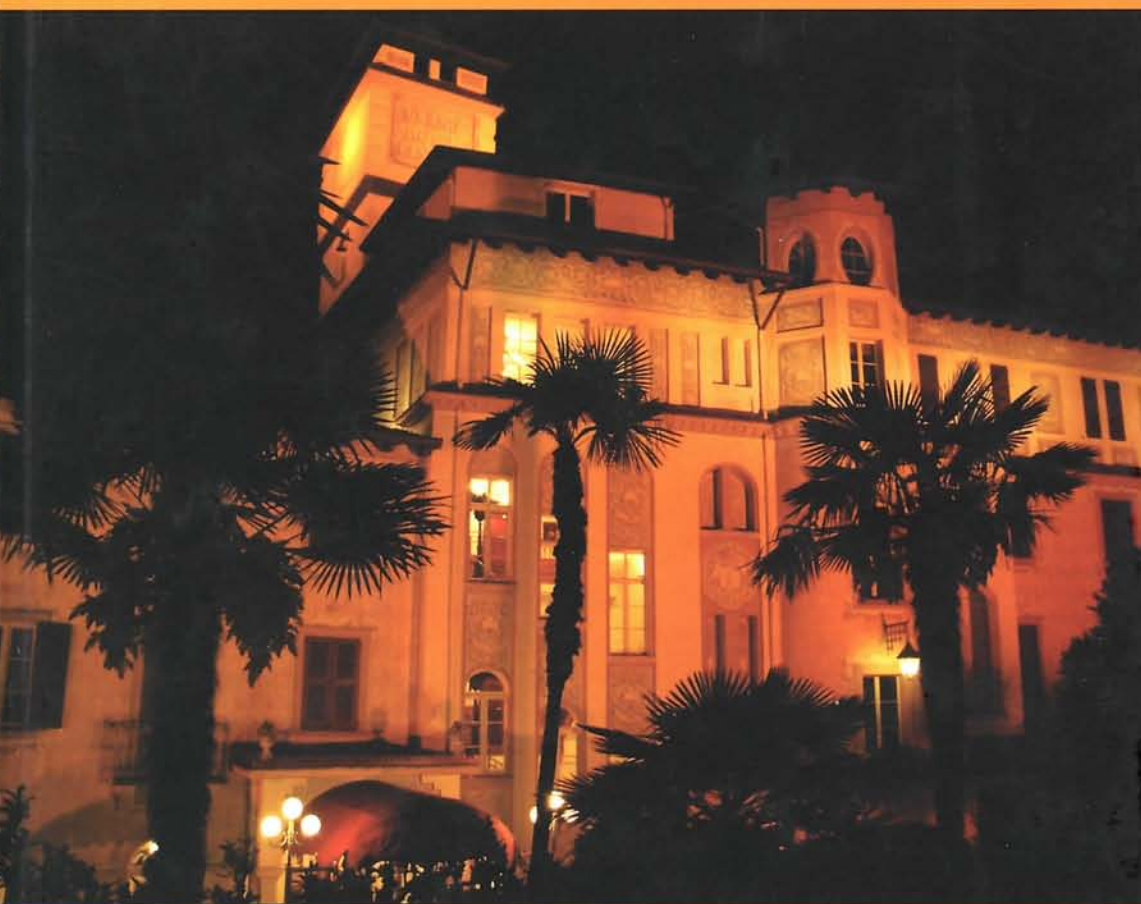


THE HOTEL AS SETTING in Early 20th-Century German and Austrian Literature

Checking in to Tell a Story



Bettina Matthias

*The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century
German and Austrian Literature*

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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Bettina Matthias

CAMDEN HOUSE

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For my parents — and to Roman

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B. M.
Middlebury, April 2006

Introduction

The attempt to evade responsibility for one's residence by moving into a hotel or furnished rooms, makes the enforced conditions of emigration a wisely-chosen norm . . . it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home.¹

THIS IS THEODOR W. ADORNO in his 1951 collection of essays *Minima Moralia*, assessing the possibility of living at home, “wohnen” in a post-1945 world. As is well known, a well-housed life “after Auschwitz” is morally almost impossible for the German intellectual, but Adorno’s criticism goes much farther in this eighteenth chapter of his *Minima Moralia*, entitled “Refuge For the Homeless.” For Adorno, the “enforced conditions of emigration” as well as the moral imperative “not to be at home in one’s home” anymore are the only appropriate attitude towards developments whose beginnings go back to the later nineteenth century and about which many of Adorno’s predecessors voiced similar concerns. In fact, Adorno’s existential homelessness has its direct precursor in Georg Lukács’s diagnosis, in his *Theory of the Novel* (1916), of the “transcendental homelessness” that characterizes life in the modern world,² an idea that will be one of the key concepts in the following study.

If “existential homelessness” is a moral imperative for life in modernism³ for Adorno, a similar idea seems to have risen to the status of an aesthetic and poetic imperative for German and Austrian authors after 1900 and especially between the two world wars. Often, we find short stories and major portions of novels no longer set in the characters’ homes. And even if they are set in these homes, we get the sense that the ideology of the solid bourgeois home (for the bourgeois subject had been an important focus of literary attention for the previous 100 years) has become problematic — one only needs to think about Fontane’s *Effi Briest* (1895) or Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Instead, writers created new settings that place the literary characters out of their element in the real and philosophical sense:⁴ Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (Magic Mountain, 1924), Arthur Schnitzler’s *Leutnant Gustl* (1900), Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues* (All Quiet on the Western Front, 1929), Hesse’s *Narziss und Goldmund* (1930), and all of Kafka’s novels are just an arbitrary few that come to mind.

Among these alternative settings, though, one appears with a striking consistency that critics have largely ignored so far: the hotel. Especially Aus-

trian, and specifically Austrian-Jewish writers from the first half of the twentieth century set their various stories in hotels, and we need to ask why and with what consequences. Much of Stefan Zweig's fiction is set in hotels including even his last, posthumously published novel *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Transformative Trance, 1982). Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else* (1924) is only one among a number of this author's stories and dramas that unfold in hotels, and Franz Werfel's "Die Hotelterre" (The Staircase, 1927) is among his better-known short stories. Vicki Baum acquired world-fame as the author of a number of hotel novels, most famously her first *Menschen im Hotel* (Grand Hotel, 1929). Peter Altenberg and Joseph Roth both spent long periods of their own lives in hotels and incorporated that experience into their literary works (especially in Roth's novel *Hotel Savoy*, 1924). Hofmannsthal decided to set his last libretto, for the opera *Arabella* (1929), in a Viennese hotel, and Erich Kästner offered his more humorous and stereotyped take on the topic in his *Drei Männer im Schnee* (Three Men in the Snow, 1934). Parts of Kafka's *Amerika* (1913/ 1927) and Thomas Mann's *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man, 1954) both explore the universe of the hotel from the perspective of an employee; Hesse's *Kurgast* (Spa Visitor, 1925) and Mann's *Der Zauberberg* combine the motifs of illness and the subjective experience of time with the setting of the hotel, respectively the elegant sanatorium. Finally, Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (Death in Venice, 1912) may have become the period's most famous literary hotel story in the proper sense, in part thanks to Visconti's impressive film adaptation of the novella. A number of these texts will be the subject of the second part of this study.

To examine the significance of this recurrent literary setting in its cultural and socio-historical context will be the main purpose of this book. For it is more than the literary hotel, a constructed space in language that calls for our attention. In order to understand the appeal that the hotel as a setting may have had for authors around 1900 and afterwards, we also need to examine its role in the social life of the time, the trends that contributed to its status as an important social meeting place, and the specific combination of time, space, and money in hotels, factors that determine the character of inhabited space in general. It is this aspect of the following study of literary hotels that seeks to contribute to a broader discussion of modernism's approach to the individual's spatial socialization.

The Many Facets of Hotel Culture

Surprisingly, a wide-ranging study of literary hotels has not yet been done, neither by literary critics nor in the fields of cultural or German studies. The lack of such critical groundwork represents a major challenge, but it also provides a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary work. To examine the

hotel itself, and not just its literary representations in the early twentieth century, from various discipline-specific angles can already reveal a great deal of its attraction for writers during that time and in general, and it helps chart the territory for my further inquiry.

As a socio-historical phenomenon, the hotel is one of the key witnesses to, as well as the product of, major power-shifts in Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a shift from an aristocratic to a bourgeois leisure class, from a sedentary to a traveling society. More specifically, hotels mirror the degree to which geographic *and* social mobility became possible around the turn of the century, and they represent the stages on which a newly empowered social group could flaunt their social skills and wealth.

As a modern economic phenomenon, hotels are perfect representatives of the workings of the mature money-based economy that the sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918) analyzed most extensively in his *Die Philosophie des Geldes* (Philosophy of Money, 1900). Money, as a socially assigned value on which modern exchange of goods and services is based, has entered the modern subject into a more objective and mediated relationship to the world and has replaced the much more subjective value of material goods in the barter-based economy. As capitalist societies have evolved, more and more areas of human life have been subjected to the objectifying power of money. Not only goods and services, but ideas, space, and time have become quantifiable in monetary terms, creating a distance between the individual and the world that has a significant impact on his or her interaction with and perception of everything around. As Simmel explains, this distance is at once alienating and liberating: while the loss of the subject's unmediated relationship to the world threatens its autonomy and makes it difficult for the individual to have an authentic experience that resists assessment in quantitative terms, money also liberates the individual and enables geographical, social, and even psychological mobility.⁵ One's situation no longer necessarily depends on blood or God-given hierarchies, and capital's ability to multiply, independent of material resources, and its lack of intrinsic qualities empowers the individual to seek out opportunities to advance in society and life that were not possible prior to the introduction of money. Late capitalist societies are fully inscribed in Simmel's money-based economy, and there is hardly a place where people are not subjected to the ambivalent effect of society's monetary organization. Yet there is also an obvious attempt in capitalist societies to mask money's omnipresence to buffer its possibly unsettling effects and to lull the human being into believing in the possibility of a life or at least moments beyond the reach of capital: this is especially the case in hotels.

Hotels are fully capitalized spaces that do not openly acknowledge or reveal their capitalist foundation. While the whole operation of the hotel is based on the power of capital, it is this capital investment that also allows

guests to suspend money's all-pervasive presence and enjoy the more or less luxurious offerings of their lodgings. In other words: it is money that buys the guest time in a hotel, but this money is partially spent on efforts to make the guest forget the capitalist equation, in which he or she is inscribed as the paying customer in the hospitality industry. The power of money's fundamentally ambivalent nature as "alienator" and "liberator," fully pronounced after the successful completion of Europe's industrialization around 1900, becomes a major driving force in the hotel's economic structure and has a significant impact on the way people interact.

As architectural units, hotels reflect the late nineteenth century's changing approach to space and its social functions, and to the notions of public and private, anonymity and intimacy, function and ornamentation, and seeing and being seen, an approach that manifests itself in a variety of other settings as well — the French architect Hausmann's plans for a new system of boulevards in Paris or that city's steel-and-glass-built arcades are other examples of modernism's new concept of the relationship between people and space.⁶ While strict barriers between public and private, most important in the consolidation of a bourgeois identity in the early nineteenth century, start to tumble under the effects of an increasingly transnational industrialization and commerce and the development of modern urban centers, the individual starts to disappear in the "mass" and is allowed a new, ambivalent attitude towards life that Baudelaire's "flâneur"⁷ expresses to the extreme. As a disengaged observer who is yet part of the flow on the streets, in his city's coffee houses and other semi-public spaces (department stores, public transportation etc.), he occupies that new gray zone that is neither home nor foreign land, where he is neither alone nor part of a group, neither private nor public, in an existential no-man's land.

Sociologically and psychologically speaking, hotels are thus spaces in which modernism's effects on interpersonal relationships express themselves most poignantly. As guests get drawn into the hotel's ambivalent, semi-anonymous atmosphere, they can only engage in social conversation that never reaches beyond the surface of the Other as an autonomous individual: not surprisingly, small talk is the conversational mode of choice. At the same time, the hotel's atmosphere also brings about modern modes of interaction. As social meeting places with a given image, hotels encourage their guests to expect a certain, pre-determined standard of manners and activities. However, this standard only persists when guests conform to its demands: a self-perpetuating, self-sustaining behavioral system is the result. Social conduct has to follow special codes and rites that the guest needs to know and master if he or she wants to be included in the assembled society.⁸

Thus assigned to a role in the hotel's social script, guests can choose to play with their identity, their heritage, and with each other, once they have adjusted to their new environment. Approached in this manner, hotels can

liberate guests from the restrictions that their everyday life imposes. The difference between seeming and being becomes blurry. Life turns into a spectacle that everybody is invited to enjoy for as long as they can pay. Most social interaction oscillates between almost complete indifference towards others, playful contact that knows of no consequences, and the reckless testing of culturally set boundaries and taboos such as sex and crime, all of this in the company of an arbitrarily composed group of people whom the revolving door has swept inside.

For writers of fiction, then, hotels are perfect experimental settings. They offer ample material for those who wish to study the dynamics between the individual and society or a chosen sub-group thereof and the subject's struggle to find the right balance between feelings of estrangement and liberation. As isolated places away from the familiar context of everyday life, hotels represent social laboratories for writers to test the stability of traditional value systems, and they use the spatial limits of their setting to zoom in on a potential struggle that would be harder to detect or isolate in a less focused setting.

In addition, hotels offer innumerable narrative opportunities that require little causal preparation: they are spaces where people meet accidentally and where stories emerge almost naturally from these chance meetings. This is an important factor especially at a time when social reality has made interpersonal communication problematic as was the case in the early twentieth century.⁹ However, while people come and go, the hotel remains the one stable factor throughout. It provides the unifying principle where storytelling could otherwise appear scattered, and it can rise to the status of an autonomous player at a time when a coherent literary character has become difficult to create.

In a literary-historical sense, the stage-like nature of the hotel is in line with a certain bourgeois fascination with everything theatrical around 1900, especially in Vienna, and with the shift to a culture of spectacle at this time; and as a literary setting, the hotel corresponds to a number of modern cultural artifacts that play with the tension between reality and illusion — Vienna's famous palaces on the "Ringstraße" are another example.

Finally, it might also be possible to explain the striking preference of Austrian fiction writers for the hotel as a setting in the context of the last days of Habsburg Austria and the period between the two world wars. Some of the best-known hotel stories from this period were written by Austrians, and more specifically by Jewish Austrian authors who, towards the end of the Austrian Empire and with the rise of right-wing forces in society, experienced a severe loss of stability, orientation, and, sometimes, even identity. While some of these authors, especially Arthur Schnitzler and Stefan Zweig, led mostly settled and stable bourgeois lives on the surface, they often sent their characters away from the comfort of their homes, a peculiarity that may

reflect these authors' deeper sense of "existential homelessness."¹⁰ The notion of home may have become problematic or outdated for them, leading them to opt for a space whose characteristics reflected modern existential conditions much more expressively. The hotel's exteriority in the Bachelardian sense, as a place with no connection to the individual's history and memory, makes it an appropriate site for literary discussions about identity and socialization in the earlier twentieth century.

In addition, the former world power Austria-Hungary had ceased to exist after the First World War and left many Austrians feeling existentially homeless and in transition. As many accounts from the period show, "old Austria" did not exist politically anymore. However, many of its people still clung to the social order of the past, or, at least, did not have valid alternatives as they still tried to cope with the traumatizing experience of the war. The hotel is a fitting symbol of this complex state of limbo: here, guests neither have a history nor do they have a place of their own anymore. Symbolically speaking, hotel guests live the "new homelessness" of an entire people, a sense of lost identity that many authors shared deeply. At the same time, hotels often subscribed to a conservative social hierarchy that resembled the pre-war European and specifically the Austrian situation. In many upscale hotels, titles and aristocratic cachet made people "better members" of their assembled society, and guests were provided with a carefree, apolitical, ahistorical environment and atmosphere that did not inspire social or artistic progress. What Theodor Adorno refers to as the "refuges" of high society turned into a "world of yesterday" (not dissimilar to the nostalgic invocation of pre-war Austria in Stefan Zweig's *Die Welt von Gestern* [The World of Yesterday, 1942]) at a time when the nation was in dire need of regrouping in a productive and progressive manner to overcome the demoralizing effects of the lost war.

All the above-mentioned issues need to be considered when we try to assess the importance of the hotel as a setting in German and Austrian literature of the early twentieth century. The one impression that emerges from such a multi-faceted approach is that we need to regard the hotel as a quintessentially modern space: this is the main assumption on which all following discussion is based. It is a "space without qualities" that is governed by Georg Simmel's "mature money economy," our economic and social reality which is organized around an abstract nominal, that is monetary value with no room for immaterial qualities beyond those that are marketable (ambiance, style, etc.). People are paying customers here, not guests in the more personal sense of the word, and what they get in return can never be more than the temporary, illusionary suspension of their money-dominated reality outside the walls of the hotel. The straightforward combination of money, space, and time that defines the hotel as a modern business makes it impossible for the guest to break out of his or her anonymity and be recog-

nized as a unique human being in the context of social interaction in a hotel. As they move back and forth between the private but ultimately impersonal space of the rented hotel room and the public halls of the lobby and other common social areas, they never find a place that they can call theirs in a transcendental sense. Self and identity thus become precarious values.

Writers from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century assess this hybrid existential situation in different ways. For some, it reflects the individual's threatened sense of self in modern society. The guest's situation in a hotel becomes the symbol of modern man's existential estrangement from everything, including himself, and some authors show how the formalization of life as a result of alienation and capitalism no longer leaves space for the independent individual. For others, the suspension of the characters' normal routines represents a chance for liberation from socially and culturally prescribed restrictions. In their fiction, they depict a stylized, protected zone in which the individual can break through to his or her innermost drives, wishes, and talents, even if only for a limited time. For brief moments, social determinism seems surmountable, and hotels become sites where anything is possible, as the Cinderella-like fate of Zweig's petty bourgeois heroine Christine Hoflehner from his novel *Rausch der Verwandlung* shows.

However, hotels are not utopian spaces. Even in the most positive cases, they remain artificial sets where dreams can be acted out but not taken outside the hotel's walls into "real life." Liberation, when it takes place, does not occur for a whole social class or group and has no broader public or political dimension. The example of Joseph Roth's *Hotel Savoy* will show that for such change or revolution to take place, the monuments of the old order need to be burned to the ground. Hotels are there to please, not to change. They offer hospitality to anyone who can pay for it, at least in theory, and their owners and directors rarely take or rather cannot afford to take a political position against the current establishment: Lorenz Adlon, the owner of Berlin's famous Hotel Adlon, for example, chose a rather uninvolved, friendly, and cooperative attitude towards the Third Reich's political leaders. His good relations to Nazi officials allowed his business to flourish and help Berlin to maintain a cosmopolitan, cultured image at a time when political developments would have suggested a less accommodating stance.

As businesses that are deeply rooted in capitalism, hotels do not even possess the prerequisites of utopian alternatives to our existing reality.¹¹ Instead, they offer guests a pleasant shelter from the outside world if they wish to withdraw from their various commitments in their "real" lives, a break from reality within the limits of the possible that is enjoyable for those players who are stable enough to follow the rules of engagement.¹²

Approach

Since the main focus of the literary analyses in this book is on hotels in German-Austrian fiction from the earlier part of the twentieth century, other contributions to the body of Western hotel fiction will obviously not be discussed in more detail here. To be sure, writers such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Eugène Dabit, Henry James and Edith Wharton, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and Sinclair Lewis wrote about hotels at the same time as their German-speaking colleagues, and late representatives of the hotel story genre such as Arthur Hailey's *Hotel* (1965) or John Irving's *Hotel New Hampshire* (1981) show that the setting has not lost its appeal for writers in the Western world. However, the first part of this study — a historical and theoretical approach to the hotel as a special social space in Western cultures — will offer enough pointers to readers who wish to examine those non-German representatives of the genre. And some of the non-German authors' comments about the hotel will find their due mention as I consider them part of a significant discourse that needs to be included in any study of a cultural phenomenon that reaches beyond national borders. To discuss hotels without considering, for example, Henry James's cosmopolitan observations would deprive the reader of some of the wittiest commentaries made about hotels and their guests. But references to sources other than German and German-Austrian as well as to representatives from arts other than literature (film, painting, music) will only be treated as additional pieces of a mosaic, which add color but cannot be explored in their own right.

The choice of literary texts has been guided by two considerations. Stories and novels such as Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Felix Krull*, and Kafka's *Amerika* are among the best-known texts in the modern German literary canon today and were the ones that suggested my exploration of their setting — the hotel — in the first place. As it became clear that the issue of gender would play itself out in a significant way in this exploration, a second consideration was to choose additional texts that would represent a broader spectrum of stories depicting men and women in hotels. Interestingly, the Austrian literature from this period provides a number of stories featuring female hotel guests as their protagonists, whereas their male counterparts appeared in a number of texts by authors from either the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Galicia in the case of Joseph Roth, the Czech territory in the case of Kafka) or Germany (Th. Mann). Whether this peculiarity should to be understood as an indication of the German-Austrian writers' more pessimistic assessment of their generation's "existential homelessness," as symbolized in the more vulnerable female hotel guest, remains to be seen.

Finishing my literary visits to hotels with a reading of Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel* was an idea that offered itself naturally. Baum's novel is

certainly part of the German canon in the broader sense — it was one of the most popular bestsellers of the 1920s — and the title of the book alone suggests a more synthesizing approach to the character's situation in the hotel, one that opened up the genre to a new, less protagonist-driven, more objective mode that has since attracted many imitators.

An additional word on the emphasis on prose here. The choice of texts in prose should not be understood as a personal preference, but as a focus that the available body of literature suggests. Except for portions of Schnitzler's *Das weite Land* (The Vast Country, 1911, act 3), probably some scenes in his *Anatol* cycle (1888) and his *Reigen* (La Ronde, 1897), no other significant dramas from this period are set in hotels. It seems that the hotel was not considered well suited as a setting for a play in the earlier twentieth century. First, the tension between public and private spaces in a hotel would be hard to represent without resorting to a compartmentalization of the stage which would be too obvious and too static. Second, and more importantly, much of the interest that lies in setting stories in a hotel is psychological or rather in the way the individual responds to his or her social context there, and this interest is, in itself, modernist. While prose offers the author all kinds of techniques to reveal the consciousness of the main character — *Fräulein Else* is the most glaring case in point — such a focus on the individual outside of a dialogue situation would be rather non-dramatic and artificial if achieved through techniques such as dramatic monologues or asides. It would certainly not be impossible, and successful stagings of dramatic versions of *Fräulein Else* or *Der Tod in Venedig* show that good actors can convey a powerful message. Yet writers from this time seem to have preferred prose. Their narratives often include detailed descriptions of cityscapes, the masses, industry, or technology that situate the hotel in its modern and sometimes urban context — Kafka's *Amerika* and Baum's *Menschen im Hotel* explore this narrative recipe most successfully and in a literary style that announces a new, more objective approach to capturing the world in language. Third, then, the construction of the setting of the hotel and its context in and through language is a central component of modern hotel narratives and may best explain these authors' decision to tell their stories in prose.

Structure of this Book

The following study has two major parts. The first part serves to provide the socio-historical and theoretical framework that allows us to understand the hotel as a quintessentially modern space.

A brief survey of the history of hotels and commercial hospitality in the first chapter will show that tourism and hotel culture are more recent and mostly urban trends¹³ whose development was still in its beginning

phases when our writers started including them in their texts. My brief history of commercial hospitality will end at the beginning of the twentieth century; we will take a quick look at further developments in the twentieth and twenty-first century at the end of this book.

The second chapter will introduce those theories from the early twentieth century that allow me to read the hotel as a paradigmatic modern space and to discuss it in the context of more recent critical studies of the early twentieth century and modernism. Georg Simmel's groundbreaking *Die Philosophie des Geldes* and some of his shorter essays on the relationship between money, inhabited space, and society provide a powerful philosophical and analytical system to understand the fundamental dynamics between these factors. I will combine Simmel's theories with those of his disciple Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) and of Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929). Kracauer is known to almost anyone who is interested in hotels as cultural phenomena — he may be the only writer to have devoted an entire essay to the special nature of the literary hotel lobby — and it is customary to discuss his theories together with Simmel's philosophy. Adding Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* from 1899,¹⁴ however, is a new direction, at least in the context of a discussion of modern social space. In his treatise, Veblen describes and explains the decadent habits and rites of those who have nothing to do, that is, those in modern society who do not have to work and can afford to compensate for their increasing loss of immediacy and contact to the world by indulging in consumption of all kinds. Even though Veblen does not mention the hotel as a setting for such a display of leisure, his observations apply most strikingly to many of the literary hotel societies from the time.¹⁵ Veblen's theories offer concrete access to important social codes of leisure (of which hotel behavior is a part), aspects that we need to consider before we can understand their underlying conditions through Simmel's and Kracauer's theories. A thorough discussion of these three theories in context will then show the multi-layered ambivalence that reigns in hotels and that the literature of the period explores.

The third chapter serves as a transition to the literary analyses that follow in the second part of this study. A fictitious visit to an elegant, somewhat old-fashioned hotel will introduce those important stock elements — characters and objects alike — that constitute the universe of almost every hotel story before any individual character checks in. It is my own fictitious, certainly literature-inspired hotel that I will present here, a sort of generic space that provides the basic grid within which writers inscribe their narratives and where the lives of their characters unfold.

The second part of my study consists of analyses of selected literary texts. As I have already pointed out, hotels try hard to give themselves the appeal of home, and my first inquiry, in chapter four of this study, will therefore address the ideological importance of this term, especially in the context of

bourgeois family structures. As authors abandoned the setting of the bourgeois home that was so important in nineteenth century literature, they did not abandon the topic of the bourgeois family. Yet by sending families — or more often than not, only atomized fractions of them — to hotels, they uncover the ideological illusion that the bourgeois family had become at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hotels are *not* homes and enable some family members to break away from traditional power structures in a way that would be unthinkable in the secure and oppressive walls of their own home. At the same time, the fact that these family dramas are set in hotels indicates that, even if only as an ideological construct, let alone as a psychological entity, a home that can serve as a site for such struggles may no longer exist. To a great extent it will be stories of women that will illustrate this shift in the fourth chapter of this study. One of the most important functions of the hotel as a literary space in such women's stories is that of a catalyst. The impersonal, unfamiliar nature of the setting has a liberating effect on these young daughters, and they start to discover themselves as individuals and sexual beings, at least in the works under analysis, which were all written by male authors.¹⁶ However, not all of them assign a purely positive value to this development. Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, Zweig's *Rausch der Verwandlung* and "Untergang eines Herzens" (A Failing Heart, 1927) as well as Werfel's "Die Hoteltreppe" will be the subjects of this chapter.

The fifth chapter compares these women's stories to those that feature men, mostly young men, in hotels. Interestingly, there are not too many such texts. Whereas female characters mostly travel to hotels in the company of family members, most male hotel dwellers do not have to deal with this double context, that is, the private family on the one hand and the hotel as a stage for their public persona on the other.¹⁷ Both Thomas Mann's Felix Krull and Kafka's Karl Rossmann (in *Amerika*) leave their families for good and find themselves in hotels, initially as employees and thus as parts of a very clear social structure. Thomas Mann's Gustav von Aschenbach (from *Death in Venice*) is already a seasoned and famous author when he submits himself to the influence of the hotel, and his response to its challenges is much more self-directed than that of Schnitzler's Else, for example.

When men travel to hotels for recreational reasons, like Aschenbach, or like Krull in his later adventures, they seem to struggle less with the ambivalent and spectacle-like nature of the place and adapt to the immanent tensions in a more self-determined manner, even if the outcome is not entirely positive. The comparison between these male hotel dwellers and their female counterparts will show what it took to live in a hotel without being damaged, and the degree to which emancipation can or cannot be realized there.

Joseph Roth's first novel, *Hotel Savoy*, explores the hotel as a setting for more than the individual's struggle with key features of modern capitalist society that run against human needs. In this rather overlooked text set after

the First World War, he uses the hotel as a stage where social tensions become so pronounced that the only solution is revolution. Roth depicts a society that ignores changed living conditions and its responsibility towards the less fortunate portion of the population. The luxurious Hotel Savoy becomes the symbol of this decadent and exploitative social situation, a symbol that needs to be destroyed for a new order to be established.

Of the texts that I will discuss, Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel* is the most modern and innovative in terms of its contribution to a new kind of hotel story that is deeply inscribed in the twentieth century and its urban setting, the city of Berlin. I will therefore conclude my literary visits with a reading of this novel. To be sure, Joseph Roth and Thomas Mann also chose hotels in cities — Roth's Hotel Savoy is in Lodz, Mann's texts are set in Venice, Paris, and Lisbon (*Felix Krull*). But in these texts, the hotel is a universe in itself and does not interact with the city around it, with the exception of the conclusion that Roth chose for his story. In this, they seem as removed from a real-life context as do the resort hotels of Schnitzler's, Zweig's, and Werfel's texts. In Baum's novel, Berlin is a key element in the texture of the plot and, as a buzzing city that never sleeps and that has its own idiom, influences the way in which the novel is told, its narrative technique. Instead of focusing on one main character and his or her confrontation with society, Baum chooses six equally important players who come from all walks of life and have very different reasons for being in the hotel. For the first time, we encounter the business traveler as a typical hotel guest in the character of Director Preising. Signs of modern life outside — car races, jazz, modern telecommunications, even travel by airplane, among other things — seem to inundate life inside of this hotel. The narrative technique seeks to mirror this new busy, loud, and hectic life, and the resulting modern *Theatrum Mundi* has little similarity with the aesthetic artificial realm of Mann's or Zweig's elegant resorts. The hotel is the only stable entity in this novel, and ties together all the different characters. However, their destinies are arbitrary, and can and will be replaced by new guests as soon as the old ones are gone, according to the rhythm of the revolving door, that symbol of modern life and random socialization. In this respect, Vicki Baum's novel represents the most modern literary treatment of the hotel setting and needs to be considered the first and in many respects best representative of a new genre.

From October 2002 until March 2003, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York featured the very successful exhibition "New Hotels for Global Nomads" and elevated insights into modern hotel culture to the status of museum-knowledge. Bonn's Fringe Ensemble performed their improvisational play *www.hotel.e*,¹⁸ scenes based on Edward Hopper's paintings, in winter 2001, and modern playwrights have started to explore the hotel as a setting for experimental plays.¹⁹ Some theater groups have

even started to take their productions to hotels and hotel rooms in search of new venues and audiences.²⁰ Instead of writing a new novel, the Dutch writer Cees Noteboom opted for a collection of philosophical and poetic reflections on his many experiences at this world's hotels in the year 2000 in his *Notebooms Hotels*. Award-winning Austrian poet Raoul Schrott decided to devote an entire collection of poems to hotels in his collection *Hotels* from 1995.²¹ *Grand Hotel — The Musical*, based on Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel*, won several Tony awards in the early 1990s and has figured among the most popular musicals since its première. Over the past decade, the Western book market has seen a significant surge in scholarly publications that focus on hotel architecture, the history of grand hotels, and even stories about celebrity hotels (as a look at this study's bibliography will confirm). And in the past decade and a half, cultural critics have rediscovered Siegfried Kracauer's contributions to the critical discourse on the hotel as a modern social setting. Over the past ten or fifteen years, hotels seem to have risen to the status of cultural icons that fascinate the broader public, inspire the artistic imagination, and intrigue the intellectual. It is time to begin closing the gap in the web of approaches to this setting that has resulted from the literary field's lack of attention to it. I hope that my contribution to the field of "hotel studies" will inspire readers to make their own journeys through literary hotels and to explore their place on the map of the literary imagination. As products of our cultural imagination, they will continue to occupy one of the most glamorous, colorful and, at the same time, opaque sites in the psychological topography of modern life, and as long as their magic still works, we will continue to check in to tell stories.

Notes

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. 11th ed. (London: Verso, 1999), 38–39. In the German original: "Will man der Verantwortung fürs Wohnen ausweichen, indem man ins Hotel oder ins möblierte Appartement zieht, so macht man gleichsam aus den aufgezwungenen Bedingungen der Emigration die lebenskluge Norm. . . . Es gehört zur Moral, nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein." Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (1951; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 40.

² Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 41. Lukács uses this term in his discussion of developments in the novel as a product of modern times. Applied to our inquiry into the status of "home" in modernism, Lukács' argument can be read as follows. The modern world, with all its inventions, discoveries and innovations, has become "too large" for homeliness and the sense of home to remain intact. The novel's hero and his story thus bear witness to the individual's struggle to situate himself in this new world without the guidance or help of the steadying factor that was home before.

Many critics have pointed out that Lukács' account is too generalized and subjective to describe the complex development of the modern novel appropriately. However, for the purpose of the present study, his assessment is a very important one, as he associates the term of homelessness with modernism — which is what we see quite concretely in the hotel stories that will be discussed here.

³ Like most critics, I prefer the term “modernism” over “modernity.” Peter Childs, in his *Modernism: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2000), points out that “modernity is an imprecise and contested term. . . . [and it] has been said to be an attitude rather than an epoch. . . . Modernism has therefore frequently been seen as an aesthetic and cultural reaction to late modernity and modernization” (16–17). Since this study seeks to examine a certain aspect of modern culture, the use of the term “modernism” allows me a more focused discussion of literary hotels after 1880.

⁴ Here I am indebted to Gaston Bachelard's study *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (1964; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994). In his “topophilia,” the French philosopher takes a phenomenological approach to the poetic power that the house — that is: the house that we recognize as our home — has in ontology. Drawing mainly from poetic representations of space as an expression of a human being's innermost relationship to the world he or she inhabits, Bachelard identifies a whole series of elements that make up the universe of home, that inspire the poetic imagination or possess poetic power in themselves. The term “home” is thus defined as both a concrete architectural unit (a house) in which we spend our most formative years (based on concrete spatial memories), and as a mentally constructed space in our psyche (based on important spatial associations). This complex universe of “home,” a person's ideal of inhabited space, is simultaneously “inside and outside,” according to Bachelard, and as these realms flow into each other constantly, they make up the universe in which the human subject can live “felicitously” (*Poetics of Space*, xxxv). To deprive us of these spaces, to take away the “shell” of our earliest memories and our existential poetic imagination (in Bachelard's words “the locations of our daydreams,” *ibid.*) means to unsettle the deepest foundations of our identity.

⁵ David Frisby, in his *Fragments of Modernity* (1986; rpt. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), notes: “The subjective objectivity or ‘dissociation’ in dealings with other human beings in the urban context ‘without which this mode of life could not at all be led,’ is in fact ‘only one of its elementary forms of socialization.’ Like the developed money-economy [on which urban life is based, BM], it has a positive side, ‘namely, it secures for the individual a kind and measure of personal freedom for which there exists no analogy under other circumstances.’” (80).

⁶ Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Passagenwerk* offers a compelling analysis of those arcades and boulevards as manifestations of modernism's new approach to the individual's spatial socialization.

⁷ Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863). Walter Benjamin engaged in a critical discussion of Baudelaire's earlier essay in his “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in his collection of essays entitled *Illuminationen* (1961; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

⁸ To be sure, behavioral patterns are an important part of our social interaction to this day, but they were more pronounced, more important at a time when society at large was more stratified and allowed for less social mobility than our world today.

This was certainly the case in the early twentieth century, when an aristocratic elite tried to maintain their social status while the newly rich started to invade the upper classes. One of the most important skills that the new members of the upper class had to master was the set of behavioral standards that had been determined earlier as a sign of social distinction.

⁹ I am referring to Peter Szondi's main argument in his *Theorie des Modernen Dramas* (1956; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986). He maintains that the human sphere of the "in-between," indispensable for drama and its main component, dialogue, had disappeared by the early twentieth century. If authors wanted to continue writing dramas, they had to search for new, sometimes experimental approaches to the genre. However, if Szondi's overarching argument, his assessment of the interpersonal reality of that period, is correct, it applies to most literature, since its focus is still the human subject in a socialized world.

¹⁰ In his study *Moral Values and the Human Zoo: The 'Novellen' of Stefan Zweig* (Hull: Hull UP, 1988), David Turner suggests this much when he points out that Salzburg, Stefan Zweig's long-term home, would have made an implausible setting in his novellas: "Since Salzburg was something of a retreat from the contemporary world and the focus of that side of Zweig's nature which sought material stability, it was never likely to be chosen either for stories which reflected the harsh socio-economic and political realities of the time. . . . or for those accounts of people who reject or are thrust out of a life of regularity, domesticity, and conventionality . . ." (199).

