia made up of a white architectural structure and surrounded by tropical greenery and blue water. The second image promotes Sandals' scuba diving activities. In the third illustration, one comes across a Sandals resort safely located on a private island. Again, clear water and lush vegetation make up the scene, complete with a never-ending blue sky. Finally, the fourth image depicts a dining scene, complemented with a seaside sunset, lust-inspiring canopy beds, and dining tables covered with soft white fabric. The entire setting takes place on Sandals' private beach. Newlyweds, dressed in formal attires, enjoy the scenery as they slowly sip on cocktails. In addition, a written text accompanies the advertisement's visual elements. Once again, the qualities emphasized are luxury, indulgence, and fantasy.

> Vous avez épousé l'homme de vos rêves; maintenant profitez de la lune de miel dont vous avez toujours rêvé (183).
> [You married the man of your dreams; now enjoy the honeymoon of your dreams.]

This passage directly invites brides-to-be to take part in a fairytale fantasy, which, according to the ad, can easily take place at Sandals resorts. Figure 3 works in relation to Figure 2 since most

of the visuals and written portions complement one another. The characters depicted in both advertisements are the same, as well as the sceneries and overall compositions.

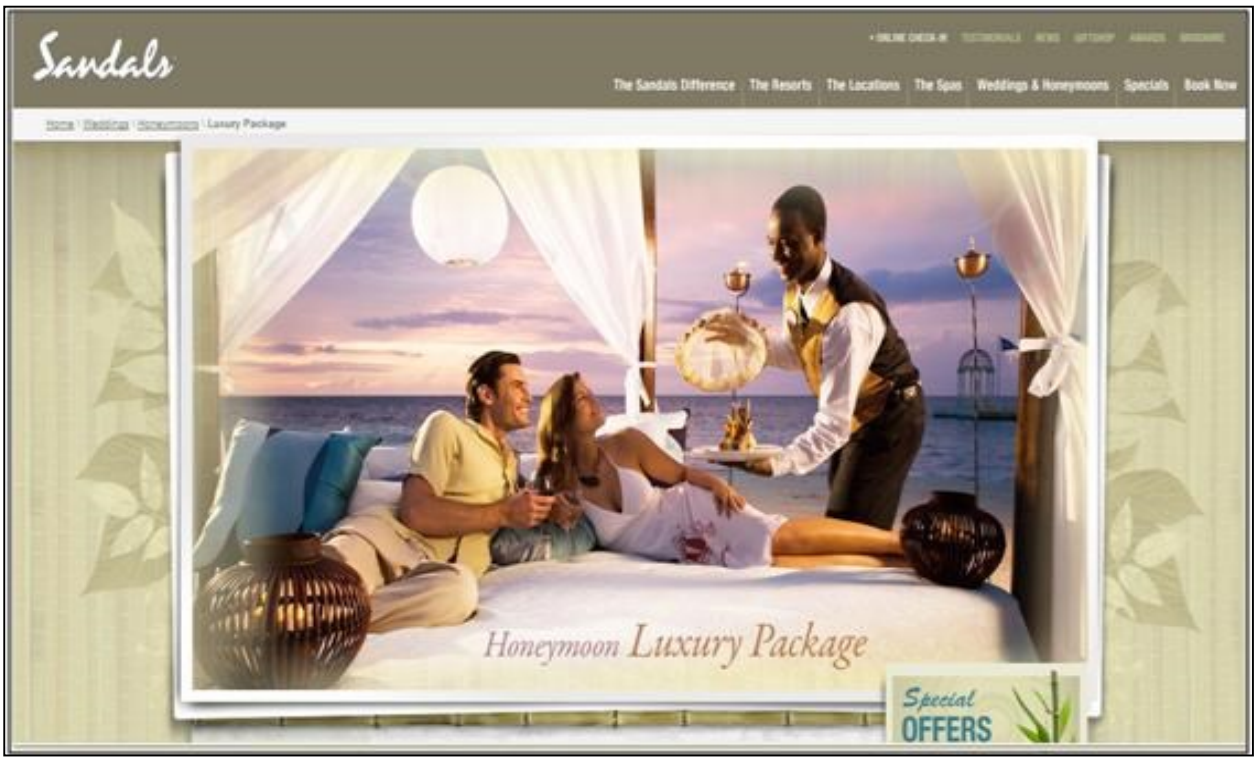
Similar to the previous two, this advertisement puts forward one central "action" image in relation to a series of visual and written texts located in the margins. Although smaller in size, in comparison to the image situated on the left-hand page, this key "action" visual stands out since it is the only one emphasizing human activity. In other words, due to its considerable size and the vividness of its "action," it works, following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, 202) analytical approach, as the most "salient" text in the advertisement. In relation to this quality, the narrative taking place within this text is framed by the whiteness of the page, located right above it, as well as the intensity of the colours in the image itself (203). These three features enhance the importance of the image within the advertisement overall. The "social action" portrayed in the image depicts two main "vectors" which are formed respectively by the female actor's arms, raised straight into the air, her left arm guiding one's gaze directly to her wedding bouquet, and the turning of the male actor's body towards his new wife. In this text, both actors play an equal role in terms of "social action." One last "vector" appears *in the margin* of the image – barely making it in, almost framed out. It is formed by the captain's shoulder and arm. Presumably, this actor guides the boat in which the key actors perform their role of honeymooners. In doing so, this *secondary* actor carries out the task of *service*, assisting the couple's urge for adventure, romance, and luxury.

This central image epitomizes the destination wedding. Multiple signifiers work in concert to put forward such idea: the whiteness of the actors' clothes, the bride's bouquet, the caption reading *WeddingMoon*, which implies a matrimonial ceremony and honeymoon taking place at Sandals. Even the background, which is composed of a blue sky, turquoise water, and tropical island, acts as "setting" for this scene. The heading of the advertisement adds to the overall meaning of the image: "You've pronounced your vows. Now, *we promise* to give you the honeymoon of *your dreams*" (Figure 3, 182) (italics mine). Making reference once again to Barthes (1972, 142), such play between written and visual signifiers promotes the honeymoon practice as myth, whereby a cultural ritual is constructed through a series of visual codes that appear as natural and legitimate. In other words, the myth claims: this is what the *ultimate*

honeymoon should look like. Political issues such as consumption, gender relations, and race are framed out of the equation. All that remains is fantasy: "the honeymoon of your dreams" (Figure 3, 182). This is the narrative that dictates the remainder of the advertisement. The additional images and written texts only act as visual support, reaffirming the discourse formed through the key "action."

Kress and van Leeuwen posit that, "For something to be presented as Centre means that is presented as the *nucleus* of the information to which all the other elements are in some sense subservient" (2006, 196) (my emphasis). I refer directly to the far-left visual, which portrays two empty beach chairs positioned at the junction between turquoise water and white sand. These empty chairs, topped with a bright blue parasol, work as signifiers reproducing the narrative depicted in the central image: this is where the key actors, as husband and wife, will spend their day lazing by the Caribbean sea. Once again, echoing Figures 1 and 2, the "setting" is constructed as an object to be consumed by Northern tourists. It acts as a blank page unto which actors write their "honeymoon script" (Bulcroft et al. 1997, 463). Actors, native to the Caribbean, are completely framed out from the visual landscape and narrative. If they are ever to appear, than they would be positioned as waiting on newlywed couples. So goes the visual grammar put forward in this advertising marketing Sandals' "luxury included honeymoon".

Figure 4: Sandals. "Honeymoon Luxury Package". Advertisement. 2009. Sandals.com. January 13, 2009. <http://www.sandals.com/weddingmoons/honeymoons/luxury.cfm>.



Sandals Advertisement. Honeymoon Collection. Reprinted according to fair dealing clause (Copyright Act, Section 29.1).

This advertisement is situated on Sandals.com in the "Exotic Honeymoons" section. The ad is composed of one main image promoting Sandals' "Honeymoon Luxury Package." The visual narrative reads as follows. After another lazy day at the beach, the couple lounge by the moonlight. Wearing a suit and tie, the waiter carefully leans in to offer them an appetizer to accompany their wine. The entree is promised to be divine as is the main course, which is soon to follow. The waiter smiles. They smile back. Soft white drapery tied to brown wooden posts welcome us to the scene. The couple's private canopy bed is arranged and made up for the part: candlelight and lush turquoise pillows. One can only conjecture that she knows her white dress is perfect for the evening. His cream linen shirt and pants highlight the exoticism of the locale: warm and breezy. He smiles at the waiter. The waiter smiles back, seeming to say, "I am at your service for the evening." It might be suggested that the waiter reminds them of the friendly locals

they have met on the beach the same day. One can impute to her such thoughts, as "Everyone is just so hospitable." The Caribbean horizon is the backdrop to this scene. So goes the honeymoon storyline promoted by Sandals. Similar to the previous advertisements, Figure 4 is made up of a visual portion, as well as a written text. The latter reads:

> Let us treat you to the epitome of luxury in St. Lucia and the Bahamas with your very own Luxury Package complete with *a personal butler* to cater to your every whim, *a private courtyard dinner* for two, a romantic couples massage, personalized bath robes, dinner at Gordon's, featuring cuisine of the sun and the sea and *normally reserved for only highest category guests*, *a private sunset photo session* on the beach to capture all the memories, and much more! (my emphasis).

Interestingly, this passage sheds light on the image's service-oriented quality. The newlywed couple is expected to be served and pampered. Clearly, Sandals prides itself of its indulgence-oriented service. In other words, nothing is ever too much for Sandals' luxury included honeymooners. Finally, the image evokes an intertextual relation to the covers of Harlequin romance novels which often depict similar visual discourses in which white heterosexual couples are presented as engaging in lustful activity and sometimes benefitting from exclusive service and hospitality from local workers.

This advertisement is composed of a main image portraying a key "social action", complete with leading actors, a secondary performer, and an elaborate setting. Since it is positioned in the upper half of the webpage, located under the rubrics "exotic honeymoons," "luxury package," it can be considered as the most "salient" text in the overall advertisement. The "framing" of the "social action" is clearly defined by the white border surrounding the image, as well as the four wooden posts of the canopy bed on which the leading "actors" lounge. The "social action" in question is demarcated by a key "vector" formed by an "eyeline" connecting the head actors, both husband and wife, and the secondary actor, the server. As the latter leans in to offer the couple what appears to be a fine delicacy of the tropics, they each return their gaze in sign of appreciation.

Strikingly, although this image is very much about heterosexual romance and the cultural ritual of the honeymoon, it strongly connotes luxury and excess. Various signifiers point towards that particular direction: the wine glasses presumably filled with Sandals' finest, the formal/semi-formal attires in which both actors are dressed, both primary and secondary, the canopy bed on which the couple is positioned, the food platter topped with fine gastronomy. Each of these visual elements speaks indulgence. Even the written text located below the image accentuates Sandals' luxury package: "A honeymoon so opulent it redefines luxury" (Figure 4, online source). In parallel to Figures 1 to 3, the leading actors depicted in this advertisement expect to be *served* by the secondary character. Although the latter is shown as carrying out a direct action, this one very much signifies compliance (O'Barr 1994). Such positioning of actors and actions – *who serves whom* – reveals Sandals complicity in reproducing dominant relations of power in regards to class, gender, sex, and ultimately race.

By applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of "narrative processes," one starts decoding the inner storylines presented in the selected ads, as well as acknowledging the way in which written and visual texts work in unison to promote an overall mythology: that of the ultimate "luxury included" honeymoon (Barthes 1972). The latter can be broken down into three interconnected categories: narratives of class, narratives of gender and sexuality, and narratives of race. All three discourses persist throughout Sandals' "luxury included" campaign.

In the next section, I discuss these discourses in greater detail and situate these micro narratives within the larger discourse of white supremacy. The selected advertisements will no longer stand on their own; they are to be grounded in history.

The Myth of the "Luxury-Included" Honeymoon

What do the settings and actors reveal about the actions that take place in the selected advertisements? After careful consideration, I state that these actions – and the visual narratives that they evoke – are the gateway into the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon since they demonstrate more than just movements or gestures; along with the settings and actors, they imply a whole new "structure of feeling" (Williams 1977) about race, class, and empire. I wish to begin

by the re-telling of the myth – the one that naturalizes and legitimizes the visual narratives in the ads (Barthes 1972).

Following an extremely busy day of smiling to the camera and to the many guests who have come to celebrate the wedding, of eating the abundance of food and cake, and of dancing the night away with that significant other, any newlywed couple is ready for a ten-day escapade to a tropical heaven, a place where all of one's desires are satisfied. So there goes the newlywed couple – Western, privileged, and obviously mobile – travelling miles away from their North American home and journeying into the Caribbean locale, Sandals Resorts specifically. Here, they enjoy the water and vegetation, luxurious suites with butler service, as well as let loose romantically and sexually. It is the tropics after all. Yet again, these sexual escapes remain quite respectable since this couple is now married and encouraged to perform sexual activities, especially on their honeymoon. Sex can be played out in any of the spaces and settings that are constructed by Sandals: from the walk-in terrace and hotel suite to underneath the romantic waterfall and in their private pool. The resort offers a safe haven amidst the wild and untamed tropics for North American tourists to execute their wildest romantic fantasies with the person they just married. Yes, this earthly paradise is all-inclusive and above all, luxurious! The "white wedding," complete with its white gown, perfectly pressed Hugo Boss tuxedo, Cadillac Escalade limousine, seven-course reception meal, and a fat thirty-thousand dollar bill is not complete without the ultimate lavish honeymoon on temptation island. The scuba-diving trips, the fine dining by the sea, the tasting of exotic fruits, the sharing of cocktails on the seashore, and above all, the bright smile on the faces of the friendly hotel staff are all invaluable components that make up the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon. With all the aspects just mentioned, it takes on the narrative of Harlequin novels and tells the tale of heterosexual romance in a tropical setting.

The myth does not stop here, of one follows Barthes' (1972, 142) analysis. It goes on. It tells a larger tale of race, class and empire. The actors playing tourists in these ads are no different that the colonial explorers taking over lands, cultures, and peoples, benefitting from the lush landscapes and vegetation, and dominating over the local population (Hall 2010, 203). Indeed, these contemporary North American explorers depicted in Sandals' ads are a tad *prettier* than their ancestors. Yet, I would also argue that they are nonetheless dangerous. Considering

the history of racialization in travel practices, the paleness of their skin is strategically positioned in contrast to the coloured sceneries and the darker skin tones of the local population (Strain 1996). These shades of whiteness act as markers, which categorize the honeymooners as dominating, and consequently, the locals as dominated. The architectural structures of Sandals' hotels stand tall and erect, welcoming these contemporary explorers. Although the names of these buildings might sound grand and formal, Sandals Royal Caribbean and Sandals Royal Bahamian, they too, echo the long history of colonialism that impacts the Caribbean region. The word "royal" while testifying to the *grandeur* of the space of the resort and its hotel emphasizes the pervasive legacy of European imperialism over the lands and peoples of the Caribbean (Tucker and Akama 2009, 506-507). The figure of the butler is not just a simple representation of a staff member; it connotes the history of subordination and racialization that has affected the Caribbean for the past centuries.

Along the same lines, the figures of the bride and groom stand as those women and men who have eloped from their routine lives in search of adventure and a *carnavalesque* lifestyle in the tropics, a place where the forbidden is almost deemed mandatory. The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon needs to be *re-politicized*; its structures of power need to be unmasked and set up for dialogue (Hall 2010). Here, I refer to back to Kress and Van Leeuwen's conceptualization of "settings," "actors," and "actions" as they pertain to the visual discourses set up in Sandals' advertisements. These notions are useful when investigating the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon since they allow one to untangle the *hidden* storylines – of race, class, and empire – that make up the advertisements. In the following sections, I discuss the ways in which power relations affect the "actors" and manifest themselves in the "settings" and "actions" put forward by Sandals' "luxury-included" campaign. In order to reposition this myth within history, I search for the general conceptual trends that are represented in all four figures, and thus reveal a larger discourse about whiteness and its pervasiveness in Sandals' honeymoon campaign. Whereas earlier I analyzed each figure individually, I now work more *on the surface* and problematize the patterns of power concealed by the myth of the "luxury-included".