¹¹ The social dimension of the concept of utopia has been the subject of intense scholarly discussion; see Wilhelm Vosskamp's edited three-volume work on modern utopia, especially Karl-Heinz Bohrer's minimalist approach, which differs sharply from the mainstream argument in the collection of essays. Wilhelm Vosskamp, ed. *Utopieforschung: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, vols. 1–3 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1982).

¹² The comparison between Thomas Mann's liftboy Felix Krull and Kafka's liftboy Karl Rossmann shows exactly the kind of personality it takes to survive, or better, succeed in the hotel. I will return to this point later.

¹³ Even if many of the hotels in our texts are actually in the countryside, in the mountains or somewhere by the sea, the emergence of a hotel culture is a phenomenon that must be seen in the context of urban development and lifestyle. If for no other reason, it is mostly an urban clientele that comes to vacation away from the big cities. They have the money to do so, and this, in turn, marks the hotel as an urban space if read in the context of Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*; see the second chapter.

¹⁴ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; rpt. New York: Dover Thrift, 1994).

¹⁵ Veblen's study was based on his observations in late nineteenth century America and the degenerative phenomena that he saw in its capitalist society. Applying his theories to the hotel culture of the early twentieth century is warranted if we bear in mind that many contemporary critics considered the hotel the best representation of the "American way of life" (Henry James, see chapter 1).

¹⁶ Some colleagues have objected that most of the stories that I will discuss were written by men and should thus be considered male fantasies. There is certainly some truth to this if one were to interpret a writer's successful rendition of an erotic scene containing a naked female protagonist as an expression of his personal, sexual enjoyment of his subject. Yet I still believe that these stories have social and literary validity beyond the psychological diagnosis of male wish-fulfillment. What is at issue here is less the motivation that led authors to conceive their stories than the settings they chose and the reasons such fantasies are believable in those settings.

¹⁷ Even though it would be an anachronism to treat inns in the same way as hotels, it would be very interesting to compare these women's stories to accounts from young men who traveled while still being dependent on their families in the context of the *Grand Tour*.

¹⁸ For more information, see <http://www.fringeensemble.de/html/repertoire/hotele/hotele.html>.

¹⁹ See, for example, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's drama *Hotel zu den zwei Welten* (1999), which uses the hotel room as a metaphor in a plot dealing with near-death experiences (staged by the Theater Regensburg during the 2005/2006 season, see: <http://www.theaterregensburg.de/index.php?id=524>), or the dramatic collage *Hotel Europa* (2000) by the Macedonian writer Goran Stefanovski. This play, staged by the Theater TKO in Cologne during the 2005/06 season, features six couples from various countries on the move to find a new identity and a new life. As the audience follows their stories, they have to move through a number of hotel rooms, guided by a hostess. The play concludes with a dinner in the hotel's restaurant. For more information, see: <http://www.theaterszene-koeln.de/stueck.php?id=18142>.

²⁰ Thus two of Cologne's newer drama groups, Futur-3 and Drama Köln e.V.; see http://www.stadtrevue.de/index_archiv.php3?tid=670&bid=6&ausg=08/04.

²¹ Raoul Schrott, *Hotels* (1995; rpt. Munich, DTV, 1998).

1: The History of European Commercial Hospitality

THE EUROPEAN HOTEL IS AN invention or development of the earlier nineteenth century. The hotel as we understand the term today — as a business in the service sector that offers travelers standards of overnight accommodations and entertainment beyond the necessary¹ — was first seen in the United States with the opening of Barnum's City Hotel in Baltimore (1825) and the famous Tremont Hotel in Boston (1829).² Not long after, European entrepreneurs started building their own modern hotels, following the standards for comfort, luxury, and service that their American colleagues had set, thus effectively introducing a new kind of commercial hospitality to the European continent. The opening of the Badischer Hof in Baden-Baden (1836) was the beginning of the fast-developing modern hotel industry in the German-speaking countries that saw its peak in the years preceding the First World War.³ In the nineteenth century, a growing clientele ranging from the traveling aristocracy to middle-class families who were increasingly able to enjoy leisure and time away from home powered the newly emerging tourist industry. This brought about phenomena such as travel agencies (Thomas Cook, an English Baptist Minister, started his British agency in 1841 with his first organized train trip from Leicester to Loughborough,⁴ while Carl Stangen imitated the British model in Berlin beginning in 1854), resort hotels in formerly under-developed or under-explored areas, and the internationalization of leisure culture. Its most glamorous and obvious expression might be the grand hotel culture of the pre-war years. Yet, before we go into more detail about the developments that preceded the First World War and the time since, we should take a cursory look at the general history of commercial hospitality before the mid-1800s and the advent of a modern hotel culture in order to better understand the industry's traditions and their impact on modern hotels and their culture.

Beginnings

Offering public commercial accommodation was not an invention of the nineteenth century, even if the idea of traveling for entertainment was. Records from as early as 1700 B.C. mention tavern-like places that offered food and drinks to their guests, and as tradesmen often had to travel for long periods of time (for example, it took them years to bring silk from

China to Europe), they needed places to stay overnight before continuing on their often strenuous journeys. From that time until well into the seventeenth century, traveling meant — in the best case — long days on a horse or on foot; roads were bad if they existed at all, and getting robbed, attacked, or even killed by people or animals was a constant threat. Yet, as trade developed over the centuries, travel became a necessary part of most tradesmen's professional reality, and taverns and other accommodations were built along the most frequented trade routes. On the Asian continent, "Caravanseries" (or "Khans"), described in Arthur White's *Palaces for the People* (1968) as "a cross between a stable, a warehouse and a fortress,"⁵ welcomed the exhausted traveler; more modest inns began offering their warmth and shelter in Europe and Northern Africa.

Combining shelter and sleep with food and drink in an inn might have been the invention of the Egyptians.⁶ Furthermore, additional physical pleasures available at these inns may have added to the appeal of combined food and drink with overnight accommodations. Arthur White speculates: "That perhaps is how people started to sleep in inns, and as any woman working in an inn — and probably most of those visiting it — were whores this would also develop the trend to provide sleeping accommodation."⁷ Hostels were equivalent to brothels,⁸ and female guests were automatically classified as prostitutes — given that moral standards of most religions kept "good" women from frequenting inns and taverns well into the twentieth century, White's association of "any woman working in an inn" with prostitution seems historically warranted.⁹ Today's notorious hotels that rent by the hour are then nothing but the logical successors in the genealogy of such dubious commercial hospitality and represent the most overt acknowledgment of our culture's association of rented inhabited space with cultural taboos such as illicit sex and crime.

Postal Coaches

One of the most significant revolutions in the history of travel and, consequently, in the development of commercial hospitality, was the introduction of the postal coach or stage coach. In the sixteenth century, the family of the Princes of Thurn and Taxis had acquired the monopoly for the postal service in the Netherlands and the German principalities. With amazing efficiency, the first general postmaster, Prince Franz von Taxis, streamlined the way the postal service was organized in the early seventeenth century, and his many coaches which traveled regularly between cities and postal stations quickly became an integral form of transportation, since, in addition to carrying the mail, they were made available to transport travelers as well.¹⁰ This resulted in a first wave of increased travel in the countries of the German Reich and Europe. As the literature from the time — letters, diaries, travelogues, and

the new genres of the travel novel and the epistolary novel — shows, a new sense of mobility influenced people's perceptions and their understanding of distances, landscapes, and their environment.¹¹ Travel began to be a means to learn about the world and to develop relationships to the scenery that the wandering eye could embrace, and other travelers in a coach became temporary companions with whom one could share experiences and impressions. To a certain degree, traveling by postal coach became an educational and social event in itself and attracted a new group of travelers, changing people's view of travel as simply a means of getting from one place to another. Traveling became an activity worth one's time and reflection.¹²

This new pre-industrial travel industry also changed the distribution and location of guest accommodations. Whereas in former times, most guest houses had been close to important commercial centers, in cities, and along trade routes, accommodations now needed to be near postal stations. Travelers who could not continue their journey right away or who did not want to move on as soon as horses were exchanged could thus stay overnight or until a later coach arrived to take them to their next destination. A new kind of hostel was born: the "Stage Coach Inn" whose name we still find in cities and towns all over Europe today. Old hostels and inns had often offered only basic accommodations with common sleeping halls, sometimes not even separated by gender. The newer inns introduced more comforts, such as a separation between dining and sleeping areas and individual guest rooms.¹³ This innovation, the separation of public and private areas, later developed into one of the most important spatial features influencing social interaction in hotels.

In rural areas, possible social tensions among the travelers who needed to stay in the one available guesthouse along their way were avoided as soon as innkeepers realized that offering separate and more comfortable dining and sleeping quarters for the richer travelers opened up new ways to increase profits. In cities, where inns were numerous, entire establishments catered to specific socio-economic groups — rich people knew where to stay to make an unmistakable statement about their social status, just like today.

Traveling by Train

The era of stage coach travel found its abrupt end with the invention of the steam- engine-powered train. In 1825, the first steam passenger railway between Darlington and Stockton (England) marked the beginning of a new era that would bring about the demise of the older modes of traveling and their associated institutions. In their place emerged a fast-expanding travel industry that has led to today's mass tourism. Trains were much faster than coaches, and they could accommodate a larger number of travelers. At the same time, traveling by train also had a significant impact on people's

understanding of time and space. In his *Die Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise* (1977, published in English in 1979 as *The Railway Journey*), Wolfgang Schivelbusch explains how traveling by train meant an “annihilation of space and time” (*The Railway Journey*, 33), a *topos* that originated in the nineteenth century to describe how trains (and, later, other high-speed means of transportation) started to negate distances and how people’s perception of time, especially traveling time between two places on the map, began to change as well. As intimidating and somewhat frightening as it might have been for the first generation of train travelers, the idea and experience of speed exhilarated and fired the imagination of many people and invited some to dream about the exploration of ever farther-away places, by drawing them into the realm of the reachable. If the coach traveler could still develop a personal relationship to details in his environment that he perceived from his coach window, the train traveler could only get fleeting impressions; from the window of his train compartment, only those scenes far enough from the eye to stay steady for more than a brief moment could be perceived. A “panoramic mode of traveling”¹⁴ became the perceptive mode of the era, and it expressed itself in other realms of life as well. As Schivelbusch explains in the last chapter of his *The Railway Journey*, the earlier nineteenth century also saw the development of other public and semi-public institutions that challenged human perception and invited the spectator to perceive things *en masse* and from a distance instead of up-close and individually. The large department store, the spacious boulevard, and city traffic after the middle of the nineteenth century are examples of modern phenomena in which the perceptive mode of choice was the cursory, synthesizing gaze. The big hotel with its social halls (where individual guests all merge to become a mass of people whose movement makes up the generic hustle and bustle of, for example, a hotel lobby) would represent yet another mid-nineteenth century semi-public institution that promoted and demanded the “panoramic perceptive mode.”

With the development of the railway system, postal stations thus lost their importance in the hospitality industry. New guesthouses needed to be built near train stations. Railroad companies were heavily involved in these early hotel businesses, especially in England and the United States, but developers from other sectors of the economy quickly saw the potential that this new industry offered as well. As a region’s or country’s infrastructure developed, large, modern hotels were built, not just along the most popular train lines anymore, designed to accommodate large numbers of guests, offering more and more services and amenities to attract customers in the newly emerging competitive market. Cities, increasingly at the center of the emerging travel industry, needed ever more hotels to offer lodging to all kinds of travelers: people who passed through on their way to a further destination; people who came to town to do business, sometimes with other

non-local business partners; cultural tourists who came to enjoy the city's offerings. Spas, mountain resorts, and later seaside resorts were connected to major train lines and thus attracted more and more vacationers. As industrialization provided the new middle class with more free time and leisure, larger numbers of people started exploring the possibilities that the new transportation system offered at progressively more affordable prices. By the late nineteenth century, anyone who could afford it traveled, supported by the services of new travel agencies. Places that were formerly reserved for the well-to-do, mainly the aristocracy, were now accessible to anyone. And new fashions such as the idea of going to the seaside for a beach vacation and the introduction of winter sports tourism in the Swiss Alps in 1864 broadened the market. The result was a veritable explosion in hotel building¹⁵ and the need for differentiation within the hotel industry, since factors of social class could not be ignored in this new and budding market.

Changes in methods of travel had an additional impact on society, an impact that extended beyond the realm of transportation. If in earlier days there were significant differences in the way people traveled depending on their social and financial situation, riding the train meant a radical democratization of mobility. Obviously, different kinds of railroad cars could accommodate smaller or larger numbers of people, and they could offer more or less luxury in compartments; but as long as all cars were connected to the same engine, they all traveled at the same speed and reached their destination at the same time. An element of chance played a role in the social makeup of the traveling parties in a train and connected destinies like railroad cars in a way that would never have happened before. This did not exactly mean social equality as wealthier people still traveled more comfortably than those with less money, following the laws of capitalism that opened up an upper class lifestyle to anyone with the right financial background. However, this shift itself was indicative of a changed approach to the definition of class in the industrial age, and together with the idea that all travelers were subject to the same mechanical forces, it influenced the way people thought about traveling in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁶

This shift in potential social mobility did not just apply to train travel. Hotels, too, were subject to the new capitalist equation that states that those who have the financial means are eligible to acquire whatever product is on the market, in this case a stay at the establishment of their choosing which could signal social status to the world. In the United States, in many ways the frontier of capitalism's victory over older forms of social stratification, this approach was simply in line with the general take on social hierarchy and mobility, and it also shaped the way in which Americans built their hotels: as "palaces for the people."¹⁷ In Europe, there was no such tolerance for social climbers in the early days of capitalism and tourism. To stay in elegant, exclusive places, whether regions or hotels, one needed to be a member of

the upper class, and traditionally, that meant old money and aristocratic bloodlines.¹⁸ Yet, with the bourgeoisie's rise to power and the advent of train travel, the newly rich and even the middle class started invading those geographical and cultural areas that had formerly been reserved for the aristocracy. As a consequence, the aristocracy had to look for less accessible areas if they wanted to safeguard the exclusivity of their circle. Since spending time away from home had become a sign of upper-class status,¹⁹ the temporary residence, that is the hotel, now had to function as a status symbol to assign and secure prestige.²⁰ Allowing in "intruders" from the lower classes would have been perceived as a threat to the integrity of the upper class's own status.

However, the old "elite" could only ward off this invasion for so long. Some traditional-minded hotel owners such as Vienna's Anna Sacher and Berlin's Lorenz Adlon certainly tried to preserve the old notion that social status was a matter of nobility or at least distinction in a traditional sense, even after the First World War. Anna Sacher for example, the owner of Vienna's prestigious Hotel Sacher, refused to serve non-aristocratic hotel guests after the First World War and in so doing caused major financial problems for her hotel.²¹ And Hedda Adlon, hotel-founder Lorenz Adlon's daughter-in-law, remembered the time after 1918 in Berlin's Hotel Adlon in her memoirs: "As far as our guests were concerned, our house had always been very exclusive. This has always been the Adlon's mark of distinction. Yet, back then, we could not choose our guests. Suddenly, life had become tumultuous, and this turbulence was reflected in the guests' character, their habits, their different professional backgrounds and in the goals that they pursued or towards which they were driven."²² Clearly, such clientele was only tolerated because circumstances were dire and hotels needed money. But to cling to prewar social hierarchies was an uphill battle against the trends and the economic reality of the time. As aristocrats lost their financial power over the course of the nineteenth century and much of their remaining social cachet after the war, they also lost their monopoly in questions of luxury, style, and fashion, and the bourgeoisie took over the leadership in these matters.²³ Industrialists, popular artists, and actors claimed their place in society and in fancy hotels. "The disintegration of the old society" that Edith Wharton and Henry James lamented could not be stopped.²⁴ The new leisure class consisted of members from all walks of life: left-over aristocracy, successful business owners and industrialists, actors, dancers, artists of all kinds, lottery and stock market winners — and even a good number of imposters and frauds who were clever enough to master the behavioral code that would, at least temporarily, allow them to pass as legitimate members of this society.²⁵

This is the situation that authors found around 1900 and that inspired them to write their many hotel-based stories and novels. Society had been

uprooted by the progress that the industrial revolution had brought about. More people had more time and money to spend; leisure and the way people spent it became subject to the dictates of fashion.²⁶ Hotels began to be a significant factor in social life in general. Luxury, the expression of surplus income and all that exceeds the necessary, was not just the privilege of the nobility anymore, and hotels were one of the tangible responses to and manifestations of this trend. If buildings are always “architectural monuments of a certain *Zeitgeist*,”²⁷ hotels are perfect examples of this idea.

Notes

¹ A more detailed definition of this term will follow in the context of a discussion of the hotel's structural and social features.

² Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York et al.: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 29.

³ Helmut Bien and Ulrich Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt: Die Kulturgeschichte des Hotels im Spiegel der Kofferaufkleber 1900–1960* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 1988), 19.

⁴ Moritz Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: Dr. Alfred Hüttig Verlag, 1960), 194.

⁵ Arthur White, *Palaces of the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality* (New York: Taplinger, 1968), 4. To my knowledge, White's is the only systematic attempt to present a more general cultural history of the hotel including a discussion of earlier forms of commercial hospitality; this chapter is therefore greatly informed by White's account.

⁶ White, *Palaces of the People*, 8.

⁷ White, *Palaces of the People*, 9.

⁸ “[I]n the earliest records the same words are used for inns and brothels and no distinction appears to have been drawn between them” (White, *Palaces of the People*, 1).

⁹ In fact, we still have remnants of such perceptions in today's society: if a woman goes to a bar or even to a restaurant alone, she may still be stigmatized and prey to the gaze of suspicious guests and, often, sexual harassment. This is one of Beatrix Beneder's main hypotheses in her study of the relationship between women and places of public hospitality (*Männerort Gasthaus?/The Inn as a Male Domain?*). See Beatrix Beneder, *Männerort Gasthaus? Öffentlichkeit als sexualisierter Raum* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1997).

¹⁰ Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels*, 121; Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 89.

¹¹ Traces of such literary reflections of people's changed relationship to traveling and space can be found in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–48), Sophie von LaRoche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771), Choderlos de Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's many travel writings such as his *Italienische Reise* (1817–18), to name just the most famous ones.

¹² In his *The Railway Journey* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1979), Wolfgang Schivelbusch briefly discusses this first revolution in European travel behavior and emphasizes its impact on the development of art and literature. After quoting an excerpt from Goethe's diary from a trip to Switzerland in 1797, Schivelbusch comments: "Goethe's trip from Frankfurt to Heidelberg consisted of a continuous sequence of impressions that demonstrate how intense was the experience of traversed space. Not only the villages and towns on the way were noted, not only the formations of the terrain, but even details of the material consistency of the pavement of the highway are incorporated into his perceptions" (52–53). The literary response to this new mode of perception is the travel novel, the "Reiseroman," that would merge with the second important novelistic genre of the time, the educational novel ("Bildungsroman") in masterworks such as Karl Philipp Moritz's *Anton Reiser* (1785) or Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796).

¹³ Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 89. The most likely driving force behind these improvements in a guesthouse's offerings was probably economical in nature (more travelers disposed of more capital to pay for better services and created a demand to which innkeepers responded). Yet, it is interesting to note that these changes started happening at the same time as the human subject as an individual entered the philosophical stage, especially in the writings of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), Gottfried Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). As soon as the individual became the focus of intellectual attention, the separation between public and private — and the realms of the collective versus that of the individual — became an important dichotomy to investigate and delineate, and possibly to explore in lucrative ways.

¹⁴ Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 52.

¹⁵ Bien and Giersch (*Reisen in die große weite Welt*) describe the boom in hotel building along the French Riviera: "Die Zukunft lag unten an der Küste, dort schossen Hotel neben Hotel aus dem Boden. Von Marseille bis Genua entstand ein Hotel-Boulevard, der 'Promenade des Anglais' genannt wurde" (70). [The future was down at the coast; hotel after hotel were rapidly built there. Between Marseille and Genova, an entire hotel-boulevard developed, named 'Boulevard des Anglais.' BMJ]. See also Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels*, 208–14.

¹⁶ For a much more detailed and differentiated discussion of this question, see Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 70–73.

¹⁷ See White, *Palaces for the People*, 146; Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 27–28.

¹⁸ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, these two, money and nobility, did not necessarily mean the same anymore — on the contrary. Featuring a character who comes from "impoverished nobility" is one of the stock motifs in late nineteenth century and twentieth-century literature, as we can see in Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel*. The only aristocratic guest mentioned in the novel, Baron von Gaigern, is in such dire financial straits that he must make his living by robbing other guests. Still, from the way he is depicted in the novel, he seems the only guest who possesses the personal style and air of inborn superiority to move naturally in this fancy hotel.

¹⁹ Bien and Giersch mention the example of the Côte d'Azur where aristocrats from Russia and England liked to spend their winters in order to escape the cold and rain

in their home countries. By the late nineteenth century, the wealthy non-aristocratic members of the new leisure class began to imitate these aristocratic habits, which then led to a boom in hotel construction in Cannes. See Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 70–71.

²⁰ See Bien and Giersch: “Nicht länger entschied das Prestige eines Stammschlosses, sondern die Aufenthaltsorte während der Saison, die Dynastie der bereisten Hotel-Paläste, über Ruf und Ansehen” (*Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 13). [It was no longer the prestige of a noble family’s main castle that decided about a person’s reputation and cachet. Rather, it was the vacation resorts during the traveling season, the dynasty of those hotel palaces in which people stayed that made or broke a person’s social standing. BM]

²¹ See Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 22.

²² “Unser Haus war immer besonders exklusiv, was die Hotelgäste betraf. Das ist auch später die hervorragende Note des Adlon gewesen. Damals aber konnte man sich die Gäste nicht aussuchen. Das Leben war plötzlich turbulent geworden, und diese Turbulenz zeigte sich auch im Charakter der Gäste, ihren Gewohnheiten, ihrem Beruf und den verschiedenartigen Zielen, denen sie nachjagten oder zu denen sie getrieben wurden” (107). Hedda Adlon, *Hotel Adlon: Das Berliner Hotel, in dem die große Welt zu Gast war* (Munich: Heyne, 2002). Translation BM.

²³ See Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 120. Ernst W. Heine, in *New York liegt im Neandertal: Bauten als Schicksal* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1984) posits a reversal in the way in which fashionable trends were dictated or launched in the late nineteenth century: “Der Adel kopierte das Bürgertum. Die Könige des 19. Jahrhunderts lebten wie Großbürger. Sie übernahmen deren Kleidung und Lebensstil und spielten an der Börse. Der gemeinsame Treffpunkt war das Grandhotel, das Traumschloß des Großbürgers” (231). [The aristocracy imitated the bourgeoisie. Kings in the nineteenth century lived like the upper bourgeoisie. They adopted their fashion and their lifestyle, and they gambled at the stock market. The common meeting point was the grand hotel, the fantasy castle of the upper middle class. BM]

²⁴ See Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 28.

²⁵ Thomas Mann’s novel *Felix Krull* is based on this motif, and in Walter Serner’s provocative Dadaist manifesto *Letzte Lockerung: Ein Handbrevier für Hochstapler und solche, die es werden wollen* (Last Relaxation: A Handy Manual for Present and Future Con Artists, 1920), the hotel figures as a perfect place for these professionals to operate. See Walter Serner, *Letzte Lockerung: Ein Handbrevier für Hochstapler und solche, die es werden wollen* (1920; rpt. Munich: Verlag Klaus Renner, 1981).

²⁶ In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; rpt. New York: Dover Thrift, 1994), Thorstein Veblen points out how fashion as one expression of a social standard or canon is mostly defined by the leisure class but readily accepted (and desired) by the entire community; see 64–65. For a more detailed discussion of Veblen’s theories about the importance of fashion and the mechanisms that drive fashionable trends, see chapter 3.

²⁷ See Ernst W. Heine, “Orte des gebauten Zeitgeistes” (in *New York liegt im Neandertal*, 12–13). Siegfried Kracauer starts with a similar idea in his essay “Das Ornament der Masse” (The Mass Ornament, 1927): “Der Ort, den eine Epoche im

Geschichtsprozeß einnimmt, ist aus der Analyse ihrer unscheinbaren Oberflächenäußerungen schlagender zu bestimmen als aus den Urteilen der Epoche über sich selbst” (57). [“The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch’s judgment about itself.” Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), 75–86; here: 75.]

2: The Hotel and Hotel Culture in Modernism — Some Critical Thoughts

THIS CHAPTER WILL INTRODUCE theories by three eminent social critics of modernism, Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, and, a generation younger, Siegfried Kracauer. Their combined theories about the impact that money and wealth have on social structures and behavioral codes will provide the conceptual framework for our understanding of the hotel as a prime representative of modern inhabited space, as a metaphor as well as a breeding ground for modern life and its corresponding *Zeitgeist*.¹ Viewed through this lens, the hotel, no matter where it is, appears as an intrinsically modern, urban setting in which human relations are conditioned by their formal organization in space and time.² For as different as the above-mentioned sociologists' particular agendas are, they all see form as key in modern social interaction. The ambivalent nature of the hotel as neither completely public nor completely private effectively reinforces and demands organized interaction in the guise of social codes and etiquette.

Furthermore, as the boundaries between private and public become blurry in hotels, as we have seen, some of modernism's key forces, as identified by Simmel and his colleagues, can invade exactly those spaces whose declared purpose it is to grant a break from the unnerving and disquieting effects of the new busy life. If hotels advertise with the slogan that they provide a "home away from home" and thus exploit a whole set of ideologically important associations with privacy, intimacy, and the bourgeoisie's "safe haven," they ultimately reveal the impossibility of preserving those safe spaces in modern times. Hotels are places in which money, according to Georg Simmel the most important modern formalizing principle, plays a key role on almost all levels. As a consequence, the idea of privacy must become a complex one. Even the most remote, seemingly private corners of the hotel cannot completely escape the capitalist reality that time and space can only be had for a certain price and that they can never be fully claimed as personal time and space. Subconsciously aware of this sobering fact, the hotel guest stays at a minimal, yet unbridgeable distance to his or her spatial environment that defies all attempts to develop and experience an unmediated and direct relationship to this temporary "home,"³ a place of psychological rest that would help him or her grasp and process the avalanche of impressions and experiences to which the modern subject is exposed. On the

other hand, the paying guest may feel a right to areas in the hotel that may be off limits in theory, such as the director's quarters or the kitchen.

After almost two centuries during which the opposition between public and private spheres constituted an important factor in the definition of a bourgeois identity, the traditionally fixed boundaries between these spheres thus disappear in the hotel under the all-pervasive, alienating influence of capitalism. What remain are strangely semi-public spaces (lobbies, halls, staircases, bars etc.) and semi-private spaces (the guest rooms) in which guests can never let down their masks completely. The hotel turns into a stage where even the self becomes a possibly distant spectator and performer of itself.⁴ As residences in which the guest can never be fully at home, hotels surround their guests with a trace of the uncanny in the Freudian sense, that is, the "Unheimliche,"⁵ which is at the core of Georg Lukács' sobering diagnosis of the transcendental homelessness of the modern world.⁶

What Is a Hotel? The Total Luxury Environment

Before we engage further in a critical discussion of the sociological and economic developments that facilitated the rise of the Western hotel culture in modernism, it is time to offer a definition of a hotel. Interestingly, many of the critics working in the field refrain from defining the term precisely. Moritz Hoffmann, in his very detailed and rather data-driven *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels* (History of the German Hotel, 1961),⁷ is the only one to offer a proper definition, yet he offers one that is not even his own. Instead, he quotes from official guidelines provided by the ministry of economic affairs of the German Reich in the 1930s, recommendations whose lack of Nazi propaganda is rare in official communiqués from that time. The neutral point of view expressed here allows Hoffmann — and us — to consider these guidelines in spite of their problematic origins:

The hotel is a high-end establishment that offers lodging and food and features a superior structural and interior design. In general, the business of the hotel is housed in just one building and should have a high number of beds. . . . A hotel should have a lobby for public use, or a reading- and writing room as a social space; the dining- or breakfast hall should be mainly used by hotel guests. The building itself should comply with current technical and sanitary requirements. . . . Only well-trained personnel should work in a hotel. Establishments hosting guests from other countries should employ enough personnel with the necessary language skills. Furthermore, an information desk should be there for all arriving as well as departing guests. Hotels have to guarantee night service as well.⁸

Admittedly, this somewhat dry definition in no way evokes the glamour and romance that are associated with the term "hotel" (and especially the

“grand hotel”), and maybe this is why critics refrain from defining it.⁹ Yet, from their combined comments, we can summarize the following: beyond the fact that hotels are bigger than the average guesthouse, one of their most distinctive features is the degree of luxury that they offer to their guests,¹⁰ and the approach that their owners or directors take towards their customers. As we have seen, the guesthouses or inns of earlier times were places where people could stay the night when they needed to. They offered short-term lodging to travelers on their way to another destination or staying temporarily in the area. Accommodations were meant to provide for the traveler’s basic needs with little attention to detail, but the general idea was not for the guest to stay for staying’s sake. With the introduction of individual rooms, the first step toward a new form of commercial hospitality was taken, but all in all, the services offered in those places never really exceeded the necessary. Guests at a given establishment usually intended to move on within days, and the idea of coming to an inn or guesthouse for social purposes, that is, to spend time there in the sought-after company of fellow guests, was not part of the equation.

Hotels, on the other hand, were run from the start with the idea in mind that people travel for pleasure and the social experience and subsequently spend a considerable amount of money on having a good time. Consequently, architects devised a whole range of public spaces in the hotel where these needs could be met,¹¹ while hotel managers and directors determined all the necessary steps to make sure that their guests would have the most pleasant and luxurious experience possible for the price they charged.¹² As “palaces for the people,” the first hotels in the United States invited their guests to feel as important and worthy as the nobility on the old continent, Europe.

The same allusion to European aristocratic style and lifestyle governed the architectural design of these new hotels in the United States.¹³ The Tremont was built in a venerable Greek, neo-classical style, imitating and suggesting the European culture, tradition, and tastes of the time,¹⁴ and its design served as a model for Western hotel architecture for the next fifty years.¹⁵ Inside, luxurious materials such as marble and gilded woods imitated the palaces of European nobility and invited architects and interior designers to outdo each other constantly in their almost wasteful use of precious materials. Obviously, not all hotel builders could afford such expense, and many projects either ended up on a more modest scale or left their investors and owners bankrupt. But even in smaller hotels, there was and still is an obvious desire to impress the guest with luxury or the illusion thereof. Lush carpets, mirrors that make rooms and halls look twice their size, gold and marble, and precious woods still greet the traveler at the entrance. And if these materials are too expensive, the building industry has come up with imitations such as papier mâché or plaster. That these ar-

chitectural illusions would find their counterparts in their guests' financial illusions is one of the motifs explored by the writers that we will discuss later in this study.¹⁶

Hotels: Heirs to Aristocratic Culture

Such elegance was available to anyone rich enough to afford it in the United States, with almost no questions asked. In Europe, on the other hand, the earlier hotels were “palaces for the rich,”¹⁷ and this meant more than just people with money. Being able to stay in elegant hotels was a status symbol and signaled to the world one's belonging to distinguished high society, distinguished by more than just affluence, as we will see. Furthermore, grand hotels were not just modeled after European palaces but were sometimes housed in them, as in the case of Vienna's Hotel Imperial.¹⁸ The cachet of aristocratic quality, style, and distinction was part of an elegant hotel's reputation and influenced the way people thought about the accessibility of such “castles of leisure.” Life-securing deals such as the one that Lorenz Adlon struck with the German Emperor Wilhelm II — the royal court sent its visitors to the elegant Hotel Adlon whenever the palace could not accommodate them — were not rare and attest to the close ties that existed between grand hotels and the European aristocracy until the First World War.¹⁹ The idea that the palace hotel originated in the palatial culture of European aristocracy and the presence of a noble clientele both instilled a sense of social superiority into some hotel owners and their guests;²⁰ only the shock of a declining economy, or rather, the declining financial power of their “legitimate” guests, could break this attitude in order for social climbers and wealthy Americans to gain full access to these elegant places. Over the course of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “the grand European Hotel . . . evolved from palaces that accommodated traveling royalty into places at which like-minded souls gathered and flaunted their social status.”²¹ But contrary to what one might imagine, this still did not lead to a democratization of these hotels' laws of admission. As we can see in many of the historical and literary accounts from the turn of the last century, money alone could not guarantee full status; something else had to be present for a guest in order to be fully recognized and belong to the group of “like-minded souls.” When the new members of the leisure class — industrialists, newly-rich entrepreneurs, and other leisured members of the bourgeoisie — made it into high society in the late nineteenth century, they instituted or at least participated in a strict system of internal checks and balances, a sort of behavioral code that would guarantee that no “intruder” could sneak into their circles and endanger their new status as members of the elite.²²

Leisure-Class Behavior and Performance: Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*

It is exactly this code that Thorstein Veblen portrays polemically in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*.²³ Published in 1899, this treatise theorizes about the tendencies in Western society that drove the leisure class — and allowed the hotel industry to blossom, one may add. Veblen offers a merciless account of a collective loss of values and the celebration of superficiality, consumption, and theatricality, of ritualized performances that prove one's undeniable belonging to the privileged class. This “show” finds its most glamorous and effective stage in the hotel, even if Veblen himself does not explicitly mention it as a setting. The ostentatious and incessant display of “conspicuous wealth,”²⁴ accumulated through the labor of the exploited working class, becomes one of the most important status symbols for the modern leisure class and appears in various forms. Veblen describes them with great accuracy and obvious contempt. Since many of those behaviors and displays that Veblen records as signs of conspicuous wealth appear as stock motifs in the hotel stories of this time, it is worth reviewing his account.

Veblen's presupposition is the idea that the leisure class can only exist in a society in which classes are strictly defined and not very permeable, and where enough people participate in securing the economic survival of the society. In order to achieve this stability, members of the upper class make sure that members of the lower classes do not have the will to effect change by “withdrawing from them as much as [they] may of the means of sustenance, and so reducing their consumption, and consequently their available energy, to such a point as to make them incapable of the effort required for the learning and adoption of new habits and thought.”²⁵ Members of the leisure class are themselves exempt from industrial occupation and happily removed from the real world, that is, the world of labor. Instead, they can devote their time to activities that do not contribute to the sustenance of life or social progress. Warfare, religious observances, and sports are perfect examples of such non-productive pursuits.²⁶

All of these activities are characterized by a high degree of formalism or ritualistic structure, and they require a lot of disposable resources. Since it is not enough to simply participate without being recognized as a participant (and thus as affluent), the members of the upper class must devise and codify various signs that make participation conspicuous: in other words, they must flaunt their social status in order to be accepted among their peers and, ideally, excel over their competitors; after all, the culture of the leisure class still possesses “traits of predatory human nature” (160). The constant display of wealth in the form of trophies of all kinds, of expensive possessions such as clothing or works of art, attests directly to the socio-

economic success of the person exhibiting them.²⁷ To spend as much time as possible away from home and work, and to pay lots of money for accommodation in a hotel where this idle time can then be wasted is another of the more effective ways to demonstrate one's exemption from the world of labor and one's belonging to the leisure class. It is clear from Veblen's line of thinking that such a system needs to be constantly controlled and protected in order to remain successful. Allowing anyone into this exclusive circle who might barely meet the minimum requirements — or even worse, someone who finds a way around them and breaks into this codified world, for instance a lottery winner — would have wide-ranging consequences.²⁸ Neither those guests who come to display their wealth nor their hosts could afford such subversion.

All power needs an attentive audience to be effective. At a time when modern culture had increasingly become a visual one and needed constant stimulation, the leisure class could not simply be satisfied with residing in and being seen in places that allowed them to display their abundance. They needed to be seen in action. All such activity must be totally useless and non-productive. Logically, then, any pursuit that would serve a practical purpose was out of the question. Learning languages, for example, or acquiring "Bildung" (education in the broad sense) could only qualify as activities of "conspicuous leisure" if they in no way related to the world of labor.²⁹ For women to learn French, for example, was acceptable if they did so in order to speak the same language as all the other idle dwellers in fancy hotels and resorts. But if they learned it to increase their chances on the job market, they disqualified themselves by showing themselves as members of a lower class. All activity should have the character of play, should be as self-referential and visible as possible, in short: it should be a performance.

The introduction of tennis to the European continent in 1876, for example, contributed a perfect element to this emerging semiotic code of leisure class behavior, and hotels both mandated and facilitated the adoption of this code.³⁰ Establishments often built their tennis courts in the convenient vicinity of the main hotel building, and as an effective byproduct, players, in their bright white tennis dress, could make a powerful impression on those who saw them from the hotel. In fact, this dress itself became a sign of Veblen's "conspicuous consumption" since white is a very unforgiving color that shows any dirt, and one needs to have many outfits, or someone cleaning them all the time, to be properly dressed for the occasion. Tennis was the number one sport in hotels and resorts, but golf, hunting, sailing, horseback riding and other expensive, equipment-intensive sports are equally effective in demonstrating conspicuous leisure and abundant financial resources.

Veblen mentions a number of other behaviors, activities, and rites that had to be mastered or internalized in order to belong to and partici-

pate fully in the leisure class. All of these are social interactions or need to be performed in front of others. Hotels offered perfect stages for these performances with their various social places such as lobbies, bars, tea rooms, palm gardens, and music salons. When the athletic part of the day was over, the fashionable hotel guest could for example show his or her mastery of social skills: manners, conversation, the latest dances, music, games; all of these provide opportunities to shine. The most effective elements in this semiotic code are, according to Veblen, fashion and dress. If fashion is a general standard that a small portion of the population, namely the upper class, dictates, dress is the most fleeting and wasteful way to translate this standard into visible signs. Nothing changes more quickly than fashion trends, and being able to follow the latest changes shows that the wearer must have money and enough time to pay attention.³¹ Especially in women's clothing, fashion designers could achieve a very powerful effect if the garment was not only fashionable but made it practically impossible for its wearer to move, breathe, or engage in any sort of useful activity. For Veblen, all leisured activity is aimed at wasting energy and resources, to show the degree to which wealth has established a luxurious distance to the world. What is more, money itself has lost its magic as the great enabler, and only wasting it feels like a status-securing activity.³² It is clear that such behavior fails miserably to indicate real social superiority and elegance,³³ and it shows the degree to which the leisure class has fallen prey to alienation and a loss of values and identity that even feverishly "playful" activity cannot camouflage.

The list of activities and status symbols that Veblen attributes to the culture of an idle, parasitic leisure class reads practically like a handbook for potential guests in upscale hotels such as the ones we encounter in stories from the early part of the twentieth century. In many of these texts, we find people engaged in fashionable sports; fashion and dress are important topics in a number of these works, and the significance of the scrutinizing gaze of hotel guests, keeping constant tabs on their fellow guests' actions, is a consistent motif in all of them. It is the clash between these superficial preoccupations that the upper class has set as rites of belonging and the responses of the — oftentimes female — guests that interested the intellectual and the artist of the time. For the rites that Veblen is talking about, performances on the "stage of social life," suggest that the emptiness and pointlessness of all of these activities may lead to a human tragedy. Veblen identifies the skills and strategies that one needs to know in order to be accepted as a legitimate member of this class, and the ways in which leisured social space can facilitate status-affirming displays. He is less concerned with the "why" than with the "what" and "how" of modern upper-class social semiotics. His treatise provides us with a clue to understanding the nature of social interaction in hotels and helps to decode seemingly harmless

activities as performances that serve social Darwinist purposes. Siegfried Kracauer, a generation younger than Veblen and one of the most perceptive German sociologists of the early twentieth century, takes a closer look at the underlying conditions and human consequences of such meaningless social, consumerist performances, and at the space in which this behavior can be displayed most effectively: the hotel. As Kracauer's theories develop further those of his teacher Georg Simmel,³⁴ we need to look at both thinkers' systems to come to a more complex assessment of the place that they assign to the phenomenon of a hotel culture and social life in the era of high capitalism and modernism.

Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* and His "Sociology of Sociability"

Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*³⁵ was published in 1900, almost at the same time as Veblen's diatribe, and it is generally considered the work that established sociology as a discipline in Germany, in spite of its association with the field of philosophy. While Simmel and Veblen clearly lament the loss of values in modern Western society, they have very different subjects and agendas in their writings. As should be clear from my brief summary of Veblen's treatise, his is a powerful sardonic critique of the life of the leisure class, which indulges in the good life at the expense of a large portion of the population. Veblen takes stock of a current situation that was born out of the capitalist organization of society, but his seemingly empirical structural analysis of certain leisure class activities is a full-fledged denunciation of the power relations in society. Simmel's project is a larger one and obviously informed by his desire to save mankind from a negative moral verdict such as the one we can detect in Veblen's account. Simmel explains social developments as natural and inevitable results of historical economic developments. For him, the change from a barter-based to a money-based economy represents the single most important paradigm shift in the social organization of our world. This shift then explains the degree to which modern society has lost its non-material essence and its ability to communicate without the help of the great mediator, money. To explain this change, Simmel posits that people have always had a natural need to mediate between the world of objects and the world of the subject (what Simmel calls the soul) by assigning a value to whatever they perceive around them³⁶ and to remove the object from its purely subjective context. As long as barter was the predominant mode of trade and material exchange, the assigned value of an object was the result of negotiations between the two parties involved and reflected an agreement between those two individuals. With the advent of the money-based economy, the basis for the assessment of an object's value changed from a personal or interpersonal one to an economic, supposedly objective

one. As a pure symbol of assigned value, money is an abstraction and in this respect simultaneously the freest and the emptiest of ways to establish a relationship to the world around us.³⁷ As Simmel explains in his later essay, “The Metropolis and Social Life” (1903): “To the extent that money, with its colorlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values, it becomes the frightful leveler — it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair.”³⁸ While it is clear that Simmel condemns the money-based economy for its alienating and anti-social effects, he still goes into great detail to explain money’s ambivalent nature as alienator *and* liberator in his earlier *Philosophy of Money*. The social critic realizes well the problematic effects of a money-based economy. Social discrimination, the objectification of the Other, and the atomization of the subject as well as of society at large are all phenomena that characterize modern life in the mature money economy.³⁹

But Simmel the aestheticist (and he outed himself as such at various occasions and to the chagrin of a number of his followers⁴⁰) recognizes a certain affinity to pure form in money-based interactions, an affinity to the Kantian idea of pure play and art that, within his project of writing a *philosophy* of money, is worth investigating. To be sure, Simmel never goes so far as to glorify or even openly praise the objectifying power of money. Yet, as a value without qualities, money allows its “users” the largest amount of freedom as well as a certain necessary distance to the world around them in an era of general and existential fear of contact, what Simmel calls “Berührungsangst.”⁴¹

Still, the common nature of money — everybody deals with it, it has no specific or intrinsic qualities — keeps it from ever achieving the status of a player in the Kantian aesthetic sense. Neither elegance nor art, both expressions of perfect play and form for Simmel, can tolerate the presence of money without losing their integrity. As soon as something refined or artistic can be purchased, it gets pulled down into the realm of the banal; the real aesthetic experience cannot embrace or merge with the realm of the money-based economy.⁴² The hotel, then, could never achieve this quality of refinement.

Conspicuous displays of elegance, which Veblen would subsume under the idea of conspicuous displays of wealth, are a contradiction in terms and therefore do not find Georg Simmel’s approval. What he, the heir to Kant’s ideas, advocates as aesthetically and socially superior are rather forms of social interaction that are governed by ideals that resist assessment in monetary terms. Examples of this would be true elegance (as an attitude),⁴³ and all social interaction that is based on the idea of perfected tact, as Simmel explains in his lecture “Sociology of Sociability” from 1910.⁴⁴

In this text, Simmel describes the ideal social company as one in which the individual never takes him- or herself too seriously, where neither personal issues nor objective traits (such as wealth, educational background, honors etc.), in short, where nothing that lies beyond the immediate presence of the social company enters its sphere. Social conversation should never evolve into a real exchange of ideas, and form should always rule over content. Playful, coquettish behavior meets these requirements as do all types of games (as opposed to serious passions or occupations). Above all, every participant needs to make sure that Kant's social imperative is respected: the other's freedom always determines the limits of one's own. However, this form of sociability only succeeds when all parties involved are socially equal, and even then, all participants should know that their seeming democracy is an artificial one:

This world of sociability, the only one in which a democracy of equals is possible without friction, is an *artificial* world, made up of beings who have renounced both the objective and the purely personal features of the intensity and extensiveness of life in order to bring about among themselves a pure interaction, free of any disturbing material accent.⁴⁵

While Simmel identifies a trait that reminds us of the artificiality of leisure class interaction and, by proxy, hotel society, he does not condemn this social behavior right away as superficial, as removed from reality, or as a lie. For him, this interaction is legitimate as long as all engaged in it know that they are playing. Within this framework, everyone operates within a strict and legitimate form beyond the reach of materiality. This form can then remain the "symbol of life" after all (128). In a rather idealist turn, Simmel posits the desirability of a social constellation that is nothing but perfect form. Such a situation allows its participants a moment of relief from the pressures of daily life through aesthetic play and would ultimately direct their attention back to life instead of away from it:

The freeing and lightening, however, that precisely the more thoughtful man finds in sociability is this; that association and exchange of stimulus, in which all the tasks and the whole weight of life are realized, here is consumed in an artistic play . . .⁴⁶

The lecture's style alone suggests that Simmel has lost himself in aestheticist daydreaming, and Sybille Hübner-Funk justly reminds us that we must keep in mind when evaluating his theories that Simmel was shielded socially as an intellectual and a member of the academy when evaluating his theories.⁴⁷ As an idea, Simmel's concept of perfect sociability seems flawless, even if stylized. But we only need to look at his earlier *Philosophy of Money* to see where his perfect world must fall apart and why ideal "so-

cial company” cannot be achieved in modern hotels either. As we have no choice but to live in a money-based economy, the “thoughtful man” (129) of whom the philosopher dreams is subject to all kinds of social pressures. Among these, the corrosive effect of money on our interaction with the world might be the most ubiquitous and pervasive. People and places are equally subject to these forces and make it more than questionable that Simmel’s ideal social laboratory could ever become reality. Granted, the ambivalent nature of money might help us overcome our initial distance to the world by making interaction possible on the basis of generally accepted assigned value, thus establishing a distance that allows us to interact in the first place. But ultimately it distances the modern individual from the world beyond repair. Money, as the great abstraction, steps in between the individual and the world by objectifying and assigning a specific value to things, services, phenomena of all kinds, and even people:

The same function that money has for the style of life also penetrates even more deeply into the individual human subject, not as a distancing from other persons but from the material objects of life. . . . just as money intervenes between person and person, so it intervenes between person and commodity. . . . If we recall how often awareness of purpose is arrested at the level of money, then it becomes clear that money and the enlargement of its role places us at an increasingly greater mental distance from objects. This often occurs in such a way that we lose sight of their qualitative nature so that the inner contact with their whole distinctive existence is disrupted.⁴⁸

To be sure, modern life, especially in urban centers, could not function any other way. Individuals protect themselves from perception overload and social friction through this mechanism of inner distancing — for Freud, this is the “Reizschutz” (the protection against stimulation) that sets in when coping mechanisms of the psyche are overly challenged.⁴⁹ Yet, the result is an impoverishment of the soul, for which the human being seeks to compensate by focusing on matters that lie far beyond the personal horizon: exoticism, intensified occupation with past centuries and cultures, nostalgia⁵⁰ — and “conspicuous consumption,” as Veblen would call it. All of these quests are symptoms of the individual’s loss of an unmediated relationship to the world and lead to a culture of aestheticism, thrill-seeking, and hustle-and-bustle.⁵¹ If we follow this line of thinking, it is unlikely that anyone could rise to the status of Simmel’s sociable “thoughtful man” under these circumstances. Modern man (and woman) seems far too inscribed in the cultural context of a money-based economy to resist its compromising effects. The resulting community consists of a number of voluntarily isolated human atoms that engage in interaction when it contributes to their need for “stimulations, sensations and external activities”⁵² like the ones

that Veblen describes for the leisure class. Otherwise, they will remain indifferent to each other as they try to protect themselves from contact (as an expression of their “Berührungsangst”) and since there is less and less to offer. This is exactly the situation that Siegfried Kracauer observes in the hotel lobby. Here, limits are set on external activity and on the flaunting of status in order to remain in line with the hotel’s unwritten laws of tact and moderation.

Siegfried Kracauer’s “Peripheral Equality of Social Masks”

Apart from a number of aperçus that Kracauer wrote for newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s, his most important contribution to the theory and criticism of the hotel appears in his famous book-length essay entitled *Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat* (The Detective Novel: A Philosophical Tractate)⁵³ written between 1922 and 1925. In the chapter entitled “Hotelhalle” (Hotel Lobby), Kracauer depicts a hotel society that has lost any trace of transcendence or substance. In his hotel lobby, we encounter the epitome of Simmel’s human subject in a money-ridden modern society. Kracauer’s powerful comparison between the hotel lobby and the sacred hall of the church allows him to identify the most important features that separate the pre-modern human being from the man of his time. The difference lies in the notion of purpose. In churches, people congregate to experience a sense of community, to gain strength from their collective attempts at dealing with the tensions that exist between the realm of real life and the realm of God to which they aspire. Abandoning themselves to prayer and God, the worshippers overcome their existential separation from each other through collective attempts to reach the transcendental. People in the hotel lobby, on the other hand, do not know any such tension or state of mental elevation. They come together in the lobby without any further destination, in a space whose sole purpose is to allow people to gather in a state of transition. It is the negative of inhabited space, nothing but the “mediator between our public and private worlds.”⁵⁴ But these visitors do not proceed to the next “world.” By staying in this realm of stasis that the bustle of the revolving door cannot break, they suspend their existence, “waiting, waiting.”⁵⁵ The hotel lobby does not point beyond itself, and it engulfs its guests in its immanence. This is the void — Kracauer’s “nothingness” — in the name of which all people are gathered here:

In the hotel lobby, equality is based not on a relation to God but on a relation to the nothing. Here, in the space of unrelatedness, the change of environments does not leave purposive activity behind, but brackets it for the sake of a freedom that can refer only to itself and therefore

sinks into relaxation and indifference. . . . [A]n aimless lounging, to which no call is addressed, leads to the mere play that elevates the un-serious everyday to the level of the serious.⁵⁶

Play, self-referentiality and the absence of essence characterize the atmosphere surrounding the people gathered in the hotel lobby. Twenty-five years earlier, Veblen recognized the same qualities in the conspicuous displays of the leisure class; Simmel is the first to consider them briefly as elements of potentially perfect social play. A façade of pleasurable anonymity keeps people from staring into the emptiness of their existence, and they lose their individuality behind the “peripheral equality of social masks,”⁵⁷ the sad leftover of a shared set of values or sense of community that held together older societies. Sentenced to passivity in this special space, they cannot even focus their attention on anything active and external such as free play or conversation as defined by Simmel in his “Theory of Sociability.” They are left with nothing but the distance to a life that does not exist.

In this society of surfaces, interaction is limited to the exchange of occasional gazes. People cannot reach beyond the “pure exterior”⁵⁸ of the social mask, and they only confirm the existence of the other as nothing but a beautiful appearance, the pure aesthetic in its most emptied-out meaning.⁵⁹ Stasis is the mode to which all action is condemned, and it keeps these people from engaging in interaction, as formal as it might be. Any attempt to reach the other is doomed from the start and would be a sign of either bad taste or unfitness to belong to this culture. Like Veblen’s “conspicuous displays of wealth,” Kracauer’s parade of impenetrable, two-dimensional masks betrays a sense of calculated anonymity and disconnectedness that characterizes not just the social interaction in this space but in modernism in general.

Borrowing from Simmel, and in the scientific register of his time, Kracauer compares the missing sense of unity in the society in question to “the isolation of anonymous atoms.”⁶⁰ Clearly, he inscribes his analysis in the tradition of the Simmelian critique of modernism while flavoring it with his own critical attitude towards the sciences and their role in modern life.⁶¹ Where Simmel diagnoses causes and effects, Kracauer assesses a society gone sour, in which human interaction has turned into a lifeless, soulless choreographed show. The hotel lobby offers the perfect stage for this.

However, we also need to read Kracauer’s radical and pessimistic assessment of the state of modern social culture in a different light. Might it not be that the lack of coherence in society, the experience of existential disconnectedness, leads to the creation of a canon of ritualized performances to allow the individual, thus crippled by the modern world, to live on? Could it be that the façade of aesthetic appearances protects the lobby-lounger from exposing those fragile fragments of his or her self that mod-

ern life has left? Would this strategy perhaps allow the individual a place, in the way that distancing functions in Simmel's explanation of modern "Berührungsangst"? Even those who realize the superficiality and pointlessness of status-affirming performances in their search for an authentic connection may not have any other way of surviving as social beings in this modern world. To withdraw from this world may lead to an authentic experience, but certainly not one that would resemble Kracauer's communal unity. The vicious circle of performing meaningless rituals to silence a possibly ardent desire for the other, and losing the ability to reach out because one is constantly engaged in anonymous rituals creates an atmosphere of sterility and boredom that could (and in some cases does) turn into revolution and chaos at any given moment.⁶²

Semi-Public Space and Its Impact on the Individual

The hotel is a quintessentially modern, urban space in which the presence of the other, distant and anonymous as he or she might be, also constitutes a constant threat. As Anthony Vidler explains, agoraphobia — which he partially equates to Simmel's "Berührungsangst" — and its counterpart, claustrophobia, are "diseases" that the modern city triggers in many people, and Vidler comments on an excerpt from Simmel's *Sociology of the Senses*: "For Simmel, the very nature of social relations forces distance and thus alienation, for reasons of everyday functioning and self-defense. Distance is first and foremost a product of the omnipotence of sight in the city."⁶³ As people see and observe each other constantly in the crowded streets and places of the city — and certainly in the hotel lobby — they submit each other to the objectifying gaze that reduces the human subject to its reflection in the eyes of its observer.⁶⁴ In this climate of intensive gazing, intimacy cannot be established, and the result, according to Simmel, is "the sense of utter lonesomeness, and the feeling that the individual is surrounded on all sides by closed doors."⁶⁵ To break away from this constant objectification, social interaction almost logically turns into a play with masks. It may be that no more substantial interaction is possible. Or the hotel guest may choose to offer and perceive nothing more than façades, Kracauer's "pure exterior"⁶⁶ in order to protect him- or herself. In either case, the unhomely, that is the Freudian "uncanny" nature of this semi-public space⁶⁷ does not provide anything in support of a person's identity when the subject is challenged to face the objectifying gaze of the other in the lobby:

The lobby of a big city hotel orients the guest or visitor as they enter from the street: it marks what is exterior and interior and, accordingly, what practices are to be sanctioned. As a spatial paradigm of metropoli-

tan modernity Kracauer's hotel lobby does bear a resemblance to Benjamin's glass-and-iron arcade. Each in its own way is an example of "ambiguous structure" in which the strict (and illusory) bourgeois dichotomy between public and private [and one could add: subject and object, BM] is both undermined and reaffirmed.⁶⁸

In this light, the hotel and, more specifically, its lobby create *and* represent the modern experience. If it is Tallack's contention that "the hotel lobby might be . . . a space which *takes place* in narratives,"⁶⁹ the hotel is also a space that engenders and shapes narratives. Its stage-like, semi-public nature unsettles the human subject and keeps it in an ambiguous state of identifying with and feeling absolutely foreign to this temporary "home," in limbo between intimacy and anonymity and constantly challenged to display "sanctioned practices." The transitory nature of a hotel stay denies the guest the option of leaving a lasting trace that could serve as a piece of the puzzle of his or her personal history, just as Raoul Schrott observes in the opening paragraph of his collection of poetry in prose, entitled *Hotels* (1995):⁷⁰

You walk up and down the endless hallways, simply there without ever arriving, the paradox of passage, of a life that searches for traces and wants to impress them onto the things while the chambermaid wipes off any fingerprints and flattens the sheets the following day. In spite of the scenic paintings in the hallway, rooms in a hotel remain empty.⁷¹

"Illusion and Reality" is the subtitle of Elaine Denby's study on Grand Hotels, and this pair describes well the basic ambivalence of the experience in a hotel. Often advertised as "homes away from home," hotels do everything to make us feel good and move within their walls with the confidence that this feeling engenders. Yet, as much as they strive to create the illusion of home and ease with their fine food, artwork, stylish furniture, cozy beds, pillows, toiletries, in short, Simmel's accessories of true elegance, these attempts cannot mask the fact that the space is not ours. It is only assigned to us for the period that we can pay for. We will not and are not supposed to leave a lasting trace in or become attached to the room. Even our experiences inside of these walls possess a touch of foreignness in the Bachelardian sense: as a space that is not fully inhabited, the hotel room denies us full identification with and, more importantly, "felicitous" remembrance of it.⁷²

Hotel rooms are rented spaces to which we are not the only ones who have a key. They are filled with objects and furniture that an indiscriminate number of people have used and will use, that we neither bought nor chose, placed in a room that says nothing about us. We can add flowers, spray perfume, rearrange the furniture, but it remains a hotel room to which we have no substantial right. Yet, we also do not have responsibility for it.

A maid will come and do the bed, clean the tub, change the towels, wipe off the stain from the table that we did not even notice. For a guest in good spirits and with a stable sense of self, hotels can offer a welcome break — Simmel's distance — from our sometimes complex relationship to inhabited space, most notably the bourgeois home. And it is exactly this sense of suspended responsibility that has made the hotel and the hotel room the prime setting for fantasies about all kinds of cultural taboos: sex, drugs, crime, even suicide.⁷³

The Ideology of the “Home Away from Home”

Creating the illusion of a home away from home is one of the key features of good hotel design, and there are certainly hotel directors who take it as a matter of personal pride if the guest gets lost in this impression. However, as a typical feature, the appealing references to our ideal home — cozy pillows, shiny furniture, chocolate bars on the bed — serve very rational purposes. First of all, customer satisfaction is a precondition for a flourishing business, and profit is very much on every hotel director's agenda. If the guest feels “at home,” his psychological disposition is to enjoy his stay and to be happy, thus to be satisfied with his financial expense and likely to come back. On a less obvious level, the illusion of the “home away from home” is crucial to the ideological manipulation that hotels need to perform. In his interpretation of the “Hotel Kracauer,” that is, Kracauer's theories about hotels, hotel stories, and hotel films of the early 1920s, Marc Katz explains:

The 20's metropolitan hotel, typically selling itself as “a home away from home for those who travel,” strategically employed domestic signs to mask its functionalist apparatus. Furniture suites were customarily presented in hallways, at elevators, in lobbies, and at other points where the bare traffic space of the hotel was thought to be too unnerving for guests. . . . Domestic phantasmagoria haunt the grand hotel. . . . Throughout his career, Kracauer figures the hotel lobby as a site of heightened exchange value, subject to nomadic, deterritorializing flows of information and desire. In taking the measure of the lobby as a paradigm and gauging its relevance for social theory, we might want to keep in mind what Deleuze suggests about how the rules of exchange and internalization relate: capital cannot acknowledge the full extent of its own power to radically deterritorialize, so it brackets out this external (i.e., absolute) limit by setting up an interior (i.e., relative) limit which it then perpetually reproduces as a form of ideological alibi. . . . As a cultural paradigm for metropolitan modernity, Kracauer's hotel lobby embodies a complex logic by which the nomadic, smooth space of advanced capital continues to call up nostalgic depth effects through various forms of place-making.⁷⁴

Strategic references to an individualized, personal place “of one’s own” whose value is beyond the reach of money are thus supposed to mask the fact that space and time have been fully subjected to the laws of capital. Katz’s “various forms of place making” in the not-so-public areas of the hotel are supposed to conjure up the idea of the psychological home and create general peace of mind;⁷⁵ the glamour and luxury of the more public spaces — the lobby, the bar, the restaurant, and especially the staircase — then carry the experience of being in this place to a higher level of excitement. Repeatedly, critics stress the theatrical character of the hotel. All interaction is based on the principle of play and suspended reality, most radically realized in today’s Club Med Hotels, Las Vegas’s twenty-four-hour casino-hotels, or the world’s cruise ships, the tourism industry’s aquatic variation on the theme of a resort hotel.⁷⁶ It is certainly possible to lose oneself in this theatricality, but as we will see in several of the literary texts, it can also be experienced as a liberation from social and cultural restrictions, as a “living out” of suppressed dreams and drives. As a relief from the everyday life, the experience of leisure and luxury in the artificial atmosphere of the hotel may be a healthy way to restore lost energy. As a lifestyle, as it appears in early-twentieth-century texts, this hotel culture becomes problematic. It would take an American literary character from the next generation — John Irving’s narrator John in his 1981 novel *The Hotel New Hampshire* — to openly denounce the fallacy of the hotel as a “home away from home”: “The first of my father’s illusions was that bears could survive the life lived by humans, and the second was that human beings could survive a life led in hotels.”⁷⁷

Notes

¹ In the words of Georg Simmel, “[s]patial relations are only the condition, on the one hand, and the symbol, on the other, of human relations.” Quoted from Simmel’s *Sociology* in Anthony Vidler, “Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer,” *New German Critique* 54 (Fall 1991): 31–46; here: 39.

² Even if some of the hotels discussed later are not located in the city, they need to be considered urban phenomena, following David Frisby’s observation that for Simmel, “the city as such is to be defined in terms of its sociological rather than its territorial boundaries.” David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity* (1986; rpt. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 77. More than many other more modern businesses such as the department store which Wolfgang Schivelbusch mentions in his study *The Railway Journey* (1979; rpt. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), 188, hotels show the degree to which life has been subjugated to the laws of capitalism.

³ According to Georg Simmel, money, as the grand formalizing principle in modernism, steps in between the human being and the commodity for which he or she pays and changes the nature of the relationship between subject and object. I will discuss

this idea in more detail in the context of my section on Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* later in this chapter.

⁴ It is not by accident that mirrors and mirror scenes are part of the stock motifs in hotel literature. In many texts, self-encounters in the hotel's mirrors bring to the surface an estrangement from the self to which the individual responds strongly, either positively or negatively.

⁵ See also Vidler, "Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer," 41; Douglas Tallack, "'Waiting, Waiting': The Hotel Lobby," *Irish Journal of American Studies* 7 (1998): 1–20; here: 5.

⁶ See Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 41 and my brief discussion of Lukács' concept of modern "transcendental homelessness" in the introductory chapter of this study.

⁷ Moritz Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Heidelberg, A. Hüttig, 1961).

⁸ My translation, quoted with omissions from Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels*, 226: "Das Hotel ist ein Beherbergungs- und Verpflegungsbetrieb gehobener Art mit entsprechender baulicher Gestaltung und Einrichtung seiner Räume. Im allgemeinen wird ein Hotel in einem für sich abgeschlossenen Hause betrieben und soll eine größere Anzahl von Fremdenbetten aufweisen. . . . In einem Hotel soll für den öffentlichen Gebrauch eine Halle oder ein Lese- und Schreibzimmer als Gesellschaftsraum und ein vorwiegend den Hotelgästen dienender Eß- oder Frühstücksraum vorhanden sein. Das Hotelgebäude muß den heutigen Anforderungen hinsichtlich der technischen und sanitären Einrichtungen entsprechen. . . . In einem Hotel soll fachlich geschultes Personal vorhanden sein. In Betrieben mit Ausländerverkehr soll ein Teil der Belegschaftsmitglieder sprachkundig sein. Für Auskunftserteilung und Zimmeranweisung bei Ankunft und Abreise der Gäste muß ebenso gesorgt sein wie für den Nachtdienst." This definition could also serve as a checklist for many of the literary hotels that we will encounter. Most of the features mentioned here as mandatory in a real hotel belong to the standard elements employed and explored in hotel narratives. We will return to this idea in chapter 3.

⁹ In his few comments regarding a valid definition, Arthur White (in his *Palaces for the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality* [New York: Taplinger, 1968]) offers a very suggestive parallel: "It was an American claim that there is as big a difference between the old inn and the modern hotel as between a broom and a vacuum cleaner" (129). Implied in this comparison are important features that characterize the hotel as an intrinsically modern phenomenon, planned to appeal to the modern consumer and indebted to technical progress and efficiency.

¹⁰ Most of the services and features mentioned in the official definition and quoted by Hoffmann contribute to a hotel's superior standards. The categories are very vaguely defined, though — Hoffmann's first sentence alone (the requirement that we are talking of a high-end establishment featuring superior architectural and interior design) can mean anything from something that is simply better than average to a veritable palace from *Schlaraffenland*.

¹¹ Over the decades, more and more of those rooms have been added to the standard floor plan of any hotel; Carol Berens mentions tearooms, palm courts and rooftop lounges. Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 37.

¹² When Boston's Tremont Hotel opened in 1829, for example, people were astonished by the luxury awaiting them. Innovations that indulged the guests included water closets and bathing rooms with hot water, washing facilities in every room with a free bar of soap, room service available with the help of the so-called annunciator, and maybe most importantly the introduction of French cuisine in the hotel's dining halls. What began as a special feature at the Tremont quickly became a desirable standard for all grand hotels in the United States and abroad and essential for those who wished to compete in the tight market that the hotel industry quickly became. See White, *Palaces for the People*, 131–33.

¹³ See the chapter "The Glorious Past: Old World Elegance in America" in Berens's *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 71–101.

¹⁴ At the same time, this associative connection to Greek culture suggests the democratic values that these "new palaces for the people" and their owners seemed to promote. Much in the same fashion (even if roughly fifty years later, 1873–83), the Austrian parliament on the famous Ringstraße in Vienna was built in the Greek style, thus alluding to Greece as the cradle of democracy. See Carl S. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 40–45.

¹⁵ Arthur White, *Palaces of the People*, 130.

¹⁶ Ernst W. Heine mockingly remarks: "Im Grandhotel tritt der Grundzug des ganzen Zeitalters zutage. Jeder will mehr darstellen, als er ist, und mehr besitzen, als er sich leisten kann. Da es nur vom kostspieligen Lebensstil abhängt, ob jemand ein Kleinbürger oder ein König ist, so sucht man nach erschwinglichem Ersatz. Es ist die Ära des allgemeinen und prinzipiellen Stil- und Materialschwindels. Getünchtes Blech sieht so aus wie Marmor, Papiermaché wie Rosenholz, Gips wie schimmernder Alabaster." Ernst W. Heine, "The Grand Hotel," in *New York liegt im Neandertal: Bauten als Schicksal* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1984) 232–33. [The Grand Hotel reflects the whole era's basic character. Everybody wants to represent more than he is and possess more than he can afford. Since it is the lavish lifestyle alone that determines whether someone is a petty bourgeois or a king, people look for affordable substitutes. It is the era of general and consistent stylistic and material fraud. Painted sheet metal looks like marble, papier-mâché like rosewood, plaster looks like shimmering alabaster. BM]

¹⁷ Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 145.

¹⁸ The Imperial was originally built as a palace for Duke Philippe of Württemberg in 1867. By the time the palace was finished, the duke had changed his mind about the building and its location. In 1873, the palace was converted into a hotel and quickly became one of Vienna's most elegant establishments. See Elaine Denby, *Grand Hotels: Illusion and Reality* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1998), 102.

¹⁹ Hedda Adlon remembers: "Der Kaiser zahlte jährlich an das Adlon die runde Summe von einhundertfünfzigtausend Mark als Garantie für die Rechnungen seiner persönlichen Gäste. Dafür hatte das Adlon jederzeit Zimmer bereitzustellen für Mitglieder der Hocharistokratie, die bei Hof eingeladen waren, aber nicht im Schloß

untergebracht werden konnten." Hedda Adlon, *Hotel Adlon: Das Berliner Hotel, in dem die große Welt zu Gast war* (Munich: Heyne, 2002), 256. [Each year, the emperor paid the sum of one hundred fifty thousand marks to the Adlon to cover any bills that the court's personal guests would incur. In return, the Adlon had to be prepared to accommodate aristocratic visitors of the royal court at any given moment if they could not be put up in the palace. BM]

²⁰ In general, aristocratic guests provided some cachet to those places. Elaine Denby, in her *Grand Hotels: Illusion and Reality*, explains: "European royalty was still active in high society and lent distinction by its presence, while transatlantic magnates may have been more welcome for their copious spending" (275).

²¹ Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 146.

²² This is the core issue in the earlier part of Stefan Zweig's unfinished novel *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982, written between 1931 and 1934) where the term "Eindringling" ("intruder") figures prominently to describe the poor Christine Hoflehner.

²³ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; rpt. New York: Dover Thrift, 1994).

²⁴ The term "conspicuous wealth" is meant to summarize what Veblen explains separately as "conspicuous leisure" (23–42) and "conspicuous consumption" (43–62).

²⁵ *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 126. A variant of this strategy dictates the fate of war veterans like Ferdinand in Stefan Zweig's *Rausch der Verwandlung* and Gabriel Dan in Joseph Roth's *Hotel Savoy* (1924; rpt. Munich: DTV, 2003). Both young men served their country during the war, sacrificing their youth, health, and dreams. But when they return from their internment, they are condemned to a life of proletarian misery that seems to secure the well-being of the leisure class. Roth and Zweig both set this class conflict in hotels where the contrast between having and not having, enjoyment of life and bare survival, can be staged most drastically.

²⁶ See *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 4–6.

²⁷ This is a very brief summary of the first two chapters of Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, the introduction (1–13) and the chapter entitled "Pecuniary Emulation" (15–22).

²⁸ This is the case in Kästner's *Drei Männer im Schnee* (1934; rpt. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna: Ullstein, 1980). The lottery winner, a millionaire in disguise who wants to conduct a social experiment to determine whether people really judge others based on their appearance is treated horribly by the arrogant hotel director and the head porter. These two know exactly how vulnerable the status of their hotel as a social meeting place will be if its social composition gets out of balance, and they try to prevent this from happening. If they cannot get rid of the unwanted guest, they can at least make sure that everybody in the hotel knows and sees that *they* know that he should not be there.

²⁹ Veblen mentions Classical languages such as Greek and Latin, languages no longer spoken, and which are thus absolutely useless in terms of modern communication.

³⁰ Bien and Giersch, *Reisen in die große weite Welt: Die Kulturgeschichte des Hotels im Spiegel der Kofferaufkleber 1900–1960* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 1988), 60.

³¹ Fashion also plays an important role in Georg Simmel's theories. But where Simmel analyzes and explains fashion as a response to the nervous energy that modernism instills in people in general, Veblen has no interest in the psychological reasons for this phenomenon. Instead, he shows how dress can function as a powerful tool in the pursuit of social distinction. The discussion of the importance of fashion in these two theorists' systems might be the best example of their different agendas in writing their theories, even if both are concerned with capitalist society and social interaction. Simmel seems much more differentiated in his pursuit of a comprehensive theory that could explain social hierarchies and modern life's underlying structures. Veblen's agenda is polemical in nature. He looks at the use that people make of certain phenomena in order to achieve social advantage. He is much less concerned with the reasons for these practices beyond his interest in critiquing the leisure class.

³² In one of his more drastic takes on leisure class culture, Veblen claims that getting drunk constitutes an ennobling act for men who want to show off their wealth. Alcohol as a "ceremonial good" is no longer enjoyed but simply wasted in the act of getting drunk; if a ceremony is already useless in the sense that it does not contribute to the sustenance of life, wasting ceremonial goods in the pointless pursuit of intoxication makes their conspicuous consumption twice as effective.

³³ The idea of "Vornehmheit," real elegance or distinction, is central to Georg Simmel's theories about social hierarchy and interaction. A more detailed discussion of this notion follows in the next section of this chapter.

³⁴ As we will see in the following, Kracauer focuses on the late consequences (especially in mass culture) of those modern trends that Simmel was the first to systematize sociologically. To be sure, one of the key concepts in Simmel's theories is the idea that modern societies are based on a rationalist approach to the world and the Other that relies on quantifiable criteria to mediate between the subject and the world around. The mature money-based economy is the most compelling representative of this approach. However, Simmel still holds on to the ideal of possible immediacy, that is, a direct, unmediated relationship between subject and the world beyond the realm of the purely rational in his vision of the ideal aesthetic play (see his "Sociology of Sociability" and my discussion below). The idealist penchant that informs Simmel's prewar writings has no place in Kracauer's post-World War I analysis of his contemporary consumerist and science-driven environment. In his comparison of Simmel's and Kracauer's approach to the modern world, David Frisby notes: "It is as if Kracauer had radicalized Simmel's theory of cultural alienation by infusing it with a quasi-religious existentialism — itself not totally absent from Simmel's later works. The feelings and values of the individual can no longer be integrated into the social functions that are available. The modern individual, in his or her inner core at least, remains isolated. . . . What is totally absent, and what Kracauer calls for, is a form of association based on community. This longing for community, for friendship, for the fulfillment of inner life, for the realization of the individual personality all remain longings that cannot be realized." David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity* (1986; rpt. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 114–15.