Settings and Actors in Actions

In its advertisements, Sandals constructs an appealing visual space that is intended to lure the audience into the narrative of romance in the tropics. As mentioned earlier, this space – whether it be interior or exterior, private or public – is presented in a way that encourages one to ascribe their own storyline or fantasy onto it. Sandals' imagery works as a blank canvas that forces one to imagine their love story in the midst of palm trees and luxury. Nevertheless, in doing so, it also locates the "luxury-included" honeymoon in a tropical destination. As previously mentioned research shows (Strain 1996; Desnoes 2003, 311-322; Kim and Chung 2005, Tucker and Akama 2009, and Hall 2010), the geography of a tourist destination is not void of politics. Sandals' presence in the Caribbean region evokes the history of colonialism that has impacted geographies and peoples. Sandals works as some sort of empire as it dictates the visual framing of the islands and their respective environments to a Northern audience. Whether it is St-Lucia or Bahamas, it simply does not matter because what the "luxury-included" honeymoon is emphasizing is not a specific country and its local culture, lands, and peoples. Rather, Sandals is putting forward an architectural mould that can be repeated over and over again, no matter the country in question as long as the location is tropical and the sea is of turquoise hue (Tucker and Akama 2010). Sandals' ads present a safe suburb, far away from the local hustle and bustle of Caribbean cultures and peoples. According to my analysis of the "luxury-included" honeymoon, Sandals' ads present more of an up-scale gated community benefitting from the lush landscapes of the Caribbean and the workforce of its peoples, erasing poverty, exploitation, and the legacy of imperial/colonial rule and subjugation. On the one hand Sandals' images show real geographical spaces that have their own stories, cultures, and peoples who are being put on display via visual advertising. On the other, Sandals targets white, middle-class couples who have the means to travel to tropical destinations and benefit from luxury service and the actual safe-guarded colony that is the resort.

The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon frames the spaces it depicts via its advertising on two levels. The first level of framing occurs with the photographic image. As I mentioned, it casts out the political quality of the geographical spaces it puts on display and replaces this with sceneries of bare beaches, blue waters, and luxury suites. Actors, who are

understood as North American honeymooners, act out their storylines of heterosexual romance into the spaces being depicted, compelling actual consumers to do the same.

The second level of framing must be imagined by viewers. Here, I refer specifically to the resort as being a frame. Similar to the camera, it casts privileged white tourists searching for luxury in the midst of an exotic locale and consequently casts out anyone or anything that does not fit the standard of respectability. Because Sandals puts forth such an elaborate campaign promoting luxury to a select few of the North American population, the spaces included in the frames – both at the level of the photograph and at the level of the resort comprise a physical architectural structure blocking out any reminder of the local struggles taking place in the area. Thus, the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon acts as a modern manifestation of white dominance.

These ads are white. Not that they are void of colour since they are indeed composed of attractive colourful images that are intended to capture one's attention at first glance. But, similar to the "white wedding," this myth constructs racialized spaces. Though investigating a different topic, Razack (1998) stresses the importance of acknowledging the social formation of spaces and the actors that move within these spaces. She reasons, "Socially constituted space is an important concept when we come to consider prostitution, for without a specifically marked space, we do not see prostitution – prostitution both defines the place and is defined in it" (1998, 356). Relating the concept of the "socially constituted space" to Sandals "luxury-included" resorts, one understands that the tourist industry in the Caribbean is a white industry, defined by whites, that seeks to ultimately frame out non-whites and their histories from the pages of travel guides and advertisements, as well as, from the actual living spaces that are the hotel resorts themselves and the beaches they enclose (Auerbach 2002). Whether it be the hotel suites or the white-sand beaches depicted in the ads, these contained spaces are framed as respectable, safe, and superior geographical areas in which white, middle-class honeymooners can experience the Caribbean safely without the fear of being harmed by locals, or face any of the social realities of the host country. These ads work at silencing any reminder of the history of colonialism that has affected the host countries. The ads and their visual content reconfigure history in order to benefit the industry of tourism in tropical destinations (Martinot 2010). Therefore, the racial categorisation of the spaces presented in Sandals advertisements serves to legitimize the

endeavour of tourism in the tropics and rationalize the "luxury-included" honeymoon as a respectable adventure to embark on as a newlywed couple (Martinot 2010, 19).

Referring back to Barthes' concept of myth, it can be argued that the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon is made possible by the racialization of these spaces as white. The structures of the ads and resorts work as visual markers that categorize and contain the respectability of the spaces, and consequently, the actors moving within these spaces. As these zones are an integral part of the "luxury-included" honeymoon, they ultimately belong to the realm of myth. They appear natural. Most North-Americans dream of vacationing on white-sand beaches, holding a piña colada in hand, without ever questioning the repercussions of the travel industry in these host countries. However, it is this very appearance of naturalness that positions the narrative of the tropical honeymoon within the discursive history of white supremacy. The privilege of benefitting from a worry-free, all-inclusive vacation, the privilege of having access to mobility, and the privilege of considering luxury as an option for one's honeymoon ranks the North-American honeymooner as dominant, as having power, and ultimately as white. The spaces presented in these ads are bare so that each traveler or couple can create their own romantic storyline - one that probably involves sexual practices. Yet these are never tasteless since they are positioned within a clearly marked space of respectability: the "luxury-included" resort. Finally, the myth promoted by Sandals Resorts maintains its status of power because it actively participates in the process of racializing the settings in its advertisements as well as the spaces defined by its resorts as white. This allocation of power to a specific space – whether visual or lived – is made possible because other spaces are classified as dirty, dangerous, and *Other* (Martinot 2010, 18-19). Domination cannot work without subordination (O'Barr 1994; Carey et al. 2009; Martinot 2010). Razack (1998) argues that historically, how men used to go to the colonies to revive or rejuvenate their masculinity. It can be argued that in some ways, these couples go to such exotic locales to rejuvenate their status as middle/upper class normative citizens of dominating nations.