³⁵ Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900; rpt. 1920; rpt. Cologne: Parkland, 2001). All English quotes from: *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. T. Bottomore and D. Frisby, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³⁶ Simmel posits a three-tiered model in which the upper level is occupied by content or Platonic Ideas, by everything that can be named (“das Bezeichenbare”). The lower level is taken by the soul with its “mysterious unity.” For Simmel, value and reality occupy the middle ground between these two spheres and mediate between them. They are comparable to a language that translates named content into the code of the soul and can, in turn, translate the yearnings of the soul into the graspable language of content: “Reality and value are, as it were, two different languages by which the logical contents of the world, valid in their ideal unity, are made comprehensible to the unitary soul, or the languages in which the soul can express the pure image of these contents which lies beyond their differentiation and opposition” (*Philosophy of Money*, 62, German original: *Philosophie des Geldes*, 7).

³⁷ See especially Simmel’s chapter 4, “Individual Freedom,” 283–354 (“Die individuelle Freiheit,” 297–386).

³⁸ Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” trans. Edward Shils, in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 69–79; here: 73. The German original reads: “. . . indem das Geld, mit seiner Farblosigkeit und Indifferenz, sich zum Generalnenner aller Werte aufwirft, wird es der fürchterlichste Nivellierer, es höhlt den Kern der Dinge, ihre Eigenart, ihren spezifischen Wert, ihre Unvergleichbarkeit rettungslos aus.” Georg Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen, 1901–1908*, vol. 1, *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 116–32; here: 121–22.

³⁹ “Thus, one may characterize the effect of money as an atomization of the individual person, as an individualization that occurs within the person. This is, however, a general tendency of the whole society that extends inside the individual. Just as money affects the elements of the individual, so it also acts primarily upon the elements of society, that is upon individuals” (*Philosophy of Money*, 342). [“So kann man die Wirkung des Geldes als eine Atomisierung der Einzelpersönlichkeit bezeichnen, als eine innerhalb ihrer vor sich gehende Individualisierung. Dies ist aber nur eine in das Individuum hinein fortgesetzte Tendenz der ganzen Gesellschaft: wie das Geld auf die Elemente des Einzelwesens, so wirkt es vor allem auf die Elemente der Gesellschaft, auf die Individuen” (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 371).]

⁴⁰ See Sibylle Hübner-Funk’s essay “Ästhetizismus und Soziologie bei Georg Simmel” in *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende: Georg Simmel*, ed. Hannes Böhringer and K. Gründer, Studien zur Literatur und Philosophie des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 44–58.

⁴¹ *Philosophie des Geldes*, 539. The English translation offers the term “agoraphobia” for this concept (*Philosophy of Money*, 475). However, agoraphobia describes a different condition than what Simmel has in mind when he describes the modern fear of contact.

⁴² See especially Simmel’s discussion of the notion of distinction (*Philosophy of Money*, 389–94; *Philosophie des Geldes*, “der Vornehmheitsbegriff,” 430–37).

⁴³ Stefan Zweig’s Lord Elkins in *Rausch der Verwandlung* personifies this virtue to perfection, and significantly, he is characterized as a man of the past throughout the story.

⁴⁴ Georg Simmel, "Soziologie der Geselligkeit." *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1900–1918*, vol. 1. *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 177–93. All English quotes from: Georg Simmel, "Sociology of Sociability," trans. Everett C. Hughes, in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, 120–29 (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1998).

⁴⁵ "Sociology of Sociability," 124. ["Aber diese Welt der Geselligkeit, die einzige, in der eine Demokratie der Gleichberechtigten ohne Reibungen möglich ist, ist eine *künstliche* Welt, aufgebaut aus Wesen, die sowohl auf das Objektive, wie auf das ganz Persönliche der Lebensintensität und -extensität verzichtet haben, um jene ganz reine, durch keinen gleichsam materialen Akzent debalancierte Wechselwirkung untereinander herzustellen" ("Soziologie der Geselligkeit," 183).]

⁴⁶ "Sociology of Sociability," 129. ["Das Befreiende und Erleichternde aber, das gerade der tiefere Mensch in der Geselligkeit findet, ist: daß das Zusammensein und der Einwirkungstausch, in denen die ganzen Aufgaben und die ganze Schwere des Lebens sich vollzieht, hier in gleichsam artistischem Spiel genossen werden . . ." ("Soziologie der Geselligkeit," 193).]

⁴⁷ Hübner-Funk, "Ästhetizismus und Soziologie bei Georg Simmel," 48.

⁴⁸ *Philosophy of Money*, 477–78. ["Die gleiche Funktion des Geldes für den Lebensstil steigt nun noch tiefer in das Einzelsubjekt selbst hinab, als Distanzierung nicht gegen andere Personen, sondern gegen die Sachgehalte des Lebens. . . . [W]ie sich das Geld zwischen Mensch und Mensch schiebt, so zwischen Mensch und Ware. . . . Erinnern wir uns der früheren Ausmachung, wie oft das Zweckbewußtsein auf der Stufe des Geldes halt macht, so zeigt sich, daß das Geld uns mit der Vergrößerung seiner Rolle in immer weitere psychische Distanz zu den Objekten stellt, oft in eine solche, daß ihr qualitatives Wesen uns davor ganz außer Sehweite rückt und die innere Berührung mit ihrem vollen, eigenen Sein durchbrochen wird" (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 542–43).]

⁴⁹ This is one of Freud's main theses in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 1920).

⁵⁰ *Philosophy of Money*, 474–76, *Philosophie des Geldes*, 541.

⁵¹ "The lack of something definitive at the center of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations and external activities" (*Philosophy of Money*, 484). ["Der Mangel an Definitivem in der Seele treibt dazu, in immer neuen Anregungen, Sensationen, äußeren Aktivitäten eine momentane Befriedigung zu suchen" (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 551).]

⁵² *Philosophy of Money*, 484; see above.

⁵³ Siegfried Kracauer, "Hotelhalle," in *Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat* (1925; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 38–49. All English quotes from Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," trans. Thomas Levin, in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–58.

⁵⁴ Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, xv.

⁵⁵ This is the title and main line of argument in Tallack's essay "‘Waiting, Waiting’: The Hotel Lobby."

⁵⁶ Kracauer, "Hotel Lobby," 55. ["Statt auf das Gottesverhältnis gründet sich in der Hotelhalle die Gleichheit auf das Verhältnis zum Nichts. Die Ablösung läßt hier, im Raume der Beziehungslosigkeit, das zweckhafte Tun nicht unter sich, sondern klammert es ein um der Freiheit willen, die nur sich selber meinen kann und darum in Entspannung und Indifferenz vergeht. . . . [E]in ungerichtetes Weilen, dem kein Anruf gilt, [führt] zum bloßen Spiel, das den unernsten Alltag gerade zum Ernste erhöht. ("Hotelhalle," 42).] In the following sentence, Kracauer himself connects his analysis to Simmel's idea of society as a "play form of sociation" ("Hotel Lobby," 55) and explains the difference between Simmel's ideal and the actual situation in the hotel lobby: "What is presented in the hotel lobby is the formal similarity of the figures, and equivalence that signifies not fulfillment but evacuation" ("Hotel Lobby," 55).

⁵⁷ Kracauer, "Hotel Lobby," 56. In the original, the expression is even more powerful: "Den ausgeblasenen Termini, die das Unterschiedene aus dem Einerlei der Null hervortreiben, entsprechen die Besucher der Hotelhalle, die das Individuum hinter der peripheren Gleichheit gesellschaftlicher Larven verschwinden lassen" ("Hotelhalle," 45).

⁵⁸ "Hotel Lobby," 58. [" . . . das bloße Außen," "Hotelhalle," 47.]

⁵⁹ Kracauer engages in a long discussion of the relationship between this phenomenon and Kant's definition of the beautiful. Whereas in Kant's system, the transcendental is an integral part of the beautiful, Kracauer's definition of modern beauty radically denies the presence of any metaphysical dimension. The lobby and its guest, as he sees them, constitute the most radical and emptiest realization of Kant's definition of the beautiful: "The Kantian definition of the beautiful is instantiated here in a way that takes seriously its isolation of the aesthetic and its lack of content" ("The Hotel Lobby," 54; "Die Kantische Definition des Schönen erfährt hier eine Realisierung, die Ernst macht mit ihrer Isolierung des Ästhetischen und ihrer Inhaltslosigkeit," "Hotelhalle," 40). It is also clear that Kracauer takes a more radical position on this question than Simmel.

⁶⁰ "Hotel Lobby," 57. [" . . . [die] Isoliertheit anonymer Atome," "Hotelhalle," 46.]

⁶¹ Clearly, this "Kracauerian flavor" needs to be seen in the context of the post-First World War world in which Kracauer lived. Georg Simmel still lived in a world that had not yet seen the catastrophic consequences that the quantification of life in the twentieth century could bring about. He still held on to the idealist belief that a direct, unmediated relationship between the subject and the world, beyond the realm of the purely rational, could be achieved in ideal aesthetic social play (see his "Sociology of Sociability"). Siegfried Kracauer did not see such a potential in his contemporary consumerist environment and clearly lamented the loss of a transcendental dimension to life. See note 34.

⁶² This also characterizes the basic mechanism of repression that is at the center of most of Freud's theories. His *Traumdeutung* (The Interpretation of Dreams, 1900) and his essays *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, 1901) and *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, 1905) for example provide detailed explanations of how that mechanism functions. According to Freud, the civilized human being (or rather that powerful agency of the consciousness that censors activity in the psychic

apparatus) does not allow him- or herself certain natural or instinctive urges or reactions to the environment and filters these out of his consciousness before they can even take shape. Like steam in a pressure cooker, stress builds up in the psyche and eventually leads to a breakdown of the regulatory system.

⁶³ Vidler, "Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer," 41.

⁶⁴ Berens (*Hotel Bars and Lobbies*) takes a more positive approach to this relationship between guests when she states: "[W]e do not pass through these rooms anonymously but engage in two roles simultaneously: actor and spectator" (2). Kracauer also admits the possibility of play as a form of social interaction, but for him, the "closet-idealist," this does not present a valid substantial mode of existence. In the context of his critique of modernism, play marks the absence of transcendence, an original loss of identity, authenticity, and God. The new modern man, though, might consider this loss a gain in personal freedom, a world of possibilities. Thomas Mann's Felix Krull represents this new player type in the most positive colors.

⁶⁵ Simmel, *Sociology of the Senses*, quoted in Vidler, "Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer," 41.

⁶⁶ Kracauer, "Hotel Lobby," 58. ["... das bloße Außen," "Hotelhalle," 47.]

⁶⁷ See Tallack ("Waiting, Waiting": The Hotel Lobby): "In the heterogeneous crowd of the lobby — as in that of the city — the familiar and the unfamiliar, the homely and unhomely mixture which Freud calls the uncanny is just about discernible . . ." (4–5). Similarly, Michel Foucault, in his lecture "Of Other Spaces" (1967), describes the (honeymoon) hotel as a paradigmatic "heterotopia." Such spaces have "the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect" (*Diacritics* 16:1 [1986]), 24, trans. of "Des Espaces Autres," 1967), quoted in Li Lian Chee, "... Not Quite At Home: Intimate Spacing in Detective Fiction and Travel Writing Inside a Colonial Hotel," www.ahra-architecture.org.uk/West_Chee.pdf.

⁶⁸ Marc Katz, "The Hotel Kracauer," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Critical Studies* 11.2 (1999): 134–52; here: 136.

⁶⁹ Tallack, "Waiting, Waiting": The Hotel Lobby," 3, emphasis Tallack's.

⁷⁰ Raoul Schrott, *Hotels* (1995; rpt. Munich: DTV, 1998).

⁷¹ Translation mine. ["Man geht die fluchten der gänge ab und ist da, ohne wirklich hier oder jemals angelangt zu sein, das paradoxon der passage, eines lebens, das nach spuren sucht und seine eigenen an den dingen hinterlassen will, während das zimmermädchen am nächsten tag jeden fingerabdruck entfernt hat und die laken flach gestreift. Die zimmer eines hotels aber bleiben trotz der genrebilder im gang leer." Raoul Schrott, *Hotels*, 5.]

⁷² See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (1964; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xxxv. See also my discussion of Bachelard's definition of "felicitously" inhabited space in the introductory chapter of this book.

⁷³ It is only logical that these cultural taboos, especially sex, are enjoyed all the more openly the less the hotel tries to camouflage its capitalist foundation, in other words: the less they try to look like homes. The infamous hotel that rents by the hour is a

perfect example. Here, the notions of space for money and that of sex for money merge. As different as the grand hotel and the hotel at hourly rates seem ultimately, they only occupy the two extremes on a spectrum of possible combinations of money, space, and time that I have explored in this chapter.

⁷⁴ Marc Katz, "The Hotel Kracauer," 147–48.

⁷⁵ It is important to note that the notion of "home" is a psychological one and not modeled after the guests' real-life homes. It is the feeling of child-like carefree existence and being taken care of in the best possible way that guests should experience.

⁷⁶ In most of these places, guests are not even supposed to leave the compound of the hotel anymore. People pay with special currencies such as Disneyland's "Toon Money" or versions of credit cards that are only good on board or within the hotel's walls. Newspapers are replaced by in-house newsletters that only tell the guest about events in the hotel or on board; and in Las Vegas, the guest does not even have to travel any further in order to see "the whole world": the Pyramids, Venice, Paris, and New York have been recreated in some of the big casino hotels. We have indeed reached an era of "plastic tourism," as Bien and Giersch state (*Reisen in die große weite Welt*, 9).

⁷⁷ John Irving, *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1981; rpt. New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 62.

3: Players and Places: Stock Elements of Hotel Culture and Fiction

IT IS TIME TO CHECK INTO THE HOTEL. Ideally, we will land in a place where architecture, objects, and people effectively work together to make sure that the total hotel environment enchants the guest from the moment he or she thinks about setting foot in this place. They provide the setting and backdrop for personal encounters, and they structure lives, movement, and time in the hotel's halls and rooms. When we approach a hotel, we know what to expect because we know the requisites of this setting. If we were to find an element changed or missing, we would have to readjust, even if we had never been to that particular place before. If spaces "take place in narratives,"¹ the hotel is a complex one, consisting of various sub-narratives that make up a spatial skeleton before any guest has even appeared on the scene. In this light, every new hotel guest simply checks in to participate in a preexisting story that will acquire his or her own personal note but will continue long after the guest has left the hotel. As the poet Raoul Schrott writes in his *Hotels*: "Obviously, names are interchangeable, as are said love-affairs, as long as the location remains the same, this decorum for staging a sentimentality whose tone alone makes it tolerable."²

The Entrance

Part of the street life, part of the hotel's universe, the entrance is designed to lure people inside. As the hotel's carpet stretches beyond the entrance door onto the asphalt, the passer-by experiences a change of step when crossing this velvety interruption of the street's pavement. The sounds of clacking heels are muffled, and the vector-like course of the walker's stride is challenged with the possibility of a 90-degree change of direction into the entrance hall. People streaming into and out of the building face the same conundrum: caught between the axis of the hotel and that of the street, they occupy the no-man's land between inside and outside, between staying and passing, between the individual and the mass, guest and ordinary person, between purpose and coincidence. A big marquee with shiny letters, neon lights with flashing colors, or a small, dignified golden plate distinguishes this entrance from all the others in this street: this house has a name, it commands our attention and respect, it has an identity of its own. Instead of telling us the names of those inside its walls, connecting the building to

its residents, the letters on the hotel's façade refer to nothing but the building itself, and ultimately to themselves. But that is enough for us to recognize the place's legitimacy among the living. A doorman or hotel boy, a gatekeeper in an impeccable livery, stands next to the entrance. He protects the building, not vice versa, and he makes sure that life on the street and life pouring into and out of the hotel merge in style without becoming confused.

You look up, but the entrance canopy blocks the sky. Just as your foot takes notice of the change from pavement to carpet, your eye cannot wander higher than the canopy allows. While you try to decide whether you should now enter or not, the hotel's entrance promises a relief from the uncivilized nature of street life,³ and you submit to the seductive powers of institutionalized comfort. You direct your steps toward

The Revolving Door

Operated by a young bellboy, the revolving door never stands still and is the most striking metaphor for a hotel's basic operational principle: that of change or flow. As guests come in or leave, the microcosm inside changes constantly. However, the change is superficial — does it really matter who makes up the hotel society at any given time? In its uninterrupted movement of swinging people into and out of the lobby, the revolving door “introduces an element of luck”⁴ into the makeup of the assembled group, and every new guest brings with him a short breeze of fresh air from the street. Yet the steady rhythm of the door almost never changes, and watching its constant swing, we get lulled into a state of indifference about those who come and those who leave, those who want to and those who have to go. After a while, the door simply shuffles people into and out of the hotel.

So you approach the revolving door, and you know what is at stake: you cannot turn farther than that half circle that swings you across the invisible line between the outside and the inside. Of course, there is always the side entrance, allowing you to walk a straight line into the hotel's interior, but do you want to start your adventure from the side? You squeeze your suitcase into the glassy ninety-degree compartment of the door in front of you, and you are afraid you'll stop the door. Or worse, you could get stuck in full swing, in the real no-man's land where your helplessness turns into a temporary spectacle for those inside and outside, and where being and having depend on the mercy of a mechanical door and its exacting young operator. Hence, you give up your own rhythm, your own speed, your own step, even your sense of your own physical boundaries, and you let yourself be moved by the force of the revolving door. As you pass through its 180 degrees, you watch yourself from afar: like cattle, you think, but what

can you do? At the same time, a new sensation goes through your body: as you move through the narrow passageway into the hotel, you experience physical admittance to the inside. With every inch, you move further away from the masses outside, into the company of a well-defined new group. Moving through the revolving door is an initiation rite: those who adapt well to the new pace and surroundings, who are willing to hand themselves over to the strict rhythm of the hotel's movement will be rewarded. Bellboys come from the sides to take your suitcase, a friendly-looking man moves towards you and wishes you a warm welcome to the hotel. Do you have a reservation? Do you have more luggage? Did you have a good trip? Would you be so kind as to register at the front desk over there? The restaurant is right here, if you are hungry . . . Still in transit, your mind cannot grasp all of this so fast, and you simply look around in

The Lobby

Much has already been said about the lobby, and much attention has been paid to its status as a symbol of modern life, to its showcase-like importance for the atmosphere of a hotel, what it communicates, how it presents itself and everybody in it. Like stage sets, lobbies are designed to catch our attention and provide the backdrop for human interaction. Caught in the theatricality of the setting, guests become spectators and actors simultaneously, an appreciative audience of a drama of which they are or become a part.⁵

You have made it into the inside, and after your eyes adjust to the shine of the polished furniture, the marble of the columns that line the outer walls of the foyer, and the almost overly bright light that an impressive chandelier sheds on the hall, you begin noticing that you are being noticed. Your wandering eye meets other wandering eyes, gazes lock, and you look down; the moment of challenge is past. You know enough about the lobby to cross it quickly. Why stage yourself before you are ready to play? Watched by inattentive lobby-dwellers, you start moving towards the check-in, pacing yourself self-consciously. Instinctively, you rearrange your hair, straighten your coat, and try to look like you belong. Two more steps, and you have arrived at the check-in. A couple of guests in front of you seem stressed, speak in voices that are definitely too loud for this space. While you are waiting, you feel a gaze on your back. You turn around, and you see two men on a sofa across the lobby, smiling at you, holding brandy glasses in their hands. Friendly facial expressions in a sea of indifference, but what does it mean here? Can you smile back? You try — and it works. What starts out feeling like a grimace begins to spread a warm feeling across your body. For the first time since you entered the hotel you feel a connection between yourself and the world, and you remember having smiled before, prior to

entering the hotel. One of the men gets up and walks across the lobby, his glass in his hand. What is he up to? What did your smile convey? You are not ready to meet a person yet . . . “Excuse me, do you have a dictionary? What’s the meaning of a smile in here?” You turn your back on the man and hope that he will return to his corner . . . but no, he comes up to you . . . and passes you to walk over to the house telephone on the counter. He dials a number. Whom does he call? Is he really waiting for someone to come down? Would he like to come up? What will they do here? Or will they leave as soon as they meet up? The way he sat there on the couch, he cannot be here to do business today. Why did he smile at you if he did not mean it? What is his story?

As strangers perceive each other in the semi-public atmosphere of the lobby, their minds begin to spin. Anxious self-consciousness mixes with the enjoyment of the other as a spectacle and as a screen onto which stories of lives past and present can be projected, stories that the imagination creates in a series of associations inspired by the lobby’s decor. With amazing speed, guests intuitively grasp the atmosphere and the behavioral as well as the fashion codes that reign in this hotel, and with equal swiftness, they know whether they pass the test of belonging or not. The rapid assessment of one’s own position in this new social environment stands in sharp contrast to the general sense of calmness and suspended activity that the lobby and its guests want to impart. Thresholds can have dimensions as impressive as those of hotel lobbies.

While you to wait to check in, you take a deep breath. The main lobby is behind you; you are not on display at the moment, and as you anticipate finally getting a key to a room of your own, you take a second look around. Plants, couches, coffee tables, a water fountain, all is as you expected: an invitation to breathe more slowly, to forget about the street, and to speculate about the many other halls and rooms in this place. Above you,

The Grand Chandelier

suspended in the air, midway between the ceiling and the ground floor, showers everything around it and beneath it with its light; its brilliance is reflected a thousand times in the many diamond-shaped crystal pendants that hang from invisible hooks to form a grape-shaped sparkling dream straight from the Snow Queen’s castle. Its light shines onto you almost everywhere in the central lobby, a personal spotlight for every guest. Neither people nor objects seem to cast a shadow where it shines, and it is almost impossible to determine the height of the ceiling in the brightness of its light. As your eyes search for a relief from the glow, they travel lower and lower in the hall to finally rest on the broad steps of the elegantly shaped

Grand Staircase

The dark red carpet that covers the bright marble of the steps accentuates the gilded art-deco grid supporting the handrails on both sides. It is actually the elegant shape of the handrails that you notice first. Their curved lines lighten up the austerity of the many parallel steps and seem to set a limit on the ladder-like sequencing of carpeted marble as it opens up to the sides at the top. Up there, you turn your gaze around and follow the effortless flow of the balustrade from the gallery down into the handrail of the stairs that open up to the sides on the main floor, with the same grace as upstairs. The concave shape of the rails on both sides of the steps remind you of a funnel. A funnel for social movement. It is an open invitation to walk down. Guests come from the left and from the right of the gallery, making their way downward. But only three at most can pass the narrowest point at the same time without feeling pushed towards the rails. Yet those in the middle experience a brief moment of taking center stage. As people look up from their magazines and drinks in the lobby, they cannot but notice the spectacle on the staircase, midway between the exclusive upstairs gallery and their own sphere, the public-access area of the lobby, a guest in sight, yet still not there with them. Where the staircase meets the lobby, some will go left, some right, merging with the crowd.

You imagine going up. Instantly, the glory of the stairway's center point changes in character. You can feel the gazes on your back as you climb up the stairs in your imagination, and you begin to wonder whether there is an elevator that could bring you up to the gallery instead. Only those who can face their audiences can convey their message and control the gaze. You resolve to avoid walking up the staircase during your stay here. As you wonder what lies upstairs at the end of these steps — a salon? a cigar bar? a restaurant? maybe nothing but corridors and bedrooms? — you hear someone address you, and you realize that it is now your turn at

The Reception Desk

The woman behind the counter gives you a welcoming smile, and you notice her impeccable hairdo, her beautiful hands, and her attire that seems a mix between a power-suit and a policeman's uniform. You tell her that you have a room reserved, and within seconds, she confirms your existence. You are a guest now, with a number associated with your name, maybe only a number, but one that means you are one of the initiated group. Asked to fill out the registration form, you realize that you are writing the beginning to your own story in this space.

You look to the side, and the man who smiled at you earlier is still holding the telephone to his ear. You finish the form and hand it back to the

woman behind the counter. She gives you the key to your room, a tangible proof of legitimacy to cross the invisible barrier between the public and private areas of the hotel. By giving you access to their space, the hotel owners express their faith in you that you will pay for your stay, that you will treat the space with respect. You glance at the key in your hand — and you realize that you have just bought into an illusion. It is a generic one, there is nothing personal or special about this key, and there are many others — maids, managers, security personnel — who have a similar key to your room. You come back to reality, thank the receptionist for her help, and turn around. Since you are visiting this city for the first time, you look for

The Concierge

Part welcoming committee, part watchdog, part source of services and information, the concierge may be the most often portrayed, most stereotyped employee in the whole hotel. As he watches over the staff of receptionists, bellboys, and other employees, he is the center of all activity, and to have this job represents the highpoint of many an employee's career.⁶ The concierge gauges whether or not a person entering the hotel meets the requirements for being a guest here. He is the poster-boy for the spirit, style, and prestige that the hotel wants to possess and convey. In his livery, he resembles the general of an elite troupe, and a special desk, or at least a special place behind the reception desk indicates his singular authoritative status. He is the one who preserves the precarious balance between efficiency and leisurely purposelessness in the lobby, and he watches over its general atmosphere. His job is to make guests feel welcome, if not at home, as soon as they check in; ideally, he knows them inside out, remembers every returning guest, their preferences and dislikes, their stories. He can distinguish between a swindler and a respectable hotel guest, and he knows the linguistic register to address each accordingly. And he is certainly the one to have received the most literary attention of all hotel employees:⁷ as a jovial friend to lonely guests, as a key advisor to clueless managers and directors, as the punishing father-figure or executor of an anonymous management's orders to lift-boys, maids, or messenger boys. He is a watchdog and a St. Peter-figure, but under his spotless uniform, he is just a human being who will go home to his own life once his shift is over.

Even though the concierge in your lobby is busy with three people who speak as many different languages, you move towards his table. You want to meet someone later in town, but you do not know where to go, would be grateful for further information about the city's attractions. You await your turn and have time to look at this man more closely: he wears an imposing uniform, an elegant coat-like jacket with pants that have a dark velvety stripe on the side. Golden epaulettes run across his shoulders, elegant buttons are

nestled in their golden-stitched buttonholes. The shine of his shoes reflects the chandelier's light. A very respectable and stately appearance, all in all, someone who emanates authority, style, tradition, and confidence.

After a short while, the people in front of you are gone, and you can ask your questions. He knows the city inside out, and within minutes, you know enough of the city's hotspots to make an informed decision about your evening plans. While you are still standing there with him, he has already arranged for a boy to pick up your suitcase and to show you the way to the elevator. After he has wished you a pleasant stay in his town, you follow

The Bellboy

in his tailored uniform towards the lift. As you cross the lobby one more time, you pass a number of other bellboys who are waiting to assist guests at the wink of the concierge's eye. They are young, sixteen at most, and they have the determined faces of little tin soldiers. Some of them struggle with guests' heavy luggage; others seem to compete for the next available customer while making sure not to disturb the general, prescribed calmness of the busy lobby. From what you have heard about the hotel business, you assume that they all speak several languages — for a job that sentences them to a respectful silence vis-à-vis the guest. The resident cherubs? What will they do when they get too old for their job? Or is this the beginning of something bigger? Before you can ponder that question further, you have already arrived at

The Elevator

You are in luck. As little as you like being in elevators, you would not want to climb those four flights of stairs up to your room, and one of the lifts has just opened its doors. People stream out, too many to all fit inside, it seems. After the last one exits, guests waiting to get carried upstairs crowd in. You take your suitcase yourself, remembering to give a tip to the bellboy, and you squeeze into the last empty corner of this metal box that will lift you up. There are seven other people with you, all looking straight ahead, avoiding looking at each other or at you. You would like to look around, but neither etiquette nor space allow it. The lift stops on the first floor, and a man and a woman get out.

Like the revolving door, the elevator is more than just a vehicle to get from one place to another. With the introduction of mechanical transportation from the ground to the top floor, guests did not have to climb stairs anymore. Consequently, the value of a room did not have to be determined by the ease of reaching it.⁸ In theory, the elevator eliminated the hierarchy of declining value in rooms on higher floors, and consequently, its upward movement could be read as a symbol of social mobility and democratization.

However, hotels did not always do away with the differences between their rooms, and even if those on the higher floors are often quieter and offer the better view, the lower floors are still considered more elegant in many upscale European hotels. The *bels étages*, the first and second floors, still feature the best accommodation in many hotels, and to go upwards, past a certain floor, still means a less elegant, less comfortable, or smaller room. The exception is, of course, the famous penthouse suite. To live on the top floor, with no neighbors above and frequently no neighbors to the sides, and often with a separate elevator, is the ultimate luxury.

In the meantime, you have missed your floor, and you get off on the fifth. One flight of stairs down to your hall is not worth waiting for an elevator down, and so you search for the staircase. Guests do not normally take the stairs anymore in a hotel, and the stairs you find betray a sense of sober functionality that stands in stark contrast to the glamour of all you have seen here so far. Dragging your suitcase behind you, you arrive on the fourth floor and find the door to

The Hallway

A long, carpeted corridor with sconces on the wall. Striped silky wallpaper in warm tones, and side-tables or consoles every so often, decorated with vases containing real or well-made artificial orchids; now and then an oil painting representing some of the city's sights. A perfectly regular pattern. Nobody is in the hallway; here and there you see a tray with the remnants of a room-service meal, enjoyed privately, shielded from the greater hotel society. All the doors look the same, a small bronze number placed at eye-level, every doorknob like the other, odd numbers right, even numbers left. As far as you can see, the pattern continues: wall, table, door, door, wall, table, door . . . in front of one door, you find a pair of black shoes, and you have to smile. Do they really still shine shoes? As you walk down the hallway to find your number, you hear sounds coming out of the rooms, clicking noises like those of a typewriter, music, the sound of a running shower. Only once can you detect a human voice, and you start wondering whether there are real people living here with you. You have an amusing vision: what if all these walls, the floor, the ceiling were made of glass? So many lives sandwiched under one roof, ignorant of each other's existence, walking past, across, underneath each other without feeling anything. A gigantic beehive. One more door and you reach your

Hotel Room

Hotel rooms seem the same wherever you go. Each has a door — and as tautological as this statement seems, it is significant. The door, marking the threshold between outside and inside, is the most significant physical barrier

in the hotel. This is not a revolving door; you cannot even open it from the outside without a key, and as you cross the doorway's threshold, you realize that this is the most privacy that you will enjoy in this building. This room will house you in your most private, personal, and most unconscious moments. You will open your suitcase here, you will undress and take a shower, then put on your costume for your social appearance downstairs. And you will sleep here, become the most removed from the world and the most vulnerable. The door not only hides you but protects you in these moments. Whatever you do in your room cannot easily be detected, but if you choose to, you can open the door and let the outer world in.

Psychoanalytic interpretation from Freud to Jung posits that rooms, and enclosed spaces in general, appeal to us because they symbolize a return to the motherly womb, the realm where we felt the most protected and safe. It is familiar rooms that make us feel the most protected, and most hotels try to convey this sense of familiarity. Yes, even in the generic setup of many hotel rooms that we might consider impersonal, there is an element of comfort; we can count on familiar features in any given hotel, and predictability, finding what we expect to find, facilitates our feeling familiar, if not at home there. With their cozy-looking beds, their pillows, their paintings, figurines, and vases, they try to cater to people's needs for comfort, taste, and style, and they invite us to indulge in this semi-conscious feeling of being well taken care of. Good hotel rooms are acoustically and visually insulated on all sides and allow us to imagine that we are the only person in the whole building, that our privacy and protection are absolute.

Yet the opposite might be the case. If we follow Bachelard's idea that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home,"⁹ hotel rooms can never fulfill our longing for this space as the ultimate protective shell. "Really inhabited" space is immaterial; it is a space that we can conjure up from our memories as an instant reaction to smells, sounds, or sights, a space that "contains compressed time."¹⁰ It is the location of past intimate experiences, like the attic that remains the most special place for a violinist because he found an old violin, his first one, there. To stay long enough for a hotel room to become such an inhabited space runs counter to the basic idea of hotels as temporary "homes away from home." Rooms like Peter Altenberg's infamous permanent residence in the "Grabenhotel" in Vienna are rather the exception to the rule within the logic of commercial hospitality — unless illustrious permanent guests become part of the hotel's offerings and add to their image and glamour.

So here are your choices: you can stay so long that the space will at one point be your own, until you have appropriated it and made it the vessel for your memories — which would probably be too expensive, too odd, too time consuming, too unlikely. Or you could take Joseph Roth's approach:

Much like the monk who loves his cell, I love the impersonal character of this room. And where others are delighted to come back to their pictures, their plates, their spoons, their children, and their libraries, I greet the cheap wallpaper, the shiny, innocent porcelain of a bowl . . . and the whitest of all books: the phonebook . . . (I find) solitude without feeling lonely, I am alone without being deserted, set apart without being separated. As soon as I open the window, the world comes in to visit me . . . I am a hotel-citizen, a hotel-patriot.¹¹

This is paradise for the commitment-fearing human being, for the man who needs his freedom to create, socialization for the unsociable, modernism as a lifestyle. But you are neither Altenberg nor Joseph Roth. You have just entered your room, put down your suitcase next to the door, and you try to assess where you fit in, in between this room's furniture and decoration. You walk over to

The Mirror

to verify that you are still there. Yes, here you are, a little ruffled after a long journey, but all in all what you remember to be you. You stare into the glass, and a pair of dark holes — your eyes — stare back at you. You look at your reflection in the mirror, and at the reflection of yourself in the room in the mirror, you in the middle of a still-life. The longer you stare, the less familiar you become to yourself. After a while, it becomes an exercise: is this how people see you when they do not know you? Is this how you look in this space? You try out some poses: “waiting in the lobby,” or “looking at a stranger in the bar.” You play with facial expressions, with your hair, you try to see yourself from the side, even from the back, you move closer and farther away from the mirror. All of this to see whether you cannot see yourself as a stranger, just a character in the dark frame of the glass. As the fun of this exercise starts to fade, you remember that you never spend much time in front of a mirror. You risk one last look, and there you are, the one you know, still framed, but with clear demarcations and showing you exactly what you do, who you are. A little dizzy from this odd exercise, you need fresh air, and open

The Window

It is late in the day, the street lights have already come on, and you can vaguely detect the outline of surrounding buildings. Since you are on the fourth floor, you can only see the dim reflection of the lights that illuminate the façades of neighboring businesses — restaurants, bars, theaters. There is not too much traffic anymore, and if you listen closely, you can hear the faint murmur of people walking in the street. You open both panes of your window and let in the evening air, and all of a sudden, you feel like your room

has lost one wall. The mirror at your back still reflects the bed and some pieces of furniture, but you feel as if you are leaving the room and becoming part of the life of the street, a disengaged observer that hovers above.

Windows — like doors and, in a slightly different way, mirrors — often have a symbolic function in literature and the arts, as symbolic frames for a person's situation in life and society, but more importantly as markers of a threshold experience. They mark the place of transition from our here and now to what lies beyond, from inside to outside, and they frame the moment of transition as an image. Modern artists such as the French surrealist painter René Magritte (1898–1967) or the Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher (1898–1972) provide many examples of this symbolic value of doors, windows, and mirrors, and literature, from folktales to existentialist theater, makes ample use of this trope. Whereas doors need to be open to allow this exchange, and thus mainly represent a potential, windows are more ambivalent. The transparent glass lets the observer engage with the scenery outside without allowing him or her to actively interact with it. The embodiment of the invisible line that separates the subject from the object, civilization from nature, and the isolated individual from the group, the window separates more spaces than it opens up — as long as it remains closed. But as soon as a window is opened, the exchange of inside and outside starts to have an impact on both sides of the sill. What can only be perceived as an image beyond the glass turns into a space that invites the subject to interact with it. The open window becomes a symbol for possible communication and communion between inside and outside, and a stream of fresh air from the outside, flooding in, can feel overwhelming if the window has not been opened for a long time.

You look down onto the street below. The horizontality of the hallway and your hotel room finds its mesmerizing counterpart in the verticality below you, and you need to step back before vertigo takes over. As it is getting late, you go back to your suitcase, open it, and put your clothes into the wardrobe. You notice that your outfits look different on the hotel's hangers, in the hotel's closet, and you are looking forward to wearing them here.

You make a call to arrange to meet your friend in the bar, then you change, go into the marble-and-gold outfitted bathroom to wash your face and hands, resist the temptation to play an encore of your mirror-dance, grab a jacket, and leave for

The Bar

Of course your friend is not there yet, but you have nothing better to do, and decide to have a first drink before his arrival. Located on the left side of the lobby, the entrance to the bar promises stereotypical entertainment: soft piano music, played live, greets you upon entering the dimly lit place and

sends your mind on a quick, associative visit to all such bars that you have admired in the movies. A big mural runs across the wall behind the bartender, and the barstools, which look like olives on a toothpick, appeal to your desire to feel stylish. Only a few people are here so far: an older couple is sitting in two leather chairs at a low table to the side, a man reading a newspaper is having a martini at the bar, the pianist, the bartender, you. You decide to join the man with the newspaper. As the bartender approaches you to take your order, your neighbor looks up. You feel awkward and order a tonic water — you leave out the gin, not knowing quite why. The man with the newspaper turns the page. The pianist seems bored, his hands move automatically over the keyboard, he has played the same tune for years. The bartender brings your tonic water and your check. Where is the famous bar atmosphere that you know from the movies? The bartender who looks like he would listen to your stories? Or dancers who move slowly in the dim light of hidden lanterns? You look at your watch and realize that it is too early for all of this.

Social interaction is compartmentalized in hotels and follows a schedule. You do not dance in hotel bars until all other dances in town are over — the occasional, old-fashioned five-o'clock tea in the adjoining salon, the fancy ball in the ballroom, the ballet that you watch from your seat in the city's theater. And you do not go to a hotel bar to really listen to music: like the mural, the jazzy sounds of the piano are there to add to the overall atmosphere. Such bars are there to help guests pass time, or rather: spend time in the consumption of luxury goods that all contribute to a sense of subtle intoxication. Action is reduced to a minimum in bars, sensory impressions all seem muffled: the light is dimmed, noise kept down, and what is served there neither fills an empty stomach nor relieves thirst. People go to hotel bars before and especially after their night out, to frame the night's experience and to add flavor to it. Hotel bars serve our needs for entertainment and comfort, and they represent the purest expression of a hotel's image as a business that caters to the non-life-sustaining needs of society. First and foremost, they are designed to serve the desires of the hotels' guests. But they are also open to the public and represent a very important connection between the world of the hotel and that outside, something that the restaurant can only stage in a much more formal setting. A drink in a fancy hotel's bar is a relatively inexpensive way for people to associate themselves with the hotel's society if they cannot afford a room, as long as their dress and demeanor do not transgress against the prevailing standards. Such observance of form and style is necessary to distinguish the hotel bar from the everyday bar or, worse, a saloon. In this environment, a drink is more than a drink; the bartender is not simply an employee in the gastronomy sector, but an important representative of the hotel for which he works, and the better his talents as a "magician" in the universe of liquid pleasure, the more the guest

can experience his or her stay at a hotel even through the last of the senses, taste, that the hotel has not previously affected. The “total hotel environment” finds its finishing touch in signature drinks that offer the guest the liquid version of all that is stylish and enjoyable here, and the pleasurable soft intoxication that can result from a good drink at night makes the guest feel cozily embedded in his or her temporary home away from home.

Among all the semi-public spaces in hotels, bars are the most accessible ones to the general public, and they represent the hotel’s most direct connection and contribution to a city’s nightlife. This is even more the case when they have an entrance that leads directly in from the street instead of requiring the outsider to pass through the lobby to enter. However, such a second entrance takes away from the exclusiveness of the hotel as a whole and makes it easier for intruders, be they social outcasts, unwanted guests, or the infamous hotel thief, to sneak in unseen.

Your friend, however, has come in through the lobby, passing all gatekeepers and checkpoints, and he is now ready to take you with him into the real world. You pick up your jacket and proceed to the door when you see a beautiful old billiard table in the back corner of the bar. You decide to return here later tonight to see whether you can be a part of yet another facet of this hotel’s offerings. But that will be a different story. Together, you leave the bar, cross the lobby, pass the concierge, a different one than before, but in the same uniform, until you reach the revolving door. You let your friend step into it first and watch him adjust to the movement of the door. Or does the door adjust to him? Another quarter turn, and you swing out into the night.

Notes

¹ Douglas Tallack, “‘Waiting, Waiting’: The Hotel Lobby,” *Irish Journal of American Studies* 7 (1998), 1–20; here: 3. Tallack himself quotes from a writer named James Donald; see Tallack’s footnote 4.

² “Wie man merkt, sind die namen austauschbar, besagte liebschaften ebenso, wenn nur der ort derselbe bleibt, dekor für die inszenierung einer sentimentalität, die nur der tonfall erträglich macht.” Raoul Schrott, *Hotels* (1995; rpt. Munich: DTV, 1998), 51. Translation BM.

³ See Carol Berens, *Grand Hotels: Illusion and Reality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997): “The hotel’s command of the street expresses its embrace or disdain of its surroundings. The relationship and progression from the street, through the entrance, and to the lobby reflect its concept of its civic nature” (7).

⁴ Tallack, “‘Waiting, Waiting’: The Hotel Lobby,” 7.

⁵ “As stage sets, lobbies and bars are backdrops for the human drama to unfold. . . . We do not pass through these rooms anonymously but engage in two roles simultaneously: actor and spectator. The décor’s job is to show us off to our best advantage.

As spectators, we are the appreciative eyes of who and what are around us.” Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies*, 2.

⁶ Hedda Adlon reports that the Hotel Adlon’s head concierge was a position for which the man holding it actually paid, although the generous wages, tips, and commissions that he received for his services made it more than a worthy investment and he died one of the wealthier people in Berlin. Hedda Adlon, *Hotel Adlon: Das Berliner Hotel, in dem die große Welt zu Gast war* (Munich: Heyne, 2002), 147.

⁷ This statement needs to be qualified. To be sure, there are not many texts that feature a concierge or porter as the main character, and among the stories discussed in this study, there is not a single main character who holds such a job. However, the concierge is one of the stock cast members of hotel narratives, perhaps earning the label “lead supporting actor” in terms of frequency. This is especially true for those hotel stories we would associate with the genre of more popular literature such as Erich Kästner’s *Drei Männer im Schnee* (Three Men in the Snow, 1934) or Vicki Baum’s *Menschen im Hotel* (1929). More recently, popular film has used this character as a mainstay in various movies and television series such as the 1970s series *Hotel Sacher* with Fritz Eckart or the American blockbuster movie *Pretty Woman* (1990).

⁸ Prior to the advent of the elevator, the number of flights of stairs one had to climb to reach one’s hotel room had an inverse relationship to social status (the more stairs the guest had to climb, the less desirable the room). But Bachelard romanticizes the act of climbing stairs when he discusses the importance of verticality in inhabited space: “But the height of city buildings is a purely *exterior* one. Elevators do away with the heroism of stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky. *Home* has become mere horizontality.” Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (1964; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 27.

⁹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 5.

¹⁰ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 8.

¹¹ Joseph Roth, *Panoptikum*, 235–37, translation BM. The original reads: “Ich liebe das ‘Unpersönliche’ dieses Zimmers, wie ein Mönch seine Zelle lieben mag. Und wie andere erfreut ihre Bilder wiedersehen mögen, ihre Teller, ihre Löffel, ihre Kinder und ihre Bibliotheken, begrüße ich die billige Tapete, das schimmernde, unschuldige Porzellan der Schüssel . . . und das weiseste aller Bücher: das Telefonbuch. . . [Ich bin] einsam und nicht vereinsamt, allein und nicht verlassen, abgesondert und nicht getrennt. Wenn ich das Fenster öffne, ist die Welt bei mir zu Gast. . . ich bin ein Hotelbürger, ein Hotelpatriot.”

4: Women in Hotels*

*How festive the hotel looks! You can tell: lots of people who are well off, who don't have to worry about anything. Like me, for instance. Ha ha!*¹

NOTHING DESCRIBES BETTER the problematic nature of the hotel for women in the texts to be discussed in this chapter than Arthur Schnitzler's title character Fräulein Else's ironic observation as she walks back from a tennis match to the Hotel Fratazza, the "magic castle"² where she spends a short vacation with relatives. As someone who can vacation in this Italian mountain hotel in San Martino, even if only invited by her rich aunt, Else seems part of the leisure class. A guest, she enjoys all the luxuries of this classy hotel³ and displays all the signs of "conspicuous leisure" that Veblen mentions in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Those who are assembled here have done so to enjoy life and themselves, to plunge into the worry-free atmosphere that the hotel guarantees with its status and reputation, suggesting the feeling of a fairy-tale-like lightness of being to the one under the spell of its magic. To be a guest means to have the life that goes with this hotel, even beyond its walls. Not being upbeat and carefree would seem like a breach of the implicit rules of the place.

All of the literary hotels discussed here belong to this class of establishments, where a certain suspended reality characterizes life in general. With their luxurious offerings, they promise relief from everyday life at home and require the guest to participate in the performance of carefree happiness in order to sustain it. Social relations, as light and capricious as they seem, are organized in a very formal manner here and require all participants to follow implicit rules. Interaction in the hotel has a horizontal rather than a vertical structure; social activities and human encounters follow each other quickly and incessantly in the daily routine of a hotel guest, and a more substantial personal investment in any one experience is not part of the definition of such leisured life in the hotel. As he or she rides on the wave that Zweig characterizes as an intoxication, a "Rausch" that befalls the visitor, the perfect guest understands that actions in this space can neither have a historical dimension nor a significant personal one. Everything is play, as represented in the initial tennis match from which Else withdraws so symbolically at the beginning of the story. Serious personal relationships should not be formed or sought, everything should be enjoyed in the here and now, the possibility

of preserving anything for later ignored, and questions of money should not enter the guest's consciousness. Hotels, as they appear in the literature from the early twentieth century, seek to facilitate ideal sociability in Georg Simmel's sense⁴ in their organization of social behavior, and they invite the celebration of these forms of interaction in their various social halls. Salons for a number of purposes allow the typical conversation and game playing; dance floors and, more importantly, the tempting proximity of social and private areas promote a sense of latent eroticism in the guests on which they can act through flirtations and coquettish behavior.

For experienced hotel guests, adjustment to this distance from oneself is nothing that they need to think about. As they choose the right costume for the place, they also dress with the right mindset. Players such as the married Cissy Mohr in *Fräulein Else*, Erna Salomonsohn in Zweig's "Untergang eines Herzens," Carla, "the little girl from Mannheim" in Zweig's *Rausch der Verwandlung*, or Guido, the "jointed doll, immaculate in evening dress" in Werfel's "Die Hotelterre,"⁵ have perfected the art of self-distancing so much that they can even invest their own bodies in their various amorous encounters without leaving the, admittedly corrupted, framework of Simmel's social play. They never forget that they are participating in the show that they call their vacation, and consequently, they do not invest themselves in their adventures in what Simmel or Kracauer would call an essential or transcendental way, to a point where they would not be fully in control. All interaction is based on careful calculation and on the desire to maximize personal gratification, be it social, economical, or sensual: in *Rausch der Verwandlung*, Carla pretends to seek Christine Hoflehner's friendship but only does so in order to gain knowledge to use against her rival in the market for eligible bachelors. The young men in the story orbit around the rich and beautiful Christine, alias Christiane, as the ones in "Untergang eines Herzens" orbit around Erna. In both cases they do so in order to compete for these women's favors and outdo their competitors in their quest for the promising trophies embodied by Christiane and Erna. In Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, Else's cousin Paul and the married Cissy Mohr carry on an illicit sexual affair in the midst of the respectable hotel society, phasing into and out of intimacy with an ease that the architectural proximity of social and private quarters enables. As in the realm of labor, so, too, in the realm of modern social interaction the body has become a mere commodity or means of interface. Intimate physical experiences seem to have no significant bearing on the initiated hotel guest's life.

The young and inexperienced female literary hotel guest, on the other hand, finds herself thrust into the middle of this society of appearances and consequence-free play without support or orientation. Coming from the protected realm of home, she experiences a clash of value systems in the hotel, a clash intensified by the fact that neither the space nor close family

members support the traditional value system, which to this point, is an abstract and sometimes questionable absolute for the young daughter. Notions such as obedience, loyalty, friendship, communication, love, and, most importantly, chastity or sexual morality take on new meanings or lose their significance in the hotel. However, the shift from the old to the new order, from an essentialist to a player's approach to life, does not come without problems, as we will see.⁶ It is this transition, most poignantly expressed in the struggle for sexual self-determination, that young women experience and solve in these hotels. The ease with which sexual encounters can happen in the semi-privacy of the hotel puts the young female body at center stage. Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig, and Arthur Schnitzler explore this situation with different focus and emphasis in their stories, to which we will now turn.

Franz Werfel: "Die Hotelterre"

Of the four stories that I will discuss here, Franz Werfel's "Die Hotelterre" (The Staircase, 1927), which has been largely overlooked,⁷ is not only the shortest one, but also the one that focuses exclusively on the relationship between the female body, sexuality, and the particular space that is the hotel. Money is only an issue insofar as it enables the protagonist to stay in the resort in Northern Italy and is a key factor in the definition of the hotel as an upper-class establishment.

Over the course of fourteen pages, we accompany the young Francine, daughter of a former imperial Habsburg minister,⁸ as she walks up the five flights of her northern Italian hotel's staircase. Dinner is over, and preparations are underway for the evening dance in the hall. However, Francine does not have any desire to join the dancing crowd. As we slowly learn, she did so about a week earlier when she succumbed to the seductive powers of a slow waltz in the arms of a hotel guest named Guido. With her parents away in Sicily, and under the influence of the erotic atmosphere of the hotel, the dance, and Guido's alluring, if insignificant whispering, Francine spent the night with him. But now, just a few days after her adventure, she feels nothing but contempt for him, and even this contempt quickly wears off as time goes on. However, her one-night stand was not without consequences, she fears, and until this morning, Francine has been tortured by the idea that she is pregnant. In her despair, she seeks the help of a local pharmacist, who seems to take great pleasure in her distress before he reluctantly agrees to help her. Thanks to a mysterious medicine the pharmacist sells her, or because she was not pregnant in the first place — Zweig prefers to leave the reader wondering — Francine's fears have dissolved, and as of this very evening, she feels that she can return to her life as it was before her escapade. This also entails awaiting the arrival of her fiancé, Philip, who announces his arrival from America in a letter that Francine reads as she walks up the stairs.

Yet instead of making Francine relieved and happy, Philip's letter sends her through a roller coaster of emotions, ranging from pious gratitude for her lucky fate to open rage about Philip's pretentious style and his obvious and complete inferiority to her own refined nature. It is only when he pledges his entire being, his honor, and his life to his "noble . . . queenly Francine" ("The Staircase," 431), when he promises her *carte blanche* for whatever she has ever done and would ever do, that she feels carried away by a tender love for this sweet, understanding, and devoted — though short and balding — man, the memory of whose physical features repulsed her just seconds earlier. As she arrives at the top of the staircase, Francine has also learned from a telegram that her parents will arrive the following morning to take her home with them. Life seems settled, the "jointed doll" (426) Guido forgotten, and the whole episode cast into the most remote corner of her memory: "Now the faultless jointed doll lay truthfully at the very bottom of an abyss and a grave rolled over it" (432).⁹

However, the short story ends with Francine's suicide instead of her return to her hotel room, number 517. After having climbed five flights of stairs as a sort of self-imposed and religiously tinged punishment for her sexual escapade, she realizes that what awaits her at the end of this symbolic ascent is not happiness and blissful comfort but "a great desolation, rushing in her ears like mocking water" (434).¹⁰ Whereas her panic about being pregnant, the memory of her one-night stand with Guido, and the fear of being found out had previously given her some *raison d'être*, a strong emotion that made her feel alive, the resolution of these problems makes her feel deprived. As a consequence, Francine lets the dangerous magnetism of the void in the center of the staircase seduce her, and she dives into the abyss to "swim" towards the glorious golden chandelier that swings slowly above. Fiancé and parents are too far away to come to her rescue, and not even an anonymous hotel guest comes out of his room to save Francine from her deadly flight. Symbolically, the narrator asks: "Why did no guest come out of his door? Why did nobody pass? Why, in all the broad corridors of the hotel did no human footstep take pity on her?" (436).¹¹ The answer to these three questions resonates silently through the entire text: because she is in a hotel.

People — and Werfel repeats the word "Mensch" twice in the German original to emphasize the term's significance — in hotels are guests, not sympathetic human beings who support each other morally or emotionally. As we know from Kracauer's essay on the hotel lobby, such sympathy and sense of community could be expected in church, and Werfel uses a religious reference in his story as well when he calls the staircase's steep vault above Francine's head "lofty as a cathedral" (425).¹² But in an interesting linguistic paradox, the narrator rejects the potentially elevating qualities of such cathedral-like space when he continues: "At the height of the abyss hung down into the space the huge chandelier . . ." (425).¹³ It is not the divine light of

faith and hope that illuminates everything. Rather height has no elevating qualities and is instead an upward abyss that gives Francine vertigo before she even starts up. After she has continually told herself that her cumbersome ascent represents a penitent exercise, her arrival on the top floor leaves her feeling empty and gives way to a complete sense of godless ennui.¹⁴ The reasons for this godless state and for her suicide remain to be seen, but it is already clear that an important contributing factor in Francine's deadly condition is the lack of real human contact that would break her nihilistic state of mind. As her brief encounter with an anonymous older man on the staircase shows, people in hotels engage in role-specific interaction that does not involve the individual beyond his or her qualities as a type; and it seems that Francine does not even mind this kind of objectified relationship. On the contrary: "She moved like a horse within the traces of that masculine gaze, which held her from behind as with a bridle. . . . As the man's footsteps died away below her, she was almost sorry to be able to go on with a free pace, released and mistress of herself once more" (430).¹⁵ Where this kind of spectator is missing, Francine lacks the energy to put on the show of her existence. When no other human being is involved, she cannot be saved, and it is questionable whether anyone could reach her in any case, since she herself has lost or has never really found her own qualities as a "Mensch" in these halls herself.¹⁶

It would therefore be wrong to read Francine's suicide as either the expression of a serious neurosis or depression or as indicative of her fear of choosing the life of a "Luder," a "tramp" or "slut," over that of a respectable woman, as Michel Reffet suggests.¹⁷ What drives Francine to kill herself is not the tension between two options, the kind of tension that dominates much of Fräulein Else's thoughts,¹⁸ but the conviction that neither offers a real experience. In other words: while Else's imagination runs wild with the various scenarios for her life as a *femme fatale* or as a respectable married wife, Francine realizes that neither option has any potential to reverse the degree of self-alienation that she has reached in her society.

To be sure, Francine is far from being a real decadent or an emancipated young woman like the stereotypical flapper of Weimar Germany and the roaring twenties. Werfel stresses that she still wears her hair long and that she agrees in principle with her father's conservative moral standards.¹⁹ When she comes to the hotel, she does so as the daughter of her old-fashioned parents, mainly her father.²⁰ As long as her guardians are still present, she does not seem to challenge any of the values that they represent, though she is bored with them. However, the moment they leave, the seductive atmosphere in the hotel has its effect on the mainly reactive, passive Francine, who has no values of her own. What throws Francine into Guido's arms seems to be neither an active curiosity to test her limits or social taboos, nor a real sexual drive. Rather, she lets herself be drawn into the dynamics of social in-

teraction in the hotel. All it takes for Guido to seduce her is a little lascivious, meaningless whispering. Like all her fictional “sisters,” Else, Erna, and Christine, Francine is vulnerable as soon as music surrounds her; the other women get carried away or entranced by the rhythms and sounds of Schumann or jazz. A slow Boston is enough to make Francine lay down her father’s moral standards. Almost out of fatigue, she gives in to an adventure that does not register fully with her: when she tries to recall Guido’s facial features, she simply cannot. The only image she remembers is a white, round surface, a meaningless “social mask” (Kracauer) that could be anyone’s.²¹ Her reaction to this first sexual encounter with Guido then resembles more that of a seasoned courtesan than that of a fallen bourgeois daughter. All she feels when she thinks about the episode is indifference, and in a cynically objective tone, she summarizes: “So this was love” (427).

The clash of notions, that is, of cultural-ideological conditioning versus real life, could not be more obvious. Time and again, Francine is surprised by her lack of inner involvement in her adventure and, later, by the speed with which she seems to be able to simply forget her previous fears and problems. What she experiences in the hotel registers on the level of an event, and as long as she fears real consequences, they keep her mind busy with scenarios of possible future events (taking a medication or getting an abortion, confessing to her parents). But none of these have a historical or a personal emotional dimension: not in this hotel, not for her, and she dismisses and forgets them as soon as they no longer pose a threat. Her fear of being pregnant does not leave a trace in her consciousness, and the memory of Guido, even of his physical features, vanishes with her decision to forget the entire episode. On the other hand, her upbringing as the daughter of upper-bourgeois parents seems to have inculcated the idea in Francine that events such as those that she just lived through are important personal experiences, and she cannot but compare their supposed significance with what she feels after having been through them. Meeting a seductive man, spending a night with him at the risk of getting pregnant, are experiences that the bourgeois ideology has branded as immoral for a young and unmarried woman, while the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and especially the literature that bourgeois daughters tended to read (often these were French romantic novels),²² romanticized such deviations from the rule as “crimes of passion” and manifestations of love and desire. But neither approach resonates with Francine, all she feels is a lack of real concern. Her disillusioned statement “So this was love” summarizes this whole paradigm shift from the old to the new order, from theory to modern practice, from illusion to reality. The ideological concept of “love” that made tragic and sympathetic the fate of “fallen” bourgeois daughters like Sara Sampson in Lessing’s 1755 *Miss Sara Sampson*, Luise Miller in Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe* (Love and Intrigue, 1784) or, almost 150 years later, Christine Wei-

ring in Schnitzler's *Liebelei* (Flirtations, 1894), is as invalid as the concept of the family²³ and the idea of a "happy home."²⁴ Instead, Francine realizes that sex has nothing to do with "love," that the term "love" itself may be a construct to mask shallow desire, and that the only emotional repercussion of such "love" is her deep sense of humiliation when she seeks the help of the pharmacist. And even this painful memory fades quickly. Temporarily liberated from her father's supervision and direct influence and theoretically free to live out her wildest dreams in the erotically charged atmosphere of the hotel, Francine realizes that nothing really matters.

For Francine lacks the desire to play the game of seduction and desire, which, she recognizes, is ultimately as boring as the prospect of her bourgeois marriage to the unattractive Philip. In her entire ascent of the staircase, Francine seems the most alive while the captive of an older man's gaze who passes her on the staircase, when she does not have to look back and engage in interaction. In fact the actual face-to-face encounter with this anonymous guest is "highly unpleasant" for her (430). Instead, the image of the young woman who works her way up the stairs as the captive of the older man's gaze becomes a symbol for what could be an ideal mode of life for her. As the object of the male gaze, she relinquishes her own will to that of the male onlooker whose perspective she adopts:²⁵ a perfect passive setup for her. At the same time, this kind of engagement exempts her from having to see the Other. All mental activity is focused on her (she knows that she is the object, and she sees herself as the Other does). Her weak, effeminate, and unattractive fiancé Philip would never challenge her to withstand such a gaze, as he would devotedly lie at her feet and admire her every move.

However, the male gaze only empowers as long as Francine feels it in her back. The case of Guido shows that, as soon as she turns around to look at her observer and give in to his seduction, the seducer does not have a face. It is this facelessness that causes Francine's ennui. Social interaction, she realizes, happens between people who share Kracauer's "peripheral equality of social masks"²⁶ and represent nothing beyond that. Her past adventure has shown her how vulnerable she is to this kind of play and its automated dynamics — why else would she call her departure from the hotel lobby and its music an overdue flight?²⁷ She knows that a return to this social group could easily lead to a repeat of her fling with Guido or any other hotel guest, and she consciously turns her back to this possibility by walking up the stairs.

But she cannot escape. As she reaches the top of the stairs, the music in the hall starts to play, and while the riveting, strange sounds of the jazz band come up the staircase, Francine recognizes the "sluggish intoxication of the dance" (435) that has seduced her once before.²⁸ There is no escape from these sounds, which permeate the entire hotel with the desolate atmosphere of modern social life, calling her to participate. Since her fears and worries of the previous days are gone, there is nothing left to make her feel like she has

substance: “The liberation has made me poor. I feel as though today I suffered a great loss . . . And what I have been, that I shall never be again . . .” (435).²⁹ She cannot return to her room and her previous life and pretend that a boring bourgeois marriage could satisfy her. But neither can she go downstairs and merge with the sea of faceless people. Both options are equally two-dimensional and unmemorable, like Guido’s plain round face: upstairs or downstairs, Philip or Guido, a man who is too short for her to see his face or faceless social masks en masse, nothing breaks the ennui. Thus in limbo — and the staircase as the setting for all the present-tense action of the story is a perfect spatial and symbolic representation of this state — Francine chooses a deadly way out. Her leap into the air adds a third dimension. With this first and only act to which Francine commits herself,³⁰ she triumphs over the two-dimensional prospects of her future and reclaims the third dimension with her entire body. As she attempts to “swim” across the abyss to the chandelier, she plummets past all five levels to hit the ground exactly where she does not want to be: in the midst of the desolate hotel society.³¹ But if the staircase’s shaft looked like an abyss from below,³² we can infer an analogous paradoxical spatial redefinition from above. Objectively speaking, Francine will fall into the abyss. What this act represents, though, is a flight away from the company downstairs that allows only two dimensions: the representatives of modern social life. It is a liberation from those social structures that would tie her down to an existence characterized by alienation from her physical body and no depth, that is, no experience. As she throws her body into the midst of the hotel’s society, she overcomes her physical alienation and withdraws it from the objectifying and pointless mechanism of leisure-class interaction. Even if her suicide cannot assume an emancipatory dimension, her deadly jump creates a connection between body and space that will break the hotel’s spell of uncommitted pleasure for at least a moment.

Stefan Zweig: “Untergang eines Herzens”

Like Werfel’s story, Zweig’s hotel novella “Untergang eines Herzens” (A Failing Heart) was published in 1927,³³ and, upon closer inspection, the two stories share much more than just their publication date and their setting. In fact, their basic premise — the reaction of a bourgeois daughter to the tempting freedom that the rented space in the hotel offers — is so similar that one could almost suspect the two writers of engaging in a playful literary competition with an agreed-upon topic. Such deals are not unheard of in the history of the novella, and a letter from Werfel to Zweig, dated September 14, 1926, proves at least that Werfel knew Zweig’s story before he published his.³⁴ Whether these two texts share a common genesis or not, they are similar enough to invite a comparative reading that will shed additional light on the relationship between space, money, and the female body in the hotel.

As mentioned, Zweig's novella shares its basic premise with Werfel's. In his story, we watch the nineteen-year-old Erna Salomonsohn as she tests the limits of her sexual freedom in the enticing space that is the hotel. Like Francine, she seems versed in all the social skills needed to be a full member of the leisure class in the elegant hotel in Gardone (Lake Garda);³⁵ and like Francine, she has also already succumbed to the erotic atmosphere and temptations in the hotel. She has a room of her own, with her own door to the hallway, and this arrangement allows her to pursue her erotic affairs at night when she can safely assume that her parents are asleep.³⁶ The hotel is not her father's home where his rights would be more substantial, his presence more of a moral imperative, and thus liberated from the tight grip of physical and moral supervision, Erna takes full advantage of her new freedom.

Freedom from immediate, physical parental supervision is the starting point for these stories; the presence of Erna's parents in the hotel certainly makes a difference in degree, but in principle, Werfel and Zweig create a scenario in which they grant their female protagonists a space in which they can explore their sexual interests. Yet the two writers develop this situation in very different ways. Werfel focuses on Francine's psyche and her ennui: her discovery that sexual freedom is only a matter of clever strategy, and the clash of her preconceived ideas and bourgeois values with the realities of modern sexual freedom leaves her mainly bored. Zweig pursues a different goal. For Erna is not the real protagonist of "Untergang eines Herzens"; instead, it is her father, the Jewish "Kommissionsrat" Salomonsohn, whose "failing heart" is at the center of the novella. Werfel experiments with a woman who is totally on her own and theoretically free to pursue any adventure she desires. Zweig gives us the perspective of the father who learns about his daughter's dismissal of traditional values and paternal rules and who has to realize that he has lost all power to oppose her. He is literally "out of his element" the moment he checks into the hotel.³⁷ Except for the important fact that he is the one paying for all of his family's fun, he does not have any central role in their lives. Much more than Werfel, Zweig reflects on the relationship between father and daughter and on the importance of sexual morals, and he uses the hotel as a powerful spatial symbol for modern, alienated family relations. In this light, one can consider "Untergang eines Herzens" as a bourgeois tragedy in a new key.

The story begins when, tormented by severe abdominal pain, Salomonsohn leaves his hotel room one night to take a stroll in the hallway. It is four in the morning, and the entire hotel seems to be asleep. All of a sudden, he sees one of the doors in the hallway opening. As he hides to avoid being seen, he recognizes his daughter leaving another hotel guest's room. The father is thunderstruck and does not believe his eyes. He goes to her room as the lights go off inside, confirming what he has just seen. There is no other

explanation for Salomonsohn: "It was Erna, his daughter Erna, who at four o'clock in the morning had slipped out of a strange bed and made her way back to her own."³⁸ But instead of confronting and maybe punishing his daughter or at least waking up his wife and sharing his discovery, Salomonsohn stays silent for the remainder of his story. As the pain this event causes him worsens his already poor medical condition, he realizes he is in no position anymore to voice his rage and authority. He tries to communicate to his wife his wish to leave the hotel and its society, but he meets with open resistance and contempt for his boorish behavior and irrational rage.³⁹ Mother and daughter form one front against the old-fashioned father, and all he can do is leave them prematurely to travel back home. Back in his own house, he withdraws into loneliness and orthodox Judaism, and lives his illness, which is all he can still claim as his own: "Nothing is left of me but this place which hurts. I own nothing in the world but my illness, my death."⁴⁰ After his heart has already symbolically "drowned" in pain after he discovers his daughter's betrayal, his body follows suit, and he dies a lonely and angry death following abdominal surgery. Neither his wife nor his daughter understand what really kills him. With his death, the last reminder of the traditional paternal order disappears from their lives.

On the surface, Salomonsohn's story is that of an old-fashioned father who dies of a broken heart after he realizes that his daughter no longer respects his rules and values.⁴¹ For some readers, such a plot may represent a moving and sad account of a process that every daughter's father must go through at some point, and they might sympathize with the sick man and mourn his death as a symbol of the end of a lost and possibly better era. For others, Salomonsohn's death stands as a symbol for the end of a male-dominated oppressive age and the overdue beginning of women's sexually liberated, self-determined lives. Zweig's portrayal supports either of these readings.

One of the key motifs in this story is Salomonsohn's desperate repeating of the phrase "my daughter Erna." Biologically speaking, this is nothing more than stating the obvious, namely that he fathered this girl nineteen years before. But the possessive appears repeatedly, even obsessively, in both his and the narrator's references to Erna whenever she is the subject of his thoughts. This obsessive repetition makes the phrase suspicious. A psychological explanation is readily available, and is suggested by more than just this possessive. As Turner points out, "[Salomonsohn] observes [Erna's] physical beauty with an appreciation that seems improper in a father and would be incomprehensible if his feelings for her were simply paternal."⁴² Since his wife has lost her physical appeal, Salomonsohn now takes male pleasure in the physical beauty of his daughter, as "surrogate satisfaction . . . not, to be sure, in actual incest, but in the contemplation of her sexual attraction."⁴³ Similar to the conflict between Erna and her father over sexual

morals, the motif of a not-so-paternal love for the daughter connects this story once more to the genre of the bourgeois tragedy while being a literary portrayal of a father under the influence of a drive that Zweig's contemporary Sigmund Freud claimed to diagnose in any daughter's father.

The possessive betrays more, though. Salomonsohn is a former salesman who has worked very hard all his life to make it into the upper class, to be rich enough to buy himself (though, perhaps, for his wife's benefit) the "beggarly title" of "Kommissionsrat, Geheimrat," that is, privy councillor.⁴⁴ The accumulation of wealth determined his entire life, not because he is a greedy businessman, but because he wanted to provide his family with the best possible life. Anchored in the world of acquisition and accumulation, "his thinking is evidently colored by a lifetime of commerce,"⁴⁵ and with the logic of a balance sheet, the possessives he uses to refer to his wife and daughter also describe a relationship between the one who pays and the ones for whom he pays. This is not to say that he treats his family like his property in a businesslike sense, on the contrary, he considers it his duty to slave himself sick so they can enjoy life to the fullest. Yet the possessive adjective "my" is deeply inscribed into his psyche when he thinks about his daughter, and it redefines his ties to her in terms of an exclusive emotional property.

Salomonsohn's late-night discovery then reveals that the possessive pronoun has no weight in this hotel and at this point in their lives anymore. When he analyzes the life he has led, he starts to understand that all that connects him to his family and to the world is money.⁴⁶ Eighteen times in total, and in an almost hypnotic repetitive accumulation, Salomonsohn conjures the evil of money that has hollowed out his relationship to his wife and daughter and alienated him from them. While Salomonsohn was busy making his fortune, his wife and daughter made the necessary adjustments to their lifestyle to move up the social ladder and become full members of the leisure class. They learned to speak French, play tennis, and dance, skills Salomonsohn did not have time to develop. Yet instead of being understanding, his wife is highly embarrassed about her husband's lack of social refinement, and the reason is evident. As Jews, the Salomonsohns need to prove twice as much as any "normal" newly rich family that they are legitimate members of the leisure class. To do so, they need money to purchase the requisite material goods, for example, clothes, and to have the time to learn the necessary skills, especially the right language, French. By speaking a different language than the father, the women of this family begin to distance and emancipate themselves from him and from his Jewish background.⁴⁷ But his wife goes even further: as soon as her husband has enough money, she pushes him to purchase the "beggarly title [of privy councillor], so that she need no longer be addressed as plain Mrs. Salomonsohn. They wanted to become genteel."⁴⁸ The formerly identity-assigning relationship between signifier (the Jewish name) and signified (the Jew) disappears. The title, used

without their family name, covers up the obvious Jewish identity of this family and shows to what degree money can interfere with people's relationship to themselves.⁴⁹ In the case of Mrs. Salomonsohn and Erna, this is felt as a relief. Money can buy them social cachet and a mask, and thus freed from the possibly compromising effect of their true background, both wife and daughter can pursue their lives as flawless members of the leisure class, as picture-perfect examples of Veblen's theories.⁵⁰

Hence Salomonsohn recognizes that he has become the victim of his own quantifiable success. Money, the great enabler, has ultimately impoverished the provider beyond repair. While he was engaged in the restless hunt for wealth, his family performed the transition from domestic to social, from pre-industrial to industrial and urban existence — and left him behind.

This transition is accompanied by a significant change in the family's domestic spatial relations. Whereas Salomonsohn spent his youth in a modest but apparently warm familial setting, the Salomonsohn's southern German home seems to be a rather spacious, cold villa with elegant social as well as private areas and even a servant's entrance that Salomonsohn himself starts using shortly before his death. If he wants to see his family, he has to show up for family dinners, ritualized gatherings that stand in stark contrast to the apparent closeness they shared in earlier times. Now that Erna has reached a "sociable" age, Salomonsohn usually leaves a sleeping household in the morning, returns to an empty one at night; and when everyone is at home, he has to share his loved ones with a number of guests who are seemingly there to invade the house with the spirit of modern social banter and entertainment.

In an attempt to reclaim the happiness of earlier days and to reach out for a new kind of pleasure, he agrees to a family vacation in Gardone instead of following his doctor's advice to take a cure in Karlsbad. He hopes that the enjoyment of this shared vacation will actually make him feel better as a human being, not just as a patient: "Yes, a man could be happy here. I had thought to be happy here; had fancied I could feel how bright the world is for the care-free. . . . I wanted to draw a few happy breaths before the end; wanted to get some of my own back at last."⁵¹ However, the nature of this hotel cannot respond to his needs. As an upper-class establishment that is appropriate for the Salomonsohns' social status — his wife probably chose this place — it does not foster real human contact and closeness. The hotel's entertainment offerings and amenities make it difficult for people to have time for each other or themselves for more than a fleeting moment. Its many social areas encourage superficial contact with many other guests, among whom the happy hotel dweller will share his or her time, a prospect that may be more appealing than spending time with family. Quickly, the Salomonsohn women make the acquaintance of three young men: an Italian count, a German gentleman jockey, and a German officer. Together, they enjoy all

the hotel's amenities and its surroundings, going on day-trips or playing tennis and dancing and leaving the father behind. Interestingly, it seems to be the German officer who wins Erna's favors most successfully, to the pleasure of her mother. If we consider the urgency with which this woman tries to leave behind the family's Jewish roots, her predilection for this man, an officer who embodies what would later be called "Aryan" ideals, may be an additional step in her path towards full assimilation into the German "good society."⁵²

Thus tempted from all sides, Erna and her mother spend most of their time away from the one who pays for all of this. If he wishes to see or speak to them, he has to follow them around most of the day. From the breakfast room to the garden to the tennis court to the lobby to one of the music salons, Salomonsohn trails his daughter's activities, and slowly, the floor plan of the hotel's social spaces resembles a map of this father's sufferings. There is not a single more intimate or private area here into which one could withdraw. Wherever Salomonsohn goes, it seems to him that someone like the young gardener finds him and looks at his every expression. Constant noise, whether voices or music, the sounds of tennis balls or of big, expensive cars, serve to numb the hotel guest's ear for real communication and distract at any given moment. Intimacy or concentration are neither possible nor desired, it seems; but as casual or superficial and almost random as social interaction is rendered by all these distractions, the social places in the hotel still serve very well-defined functions and should not be used for other activities than the designated ones: to dance in the lobby is as inappropriate as to sit in the dancing salon reading a newspaper. Because the downstairs of the hotel is thus taboo for any kind of personal contact, Salomonsohn has to withdraw into the supposed privacy of his hotel room. But even there, the "un-privacy" of the space keeps him from communicating anything to his wife.