Turning to the actors presented in Sandals' honeymoon advertisements and the actions that they carry out, the salient question is: what role do these actors play within the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon? Thus far, it is apparent that the settings depicted in the ad campaign are an integral part of the survival of this myth. Without out them, the myth would

lose some of its power, appear less attractive, thus potentially losing several members or segments of the audience. However, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) emphasize, settings do not act alone in creating a visual grammar. Similar to the syntax of a sentence which includes subject, verb, and object, the order of the visual narrative necessitates settings which act as contexts to actors in action. In the following sections, I speak of these actors and their role within the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon. My discussion begins with an important premise: the actors performing in this myth are actually markers of either domination or subordination (O'Barr 1994). The position of power that each actor holds in the various advertisements depends on the position of power held by their counterpart. One is therefore obliged to speak of power in terms of the relation it creates between actors. My observations thus focus on the relation between the different actors and what these relations actually say about power and whiteness.

When O'Barr (1994) explores the concepts of domination and subordination in travel advertising, he identifies two occasions where such relations of power manifest themselves: (1) between the actors and (2) between the actors and the spaces. And since these relations operate within the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon, which as I have stated previously, is made up of a series of racialized spaces in which racialized actors perform the mythical narrative, I must imagine these actors performing within the spatial boundaries set up by Sandals' attractive storyline.

The advertisements discussed in the previous sections present six key couples as North-American honeymooners, five of whom can be considered "white" and only one can be considered as "non-white" or of Asian descent. In addition, Figures1 (second spread), 3 and 4 present an actor who is playing the local host and, interestingly enough, this actor is always presented as a black male and is always in a position of service. In terms of power relations, the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon goes further than just present a list of different racialized actors. It sets these actors in action with one another.

As a general trend, the couples in the ads take on the roles of prince charming and the beautiful delicate princess, in which case this prince is always the provider, the protector, watching over his damsel. In comparison, this princess appears as excited or day-dreamy, almost child-like. She gazes up into her husbands' eyes. Whether the groom feeds his bride an exotic

fruit, helps her unto a boat, or stares down into her blue eyes, he appears a little taller, somewhat sharper, and consequently, a little more dominating. His bride, conquered by his charm, follows his lead. This storyline derives from the "white wedding". On her wedding day, the bride becomes princess. Yet, Cinderella's glass slipper does not have to come off at midnight that same day. The fairytale romance can resume in tropical paradise (Ingraham 1999; Otnes and Pleck 2003; Howard 2006). Therefore, the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon is an extension of the "white wedding" discourse since it simply relocates the prince/princess narrative into a different spatial setting. The white gown and tuxedo suit are not framed within a luxurious reception hall, but are now converted into costume that fits the setting of a white-sandy beach and turquoise sea.

The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon also perpetuates the discourse of some *woman as temptress*. Although Sandals' advertising campaign primarily focuses on white couples, it does however include non-white honeymooners into its images. In Figure 1 (second spread), a woman seemingly of Asian-descent takes on a role of power as she leads her groom into the bedroom suite. In fact, it is the only image where the female protagonist seems to dominate. Interestingly, it is also the only instance where Sandals' presents a non-white couple in its campaign. This *woman as temptress* takes power over her groom as she lures him into the hotel suite. One can imagine the narrative that follows. Most importantly, this performance takes place within a space set up by the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon. According to Yasmin Jiwani (2005), women of South-East and Eastern Asia have been stereotyped in the popular media as hyper-sexualized and exotic figures, tempting the white male character into sexual relations (Jiwani 2005, 184). Interestingly, Figure 1 (second spread) portrays the Asian female character leading her male partner – who is also an actor of Asian-descent – into the bedroom. Although the ad does not present a white actor as her love interest, it does echo the legacy of European imperialism and white dominance. The role of the temptress reproduces the myth of the erotic Asian woman casting a dangerous spell on her male lover (Jiwani 2005).

Referring to Razack (1998, 361), spatial settings are social constructions that imply politics of power, including whiteness. In other words, some spaces are considered white, and ultimately, *respectable* as they belong to the privileged white class; whereas, Other spaces are framed as *run down* since they cater to the poorer groups [often men and women of colour in

developing regions]. Razack emphasizes that the run down label of the coloured space actually reinforces the respectability of the white space (1998, 361). In this regard, the framing of the Asian woman in the Sandal's ad is contained within a space of respectability. Thus, the myth of the "luxury included" honeymoon legitimizes the respectability of the Asian woman as temptress (Jiwani 2005) since her role is defined within the *clean* walls of the "bourgeois" resort (Berthold 2010; Razack 1998). The behaviour of the temptress is accepted in such context. A bride is expected to be sexually available to her groom, especially on their honeymoon. These actions take place within the larger rubric of matrimony. Not only are these honeymooners deemed respectable because they act within the institution of marriage, but also their actions are praised and accepted in wedding magazines simply because these are performed within the walls of respectability, and ultimately within the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon. The myth defines her role as acceptable to the middle-class North-American tourist since she is automatically associated with the "white wedding." Unlike the sex worker or the college student on spring break in Cancun, the Sandals bride maintains an aura of respectability despite her role as temptress. Readers recognize the sexualized quality of the temptress, yet they do not frown upon it. On the contrary, it is celebrated. Therefore, the myth does not simply categorize various areas and protagonists as respectable, it also defines a particular kind of femininity. In doing so, it ultimately sets up an order of femininities (Razack 1998) in which case the white middle-class woman in categorized as superior to the poor woman of colour. The Sandals bride is placed at the top of the pyramid. She is qualified as empowered, privileged, and as having access to a certain level of wealth and mobility, and respectability. Yet her status does not define itself. Instead, it can only maintain such level of power so far as it stands in contrast to a more inferior role: the *loose woman* or the sex worker (Razack 1998; Razack and Fellows 1998).

Referring back to O'Barr (1994), in advertising, the actor in a dominant position plays in constant opposition to the actor in a position of subordination. In emphasizing the respectability of the North-American bride, the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon covertly discredits the femininities of Caribbean women, those who are servicing the resort as well as the femininities of women labelled *loose* or belonging to the sex trade (Razack 1998). Furthermore, since the myth is a white myth (Martinot 2010), in that it emphasises that whiteness, and ultimately white power, thereby overshadowing the actual architecture of Sandals Resorts and the

spaces delimitated within those walls, I argue that the actors in the images are white regardless of the colour of their skin. These actors play within white walls. They symbolise privilege and mobility in contrast to the disenfranchisement typically associated to third-world countries and tropical destinations. They represent the modern version of the European explorers conquering tropical geographies, cultures, and peoples. The myth positions these actors as the epitome of modern imperialism. By their very presence in the advertising campaign, these protagonists set themselves apart from the actors playing the role of the butler or the domestic help. Their role of power only enhances the status of Otherness associated with the figure of the butler in the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon.

The role of the butler is invaluable to the livelihood of the myth. Without this specific figure, the myth would lose some of its power. As much as the touring couple stands as the modern representation of white imperialism, the butler symbolizes the actual presence of white imperialism in tropical destinations in general and in Sandals Resorts particularly. Everything from his uniform to his actions of service and hospitality works at emphasizing his Otherness in sharp contrast to the dominant position of the honeymooners. Dressed in clothes that are not his own and serving people he does not know, he caters to wishes of luxury and excess. In the case of Sandals' campaign, the touring couple needs the butler to effectively fulfill the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon. Indeed, these actors would be stripped from some of their power if the butler were not to appear in the images. Similarly to the spaces contained within the walls of Sandals' Resorts, the figure of the butler is reduced to a state of service and consumption (Kingsbury 2011, 652). He is part of the theatrical setting, a prop. As mentioned in the introduction, Sandals ensures that the relationship between the workers and the tourists is part of the overall vacation package: the worker *serves* the tourist. Such careful positioning frames the butler as a luxurious commodity (Kingsbury, 652-653). The myth sees no difference between his role and that of the turquoise sea and white, sandy beach.

In addition, the role of the black butler strongly connotes the oppressive discourses of slavery in the Americas. In the past fifteen years, Sandals has invested millions of dollars in providing training to its workers (Kingsbury, 655). Now such employee care sheds a positive light on Sandals as a corporation. Education and formal service training are empowering tools that can enable one to perform better at their job. Yet, when linking such formal training to the

role of the butler, one must acknowledge the process in which the structure of white dominance openly embraces the figure of the black butler. Unlike the role of the black male field worker who takes on the harsh physical labour under the hot sun, the black butler works in the spheres of *white domesticity* and *cleanliness* (Kingsbury 2011, 116; Berthold 2010, 14-15). The role of the butler is part of the established order of power; his submissiveness does not threaten the status quo of racialized hierarchies, rather this character works within the structure of whiteness, as shown in the 2013 film *The Butler*. In fact, his pristine gloves and attire only enhance the pervasiveness of whiteness in contemporary advertising. Although native to the Caribbean, Sandals' butler does not threaten the white tourists; he has access to their private suite and dinner table. Berthold (2010) emphasizes that whiteness is a practice that creeps into the most mundane activities of one's life, for example, extreme cleanliness. Indeed, the advertisements depict the butler as the exemplification of the highest standards of cleanliness and domestic service at Sandals. In this way, the role belongs to the sphere of whiteness and its very presence in the ads confirms the prevalence of white power. Berthold writes,

> The linguistic genealogy of the link between *whiteness* and moral purity reaches back before the founding of the US. The OED's seventh meaning of 'white' is morally and spiritually pure (esp. when compared to something black). The word 'fair' means both light and right. A white lie is an innocent lie. Whiteness is cleanliness, purity, the absence of a stain or mark. (2010, 11)

Therefore the role of the butler in the images reaffirms the myth of the "luxury included" honeymoon and its strong connection to whiteness as a system of power. The figure of the butler represents *safety*, service, and hospitality within the walls of the gated community – which strategically *protects* its exclusive members from the social realities and struggles of the host country. The butler is an important player in the machine of whiteness as his very presence reaffirms the power of the white tourist over the Caribbean locale, and ultimately the "white wedding" and "luxury-included" honeymoon.

The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon manifests itself through Sandals' advertising images. As discussed previously, these images work as visual discourses or narratives that involve actors taking part in a series of transactions, eliding the sense of any power struggle existing between the touring honeymooners and the tropical locale and its people and cultures. The images examined in this research show that white couples on their honeymoon overshadow the locals via their status of privilege, mobility, feeling of entitlement, and culture of excess and luxury. This myth stops at nothing. It encompasses the power relations embedded in the contemporary tourist industry, which are underpinned by a legacy of imperialism and consequently white power. Via the "social semiotic theory" of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), I situate and interrogate the various visual components of the images and ask the question: what larger narrative is embedded within the campaign of the "luxury-included" honeymoon? Barthes' concept of the myth (1972) highlights my understanding of the visual signifiers within these ads and encourages me to go beyond the primary level of meaning of the images and seek out the larger the discourse which structures the advertising campaign. The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon is a story about whiteness and how it acts as a system of power placing in hierarchy different social groups and geographies. The North-American honeymooners do not play the role of innocent travellers; rather, they take on the part of their predecessors: the European colonizers. The settings, complete with white, sandy beaches and turquoise water, act as the colonies, the geographical spaces in which the struggles are fought. Finally, the figure of the butler represents the colonized, serving the colonizer, wearing the uniform that the colonizer has chosen. This figure, along with the different actors and settings, is the ultimate indication that Sandals' honeymoon advertisements perpetuate a discourse of race, class and empire to middle-class North American brides and grooms.