Salomonsohn's inability to communicate starts long before he discovers his daughter's betrayal. Already at the beginning of his story, when he gets up at four in the morning, he does not wake his wife, even though he fears a gallstone attack. After he comes back from his fateful walk, he goes back to bed and torments himself with his new knowledge instead of telling his wife about his discovery. Zweig tries to make us believe that Salomonsohn makes the first decision out of consideration for her peace of mind, while the second grows out of his inability to put into words what seems beyond description, but it becomes very clear that it is the hotel and what it stands for that make him stay silent for the remainder of the story. In a typical business transaction, the one who buys something normally becomes the owner of it and decides how to use it. But here in the hotel, the fact that Salomonsohn pays for his family's stay cannot prevent him from having no control over what happens after they have checked in. The space is not his, which means that he has power neither to approve nor reject the social company found

there. As we will see in *Fräulein Else*, money can only exert that kind of power over a personal situation when it is employed strategically and is associated with a threat, that is, when someone uses pressure and blackmail to get what he pays for. This is certainly not father Salomonsohn's approach. When he leaves the hotel two days after his discovery, he understands that his old-fashioned approach to life is no longer viable in the modern world.

If the experience in the hotel has revealed to Salomonsohn the degree to which money has alienated him from his family and himself, it also engenders a new search for an authentic, unmediated relationship to something or someone, even if it is defined *ex negativo*. In a move that is diametrically opposed to his wife's various attempts to hide their Jewishness, Salomonsohn begins both attending and giving financially to the synagogue, and he also begins to pay more than the obligatory visits to his parents' graves. More importantly, though, and as his illness takes a dramatic turn for the worse, Salomonsohn focuses all his energies on developing an authentic, unmediated relationship to himself through his deteriorating body. It is through his excruciating pain that he claims back a non-alienated relationship to himself, and with a stringency that looks like stubbornness to the outer world, he takes great care to protect his death as the last of his possessions.

However, it is also this stringency that makes his actions suspicious. As I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, his death could be read as a liberation for the women of his family. To be sure, all of Zweig's sympathy rests with this poor, sick father on whom his family cheats in more than one way. The author takes great care to show his main character as a loving if rough-edged man who is exploited by the women of his family in their pursuit of pleasure and luxury. Then again, as Salomonsohn himself recognizes at one point, not all the blame is theirs: "Money, this cursed money, has spoiled them, has estranged them from me. Fool that I am, I have piled it up for them, thus robbing myself, impoverishing myself, and corrupting them."⁵³ Similarly, if he can no longer understand his wife and daughter because they speak a different language, it is also clear that he has made no effort to learn it. In other words: the problem that Zweig identifies in this family is not just that an old value system is dismissed recklessly by a new generation to which both mother and daughter belong. Rather, on a deeper level communication is the key concept and problem in this story. There is no real exchange of thoughts and ideas between the parents, and Salomonsohn does not express himself at all. He gives in to whatever whims his women would like to pursue, perhaps out of love, perhaps out of a sense of inferiority, certainly out of weakness. Even though he seems to enjoy the lake and the hotel, he never shares this feeling with his wife and daughter, and his communication with them seems limited to his granting them their every desire. After discovering his daughter's double life, he slips into an incomprehensible code of grunts and moans, a sign system that Zweig uses to

indicate the degree to which his hurtful discovery has affected and humiliated him.

As a businessman, Salomonsohn has made it into the twentieth century, but as a man, he fails to understand the need for negotiation and communication. Instead, he decides to live out the pain caused by the seemingly unbridgeable gap between old and new to his death. He withdraws from the world entirely, even in his own home, and he leaves the stage to the various counts and officers of the women's new social circle. His daughter is thus left without any guidance in repairing the damage caused by a life lived in the pursuit of money, guidance on which she could draw to exercise her new freedom in a more self-determined manner. Left in the care of her mother, Erna will now have an uneasy choice: she can continue her pursuit of pleasure until the right husband shows up to subject her to his rule and start the cycle again. Or she can turn into a Francine and realize that a world without old-fashioned people like her father might also become a world filled with faceless puppets, like the German officer, who may gang up eventually to become a "Herrenvolk" against whom her beauty will no longer protect her.

Arthur Schnitzler: *Fräulein Else*

Of all the stories discussed in this chapter, Schnitzler's interior monologue *Fräulein Else* is certainly the best known and most discussed. After almost two decades of work, the Austrian writer finally published his novella in 1924, and it met with great acclaim among Schnitzler's fellow writers and polite reserve in the more general public. Many critics complained about Schnitzler's almost obsessive treatment of prewar topics, and no matter how vigorously he tried to defend himself, claiming that his subject matter was of eternal and universal significance,⁵⁴ many contemporaries dismissed him as a man from "the world of yesterday." However, more recent studies have shown that most of Schnitzler's later works clearly discuss postwar Austrian issues,⁵⁵ and this is especially true for *Fräulein Else*.⁵⁶ To be sure, the setting for Else's grand interior monologue, the hotel, is not new, nor is it clearly marked as post-1918, nor is Else the first "homeless" Schnitzlerian protagonist to lead an interior monologue. But the close connection that is established between money, the hotel, and the female body and sexuality, and Schnitzler's effective and programmatic literary use of the different social and private areas of the hotel make it a paradigmatic text for postwar hotel narratives.

On the surface Else's situation resembles that of her fictional sisters Francine and Erna, even if her sexual experience in the hotel is different from theirs and complicates her story. Like them, she vacations with a relative, her aunt, at a nice mountain resort, and like Francine and Erna, she seems well-liked by her fellow leisure class guests. And not unlike Francine, she runs into a moral challenge that unsettles her already underdetermined value sys-

tem and sense of self. However, Schnitzler's 1924 text (which may have served as a model or literary challenge for Zweig and Werfel) is unique in its complexity. Zweig and Werfel keep the factors of body, space, and money separate, either neglecting one of them or dividing their weight between different characters.⁵⁷ In Schnitzler's novella, all three factors come together in the conflict that Else faces, when a fellow guest, Herr von Dorsday, challenges Else to show herself naked to him if he is to give her a significant sum of money that Else's family needs in order to avoid financial and social ruin. Faced with a challenge of this magnitude, Else experiences the hotel's social areas, the private guestroom, and the world outside not only as architectural units but also as symbolic realms that help us understand her conflict not only as a moral, but also as a spatial one, and this, in turn, in a metaphorical sense. For it is Else's lack of a space of her own that makes her so vulnerable both in this society in general and in her confrontation with her challenger Dorsday in particular. With her immediate family absent, neither the hotel as a gathering place for leisure-seeking people nor her segregated, private guestroom offer anything that would help her find her place in society and stand up against Dorsday, and nature is no viable alternative for the socialized urban being of modern times. When Else decides to expose her naked body to the assembled guests in the hotel's music salon at the end of the story instead of giving in to Dorsday's blackmail, thus openly and intentionally violating the rules that govern physical and social behavior in the hotel and in society in general, she projects her inner state of homelessness outward. At the same time, she also tears open the smooth surface of social interaction that allows the pursuit of erotic and economic interests under the cover of appropriate hotel behavior. When Else performs her scandalous striptease, she dares to do in public what people like Cissy only do in the privacy of their rooms: "How Cissy will envy me! And the others too. But they won't dare do anything. They'd all love to do it! Go ahead, take me for an example, everyone!" (241).⁵⁸ What in respectable society can only be had at a high price (i.e. the price of a hotel room in an establishment that is good enough to offer a respectable cover, or the 50,000 gulden that Dorsday offers to see Else naked) is now available at no cost, and to everyone. With this move, in the social setting of the music salon, Else forecloses publicly and provocatively all further speculation about her beautiful body. When his protagonist "flies" out of her story to her presumed death, Schnitzler suggests that she has overcome the confines of her spatial existence to search for a realm in which she can live in unison with herself and her now freed and weightless body.

Before we further discuss the ramifications of Else's suicide, we should take a closer look at the path that leads to this dramatic climax of her story. Although, as stated, the basic premise of her situation is similar to that of Francine or Erna, this is not the whole story. First of all, Else is not spending

her vacation with her immediate family, that is, her parents. Even if Francine's parents are absent during the time when her story unfolds, they have just gone away temporarily. However, as a mental and moral presence, they are still a factor. Furthermore, there is no question that Francine's family has the financial means and the social standing to be guests of the elegant hotel in northern Italy, and instead of dealing with the issue of whether or not she belongs to the hotel's society, Francine has to decide whether she wants to belong to it. The Salomonsohns are a similar case. At least financially, they are without a doubt rightful guests in the hotel, and it is the question whether or not the main character, Salomonsohn, wants to be a member of his socioeconomic peer group that drives part of the narrative.

Else's case is different. On the surface, she is a legitimate member of the leisure class. Coming from a very cultivated Jewish family, she has learned the necessary skills early enough in her life to move naturally in this social circle and to show that she belongs. However, her immediate family can no longer afford to stay at this hotel. Instead, her mother's rich sister invites Else to spend time with her and her son, even if this aunt's affection does not seem to run deep, since Aunt Emma mostly worries about Else's suspicious interest in her son Paul and a possible *mésalliance* between them, as Else mockingly observes: "The poor relative, invited by her rich aunt. I'm sure she already regrets it. Should I put it in writing, dear aunt, that I wouldn't dream of going after Paul?"⁵⁹ And such concerns are not unfounded. Time and again, Else drops hints concerning her family's precarious financial situation, and although they have been able to hide their decline well up until now, Else still knows that underneath her pretty face and dress she is a fraud in this place.⁶⁰

Money and the lack of financial security are therefore constantly on Else's mind even before she receives her mother's letter announcing the newest disastrous development in her family, her father's impending imprisonment for embezzling trust fund money. The hotel is a steady reminder of the importance of money — whoever stays here is supposed to have it — and guests gauge each other suspiciously to assess their legitimacy in this place, as does Else when she meets Dorsday outside the hotel after her tennis match and says to herself: "He's just an artful social climber. A first-class tailor isn't enough, Herr von Dorsday! Dorsday! I'm sure your name used to be something else" (195).⁶¹ If Else's reaction is representative of the hotel guest's in general, it shows to what degree the display and recognition of signs of belonging and power that Veblen describes have become a crucial element in the fabric of social interaction in the hotel, and how precarious these signs are in an atmosphere of mutual distrust and supervision. The awareness of being under constant critical scrutiny leads to some sort of split consciousness that one always performs two roles at once, those of spectator and actor, even of the self. Else is a merciless and suspicious observer of her

fellow guests' appearance and behavior, and many of her comments regarding her own "performance" in the hotel's social areas show her mediated, overly conscious relationship to herself in a space in which she is supposed to relax as a vacationer. As we will see later, this distance to herself and to her body runs so deep that she cannot even reconnect with herself in the privacy of her hotel room. It is only when she is outside, in the hotel's park, that status and money do not constantly taint her perceptions, that she is able to perceive the world around her in a more immediate and self-sufficient manner.

Implicitly, then, money regulates the hotel guest's relationship to the social environment. Guests know that status, a certain level of company and the social cachet it brings, and also certain erotic pleasures that one can pursue sheltered by the hotel's respectable image, are only available at a set price, and they make sure to display the corresponding socio-economic façade convincingly enough to be given access. Since Else's façade is twice as thin as anybody else's, considering that she is at the mercy of her rich aunt, it is thus natural that her mother's fateful letter announcing the family's complete demise must come as a sharp blow. The symbolical "little run" in Else's stockings (205) could still be hidden from view, but her parents' idea that she approach a fellow guest for a large sum of money will reveal their real situation and make it impossible for Else to stay on if she does not want to be at the mercy of another sponsor, this time one from outside her family.

However, this is exactly what happens, and of all the people in the hotel, the one she appeals to for help is the man she had thought to deny legitimacy, Dorsday. As a punishment for her earlier haughtiness, this is a clever ironic twist in the story. However, the following developments show that Else's initial and instinctive impression of Dorsday was right on the mark. After Else has presented her case, Dorsday offers his help under the condition that she show her naked body to him for fifteen minutes. With the undeniable logic of a business transaction, Dorsday reasons:

But I am not an extortionist; I am just a man who has learned many things from experience — among them this: that everything in the world has its price and that anyone who gives his money away when he is in a position to get something for it is a consummate fool. And — what I want to buy now, Else, as valuable as it is, won't make you any poorer if you sell it. (220–21)⁶²

Such is the credo of capitalism, voiced by someone who made it far in society exactly because of the general validity of his beliefs. Like Zweig's Salomonsohn, Dorsday seems to have bought himself social cachet with his new aristocratic name. His wealth has secured him a place in Austria's high society, even if not everybody accepts him into this circle, for instance Else, who treats him with a remarkable snobbery that her own precarious social

standing does not warrant. Dorsday's presence at this hotel is a proof of his wealth and status; and if he can buy time, space, and good company, there is no reason, within the logic of his thinking, why he should not be able to buy the sight of Else's beautiful body. At the core of Dorsday's proposal is the idea that not only goods and labor, but also bodies have become subject to the alienating forces of money. The rational distance that money establishes between the seller and his or her product thus allows for business deals that should leave both parties equally satisfied.⁶³

This is exactly the theoretical basis for prostitution, and more than once, and certainly not by accident, Else's monologue refers to the "whores from the Kärntnerstraße" (224) and the fact that Dorsday's suggested deal would amount to her selling herself. As is well known, prostitutes need to seek out cheaper hotels to offer their services to their clients; but the case of Else's friend Bertha demonstrates that a hotel is a hotel: that even elegant establishments participate in the promotion of sex: "In Hamburg it was a married man, and she lived in the Atlantic Hotel . . ." (204).⁶⁴ The Hotel Fratazza would thus not be different from any other hotel.

At first Else refers to her friend Bertha as a "Luder," a "tramp," that is a woman who ignores all social and sexual taboos to do what she pleases and be independent, but it becomes very clear that Bertha lives a life that reduces her to the status of a sexual product for sale. Even though Else tries to convince herself that she would never "fall" like Bertha, the repeated strategic insertion of her story — her development from a tramp earlier in the text to a courtesan later — betrays Else's preoccupation with this prospect and suggests that she knows how easily she, too, could slip and follow the same path. Before her conversation with Dorsday, Paul and Cissy's illicit affair is the most daring sexual adventure in the hotel that Else knows about, and the idea of selling herself only crosses her mind as a literary motif, with herself as the protagonist of this fiction. "Paul, if you give me the thirty thousand, you can have anything you want from me. . . . No, that's right out of a novel again. The noble daughter sells herself for her beloved father, and in the end really enjoys it."⁶⁵ After Else's encounter with Dorsday, fiction turns into a real possibility, and her perception of men changes: no longer are they just admirers of her female attributes or supernumeraries in her narcissistic erotic scenarios expressed in the subjunctive mode in her interior monologue. Instead, the "ideological alibi" of love or at least passionate attraction vanishes and makes all men in the hotel and beyond sexually charged potential customers or blackmailers in the indicative:

Mercy, have mercy, Herr Dr. Fiala. With pleasure, my Fräulein. Go into my bedroom. — Do me a favor, will you, Paul, and ask your father for thirty thousand gulden? . . . Gladly, my dear cousin. I'm in room number so and so; I'll expect you at midnight. . . .

Too bad that there's no one else out here. The man at the edge of the woods obviously finds me very attractive. Oh, my dear sir, I'm even more beautiful naked, and the price is laughable, only thirty thousand gulden. Perhaps you can bring friends with you; then it'll be cheaper for each of you. (222–23)⁶⁶

From the start, Else is certainly aware of the allure of her beautiful body, and she enjoys the desire she instills. However, Dorsday's proposal is felt as a departure from the hotel society's use and enjoyment of visual signs. It is no longer a play between spectator and actor, with potentially equal partners. Instead, Dorsday's offer attaches a price tag to Else's body, submitting it to his laws, his space, and his perception, a situation that Else visualizes and desperately tries to use to her advantage when she imagines her striptease in his room: "Yes, that's how I'll do it. I'll go to see him in his room, and only after he's written the telegram before my eyes — then I'll undress. And I'll hold the telegram in my hands. Ha, how unappetizing!" (238).⁶⁷ On the one hand, this scenario illustrates Else's wish to "spoil the pleasure" for Dorsday (232) since the money order would symbolically replace her fallen dress and be a sobering reminder that the art dealer Dorsday had to pay a high price for this sight — perhaps spoiling both the aesthetic pleasure and the erotic excitement that he could gain from this quarter hour.⁶⁸ On the other hand, this strategy would still expose Else to his exclusive gaze. And exclusivity, combined with her horror at selling herself instead of giving herself away for free, is a thought that she cannot bear.

Else's inability to commit to one option (what critics have called her existential indetermination),⁶⁹ be this about people, places, or visions for her life, is her main character trait. As rarely as she can focus on one idea for more than a few seconds at a time, she can also not imagine ever settling down with one man. In her various fantasies, she sees herself with hundreds and thousands of men who compete for her love, to whom she could show her beautiful body in all its splendor "on the marble steps that lead into the water" (230), and play with their desire until they go mad and drown themselves in the ocean.⁷⁰ Yet when she thinks about intimacy, she cannot even imagine sharing a bed with a man, and the only one whom she considers a potential husband is a certain Dr. Froriep, a landowner who seems sexually rather unthreatening. In her many visions of her future, there is no clear goal, except for her unwillingness to accept one man as he is and give up all other options, including the wildest ones. And as little as she knows what she wants to do and with whom she would like to spend her life, she also does not have a place or even a country where she feels at home. She could live in the countryside as the wife of a landowner, move to America with her father if he decided to flee, live somewhere in Italy⁷¹ if she married a rich American, move all over the place if she were to become a tramp.

Even home, her parents' house in Vienna, fails to provide a sense of belonging. It is where family members live together, but it is not a home in the intimate sense at all: "Everything at home is settled by joking, but no one's really lighthearted. Everyone is basically afraid of everyone else. Everyone is all alone" (208).⁷² This depiction could equally describe the atmosphere in the hotel, and it shows to what extent Else's home no longer serves any positive function toward forming or supporting her identity. Her memories are fraught with a sense of constant danger and instability, and messages from home to the "un-home" of the hotel bring nothing but bad news, the confirmation of Else's loneliness at the hotel. Only as an exploitable ideological construct, as an idea that is part of the definition of the bourgeois family, does the notion of home still function in her family; but even though Else recognizes her parents' well-calculated attempt to exploit her allegiance to a home that has ceased to be meaningful, she has nothing that could replace it and what it stands for. She is homeless in the broadest sense of the term, and the hotel is not the place to reverse this state of alienation.

Else's existential predicament in inhabited space is thus one of the key topics in the novella, and Schnitzler takes great care to convey this focus not only on the level of content, but also in his use of the hotel's subsettings, which constitute an important structural element in this novella. There are three areas that serve a distinct function: Else's bedroom, to which she returns three times in total to try to gather her thoughts and find a solution to her dilemma; the park and the woods surrounding the hotel, Else's refuge from her pain, her problems, the hotel society, and even from herself; and the space of transition between bedroom and park, the social areas (the lobby, the salons, the entrance, and also the tennis court) in which Else interacts directly with the outer world and in which her estrangement from this outer world becomes most obvious. Whether she seeks the privacy of her hotel room or she wishes to escape from everything and everybody into the woods, she has to cross the lobby. This transitional space becomes the main stage for all significant events, and it is the place where Else receives all important impulses from the outside that push her fate forward. It is the center of her narrative's topography.

The story begins outside, on the tennis court. Symbolically, Else withdraws from her match with the two stereotypical hotel "players" Paul and Cissy⁷³ in the first line of the text, and she proceeds towards her room, the supposed safe haven where she could let down her mask for a while and recover. When she passes the foyer, she picks up a letter from the outside world, from her mother, and she takes it upstairs to read it in private, on her bedroom's windowsill. It is here that Else feels closest to nature and hence the farthest removed from all that she wishes to leave behind. However, the letter from Vienna literally and symbolically pushes her back into her room and into her social reality, that is into the hotel. After she has finished read-

ing the letter, she leaves her seat on the windowsill and loses her closeness to the outside world, and her bedroom turns into a rehearsal and changing room for her upcoming confrontations with the people in the hotel, most notably Dorsday. Until the end of her story, Else will not be granted any rest in this space. Instead, her room now gets virtually crowded with all the people in her head. She recalls previous encounters with men, considers a number of them and new men in the hotel as possible targets for her seduction, thus as potential “sponsors,” and she experiences herself mainly from the outside, as a visual attraction. The mirror reflects nothing but the image of a beautiful object that many men have already desired. At the same time, her many invocations of absent friends and family and her repeated pleas to nature to take notice of her plight serve to underscore Else’s loneliness in this remote resort, the lack of someone to confirm her existence as significant beyond her outer shell. In all of this, her room has one very special quality: it is the place where she keeps her Veronal, her backup against the pains of life. Only through the negative, as the place where she possesses the freedom and possibility to make herself disappear, does her room assume an intimate quality.

The deal that Dorsday offers after Else has left her room and her scenarios behind is beyond anything that she had imagined. When Else returns to her room for the second time, after her conversation with Dorsday, she realizes that she has few options left.⁷⁴ A second missive from Vienna informs her that the sum needed to ensure her father’s freedom has even increased; the conditions under which she can raise that sum are all too clear, and with that, the idea of death becomes more real and more appealing. The combination of exposing herself, possibly to a number of people, and dying right afterwards starts to take shape and fits in with Else’s desperate desire to “spoil the pleasure for Dorsday” and with her own, barely suppressed sexual drives.

While Else prepares for her upcoming “show” downstairs, she catches the sight of her naked body in the mirror, and it sets free a narcissistic auto-erotic enjoyment that has nothing in common with the “official” Victorian bourgeois approach to the young female body around 1900: “Am I really as beautiful as I look in the mirror? Oh, won’t you please come closer, beautiful *Fräulein*? I want to kiss your blood-red lips. I want to press your breasts against mine. Too bad there’s this glass between us, this cold glass” (242).⁷⁵ Even though her use of the formal “you” (*Sie*) reveals the degree to which Else is used to perceiving herself as the socialized Other, the general direction of this new approach to herself is clear. Instead of simply admiring her physical beauty like she did during her first scene in her room, anticipating the hotel gazers’ reaction to her and thus deepening the split between self and image, she now seeks a tangible experience (“kissing,” “pressing”) whose nature is asocial. The new gaze actively engages the self as its own

onlooker and helps Else to experience herself as a physical whole. In her longing to merge with her reflection, she expresses a deep desire to overcome the split between subject and object, between image and self that is at the basis of the modern subject's being in the world. Such a paradise-like union and totality would offer a real alternative to modern social existence: "We'd get along together so well, don't you think? We wouldn't need anyone else. Maybe there isn't anyone else" (242).⁷⁶ The insights that Else gains during her second scene in her hotel room are then twofold: she starts to understand and enjoy her nakedness as an autoerotic pleasure and she wants, narcissistically, to be the only one to derive such pleasure from her body.

However, the glass is in between Else and her image, and eventually, someone else — Dorsday or Fred or Paul? — will step in to claim a touch that is only enjoyable as long as Else is touching herself. The trance-like utopian moment in front of her hotel room's mirror and its impossible suggestion to enter the realm behind the mirror's glass lead Else to choose a solution to her dilemma that may allow her to experience a climax of excitement but that is also ultimately destructive. The scandalous nature of her striptease in front of her fellow guests, following her self-discovery in her room, heightens the pleasure that she can derive from this act. Her onlookers can never achieve the same level of arousal as she can, given that she defines pleasure in part through the exclusion of the Other. Only feeling herself and knowing that nobody else can have this sensation is the real pleasure: "Chills are running up and down my skin. The woman keeps on playing. It's giving me wonderful chills up and down my body. How wonderful it is to be naked" (250).⁷⁷

Yet dropping her coat in front of everyone also makes her naked body generally available, and Else can only protect and withdraw it from further negotiations by way of destruction. Else's suicide following her exposure is thus the only logical consequence if she wants to stay true to her own definition of pleasure.⁷⁸

Between the first and second scene in her room, Else spends a longer period outside, away from the hotel on a park bench. After her troubling conversation with Dorsday, Else flees from the numbing influence of the busy hotel to think about her situation. The air, the immensity of the sky, the mountains, and the meadows seem to open up a mental realm where a solution may linger. Yet instead of working through her troubles in this calming environment, Else falls asleep on the park bench and dreams about her own death. Nature thus enables her to flee from the problems that she faces, and to experience a "preview" of the relief that death might bring, but it does not help her find a life-affirming solution.⁷⁹ When she wakes up, she realizes that she needs to go back eventually: "I can see the hotel gleaming all the way from here. I have to go back. It's horrible that I have to go back" (228).⁸⁰ Seen from the outside, the illuminated hotel becomes the symbol of

Else's pains and sorrows, a "Zauberburg" (355), that is a "magic castle" (230) or rather a sorcerer's castle in which Dorsday and his peers do their magic with a bundle of money, and in which women like Else have to sell their own "magic" to stay.⁸¹

However, as we have seen, the hotel is also the place where Else discovers herself anew following her mind-clearing outing in the park. It is here that she acts on her desire, much like Francine and Erna, even if in a much less conventional way. As soon as she decides not to continue playing along with society's rules, the sorcerer's "Zauberburg" changes into a magic palace where the speaking mirror turns into the young woman's best friend and temptress. After having discovered herself as a source of pleasure in front of the mirror, Else throws on her black coat, reminiscent of the traditional magician's costume, and she goes downstairs one last time to expose what has been hidden so well so far. Her public striptease will not only undermine Dorsday's offer, but it will disrupt the superficial calm and good behavior in this upscale hotel and confront society with its hidden desires and fears.⁸² With a Zarathustra-like laughter, Else leaves the stage of social interaction when the coat falls, and all that is left for her to do is to "turn off the lights."

Neither Else's striptease nor her following suicide should be understood as the actions of a woman who is fully conscious of her actions and who wishes to make a public, possibly political statement with her self-destruction. Her thoughts preceding and surrounding the event show a deeply confused, conflicted, and desperate state of mind, and after she takes the fatal dose of Veronal, she tragically realizes that her will to live is stronger than the appeal of death after all. Her father will probably not get the needed money, the entire hotel society reads her striptease as a symptom of insanity, and they will equally misunderstand her suicide as either yet another proof of her mental illness or as a self-imposed punishment and proof of her shame for the scandal that she has caused. In this light, the end of Else's story leaves the reader frustrated.⁸³

As a modern hotel story, though, *Fräulein Else* sets a new standard. By writing his novella in the form of an interior monologue, Schnitzler creates a link between the hotel environment, language, and the psyche that makes the reader experience the modern hotel with powerful immediacy: more than in other forms of prose, language in the interior monologue becomes identical with what it describes and allows the reader immediate access to the protagonist's experience as much as it can manifest itself in language. There is no viewpoint outside of Else's psyche, and it is only through her monologue, constructed in and through language, that the hotel comes to life even as an architectural unit. Schnitzler uses many of the stock motifs that make the hotel such an attractive setting for stories about modernity and the individual's place in modern society; but he does so in a way that adds com-

plexity to a model that Zweig and Werfel, for example, explore mostly for its sociocritical potential from the outside. Schnitzler's complex presentation of the relationship between space, language, and the psyche offers a look "behind the peripheral equality of social masks"⁸⁴ that none of his successors have since taken to that extent.

Stefan Zweig: *Rausch der Verwandlung*

The last of the four hotel stories discussed in this chapter is Stefan Zweig's second — and unfinished — novel *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Transformative Trance, posthumously published, 1982).⁸⁵ As the editor Knut Beck notes in his postscript to the unfinished novel, Zweig started to work on this text in 1931 and wrote the first part, the story of a young postal assistant's fairytale-like experience in a Swiss resort hotel, by November. An artistic crisis kept the writer from further developing his novel,⁸⁶ and Austria's move to the political right after Richard Dollfuß's rise to power in 1934 led Zweig to adopt a much more critical attitude towards Austria, as is reflected in the second half of the novel.⁸⁷ This second part, quite different from the first half in narrative perspective, thematic focus, setting, and general atmosphere, sharing with the first part only the main character Christine Hoflehner, seems to betray Zweig's failure to carry out final unifying work on the text. However, Beck has convincingly shown that the novel can stand alone as a finished work of art in spite of its shortcomings, and Thomas Eicher's article "Das Ich im Spiegel"⁸⁸ has identified the motif of the mirror and mirroring as the novel's overarching and unifying aesthetic and structural principle.

Another element that connects the seemingly uneven parts of this novel is Zweig's use of hotels as a setting. The first half of Christine Hoflehner's story takes place in the fancy Palace Hotel in Pontresina near St. Moritz,⁸⁹ yet another mountain resort like the ones in *Fräulein Else*, "Die Hotel-treppe," and "Untergang eines Herzens." The long episode ends with Christine's unhappy and involuntary departure from the hotel and her return home to her petty life in Klein-Reifling, "an insignificant village close to Krems, about two hours by train from Vienna," where she is a postal assistant.⁹⁰ Not surprisingly, the young woman cannot stand being back in the oppressive confines of her boring provincial life, and to rekindle and relive the happiness and excitement that she enjoyed in Switzerland, she begins to travel to Vienna for brief weekend outings. Here she seeks out a number of hotels, an urban grand hotel on the Ringstraße, a more modest establishment on the Mariahilfer Straße where she stays overnight, and, later in her story, a small, dirty hotel that rents by the hour where she and her new lover Ferdinand try to have sex. None of these places can bring back the carefree magic that Christine experienced in Pontresina, and at the end of her first weekend in Vienna, she realizes that that world is closed to her. The hotel

becomes an important catalyst in Christine's enraged recognition of her hopeless social situation, and, as a symbol, it reveals the degree to which inhabited human space has been subjected to the laws of capitalism. The place that society has assigned to Christine imprisons rather than enables the human being to develop; the place where such liberation and development would be possible is inaccessibly expensive: Christine becomes an existentially homeless person.⁹¹ According to Thorstein Veblen, one of the fundamental preconditions for the leisure class to exist and thrive is its strategic withdrawal of the means of sustenance from the lower classes by reducing "their consumption, and consequently their available energy, to such a point as to make them incapable of the effort required for the learning and adoption of new habits and thought."⁹² Christine's and Ferdinand's experiences with hotels in Vienna illustrate this strategy well. It is therefore not surprising that the novel ends with the prospect of a crime — the planned embezzlement of funds from the post office where Christine works — whose moral foundations can be considered revolutionary, even if in a very personalized, possibly egocentric, way.⁹³

The repeated use of the hotel as a setting for Christine's story thus tightly connects the first and the second halves of the story, but Zweig extends this motif even beyond the end of events in the novel. In his detailed plan for his life with Christine after the planned theft, Ferdinand envisions an existence in hotels, for no more than two to four weeks at a time, the life of modern nomads, of homeless and countryless people with money. Given Christine's and Ferdinand's combined experiences in and with hotels that allowed them insights into the rules that govern a guest's stay, their chances to go undiscovered at least for a while are not bad.

The hotel plays its most significant part in the first part of the novel. Again, the novel's initial setup features a young woman who vacations at an elegant resort not with her immediate family, but instead, like Else in Schnitzler's story, as the guest of her rich aunt and her aunt's American husband. It is in the foreign, carefree and erotically charged atmosphere of the hotel that Christine discovers social life, her body, and desire: once again, life in the hotel, as disorienting as it is at first, causes a main character to forget about her "normal social and moral restraints."⁹⁴ Like Erna Salomonsohn, Christine quickly becomes the center of male attention, and even though her background has not prepared her for the life of a "flapper," she quickly adjusts and participates in the leisure class's activities with a zeal that makes her aunt and uncle nervous. However, there is a major difference between this woman and Schnitzler's, Zweig's, and Werfel's other heroines: Christine is an intruder in this hotel, and this has a significant impact on the way she experiences the place as well as on the direction of the story as a whole. In contrast to Else, who comes from an upper bourgeois background, just without the money to support that lifestyle at the moment, Christine is a member of

the lower class. Her deceased father was a taxidermist before the war, more an artisan than a businessman, and the war sent the entire family into poverty and misery, from which Christine and her mother have not recovered by the time this story unfolds, in 1926. Out of pity, Christine's rich aunt Claire van Boolean invites her to spend two weeks at the Palace Hotel, yet Christine brings nothing to Switzerland that would make her a savvy player in this hotel or enable her to understand the dynamics that govern interaction and become a careful and informed participant like Erna, Francine, or Else.

Christine's situation in being at the mercy of her relatives is already a precarious one in terms of her legitimacy at the Palace Hotel, but a second issue makes her even more vulnerable. Her relatives are Americans, and only members of this "better" society by virtue of their money, and Zweig makes it clear that there is a distinct difference between old European wealth and new American money as far as social status is concerned in this hotel. With obvious ironic contempt, one of the German guests at the Palace Hotel distinguishes sharply between the American and the European approach to being a member of the upper class: "Well, sure, the Americans were more democratic and generous in questions of social class than us, the conservative Europeans who still played the game of 'good society' . . . who still required education and a good upbringing in addition to fashionable clothes and money."⁹⁵ The van Boolean's status is certainly not as contested as that of rich Jews in society,⁹⁶ but they are not completely exempt from suspicious inquiries into their legitimacy.⁹⁷ Given this double liability, it would take a much more well versed player than Christine to stand the test of belonging in this hotel. She fails, falling into the trap set by Carla, a jealous guest who cannot tolerate sharing the pool of eligible men with Christine, who is the newcomer at the hotel.

Christine's story almost reads like a counterpart literary experiment to Else's, one with similar parameters but different social preconditions. Both women vacation with their aunts, both need to hide their families' financial situations, and they both have "magic mirrors" in their room that help them discover their true identities. In fact, there is such a resemblance between the two mirror scenes that there can be little doubt that Zweig had Schnitzler's older text in mind when he sent his main character in front of the looking glass in her hotel room. Following a makeover shopping spree with her aunt on her first day in Switzerland, Christine gets ready for the evening's big dinner. Shortly before she leaves her room, she dares a first look into the mirror:

No, this can't be true, she thinks. One cannot change like that so quickly. For, if this was really the case, I would be . . . She stops, she does not dare thinking the word. . . . "Yes, I am beautiful."

. . .

She would love to embrace this new human being that she is, she pushes herself as close as possible, so that the pupils can almost touch each other, and her hot lips move into such kiss-like closeness to the sisterly ones that, for a moment, proximity to herself almost dwindles under the gentle breeze of her own breath.⁹⁸

The similarities to Else's self-inspection are obvious and rendered even more apparent through Zweig's choice of words, which resemble closely those that Schnitzler has Else use. Both women discover and embrace their beauty as an identity-assigning quality, and both wish to actively and physically engage their reflection in the mirror in an autoerotic manner to become one with their image. Yet there is a major difference, one that supports further the idea that Zweig's story is a conscious response to or rearrangement of Schnitzler's novella. Whereas Else admires herself naked with all the consequences that I have discussed before, Christine gets this new sense of herself when she is in costume, namely in one of the silk dresses that her aunt wants her to wear to look fashionable. In other words: it is the social mask that Christine admires and that makes her feel alive in this new social environment. In the tradition of the Cinderella plot to which Zweig himself refers when he calls the Christine of Pontresina the "Cinderella-sister" of the lowly postal assistant from Klein-Reifling,⁹⁹ and following the idea that clothes make the man (or in this case the woman), Christine believes that the costume will reveal her real essence. In a fatal misunderstanding of the function of dress in hotels, Christine assumes that signifier (dress) and signified (her essence) are inseparable, and this naïve approach to social existence in the upper class characterizes her entire interaction with people in the hotel. Else's critical and conscious perception of the double standard that rules social morals and relations could not be farther away from such naïveté.

Zweig seems to set up not much more than a modern fairy tale in this first half of his novel:¹⁰⁰ it is the stereotypical "rags to riches" plot, for which the author chose the hotel as the most fitting and maybe only possible setting in modern times. However, it is not the innocent joy of telling fairy tales that led Zweig to use this familiar basic plot, perhaps just the opposite. Christine's downfall (she is found out as a fraud by a jealous fellow guest) that ends her stay in Pontresina suggests that fairy tales cannot come true, no matter how democratic an age wishes to seem, as long as social hierarchies are in place. The illusionary fairy-tale scenario only sets the stage for Christine's later attempt to join the better ranks of society through conscious betrayal, after she and Ferdinand have stolen the money from Christine's post office. Social ascent does not happen overnight, this story seems to teach us, and it does not always occur with a clean record, as the case of Christine's aunt shows. And neither can storytelling succeed with the repetition of old models, made to appear new with some added contemporary de-

ails. In its overly obvious exploitation of clichés, such as the rags-to-riches motif or Zweig's descriptions of the hotel's "atmosphere of sunny carefreeness, a world without work, a world without poverty that [Christine] never knew about,"¹⁰¹ sentimentalities ("They are all so nice, the aunt and the uncle, so beautiful and adorned, these elegant, wonderful people all around, beautiful the world, life in general")¹⁰² and stylized language, especially in the narrator's description of nature,¹⁰³ elements used to convey Christine's subjective experience,¹⁰⁴ the first part of Zweig's novel suggests that stories like Christine's in Switzerland are built on illusions — and that nobody should make the mistake of buying into such feel-good fantasies.

This first portion of the novel is therefore much more than a fairy tale with an unhappy ending or a cautionary tale. The degree to which detailed psychological characterization is an important part of the story already sets it apart from the genre of the fairy tale. In addition, the detail with which Zweig's narrator portrays and comments on the high society at this resort hotel makes it the most openly sociocritical of the four texts discussed in this chapter. The time and the location are unmistakably identified in the novel — 1926 in Pontresina — and with this, Zweig suggests that his novel represents a specific societal situation that the other two writers leave more in the background.¹⁰⁵

This critical realist approach to the novel's sociohistorical content is obvious from the first page on, long before Christine is introduced as a character and she travels to the Engadine. The novel begins with an almost three-page-long description of the anonymous and alienating gray atmosphere of a postwar Austrian postal office in which everything has its established place and there is no trace of human warmth or even human existence. For another two pages, the narrator tries to break through to the description of the actual person working at the postal station, but it is almost as if the depressing and bleak atmosphere that rules this place and time paralyzes the attempt to introduce a human being into the narrative: "Strictly speaking, this type-written register of all objects present should also list that someone who opens the window every morning at eight . . ."¹⁰⁶ Finally, five pages into the book, the narrative penetrates the symbolical glass that separates the customer-service area from the office proper and introduces us to the young, still nameless woman who is wasting her life in this misery. Yet there is nothing personal that the narrator could tell us about her. The office is indifferent to the one occupying it, and the "owner" of the office is the abstract entity of the state. Time seems suspended, reduced to purely quantifiable units of measure: hours, days, weeks, months on the calendar, and nothing happens that could bring this still life to action. Until the telegraph, one of the most important innovations of modernity, begins making a noise and acts as a catalyst to break the general apathy: "Then, all of the sudden: Tack! She starts up. And again, harder, more metal-sounding, more intolerant:

Tack, Tack, Tack!”¹⁰⁷ Now the story starts moving, and if the prince has to awaken Snow White with a kiss, it is modern technology that wakes up this young princess and calls her to a castle far away where all her dreams shall come true. Yet Zweig makes it clear from the beginning that no miraculous power is involved, that everything happens within the logic of modern advancements in technology and capitalism. The narrator’s detailed technical descriptions of how the telegram traveled all the way from Switzerland to the little village of Klein-Reifling clearly situates Christine’s story in the early twentieth century. It establishes a rational and modern, not an emotional, transcendental, or miraculous relationship between the human being and space, a relationship that also rules in the hotel.¹⁰⁸

Many of the following descriptions and events preceding Christine’s departure for Switzerland serve to show the approach to concepts of space that still prevail in her little town. The lack of money forces Christine to share a small bedroom with her sick mother, and their desperate financial situation obliges Christine to live in this backwater town and work in its small post office. Money determines Christine’s spatial existence all around — and that of people in Klein-Reifling in general. The world beyond this little village only exists in books and atlases, and the idea of distance and vast expanses seems so threatening that Fuchsthaller, the town’s teacher and Christine’s timid admirer, hand copies a detailed map of both what Christine will see on the way to Pontresina and the Engadine itself from travel books: “[That way] she could orient herself when on excursions and not have to worry about getting lost.”¹⁰⁹ Fuchsthaller’s hand-drawn map, which includes even the most minute detail, shows him to be a pre-industrial man, one who has no experience with modern modes of traveling and perception, that is, with the “panoramic mode” as Wolfgang Schivelbush calls it in his *The Railway Journey*.¹¹⁰ As moved as Christine initially is by Fuchsthaller’s gift, she forgets about the map as soon as she experiences the power of the “panoramic mode of perception” on her way through Switzerland by train. The size of the Swiss Alps, the width of the sky, the immensity of nature open her horizon beyond anything she has experienced before, and she feels overwhelmed by the power of these perceptions, which do not need exact labeling and mapping. As long as Christine vacations in the mountains, she will not lose this feeling of excited awe and attraction to the dimensions that enable her to breathe freely. When she leaves her hotel room early the following morning to take a walk up a high mountain, she does not take her map along.

Space, in its literal and metaphorical sense, is then one of the main topics in *Rausch der Verwandlung*, and the one place where it merges with the second main topic, money, is the hotel. In a less complex way than Schnitzler in *Fräulein Else*, Zweig explores the intimate relationship between money and inhabited space in the hotel and its impact on someone who is not prepared to deal with the resulting tensions. The clash between the disadvantaged

lower class and the idle, self-protective, and decadent leisure class after the war is the main topic in terms of the novel's sociocritical content and follows closely the critical attitudes of Simmel, Veblen, and Kracauer. The availability of livable space as a precondition for social progress, and the importance of a room of one's own in the individual's development is a key factor in Zweig's analysis of social inequality.

Christine's naïve if not careless approach to her stay at the elegant hotel provides the exemplary situation for Zweig's analysis. Not used to having a room of her own, that is, any space to herself, Christine is so intoxicated by her new freedom in the hotel, with its big lobby, spacious guestrooms, sumptuous social areas, and the sight of the immense panorama outside that she does not catch on to the behavioral rules and codes that regulate movement within it. As she explores new horizons with an enthusiasm that estranges at times,¹¹¹ she does not understand that almost every move she makes constitutes a transgression of the limits defined by conventions of "good behavior" in society. Her aforementioned early morning excursion up the mountain and her high-speed return from the mountaintop surprises the young German engineer Edwin, who watches her — such speed and such performance are not becoming in a young upper-class woman. When Christine eats with her relatives, she eats too much, that is, she eats to fill her hungry stomach instead of participating in the performance of a hotel dinner. Her voice and laughter seem too loud in this place; her delight in excursions by car, especially in fast cars, is so untamed, her presence in this hotel so ostentatious that sooner or later someone has to find her out. But even apart from socioeconomic concerns, Christine would still disturb the well-guarded peace of the hotel society with the immediacy with which she experiences her vacation, a directness that is the exact opposite of most other guests' reserved enjoyment. Georg Simmel, in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," explains this clash as follows: "[T]he self-preservation of very recent associations requires a rigorous setting of boundaries and a centripetal unity, and for that reason it cannot give room to freedom and the peculiarities of inner and external development of the individual."¹¹² Christine's use of space in the hotel is transgressive, and the ensuing scandal, that is, people's discovery of and reactions to Christine's real social background, corresponds to Simmel's description of a small, elitist group's self-protective mechanisms, as her aunt points out: "I am talking about someone who . . . just does not know how to behave in such a way that people don't notice where she comes from . . . it is her fault . . . if she had not been so flashy, nobody would have noticed . . ."¹¹³

The same naïveté that determines Christine's approach to the Palace Hotel also influences her perceptions of her body and intimacy in the hotel. Inexperienced in desire or even interaction with men in a nonplatonian, non-professional manner when she comes to Pontresina, she has no sense of her

own body as an important part of her femininity, and she does not know how to display herself in an effective, yet self-protective way. All she feels for herself upon her arrival in the hotel is shame and contempt, and when she first perceives her shabby exterior in her guestroom's mirror, she comments angrily: "Intruder, away! Don't soil the house! Go back to where you belong," the mirror seems to yell at her. Really, how dare I want to live in such a room, in such a world, she thinks to herself. What a shame for her aunt!"¹¹⁴ Her sense of shame and not-belonging is so deeply engrained that she cannot even accept her beauty easily when, after an afternoon at the hairdresser's and dressed in her aunt's elegant evening gown, she first sees her transformed beautiful self in the same mirror shortly before dinner on her first evening. Paradoxically, though, the moment of total unfamiliarity with her reflection in the mirror turns into an identity-assigning experience, and instead of addressing this reflection in the second person ("du") as she did before — when she saw herself as an ugly intruder — or as Else does in front of her mirror ("Sie"), Christine finally embraces her own image when she marvels: "Yes, *I am* beautiful!"¹¹⁵ Discovering this beauty makes her feel doubly legitimate in the hotel: as a woman, she will be eligible to be subjected to the male desiring gaze, a perspective that she readily assumes herself: "Slowly she turns to the side, very slowly, and she checks, her profile facing back to the mirror, the effect of her movement: again her gaze in the mirror meets with a proud, happy brotherly gaze."¹¹⁶ And as a beautiful sight, in the elegant company of other beautiful objects in her room, she fits in and has a right to stay. As Christine mentally auditions for her appearance downstairs, in front of the hotel's assembled elegant guests, her room turns into a stage whose scenery determines whether or not the actress can stay on stage. The hotel room does not liberate; Christine neither discovers nor acts on forbidden drives like Else or Erna (or even Francine). Instead, it is the place where she can leave her old identity behind, reinvent and project herself into the elegant hotel and try the impossible: embrace a two-dimensional version of herself in the mirror. The desire to overcome the separation between image and self does not express a wish to return to a pre-mirror stage harmony; instead, she wishes to become one with the image that her mirror shows, the dressed up socialite whose identity is determined by her outer appearance. And as far as she is concerned, this identity change is a total success in the "magic castle." After only a few days, Christine has gotten used to being pretty, being looked at, and even having a new name, Christiane von Boolean: "If someone in the know would suddenly address her as Fräulein Hoflehner, she would be shocked like a sleepwalker . . . , this is how completely that new name has grown onto her, how passionately she is convinced to be another, that other woman."¹¹⁷

However, society is not satisfied with the display of status symbols alone to admit newcomers to their circle, and Christine is too inexperienced to

understand that living among these guests means being under constant scrutiny. Her crucial error is to believe in the identity of signs — signs of friendship, of desire, of good heartedness, and of interest in her — with real friendship and interest, and she misunderstands physical closeness — with Edwin and with Carla, the “little girl from Mannheim” — as an expression of social and emotional intimacy. Christine’s fellow guest Lord Elkins’s reserved and respectful behavior towards her seems to her an indication of an unbridgeable social and emotional distance, not as a sign of his deep affection within the framework of Simmel’s idea of true elegance or distinction (“Vornehmheit”). The younger guests’ invitation for Christine to join the inner circle of this hotel society, on the other hand, numbs her ability to see through the strategic manipulation of physical closeness in the interest of more tangible goals, be they economic, social, or sexual. The German engineer Edwin’s calculated pursuit of the supposedly rich girl culminates in their forbidden outing on Christine’s last happy evening at the hotel and their passionate embrace, from which she flees just at the point of giving in to his powerful seduction. And Carla, a young woman from Mannheim who watches Christine’s social success with growing irritation, pursues a similar strategy to win her competitor’s innocent trust: slowly, she begins to invade Christine’s personal space when she joins arms with her “friend” during walks and when she visits Christine’s room late at night. For these people to give up the luxurious distance that the spacious hotel offers must mean that they have a sincere interest in her, Christine concludes. Thus seduced, she surrenders to this new, positively defined spatial intimacy that is utterly unlike the miserable lack of space at home, and she suspends all caution, a caution that even the most legitimate members of this clique, like Carla, exercise: “A chemistry student, intelligent and sly, high-spirited, sensual, *yet ultimately controlled*, she observes everything that is going on with her sharp black eyes.”¹¹⁸ After only a few days together, Carla becomes suspicious of the discrepancy between her own behavior and Christine’s, and a strategic check of her rival’s mastery of what Veblen would recognize as some of the leisure class’s signs of conspicuous leisure and consumption allows the quick and effective destruction of the unwanted competitor: “Without knowing it, Christine had shown a number of weak spots in her mastery of social skills; she did not know that one has to ride a horse in order to play polo; she did not know the names of the most common perfumes such as Coty and Houbigant, she did not distinguish between more and less expensive cars, and she had never been to a race. . . . No, something was wrong with the elegant Miss van Boolean.”¹¹⁹

Cleverly, Carla spreads rumors about Christine’s unacceptable social background and achieves her swift removal from the hotel: paranoid about a possible scandal, Christine’s aunt decides that it is time for her niece to go home. Back in her room for one last night, Christine then goes through a

traumatic loss of her important outer persona, a death-like process of alienation that takes away everything with which she had begun to identify.¹²⁰ It is as if Christine's existence fades or shrinks layer by layer, and in the middle of the night, when nothing external is left to lose anymore, the withdrawal continues in her body: "It is a hard process of internal dying, a process of freezing to death, piece by piece, and she is sitting there as if she was trying to hear when the pounding, hot van Boolean heart would finally stop hammering inside."¹²¹ As the entire world around her seems to close in on her, Christine experiences her existential transformation in spatial terms, most drastically when she has to put on her old, shabby clothes: "When her fingers take it [the skirt that she had brought from home] from the hook, she shivers under this dreadful horror that the touch of something decayed induces: back into this dead person Hoflehner, this was her destination."¹²² Struck by the feeling that something that she was entitled to has been taken away unjustly, she experiences the sudden end of her vacation as a serious deprivation: "But nothing belongs to her any longer: other people will sleep in this bed, others will watch the golden landscape through this window, others will see themselves reflected in this polished glass, never again will it be she! It is not a farewell, it is a kind of death."¹²³ Even though Christine will return home to Klein-Reifling with her new haircut, some of the pretty outfits that her aunt bought her as a gift, and with a little money that she won gambling, she will feel nothing but resentment. The place to which she must return empties these tokens of happier days of any significance, and they will remain nothing but meaningless objects in the suffocating atmosphere in which she lives.

Four weeks later, after her mother's death, Christine cannot bear the atmosphere in Klein-Reifling anymore, and tries to rekindle the enchantment of the Swiss hotel by traveling to Vienna. Under the spell of a "Wiederholungszwang" (192), a manic need for repetition, she first visits a hairdresser to find her "Christiane-face" again. While this experiment succeeds to a certain extent and makes her feel more secure on Vienna's streets, her next step leaves her even unhappier than before. As she walks along the Ringstraße, she feels magically drawn towards a grand hotel, and hoping that she can bring back the memory of happier days, she enters through the revolving door. The clientele seems similar to that of the Palace Hotel, and since she has enough money, she thinks about staying for dinner. However, she is not dressed well enough, and without the talisman of the fashionable dress, she feels too insecure to stay. On the street again, she continues her senseless effort to return to earlier days at the Palace and ends up in her own modest hotel, feeling useless, deserted, and sentenced forever to remain a member of the lower classes.¹²⁴ But her search for happiness must fail for a simple reason: Christine tries to buy back a feeling that she experienced when she did not have to think about money at all. The most important

quality of leisure-class happiness is its ignorance of its financial basis, and to pull back the veil of carefreeness that comes with having enough money means to destroy the lifestyle's magic. The hotel, as a simple building, has no qualities, she realizes; it is external and cannot conjure up the complex illusion that staying at a fancy place in a community of like-minded vacationers creates. Only the combination of space, time, and activity, as described by Thorstein Veblen, makes a person a visible member of the leisure class, and such a combination can only succeed when sufficient funds are available without being openly acknowledged, that is, without anyone asking for them. Where this combination is absent, the visitor must leave, unnoticed and unsatisfied, like Christine.

The constant thought of money ruins Christine's effort to change back into her "Doppelgänger" Christiane van Boolean, in spite of its promising setting. But Zweig carries his overarching literary experiment with the combination of space, time, money and, in addition, bodies, further when he has Christine and her new lover Ferdinand end up in a shabby hotel that rents by the hour. Again, the interaction between money, time, and activity determines the identity of the assembled group in the hotel, but in the most negative way. Money is fully acknowledged in this place and makes the setting in which these people try to have an intimate experience anonymous and uncanny. There is not even an effort to cover up the hotel's capitalist basis, and any reference to the idea of the hotel as a "home away from home" is intentionally absent. It is in these dens that people act on desires that a bourgeois "home" would certainly not acknowledge, and the worse the location, the better the chances for self-alienation and the realization of everything that society deems taboo. Bodies are reduced to their pure physicality instead of being inscribed in a complex behavioral code that allows for a playful approach to similar sexual interests, a code that governs physical interaction between men and women in better hotels. Neither the shabby hotel's lobby area nor the small dirty guestroom serve to elevate the enjoyment of oneself but rather humiliate one who is not completely carried away by lust:

And when he takes her clothes off and she feels his body, naked, strong, warm, and glowing, she also feels the unfamiliar damp sheet, like a wet sponge. . . . her nerves are trembling, and while he pulls her towards him, she feels that she wants to run away . . . away from this house where people copulate for money — quick, quick, the next one, the next — where poor people sell themselves like stamps . . .¹²⁵

Francine's and Else's experiences in the hotel suggest that modern women (and men) and their bodies are inscribed in an alienated reality that is the result of the mature money-based economy, but Werfel and Schnitzler still allow these women to participate in a game that may enchant if the

situation is right. Christine's horrifying night at the cheap hotel illustrates how these dynamics play themselves out among those who do not have the money to even camouflage their complete objectification in this capitalist world. Where money is fully acknowledged, here in the negative by its absence, there is no need for decency, consideration, or even strategy. Where Carla had to plot for days, the police can simply storm into the hotel guest's room during a nightly raid to find out his or her real identity. And if the "various forms of placemaking"¹²⁶ in the grand hotel invite the guest to experience its space as bigger and brighter than it is, to go beyond his or her own limits to blossom into a new, more spectacular persona, the tawdry thin walls of the flophouse seem to fall onto the guest and reduce the space and the guest to little more than a cave and its animal.

However, this is all that Christine and Ferdinand can afford, and given this experience, they choose not to repeat the horror of this night. It is only when they decide to commit suicide together that they consider another stay in a hotel, a good one this time, since money is no longer an issue. As we know, they do not realize this plan. Instead, they find a different, much more adventurous and life-affirming solution when they decide to rob Christine's post office. This act will certainly not set them free from thinking about money, but they will do so in a different way. By stealing money (the biggest abstraction in the exchange of values) from the state (the biggest abstraction in human interaction), they revert the state of alienation that modern capitalism brings about, in the way a double negative works: nobody will be personally able to claim the stolen money, and the funds appear as nothing but numbers in a big book that Christine has to keep. Instead of disappearing in the black, anonymous hole that is the state's record book, this money will help two young people to realize their vision of a life more worth living. They will have to live at a distance to the world that the presence of the stolen money prescribes, but this distance will ensure that they will succeed in playing along in a society that does not reward the honest. If Eicher's principle of mirroring as the governing principle in this novel applies beyond the last narrated event in the story, Christine will replicate her aunt's social ascent and become an accomplished player on the social stage that is the hotel.

The four stories examined in this chapter share a very similar basic constellation, and they all comment on the precarious position that young unmarried women face in a setting that does not offer them orientation in a way a traditional bourgeois home supposedly could. As objects of desire in a male-dominated, money-ridden society, these women struggle to find a legitimate place without losing themselves in the ongoing display of social masks and exchange of social performances. Torn between temptation and disgust, elemental drives and culture, enchantment and manipulation, they choose solutions that cannot be called productive or emancipatory in any of

the four cases. Early twentieth-century hotels are run by men, vacations in them are financed by male providers, and a strict behavioral code does not tolerate women who follow their own agenda. Those who do are driven straightaway to self-destruction, these stories seem to teach us. The hotel does offer limited freedom to these young women, the freedom to transgress set personal boundaries. But hotels are no arena to push for general societal, political change, and any transgression will therefore be judged as a personal, psychological, economic, or a moral one. Real emancipation does not result from the struggles of these women. Hotels are social and cultural places, not political ones.¹²⁷

If it is true that women's *a priori* disadvantaged situation in a male-centered capitalist society determines their level of freedom and possibilities in literary hotels in the early twentieth century, one should expect to find a very different situation for men. The following discussion of four hotel texts featuring male protagonists will show us how men cope with the strange semi-public atmosphere and the codes that govern all interaction in these places.

Notes

* An abridged version of this chapter was published in *German Studies Review* 27. 2 (May 2004): 325–40.

¹ Arthur Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else*, in Schnitzler, *Desire and Delusion*, trans. Margret Schaefer (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2003), 192–264; here: 194. Translation modified. The German original reads: “Wie festlich das Hotel aussieht. Man spürt: Lauter Leute, denen es gut geht und die keine Sorgen haben. Ich zum Beispiel. Haha!” (Arthur Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else*, in *Gesammelte Werke: Die Erzählenden Schriften*, vol. 2 [Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961], 324–81; here: 325).

² Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else*, trans. Schaefer, 230. The German original is “Zauberburg” (355).

³ Today, the Hotel Fratazza in San Martino is a two-star hotel that advertises its appeal to families. Schnitzler's prewar hotel, on the other hand, is clearly an upscale establishment if not a grand hotel.

⁴ See chapter 2 of this study.

⁵ Franz Werfel, “Die Hotelertreppe,” in *Deutschland erzählt: Von Arthur Schnitzler bis Uwe Johnson*, ed. Benno von Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1972), 87–97. This and all following quotations are from Franz Werfel, “The Staircase,” in *Twilight of a World*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Viking, 1937), 421–38; here: 426.

⁶ This transition could be characterized as a shift from experiencing the world (the German word “Erlebnis” is much more appropriate here) to living through or witnessing events (“Ereignisse”), a terminological pair of opposites that shares traits with what David Frisby calls the general qualities of the “[objective and subjective] culture” in Simmel's analysis of modernism (David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, [1986; rpt. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002], 41). Sooner or later, all the young women in our texts realize that modern human interaction, and especially sexual en-

counters, should not be approached as “Erlebnisse” with deep and far-reaching consequences for them as human beings. Rather, they are “Ereignisse” in a potentially endless series of similar events.

⁷ Except for one very superficial essay by a German university student, published on a Web site that is no longer available, and Robert Weigel’s chapter “‘Der Abgrund lockt’: Zu Franz Werfels Erzählung ‘Die Hotelterre’” in his book *Zerfall und Aufbruch: Profile der österreichischen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 14–26, there has not been much critical attention paid to Werfel’s story.

⁸ The father’s former high position in Habsburg Austria suggests that the family are members of the aristocracy. The story itself does not stress this at all, on purpose, I maintain. Whereas some of the other texts discussed later in this study introduce people with aristocratic titles by name to illustrate the specific makeup of the assembled hotel society, names or titles are not mentioned in “Die Hotelterre.” The story is clearly set after the First World War, when aristocratic and upper bourgeois members of high society met and mingled in fancy European resorts, as I have shown in chapter 1. The real focus of Werfel’s story is on the shift from old to new morals in social interaction, and on the attitude the daughter adopts in this process. The portrayal of the father and his objections to his daughter’s staying at the hotel by herself associate him closely with moral values that literature has assigned to the bourgeoisie since the late eighteenth century and on which the genre of the bourgeois tragedy rests.

⁹ Translation modified. “Jetzt lag die tadellose Gliederpuppe wahrhaft im tiefsten Abgrund, und ein dichtes Grab wälzte sich über sie” (“Die Hotelterre,” 94).

¹⁰ “. . . eine große Öde, die ihr in den Ohren rauschte wie gottloses Wasser” (96).

¹¹ “Warum trat kein Gast aus seiner Tür? Warum ging kein Mensch vorbei? Warum erbarmte sich in den weiten Gängen des Hotels auch nicht ein Schritt mit menschlichem Hall?” (97). Translation modified.

¹² In German, it is a “kathedralenhohe[r] Raum” (89).

¹³ Translation modified. The German original reads: “Und in der *Höhe des Abgrunds* hing der gewaltige Kronenlüster . . .” (89, my emphasis, BM).

¹⁴ A feeling of “gottloses Phlegma, der Öde, ein[em] tödliche[n] Übermut” (96).

¹⁵ “Wie ein Pferd ging sie gleichmäßig im Gespann des Männerblicks, der sie kräftig von hinten zügelte. . . . Als des Herrn Tritt unter ihr, von neuem hallend, sich entfernte, bedauerte sie es fast, ohne Fesseln und sich selber überlassen weitergehen zu müssen” (92–93).

¹⁶ Weigel, in his chapter on Werfel’s “Hotelterre,” focuses on this state of limbo in which Francine seems fatefully caught. For him, she is a representative of a generation that has been brought up in the morally conservative traditions of a prewar generation but for whom these values have lost all deeper meaning. For Weigel, the term “Wertevakuum,” a vacuum of values (“Der Abgrund lockt,” 23), describes the era’s general moral and social atmosphere.

¹⁷ In his brief discussion of “Die Hotelterre,” Reffet explains Francine’s suicide as an expression of shame: “Elle a honte de constater qu’un play-boy aux temples grises est un homme ‘comme elle les aime, malgré tout’ (74). . . . elle n’ose pas choisir” (380–81). [Francine is ashamed to concede that a playboy with gray temples would

be a “man of her liking, in spite of everything”. . . . She does not dare to choose. BM] Michel Reff  t, *L'Oeuvre de Franz Werfel jusqu'en 1930: Un Itin  raire Moral et Politique* (Lille: n.p., 1991).

¹⁸ Elisabeth Bronfen, in her *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 1992), identifies this tension as one of the main factors influencing Else's existential undecidedness.

¹⁹ “Ihre Eltern waren sehr alt und von der ahnungslosen Sittenstrenge l  ngst verschollener Zeiten erf  llt. Nicht da   sie, Francine, gegen solche Sittenstrenge auch nur in einem Winkel ihres Herzens rebelliert h  tte. Sie war durchaus einverstanden mit ihr, wie mit jeder Festlegung und Erschwerung des Lebens” (88). [“Her parents were very old, and they had the unsuspecting austerity of morals that characterized an age long past. Not that she, Francine, had rebelled against that austerity, even in the depths of her heart. She entirely assented to it, as to everything that gave fixity to life and weighed it down” (424).]

²⁰ Like many authors, Werfel portrays the father figure as much more conservative than the mother, who, in the tradition of the matchmaking mother (see Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* [1772] or Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* [1784], two early examples), does not object to her daughter's desire to stay at the hotel alone while her parents go on a trip to Sicily. The reference to the mother's penitential exercises years earlier even suggests that she too has a secret not dissimilar to that of her daughter: “Sie [Francine] dachte an den Wallfahrtsort, wohin die Mutter sie einmal, noch als Kind, mitgenommen hatte. . . . und die Mutter war die hundert Stufen in Leistung einer Bu  , zerknirscht, auf den Knien emporgedr  hlt” (89). [“She thought of the shrine to which her mother had once taken her when she was a child. . . . And her mother, in performance of a vow of penitence, had crept up all the hundred steps upon her knees” (425).]

²¹ “. . . eine wei  -ovale und selbst  berzeugte Scheibe . . . , die sie [=die Gliederpuppe Guido] an Stelle eines Gesichts trug” (90). [“. . . the blank white self-confident oval which he wore instead of a face” (427).]

²² Werfel does not mention such readings for Francine. Her literary sister, Schnitzler's Else, however, explicitly mentions her familiarity with and love for one of the most famous “immoral” love-stories of the eighteenth century, Abb   Pr  vost's *Manon Lescault* (1731), when she marvels: “Mit dreizehn war ich vielleicht das einzige Mal wirklich verliebt. In den Van Dyck — oder vielmehr in den Abb   Des Grieux, und in die Renard auch” (*Fr  ulein Else*, 325). [“Maybe at thirteen, I really was in love. With Van Dyck . . . — no, the Abb   Des Grieux —, and with Marie Renard . . . ” (*Fr  ulein Else*, 194).] Later in her monologue, Else mentions reading Guy de Maupassant's novel *Notre Coeur* (1890, *Our Heart* or *A Woman's Pastime*): “Das Buch aufs Nachtkastl, ich lese heut' Nacht noch weiter in ‘Notre Coeur,’ unbedingt, was immer geschieht” (*Fr  ulein Else*, 337). [“The book on the night table. So. I'm going to read further in ‘Notre Coeur’ no matter what happens” (*Fr  ulein Else*, 207).] Given the general resemblances between Francine, Else, and Zweig's Erna Salomonsohn as daughters of upper middle class families, it seems reasonable to assume that Francine, too, is a reader of romantic literature.

²³ It is important to remember that Francine does not want a child at all, not only as a result of her sexual adventure, but even as a married woman: “Sie versuchte auch zu

glauben, daß ihre Gleichgültigkeit gegen Kindern eine heilbare Eigenschaft sei, Philips wegen" (94). ["She tried also to convince herself that her indifference about children was not irremediable, on Philip's account" (432).]

²⁴ Weigel comments: "Da wir annehmen können, daß [ihre Affaire mit Guido] ihre erste war, wird klar, daß sie sich dem Phänomen der Liebe gegenüber schon länger keinen Illusionen hingibt, sondern ihren Wert als ebenso vergänglich und sinnentleert betrachtet wie den vieler anderer der Epoche." [Since we can safely assume that her affair with Guido was the first of this kind for Francine, it seems clear that she has long lost any illusions about love, that its value is as ephemeral and devoid of meaning as many other values of her era. BM] ("Der Abgrund lockt," 20).

²⁵ This situation is similar to Else's, as Susan Anderson sees it. For her, Else is caught in a "double-bind" of being the voyeur and being the object of the voyeur as she assimilates the male gaze. Her adoption of the male gaze betrays the lack of a strong sense of self, for which she compensates with assigned external identity, based on her exterior beauty. See Susan C. Anderson "Seeing Blindly: Voyeurism in Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else* and Andreas-Salomé's *Fenitschka*," in *Die Seele . . . ist ein weites Land: Kritische Beiträge zum Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, ed. Joseph Strelka (Bern: Peter Lang 1996), 13–27; here: 16–18. One could assume Werfel lives out a male fantasy in this scene. The glorification of the male will, the happy submission of the woman's will, her readiness at being thus objectified all betray such male daydreaming — which Werfel, the man, might not always have been able to live out with his anything-but-submissive wife at the time, Alma Mahler-Werfel.

²⁶ Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," trans. Thomas Levin, in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–58; here: 56.

²⁷ "Sie sah, daß man in der Halle schon die Tische für die Abendmusik und den Tanz rückte. Es war höchste Zeit zur Flucht" (88). ["In the lobby they were already arranging the tables for the evening music and dancing. It was high time for flight," 425.]

²⁸ In the scene that follows, Werfel uses the same topos as Schnitzler in *Fräulein Else* when he connects his main character's decision to die with the sounds of music that exert a powerful influence over her. As I have pointed out elsewhere (*Masken des Lebens, Gesichter des Todes: Zum Verhältnis von Darstellung und Tod im erzählerischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers* [Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999]), Schnitzler's — and consequently, Werfel's — decision to set death and music in such conceptual proximity needs to be seen in the context of Nietzsche's essay *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik* (The Birth of Tragedy Out Of the Spirit of Music). In this, the philosopher explains his view of music as an "Urkraft" that stands in close relationship with other "original forces" such as pain, untamed love, unmediated body-language (dance), in short, all eruptive Dionysian forces that disturb the Apollinian order and pace of civilized life and lead to chaos and destruction, but also to an authentic expression.

²⁹ "Die Erlösung hat mich leer gemacht. Mir ist, als hätte ich heute einen großen Verlust erlitten. . . . Und was ich gewesen bin, werde ich doch nie wieder sein . . ." (96).

³⁰ This needs to be qualified further. Francine does not decide actively to commit suicide, as the result of logical considerations or a form of public protest. As is her nature, she surrenders to the magical attraction she feels to the dangerous abyss and the beautiful chandelier. Yet, once she succumbs to these forces, she develops a very active “tödlicher Übermut” (96), a “deadly arrogance of spirit” (435) that makes her take the suicidal leap towards the chandelier.

³¹ Again, there is a striking resemblance between Else’s and Francine’s visions while they commit suicide. When Francine leaps into the air, she attempts to swim but actually flies; Else’s last thoughts revolve around her feeling that she is flying. And the act of flying also stands in stark contrast to Francine’s cumbersome walk up the staircase.

³² See my earlier discussion of the strange paradox that the narrator creates when he describes the chandelier as “[hanging] down into space from the height of the abyss” (425, quote modified).

³³ Stefan Zweig, “Untergang eines Herzens,” *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben* (1927; rpt: Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982), 145–81. All English quotes from: “A Failing Heart,” in *Conflicts*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking, 1927), 111–62. Even though Zweig’s novella seems to have been released to the wider public in 1927, the writer must have circulated his text among friends and colleagues before that. Franz Werfel commented on the collection of novellas entitled *Verwirrung der Gefühle*, in which “Untergang eines Herzens” was included, in September 1926; see Jeffrey Berlin and Hans-Ulrich Lindken, eds., “Der unveröffentlichte Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Werfel und Stefan Zweig,” *Modern Austrian Literature* 24. 2, *Special Franz Werfel Issue* (1991): 89–122; here: 101. And the official Web site of the Freud-Museum in Vienna posts the following entry for the year 1926: “In einem Brief an Stefan Zweig analysiert Freud dessen Novellen ‘Vierundzwanzig Stunden aus dem Leben einer Frau,’ ‘Untergang eines Herzens’ und ‘Verwirrung der Gefühle.’ [In a letter to Stefan Zweig, Freud offers an analysis of the writer’s novellas “Untergang eines Herzens” and “Verwirrung der Gefühle.”] For the museum’s Web site, see: <http://www.freudmuseum.at/freud/chronolg/1926-d.htm>.

³⁴ See Jeffrey Berlin and Hans-Ulrich Lindken, eds., “Der unveröffentlichte Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Werfel und Stefan Zweig.” Unfortunately, there are no records left that would allow us to date Werfel’s novella more precisely. It was published in 1927 in a collection of four novels entitled *Geheimnisse eines Menschen* (Human Secrets), but whether Werfel wrote it while Zweig was writing his story and with his knowledge, whether he wrote it as a response to Zweig’s, or whether the two authors accidentally chose a similar topic at a similar time, possibly as a response to Schnitzler’s famous *Fräulein Else* from 1924, will probably remain an unanswered if intriguing question.

³⁵ Since Werfel does not mention the name of the place where Francine vacations, we can only infer from subtle clues that her hotel is supposed to be somewhere in northern Italy — one of those pointers is the fact that it will take her parents until the next morning to return from Sicily by train. Given the speed with which trains traveled at the time, a whole night’s travel would suffice to cross most of Italy. This would place this hotel in roughly the same geographic area as the one that Zweig’s story features

as its setting — and support my hypothesis that the two writers might have conceived the fundamentals of their stories together, in the spirit of competitive collaboration.

³⁶ It may be the secrecy with which Erna has to operate that provides the thrill in her adventures that is missing in Francine's. As a forbidden act, sex with another hotel guest could signal some sort of rebellion against the parents' authority and a victory over their supervision. Since Francine's parents are absent from the hotel, Francine does not have to fear being found out by them; the heightened thrill of the forbidden gone, sex with Guido seems to bring nothing beyond pure sexual gratification.

³⁷ In his article "The Choice and Function of Setting in the Novellen of Stefan Zweig" (*Neophilologus* 66 [1982]: 574–88), David Turner explains Zweig's predilection for non-domestic settings, and distinguishes between "those which help to define a dislocation or disorientation and those which express the presence or absence of normal social and moral restraints" (575). In "Untergang eines Herzens," both functions are at work. The setting of the Italian resort clearly disorients Salomonsohn, while it has a liberating effect on the daughter, who "blossoms into full sexuality" in the "absence of normal social and moral restraints" (580).

³⁸ "A Failing Heart," 114. "Erna, seine Tochter, sie war es, die da nächtlich aus fremdem Bett in das ihre schlich" (148).