Conclusion

Conceptually, my thesis takes on a social constructivist approach in its line of inquiry. The advertising images selected for this cultural investigation derive from two different media sources, wedding magazines and an online website - Sandals.com. In addition to their role as visual stills promoting luxury honeymoons to newlyweds, they play a more invaluable part: that of the cultural "text" (Long and Robinson 2009; Brummet 2008; Barthes 1977). In the field of communication studies, scholars (Barthes 1972; O'Barr 1994; Hall 1996, 1997; Auerbach 2002) recognize that popular media and the representations that they produce are part of and work within an existing social fabric and it is within the sphere of representation that the dynamics of the social fabric are consumed or challenged. Hall (1997, 443) stresses that "*it is only within the discursive*" that social relations of power acquire meaning or are made meaningful (my emphasis). Therefore, I ask, how are whiteness and colonial relations of power reproduced in this particular field of advertising?

Sandals' myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon perpetuates whiteness as a standard of power, and consequently reproduces colonial relations between tourists and the peoples, cultures, and landscapes of the Caribbean. Via the channel of visual advertising such practice is made possible. This thesis encourages one to position the honeymoon narrative promoted by Sandals within the fields of international tourism and the North American wedding industry (Long and Robinson 2009). Both industries involve their own set of systems of oppression. Whereas the former is grounded in European imperialism and thus promotes white power as its standard for access, mobility, and privilege, the latter, with its concept of the "white wedding", emphasizes a hierarchy of femininity in which case the bride who has the privilege to travel to the Caribbean is marketed as superior to the indigenous bride of colour. Sandals' honeymoon advertisements utilize these ideologies and distribute them via the visual discourses. Through a detailed textual analysis of the ads, I am able to uncover the many narratives of power and place them in dialogue with one another.

Kress and van Leeuwen's "social semiotic theory" (2006) provides valuable tools by which to understand the different signifiers within the ads and to analyze them in relation to one another. As mentioned previously, images have an order to them. In the same way that one reads a written text, one can also read an image. The ads included in this work involve "actors," and consequently place these "actors" within "settings." These "actors" and "settings" carry major implications. As O'Barr (1994) suggests, protagonists in travel ads, along with the spaces in which they are found, are in constant struggle with one another. Western tourists exert power over the exotic destinations to which they travel. Sandals' honeymooners are no different. They take precedence in each image, controlling either the natural landscape of the Caribbean through their "tourist gaze" (Urry 1990) or practicing their status of privilege by enjoying the service from the hospitable hotel staff. The landscapes and locals presented in the ads are to be consumed by visitors (Kingsbury 2011, 652). These landscapes and locals are not marketed as dominant [read white]. Instead, they invoke colonial relations of power. Kress and van Leeuwen's "social semiotic theory" (2006) encourages one interrogate the various "actors" and "settings" in the ad. Interestingly, their method of analysis works in concert with O'Barr's (1994) concepts of domination and subjugation emphasizing that the characters in travel ads depicting the Caribbean locale are in a constant power struggle with one another; the privileged Western tourist defines his or her status of power in relation to the subjugation of the indigenous worker who is depicted *in service*.

Such a methodological framework is a perfect gateway into Barthes' notion of the myth: cultural discourse is composed of a plurality of narratives – each one has its own politicized history and meanings; yet, these narratives are overshadowed by a *metalanguage*, voiding them of their political meanings (1972, 115). Myth sugarcoats the actualities of power and dominance in travel advertisements by framing out what is not considered suitable for a white public, for example, poverty, sex tourism, social unrest, not to mention other residues of a colonial past. All three academic sources (Barthes 1972; O'Barr 1994; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) are used here to unveil the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon embedded in Sandals' honeymoon images. This myth, which is the means through which Sandals reproduces whiteness and colonial relations of power, is no longer hidden behind the narrative of the "white wedding". Instead, it stands out. It becomes obvious to the eye of the critical consumer. As Barthes

explains, myth is all-encompassing (1972, 117). Hence, the myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon manifests itself in the actual advertisement included in the wedding magazine, as well as in the magazine itself which displays the many trades involved in maintaining the prestige of the "white wedding." By participating in the visual consumption of these texts, brides-to-be engage knowingly or unknowingly in the myth.

This research conceptualizes whiteness as a position of power (Dyer 1997; Martinot 2010; Berthold 2010). Whiteness is a system of exclusivity that labels specific actors as legitimate and respectable, and in turn, dismisses Others (Jiwani 2006; Martinot 2010; Berthold 2010). This system reproduces colonial relations of power (Carey et al. 2009, and Tucker and Akama 2009). Since Sandals' advertisements are about racialized representation – as are all travel advertisements – they ultimately involve race in their discourses. Such conceptualization proves useful in the unmasking of the myth in Sandals' advertisements since it allows one to decipher the different narratives of colonial power. These images are rooted in the "legacy of empire" (Auerbach 2002).

Going back to my initial framing, contemporary travel advertising perpetuates whiteness as a status of power, a position that is well represented in visual ads selling the sand and sun to prospective brides and grooms across North America. In this specific instance, I chose to elaborate on a specific resort chain that is quite popular among the "white wedding" market. However, this recipe for all-inclusive travel dominates the tourism practices between the wealthy northern countries and the developing southern countries. Hence, regardless of the resort one chooses to focus on, the underlying factor remains that particular signifiers are staged in visual ads with the sole purpose of demarcating the increasing divide between North and South. I come to this conclusion by considering the textual significance of Sandals honeymoon advertisements. Long and Robinson (2009) accentuate the importance of this matter:

> Approaches to so-called cultural tourism are still dogged by being site specific and often fail to take account of the role of the media in their production and consumption. Moreover, approaches to tourist behavior and performances sometimes neglect the role of media in shaping pre-visit expectations and imaginations…. As tourism spills out into

> more cultural realms it is increasingly important to be able to draw upon ideas such as, for instance, translation, genre, intertextuality, and celebrity (110).

In other words, romantic images scripting the performative value of contemporary honeymoons in tropical destinations actually reinstate the legacy of race, class, and empire in a modern setting. The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon is made possible via the textual significance of Sandals' honeymoon advertisements. Although, I speak of the tourism industry in this thesis, my attention and effort are primarily focused on the actual cultural importance associated to advertising, which is the very foundation of destination tourism as we now know it. Via these pictures a whole world of possibilities and imagined performances come alive. The myth of the "luxury-included" honeymoon is a myth both sneaky and dangerous since it swims in the waters of imperialism and covers its true nature through the discourses of romance, luxury, and honeymoons. Whiteness, as a status of power, fuels this machinery ever so carefully as it continues to shape popular culture (Martinot 2010).

Future Research

Ongoing social struggles permeate the cultural and economic fabric of the Caribbean region. Imperialism is part of its lived history, according to Knight (2012). He stresses that economic development in the Caribbean can be divided into three main models: "the Cuban socialist model" which works along the lines of the Soviet style economy heavily relying on barter negotiations between countries; the second model includes the "openly capitalist economies"; the third model represents a blend of the two previous economic systems and necessitates financial aid from Western powers, notably North America and Europe (240). From this point forward, Knight emphasizes that not one of the Caribbean countries "has yet achieved an enviable degree of social and economic development" (240). Some have adopted a single model, while others have taken bits and pieces of different ones to make up their own. Despite this effort in "making-do," the Caribbean states are still left with a bitter taste of economic dependence when it comes to international transactions, notably tourism.

One can criticize and judge the tourist industry adinfinitum but the fact of the matter remains that tourism, and the structures of power it promotes, is invaluable to the economic

livelihood of the Caribbean region. Jenny Burman (1999, 161) emphasizes that, in the case of Jamaica, tourism is an important economic sector with direct impact on the lives of workers. In other words, yes, Jamaica's economy depends on the international market; however, the country's cultural fabric and social institutions are greatly influenced by the tourism industry on many levels. Burman emphasizes that tourism deeply impacts "human resources development and Jamaica's incorporation into the global economy" (162). It ensures the stability and permanency of a "northern leisure class" as well as a "southern service class" (162).

In addition to this uneven balance of power, another pressing issue regarding tourism in the Caribbean is the manner in which economic capital primarily lies in the hands of foreign owners or the wealthy business class. Burman stresses,

> The basic point relating to structures of ownership comes as no surprise: big business and colonial elites have been right in there from the start, and have had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of the industry. Their entrenchment presented major obstacles to post-independence attempts to break out of colonial patterns. Today, the nationality of ownership may be different (in the case of all-inclusives at least, with Sandals and Superclubs instead of the United Fruit Company) but the colour is the same, and the bulk of the profits still flows to few though the costs are borne by many (1999, 164).

Sandals Resorts prides itself of being "Caribbean-owned." Yet, as described above, the face of its ownership is white. On paper, the Caribbean region seems to be post-independence, specifically when it comes to the political sphere and governance: the region is no longer controlled politically by European empires; however, the same cannot be said in regards to achieved independence in the political sense, but not from post-colonialism in terms of its economic and social relations of power. According to David Dodman (2009, 214), local residents in the Caribbean "have reaped few benefits from this process." Although tourism has had a positive impact on some of Jamaica's social infrastructures, Dodman includes "the North Coast Highway Project," economic investments and profits remain in the hands of the elite few – white and foreign (214).

Tourism is the leading industry of the Caribbean region. It represents almost 25 percent "of regional export earnings (compared with 7% worldwide). The Caribbean can legitimately be described as the world's most tourism-dependent region" (Holder, 1996; as cited in Weaver 2001, 161; also see: Fletcher 2010, 170; Knight 2012, 239). Mass tourism works within this context. "The tourism industry is dominated by large scale resort and cruise ship tourism that has generally proved to be unsustainable" (Weaver 2001, 172). Although this thesis does not cover the many levels of agency that are present in the Caribbean region which reclaim tourism practices to benefit the local population and environment, it is invaluable that I mention that grassroots initiatives exist alongside the mass tourism model (see Knight 2012, 244-245). Further, while this thesis does not investigate the actual lived experiences of the local peoples living in the Caribbean and working within the resorts, (a project that would entail an entire separate project and line of inquiry), it does however emphasize the importance of considering these experiences when analyzing the discourses in travel ads. Consequently, this thesis opens up many routes of inquiry such as an examination of the lived experiences of those working in the resorts. While I am critical of the all-inclusive Sandals, I must admit that Sandals and other resorts employ many men and women who would otherwise probably not have a source of revenue. These people are not without agency. Yet, how is their own individual agency practiced in relation to Sandals Resorts and its advertising campaign of the "luxury-included"? This posits a new line of investigation, one that can inform future scholarly research.

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