³⁹ His wife replies: "Heute abreisen? Was sind das für lächerliche Ideen . . . und nur, weil dir die Herren unsympathisch sind . . . Du mußt ja nicht mit ihnen verkehren[. . .] ich sehe nicht den mindesten Anlaß für eine Abreise . . . ich bleibe da und Erna auch" ("Untergang eines Herzens," 165). ["Leave today? What on earth are you talking about? Simply because you find these gentlemen uncongenial. You don't need to associate with them. . . . I see no reason for leaving, so I shall stay here with Erna . . ."] ("A Failing Heart," 138–39).]

⁴⁰ "A Failing Heart," 142. "Nur was da wehtut, bin ich," fühlte er, 'nur das bin ich, einzig nur dieses Stück heißer Haut . . . und einzig, was da innen umwühlt, nur das gehört noch mir, das ist *meine* Krankheit, *mein* Tod . . .'" (168).

⁴¹ David Turner, in his *Moral Values and the Human Zoo: The 'Novellen' of Stefan Zweig* (Hull: Hull UP, 1988), points out an important shift in the development of the classic father-daughter conflict that we know from the traditional bourgeois tragedy: "In his [Salomonsohn's] patriarchal role and his puritanical attitude to work and pleasure he is reminiscent of Meister Anton in Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*, but where Anton's response to his daughter's suspected sexual misdemeanor is moral outrage and concern for his reputation, Salomonsohn seems indifferent to moral questions and public opinion and judges his daughter's escapades privately, in terms of the effect they have on the personal relationships between the two of them" (65). This is certainly an important change in the development of bourgeois morals and their importance in public life. On the other hand, Turner's emphasis on the incestuous tendencies in Salomonsohn's love for his daughter leads him to miss the moral aspect of Salomonsohn's outrage. After all, Zweig has Salomonsohn use the term "diese Schande" ("the shame of it," "A Failing Heart," 116) six times right after he discovers his daughter's escapade ("Untergang eines Herzens," 149–50), and when his daughter asks about the reasons for his strange behavior during breakfast the next morning, his outraged — and only thought but not uttered — reply, is "Was ich habe?" dröhnte es in ihm. 'Eine Hure zur Tochter . . .'" ("Untergang eines Her-

zens," 152). ["What's the matter?" The words form themselves in his mind, but he does not utter them. 'My daughter is a whore — and I have not the courage to tell her that I know it.' ("A Failing Heart," 121).] This language is clearly part of the bourgeois moral discourse and justifies my further use of the term "bourgeois morals" in the context of Salomonsohn's response to his daughter's sexual behavior.

⁴² Turner, *The 'Novellen' of Stefan Zweig*, 67.

⁴³ Turner, *The 'Novellen' of Stefan Zweig*, 68.

⁴⁴ "A Failing Heart," 118; "Untergang eines Herzens," 150.

⁴⁵ Turner, *The 'Novellen' of Stefan Zweig*, 69.

⁴⁶ He realizes: "Aber was weiß ich denn überhaupt von ihnen? . . . Den ganzen Tag schufte ich für sie, sitze vierzehn Stunden im Kontor, genau so wie früher mit dem Musterkoffer auf der Bahn . . . nur Geld für sie zu schaffen, Geld, Geld, damit sie schöne Kleider haben und reich werden . . ." ("Untergang eines Herzens," 149). ["After all, what do I know about them? I spend the whole day working for them, fourteen hours at my desk, just as, long ago, I used to travel with my box of samples — only to earn money for them, money, money in abundance, so that they can buy fine clothes, play at being rich" ("A Failing Heart," 116).]

⁴⁷ The text does not clarify whether Salomonsohn's wife is Jewish or not. But the eagerness with which she pursues the religiously neutral title of "Kommerzienrat" and the family's integration into "good society" shows how little she wishes to be identified with the Jewish people.

⁴⁸ "A Failing Heart," 118, translation modified. "Und kaum waren sie oben und im eigenen Haus, da mochten sie meinen ehrlichen guten Namen nicht mehr . . . den Kommissionsrat, Geheimrat habe ich mir kaufen müssen, damit man sie nicht mehr Frau Salomonsohn anspricht, damit sie vornehm tun können . . ." ("Untergang eines Herzens," 150).

⁴⁹ Cf. Simmel's statement: "Wie sich das Geld zwischen Mensch und Mensch schiebt, so zwischen Mensch und Ware. . . . Erinnern wir uns der früheren Ausmachung, wie oft das Zweckbewußtsein auf der Stufe des Geldes halt macht, so zeigt sich, daß das Geld uns mit der Vergrößerung seiner Rolle in immer weitere psychische Distanz zu den Objekten stellt, oft in eine solche, daß ihr qualitatives Wesen uns davor ganz außer Sehweite rückt und die innere Berührung mit ihrem vollen, eigenen Sein durchbrochen wird" (*Philosophie des Geldes* [1900; rpt. 1920; rpt. Cologne: Parkland, 2001], 542–43. ["Just as money intervenes between person and person, so it intervenes between person and commodity. . . . If we recall how often awareness of purpose is arrested at the level of money, then it becomes clear that money and the enlargement of its role places us at an increasingly greater mental distance from objects. This often occurs in such a way that we lose sight of their qualitative nature so that the inner contact with their whole distinctive existence is disrupted." *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. T. Bottomore and D. Frisby, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 477–78.] This has already been commented upon in chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Salomonsohn's repeated ironic use of the word "vornehm" (=distinguished or elegant) seems to echo Simmel's definition of the term "Vornehmheit" ("distinction," see chapter 2). For Simmel, real distinction cannot be assessed in monetary terms but

is rather a state of mind that exists outside of any competitive or comparative context. See *Philosophie des Geldes*, 430–37; *Philosophy of Money*, 389–94.

⁵¹ “A Failing Heart,” 122–23. “Hier könnte man glücklich sein. Einmal hab ich’s auch haben wollen, auch einmal selber fühlen, wie schön die Welt der Sorglosen ist. . . . Nur ein paar leichte Atemzüge wollte ich vorher [vor dem Tod], auch einmal etwas für mich . . .” (“Untergang eines Herzens,” 153). Zweig’s *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982) suggests that the idea of taking a deep and quiet breath is not really an option in fancy hotels anyway. More than once, the novel’s protagonist Christine is said to be “atemlos.” It is clear that older parents like the “Kommerzienrat” and the younger generation cannot share the same kind of enjoyment in this place, even if Erna’s mother tries hard to be part of it.

⁵² Because Erna is blond, it is probably not all too obvious to the stereotyping public that she might be of Jewish descent. In the same way, Else marvels: “‘Mir sieht’s niemand an. Ich bin sogar blond, rötlichblond, und Rudi sieht absolut aus wie ein Aristokrat’” (333). [“No one can tell by looking at me. I’m even a blonde, a strawberry blonde, and Rudi looks absolutely like an aristocrat.” *Fräulein Else*, 203.]

⁵³ “A Failing Heart,” 119. “Oh, das Geld, das verfluchte Geld hat sie verdorben. . . . das hat sie mir fremd gemacht . . . Ich Narr hab es zusammengeschart und mich dabei selber bestohlen, mich hab ich arm gemacht damit und sie selber schlecht . . .” (151).

⁵⁴ See especially his often-quoted poem “Und klagt ihr wieder/ Eure krit’sche Not” in which he names “Liebe, Spiel und Tod” (love, games or gambling, and death) as the three eternal and universal topics that underlie all literature to some extent. Arthur Schnitzler, *Aphorismen und Betrachtungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1967), 17.

⁵⁵ See especially Felix Tweraser’s study *Political Dimensions of Arthur Schnitzler’s Late Fiction* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998) in which Schnitzler’s late prose is read in the context of Austrian postwar politics. Tweraser’s study reveals that many of these texts, even though set in a prewar Habsburg setting, implicitly discuss issues that the new republic faced after the loss of the old imperial social and political structure.

⁵⁶ Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, in his essay “Inflation der Werte und Gefühle” (in *Akten des Internationalen Symposiums ‘Arthur Schnitzler und seine Zeit,’* ed. Giuseppe Farese [Bern/Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 1985], 170–81), offers a detailed analysis of those elements in the story (like the increasing sum that is needed to save Else’s father and that Schmidt-Dengler connects to the very real fears of inflation during the 1920s) that betray Schnitzler’s critical stance towards Austria after 1919, and he shows how Schnitzler weaves these postwar issues into a narrative that takes place well before the war.

⁵⁷ Money does not really play a role in “Die Hotelterasse” beyond the fact that it enables Francine and her parents to stay at the fancy hotel; and in Zweig’s story, the alienating effects of money are felt by the one whose body is not the object of desire in a money-based economy.

⁵⁸ “Nackt, ganz nackt. Wie wird mich Cissy beneiden! Und andere auch. Aber sie trauen sich nicht, Sie möchten ja alle so gern. Nehmt Euch ein Beispiel” (364).

⁵⁹ *Fräulein Else*, 193. “Die arme Verwandte, von der reichen Tante eingeladen. Sicher bereut sie’s schon. Soll ich dir’s schriftlich geben, teure Tante, daß ich an Paul nicht im Traum denke?” (*Fräulein Else*, 325).

⁶⁰ Zweig’s Christine Hoflehner in *Rausch der Verwandlung*, lacking the superiority that the right background provides, will fall over this same issue.

⁶¹ “Schraubt sich künstlich hinauf. Was hilft Ihnen Ihr erster Schneider, Herr von Dorsday? Dorsday! Sie haben sicher einmal anders geheißsen” (326).

⁶² “Aber ich bin kein Erpresser, ich bin nur ein Mensch, der mancherlei Erfahrungen gemacht hat, — unter andern die, daß alles auf der Welt seinen Preis hat und daß einer, der sein Geld verschenkt, wenn er in der Lage ist, einen Gegenwert dafür zu bekommen, ein ausgemachter Narr ist. Und — was ich mir dieses Mal kaufen will, Else, so viel es auch ist, Sie werden nicht ärmer dadurch, daß Sie es verkaufen” (*Fräulein Else*, 346).

⁶³ To be sure, this is the rational description of a proposal that has a more personal dimension. What Dorsday wants to buy himself here, too, is male and possibly social superiority. It is likely that he has felt the same resentment that Else voices in society at large, and by “enslaving” and humiliating Else, who is a representative of this society, in this way, he can take cruel revenge on those members of the bourgeoisie, like Else, who deny him full legitimacy, and on women. Else’s mother mentions that Dorsday has an affair with a woman who is “nothing very high class” (199), possibly because he cannot win the favors of “finer” women. This is speculation, of course, but if thought through, it could reveal Dorsday’s proposal as an expression of his sexual frustration and his desire to avenge himself.

⁶⁴ “Mit einem verheirateten Manne war sie in Hamburg und hat im Atlantic gewohnt . . .” (334).

⁶⁵ *Fräulein Else*, 203. “Paul, wenn du mir die dreißigtausend verschaffst, kannst du von mir haben, was du willst. . . . Das ist ja schon wieder aus einem Roman. Die edle Tochter verkauft sich für den geliebten Vater, und hat am End’ noch ein Vergnügen davon” (333).

⁶⁶ “Gnade, Gnade, Herr Doktor Fiala. Mit Vergnügen, mein Fräulein. Bemühen Sie sich in mein Schlafzimmer. — Tu mir doch den Gefallen, Paul, verlange dreißigtausend Gulden von deinem Vater. . . . Gern, liebe Kusine. Ich habe Zimmer Nummer soundsoviel, um Mitternacht erwarte ich dich. [. . .] Schade, daß keine Leute mehr im Freien sind. Dem Herrn dort am Waldesrand gefalle ich offenbar sehr gut. O, mein Herr, nackt bin ich noch viel schöner, und es kostet einen Spottpreis, dreißigtausend Gulden. Vielleicht bringen Sie Ihre Freunde mit, dann kommt es billiger” (348).

⁶⁷ “Ja, so mach’ ich es. Ich komme zu ihm ins Zimmer und erst, wenn er vor meinen Augen die Depesche geschrieben — ziehe ich mich aus. Und die Depesche behalte ich in der Hand. Ha, wie unappetitlich” (361).

⁶⁸ This is a good illustration of Simmel’s thesis, in his *Philosophy of Money*, that money steps in between the subject and the object and makes direct contact impossible. See chapter 2 of this study and my earlier discussion of this idea in this chapter.

⁶⁹ See Rolf Allerdissen, *Arthur Schnitzler: Impressionistisches Rollenspiel und skeptischer Moralismus in seinen Erzählungen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1985), 38; Elisabeth Bronfen,

Over Her Dead Body, 283–85; Lorna Martens, “Naked Bodies in Schnitzler’s Late Prose Fiction” in *Die Seele . . . ist ein weites Land: Kritische Beiträge zum Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, ed. Joseph Strelka (Bern: Peter Lang 1996), 107–29; here: 115; Margaret Morse, “Decadence and Social Change — Arthur Schnitzler’s Work as an Ongoing Process of Deconstruction,” *Modern Austrian Literature* 10.2 (1977): 37–52; here: 45; William Rey, *Arthur Schnitzler: Die späte Prosa als Gipfel seines Schaffens* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1968), 55.

⁷⁰ There is an obvious element of sadism involved in this fantasy, an apparent wish to punish men who desire her with their own weapons, so to speak. By tempting, even arousing them and then denying them sexual satisfaction, she induces a sexual frustration that will lead to neurosis and, in her scenario, suicide. The path she chooses later follows a similar logic. If she cannot fully prevent Dorsday from getting sexual satisfaction through her, she has to kill herself to destroy the object of desire. In an even more drastic vision, Else dreams about bequeathing her naked corpse to Dorsday, thus again denying him satisfaction even though the object of desire is, theoretically, right before his eyes. “Aber ich werde einen Brief hinterlassen mit der testamentarischen Verfügung: Herr von Dorsday hat das Recht, meinen Leichnam zu sehen. Meinen schönen nackten Mädchenleichnam” (358). [“But I’ll leave a letter behind with a will: Herr von Dorsday has the right to see my corpse. My beautiful, naked young girl’s corpse” (234).]

⁷¹ Of all the places she considers, Italy appears with the highest frequency. Schnitzler seems to be playing with the German cultural trope of Italy as the country of longing (das Land der Sehnsucht) that Goethe made so famous in his novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1794).

⁷² “Alles in unserem Haus wird mit Scherzen erledigt, und keinem ist scherzhaft zu Mut. Jeder hat eigentlich Angst vor dem Andern, jeder ist allein” (337).

⁷³ This refers back to my earlier discussion of the “seasoned guests” who know how to play along with the general social rules that govern life in this hotel. At the same time, I want to point out that Schnitzler takes the metaphor literally when he has the two play tennis with Else. There is no mention of a fourth player in the text.

⁷⁴ Correspondingly, during her first stop in the hotel room, Else goes through a whole list of men who could be potential “saviors.” Upon returning to her room, her monologue revolves solely around Dorsday, Paul, and various scenarios involving these two men, one of which will ultimately take place if she does not kill herself first.

⁷⁵ “Bin ich wirklich so schön wie im Spiegel? Ach, kommen Sie doch näher, schönes Fräulein. Ich will Ihre blutroten Lippen küssen. Ich will Ihre Brüste an meine pressen. Wie schade, daß das Glas zwischen uns ist, das kalte Glas” (365).

⁷⁶ “Wie gut würden wir uns miteinander vertragen. Nicht wahr? Wir brauchten gar niemanden andern. Es gibt vielleicht gar keine andern Menschen” (365).

⁷⁷ “Es rieselt durch meine Haut. Die Dame spielt weiter. Köstlich rieselt es durch meine Haut. Wie wundervoll ist es, nackt zu sein” (372).

⁷⁸ Else’s decision to die is the result of a longer psychological process that starts early in the text, with Else’s decision to stop playing tennis, with her first reference to her Veronal, and with the first of her various morbid fantasies about lying on cold marble

like a dead body. The direction that her fate will take is so obvious and inscribed in the text on so many different levels — in her explicit references to deadly scenarios, in the rhetoric of her monologue, in the general “color code” of her story that often features black and red — that it does not make sense to assert, as Hartmut Scheible does, that Else does not ultimately kill herself. (Hartmut Scheible, *Arthur Schnitzler in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* [Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1976], 118). For a detailed analysis of the discourse of death that permeates the novella, see the chapter “Wenn Worte töten können: *Fräulein Else*” in my *Masken des Lebens* (137–70).

⁷⁹ It is significant that even in this dream, Else ends up homeless: “Wo ist denn meine Gruft? Hat man die auch unterschlagen?” (353). [“Where is my crypt? Did they embezzle that too?” (228).]

⁸⁰ “[D]as Hotel leuchtet bis her. Ich muß zurück. Es ist schrecklich, daß ich zurück muß” (354).

⁸¹ Fittingly, Dorsday tries to justify his indecent proposal with the “magic” (“Zauber,” here translated as “spell”) that Else emanates: “Ich bin es [=verrückt] wohl auch ein wenig, denn es geht ein Zauber von Ihnen aus, Else, den Sie wohl selbst nicht ahnen” (346). [“You are looking at me as though I were crazy, Else. I am, perhaps, a little, because you exercise a spell that you aren’t perhaps aware of yourself, Else” (220).]

⁸² Lorna Martens explains the complex significance of Else’s striptease as follows: “In *Fräulein Else*, the body is the place of coincidence of projections, of different codes. In the fantasy of the femme fatale, the young female body signifies a woman’s power. In the world of economic realities, it signifies (to the woman at least) women’s servitude and degradation. In the context of Else’s social milieu, a naked body in the middle of an evening gathering signifies madness. Thus, when Else drops her coat, she reveals not so much her body as the contradictory significations that society attaches to the female body, contradictions of which she has become traumatically aware” (“Naked Bodies,” 123–24).

⁸³ Martens comments: “Else’s act does not at all have the effect of empowering her: rather, it is a fatally wrong move, one which places her in yet another losing position” (“Naked Bodies,” 123).

⁸⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, “The Hotel Lobby,” 56.

⁸⁵ Stefan Zweig, *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982). All English translations are mine since Zweig’s novel has not yet been translated into English.

⁸⁶ This is editor Knut Beck’s explanation in his postscript to the novel: “Dann (=nach November 1931) brechen die Materialien zu diesem nachgelassenen, bisher unveröffentlichten Werk ab — vermutlich war es beim fiktiven Erzählen zu einer Krise gekommen, die bis zum Ende 1933 anhielt” (Knut Beck, “Nachbemerkenngen des Herausgebers,” *Rausch der Verwandlung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982), 313–29; here: 317). [After this date, there are no further notes on this so-far unpublished novel in Zweig’s literary estate — it is likely that Zweig experienced a narrative crisis that lasted until the end of the year 1933.]

⁸⁷ Beck, “Nachbemerkenngen,” 325.

⁸⁸ Thomas Eicher, "Das Ich im Spiegel. Beobachtungen an Stefan Zweigs Nachlaßroman 'Rausch der Verwandlung,'" *Sprachkunst: Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft* 25. 2 (1994): 373–88.

⁸⁹ The model for Zweig's literary hotel is the Grand Hotel Kronenhof in Pontresina. Zweig knew it from a vacation in the Swiss Alps in 1918.

⁹⁰ "... einem belanglosen Dorf unweit Krems, etwa zwei Eisenbahnstunden von Wien ..." (9).

⁹¹ Zweig highlights this idea in his descriptions of Ferdinand and Christine's Sunday afternoon dates when, in search of an affordable place to sit, talk, and make love, they have to roam all over Vienna like homeless people.

⁹² Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 126. See also chapter 2 of this study.

⁹³ David Turner discusses the nature of this crime in his essay "Flucht ins Private" ("Rausch, Ernüchterung und die Flucht ins Private: Zu Stefan Zweigs Roman aus dem Nachlaß," in *Stefan Zweig heute*, ed. Mark H. Gelber [New York: Peter Lang, 1987], 201–25). For Turner, Ferdinand's plan to make off with the post office's weekly deposits on a Friday afternoon does not represent a revolutionary or political act. Although the injustice of the class system in postwar Austria is criticized throughout the novel, especially through the contrast between the fancy hotel near St. Moritz and the shabby sex hotel in Vienna, this class conflict is not the main motivation for Ferdinand's action, according to Turner. As he has witnessed former fellow political activists, such as Christine's brother-in-law, settle comfortably in their pitiful narrow lives after the war, Ferdinand has lost his belief in political action for a cause and is now trying to protect his and Christine's personal interests: "Solange er 'droben' sein kann, scheint ihn eine klassenlose Gesellschaft nicht weiter zu interessieren" (Turner, "Flucht ins Private," 218). [As long as he can be "on top," he does not seem interested in a class-free society.] Turner argues that when Ferdinand repeatedly refers to the Austrian state as the worst of all thieves, as a "Lump" (285) who owes him everything but never even pretends to help him and his fellow traumatized war veterans, he is merely using a morally acceptable argument to dress up his personal agenda.

⁹⁴ Turner, "The Choice and Function of Setting in the Novellen of Stefan Zweig," 575.

⁹⁵ "Ja, die Amerikaner dächten doch in solchen Standesfragen demokratischer und großzügiger wie [*sic*] wir rückständige Europäer, die immer noch Gesellschaft spielten ... und schließlich nicht nur Kleider und Geld, sondern auch Bildung und Herkunft forderten" (135).

⁹⁶ The attitude of a Silesian couple from the lower aristocracy, fellow guests of the van Boolens at the Hotel in Pontresina, assigns a clear social place to the Americans, who do not possess European cachet and culture, but whom the members of the "old upper class" can tolerate: "[I]m Hotel wohnt jenes schlesische Gutsbesitzerpaar, Herr und Frau von Trenkwitz, die in ihrem Umgang streng auf Feudal und Klasse setzen und mitleidslos alle Bürgerlichen schneiden. Bei den van Boolens haben sie eine Ausnahme gemacht, erstens weil sie Amerikaner sind (schon dies eine Art Adel) und doch keine Juden ..." (137). [Among the guests in the hotel, there is a Silesian landowner and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. von Trenkwitz. Their social relations strictly

belong to the feudal and upper class, and they have no tolerance for the bourgeoisie. They did, however, make an exception with the van Boolens because they are Americans (this alone is a kind of nobility) and not Jews . . .]

⁹⁷ Such an inquiry would be a disaster for Christine's aunt, given her history. She is a former Viennese "Probierfräulein," that is, fashion model, who immigrated to the United States following a scandalous affair with a rich customer. To keep her quiet about this affair, the man's family gave her a significant sum of money with which she could move to America and help her future American husband start his now flourishing business. Neither the husband nor society are supposed to know about the origin of the money and her social ascent. Claire van Boolean certainly needs to observe the rules of good society with special care.

⁹⁸ "Nein, es kann nicht wahr sein, denkt sie. Man kann sich nicht plötzlich so verändern. Denn wenn es wirklich wahr wäre, dann wäre ich ja . . . Sie hält inne, sie wagt nicht das Wort zu denken. . . . 'Ja, ich bin schön.' . . . Umarmen möchte sie am liebsten diesen neuen Menschen, der sie ganz ist, ganz nah drängt sie sich heran, daß die Pupillen einander fast berühren, und so kußhaft nahe rührt die heiße Lippe die schwesterliche, daß für einen Augenblick im Anhauch des Atems die eigene Nähe zerrinnt" (68–70).

⁹⁹ Halfway through Christine's life-changing stay at the Palace Hotel, and a few days after she has adopted the new name of Christiane van Boolean, the narrator observes: "Unleugbar, Christiane von Boolean sieht anders aus, jünger, frischer als ihre Aschenputtelschwester . . ." (104). [Without any doubt, Christiane van Boolean looks different, younger, more rested than her Cinderella-sister . . .]

¹⁰⁰ See Eicher, "Das Ich im Spiegel," 379.

¹⁰¹ "Die ganze Atmosphäre sonniger Sorglosigkeit, eine Welt ohne Arbeit, eine Welt ohne Armut, die sie nie geahnt" (64).

¹⁰² "So gut sind sie alle, die Tante, der Onkel, so schön und geschmückt diese gepflegten, prächtigen Menschen ringsum, schön die Welt, das ganze Leben" (73).

¹⁰³ On Christine's first evening in Pontresina, she watches the sunset over the mountains: "Aber mit einemmal beginnen die Höhen neu zu leuchten in einem kälteren und fahleren Licht; siehe, in dem längst noch nicht erlöschten Azur ist der Mond erschienen." [But suddenly the mountaintops start to glow anew in a colder and paler light; look, the moon has appeared while [the skies' BM] azur has not yet faded.] (*Rausch*, 65). This is just one among many examples where Christine's inexperienced and romanticizing perspective colors the narrator's description and where it borders the narrative perspective of free indirect speech (also called narrated monologue).

¹⁰⁴ See Eicher, "Das Ich im Spiegel": "Die Etablierung eines — wenn auch modifizierten — Märchenschemas für die erste Hälfte des Romans scheitert also an einer dafür notwendigen perspektivischen Reduktion. Nur aus dem eingeschränkten Blickwinkel Christines scheint eine Bezeichnung des Geschehens als märchenhaft gerechtfertigt. Sie läßt einiges vom Ich-Bezug der Protagonistin erkennen . . ." (381). [Establishing an — admittedly modified — fairy-tale scheme for the first half of the novel necessarily fails since it requires limiting the [narrative] perspective. It is only Christine's limited perspective that justifies the label fairy-tale-like for every-

thing that happens. It is this perspective that allows insights in the self-centeredness of Zweig's protagonist.]

¹⁰⁵ This penchant for historical accuracy may be a function of Zweig's extensive work as a biographer, and some of his most important biographies were published in the 1920s and early 1930s, around the time that he started to work on his novel (*Fouché* was published in 1929, *Marie Antoinette* in 1932, and his *Maria Stuart* appeared in 1935). Zweig also knew the region about which he wrote in this novel first-hand: in January 1918 he had spent a few carefree days in the Hotel Kronenhof in Pontresina.

¹⁰⁶ "Strenggenommen müßte in diesem Schreibmaschinieren Gegenstandsverzeichnis auch der Jemand verzeichnet sein, der alltäglich morgens um acht Uhr die Glasscheibe hochzieht . . ." (7).

¹⁰⁷ "Da plötzlich: Tack! Sie schreckt auf. Und nochmals, härter, metallener, unduld-samer: Tack, Tack, Tack!" (11).

¹⁰⁸ Part of Christine's experience in Pontresina is her encounter with further innovations from the twentieth century. Cars play an important role, both General Elkins' Rolls Royce and the less expensive but fast cars that the men from Christine's new circle of friends drive. Fashion and jazz music are further elements in this society's pursuit of leisure with which Zweig situates the story clearly in the mid to late 1920s.

¹⁰⁹ "[S]o könne sie bei allen Ausflügen sich selber orientieren und ohne Sorge sein, den Weg zu verfehlen" (39).

¹¹⁰ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey* (1979; rpt. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), 52. See chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of this term.

¹¹¹ Even though Christine's behavior strikes the more seasoned and reserved members of the hotel society as odd, their initial response is positive, as the narrator observes: "Trotz allerhand Kopfschütteln über einzelne Naivitäten und Überschwenglichkeiten begegnet Christine von allen Seiten Gegenblicken herzlicher Einladung . . ." (107). [Even though people shake their heads about occasional signs of Christine's naïveté and effusiveness, they still shower her with looks of cordial inclusion . . .]

¹¹² Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," trans. Edward Shils, in *Re-thinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 69–79; here: 74–75. Translation modified.

¹¹³ "[I]ch meine, jemand, der . . . der sich eben nicht so benehmen kann, daß man's nicht merkt, woher er kommt . . . Es ist ihre Schuld . . . hätte sie sich nicht so auffällig gemacht, hätt' man's nicht bemerkt . . ." (148).

¹¹⁴ "Einschleicherin, weg da! Schmutz nicht das Haus an! Geh hin, wohin du gehörs,' scheint sie der Spiegel anzuherrschen. Wirklich, wie kann ich, denkt sie bestürzt, mich anmaßen, in solchem Zimmer, in dieser Welt wohnen zu wollen! Welche Schande für die Tante!" (51).

¹¹⁵ "Ja, *ich bin* schön!" (69, emphasis added).

¹¹⁶ "Langsam dreht sie sich zur Seite, ganz langsam und überprüft gleichzeitig, das Profil rückgewandt, die Wirkung der Bewegung: wieder begegnet der Blick im Spiegel einem stolzen zufriedenen Bruderblick" (69).

¹¹⁷ “Wenn jemand Wissender sie jetzt plötzlich mit Fräulein Hoflehner anredete, sie würde aufschrecken wie eine Schlafwandlerin . . . , so völlig ist der neue Name in sie hineingewachsen, so leidenschaftlich ist sie davon überzeugt, eine andere, jene andere zu sein” (104). Again, just as in the case of Zweig’s Salomonsohn family or Schnitzler’s von Dorsday, the name change serves as a catalyst in a person’s entry into the upper class.

¹¹⁸ “Studentin der Chemie, klug und gerissen, übermütig, sinnlich, *im letzten Augenblick doch beherrscht*, sieht sie mit ihren scharfen schwarzen Augen alles, was vorgeht” (113, emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ “Ein paar Blößen gesellschaftlicher Sicherheit hatte sich Christine unwillkürlich gegeben, vom Polospiel nicht gewußt, daß man dazu reiten muß, sie kannte nicht die Namen geläufigster Parfummachen wie Coty und Houbigant, sie unterschied nicht die Preisabstufung der Automobile, war nie bei einem Rennen gewesen. . . . Nein, da stimmte etwas nicht mit dem eleganten Fräulein van Boolean” (133).

¹²⁰ This process represents the reversing of Christine’s initial “growing” into the hotel: upon her arrival, she first embraced her new beautiful self in her room; then she developed a sense of legitimacy in this room; finally she formed personal relationships with the guests. Following the principle of mirroring that Eicher points out, Zweig reverses this process when her fairy tale is over.

¹²¹ “Es ist ein hartes In-sich-Sterben, ein Abfrieren und Erfrieren Stück für Stück, und sie sitzt starr, als horche sie in sich selbst hinein, wann das pochende, heiße van Boolean-Herz endlich aufhört, in ihr zu hämmern” (169).

¹²² “[A]ls die Finger ihn [den Klein-Reiflinger Rock] von der Stange heben, schauert sie in jenem widrigen Grauen, mit dem man etwas Verwestes abgreift: in diesen toten Menschen Hoflehner sollte sie wieder hinein!” (170).

¹²³ “Aber nichts gehört mehr ihr: andere werden hier schlafen in diesem Bett, andere durch dieses Fenster die goldene Landschaft sehen, andere sich spiegeln in diesem geschliffenen Glas, sie nie mehr, nie mehr! Es ist kein Abschied, es ist eine Art Tod” (170).

¹²⁴ Again, the narrator expresses Christine’s experience of her social position through a spatial metaphor when he summarizes her day in Vienna: “Es ist vorbei, man kann nicht hinüber, man kann nicht durch die unsichtbare Wand . . .” (199). [It is over, you cannot cross, you cannot pass through this invisible wall . . .]

¹²⁵ “Und als er ihr die Kleider nimmt und sie seinen Körper fühlt, nackt, stark, warm und glühend, spürt sie zugleich das fremd feuchte Laken wie einen nassen Schwamm. . . . Ihre Nerven beben, und während er sie an sich zieht, spürt sie, daß sie weg will . . . weg aus diesem Haus, wo sich die Menschen gegen Geld paaren — rasch, rasch, der Nächste, der Nächste —, wo sich Arme verkaufen wie eine Briefmarke . . . (244).

¹²⁶ Marc Katz, “The Hotel Kracauer,” 148.

¹²⁷ See Tallack: “The hotel lobby’s small contribution to the redefinition of class and gender was largely social and economic, rather than political” (9). Douglas Tallack, “‘Waiting, Waiting’: The Hotel Lobby,” *Irish Journal of American Studies* 7 (1998): 1–20; here: 9.

5: Men in Hotels

I could arrive at the Hotel Savoy with a single shirt, I could leave with twenty trunks and still be the same old Gabriel Dan.¹

HOW DO MEN DEAL WITH and survive their stay in upscale hotels in the early twentieth century? What is the role of hotels in these men's stories? Joseph Roth's character Gabriel Dan's statement suggests that the relationship between the male guest or hotel resident and his environment is much less unsettling than that of young female guests. He expects this hotel to offer him possibilities for social ascent, but the prospect of economic success would not affect his identity. The Hotel Savoy would be a magic castle without the problems that Else (*Fräulein Else*), Christine Hoflehner (*Rausch der Verwandlung*), and even Francine ("Die Hotelterre") have to confront eventually. As a man in a male-dominated society, and in spite of the many roles that he, the former soldier, had to adopt during the war and his three-year internment in Siberia — as a victim, as a perpetrator — Dan relies on an inner identity that is not derived from or dependent on external factors or other people. This man, as well as men in general, enjoys an autonomous place in society that makes him much less vulnerable to the effects of the semi-anonymous and capitalist nature of hotels, a place in life that women are generally denied. "Good" women can only come to hotels as dependents, as daughters, relatives, lovers, or as brides-to-be, waiting to trade their family-based identity for similar status as another man's dependent, and attempts at finding a room of their own ultimately fail, as we have seen.

Men thus come with a legitimate a priori claim to space, especially if they pay for their stay in the hotel. Even though the four texts to be examined in this chapter explore the setting of the hotel in very different ways, they all feature men who arrive at the hotel alone and with a vision of themselves as human subjects. Especially for the three young men in these stories, Gabriel Dan in *Hotel Savoy*, Karl Rossmann in Franz Kafka's *Amerika*, and Felix Krull in Thomas Mann's *Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*, the hotel represents a transitional realm to which they come in the hope of finding the right path into life and society,² and it is here that they test socialization, mainly through work and class affiliation. But even the older Gustav von Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (Death in Venice, 1912) arrives at the Grand Hotel des Bains in Venice expecting to

restore his exhausted creative energy and then to return to his life as a distinguished writer. The young Gabriel Dan hopes to reintegrate into society after years of deprivation and loneliness at war; Kafka's Karl Rossmann buys into the promise made to him by the "Oberköchin," that is, his prospective manager, that his job as a liftboy in the Hotel Occidental is the first step towards a promising career in the hotel business and therefore towards establishing himself in the world; and a similar idea drives Felix Krull's, or rather his godfather's decision for Felix to work at the elegant St. James and Albany in Paris. For all four men, the hotel is a universe of opportunities in which they can pursue their individual and social ambitions.

However, except for Felix Krull, who is a very unusual and very happy case, as his first name (Latin for "happy") suggests, none of these men reach their goals. Aschenbach relinquishes his artistic ambitions to the overwhelming power of his Dionysian attraction to the beautiful young Tadzio. Gabriel Dan leaves a hotel set on fire by the town's workers, who are in revolt. The hotel's destruction is a symbol of the impossibility of Dan's reintegrating into a society that has not yet managed to do justice to those from whom the war took everything. And Karl Rossmann's project of finding an honorable bourgeois career fails miserably when he is tripped up by the strict laws of the hotel's bureaucracy. Something goes wrong in these men's pursuit of their goals, and we need to ask whether their goals were wrong from the start, or whether they simply could not be realized in the environment in which they are pursued.

A beginning of an answer to this question may be that although these men come to the hotel with ideas and ideals about the social and even existential possibilities they might find here, they come for reasons that one cannot call altogether happy. Aschenbach flees from his home in Munich when he realizes that he has worked himself into an artistic dead end that can only be remedied by a drastic change of scenery in a voluntary exile where he can be as anonymous as possible. Gabriel Dan has not had a home in years, having lost his prewar fatherland Habsburg Austria, for which he fought so hard in the war, and his stop at the Hotel Savoy is only supposed to be a temporary one until he has secured the financial means to go further westwards and find a permanent new home. Karl Rossmann is deported from Prague to America after he causes a scandal by having a sexual affair with his parents' maid, and the Hotel Occidental is the second stop in his futile quest for a new home in America. Finally, Felix Krull starts his career at the St. James and Albany after his family's champagne distillery goes bankrupt and his father commits suicide. And although Felix's confessions portray his move to Paris and to the new job as a fortunate turn of events, he too has lost his home, and the hotel amounts to an institutionalized exile in which he is unlikely to put down roots, especially as a lowly employee. All four men are more or less homeless in the literal and existential sense, and the hotel as

a place of transition cannot offer much to those suffering from this existential lack.

As already mentioned above, the four texts discussed in this chapter are very different and resist an easy comparative reading. First of all, we are no longer dealing with stories in which all the hotel residents are guests and supposed members of the leisure class. The typical social interaction between hotel guests is not the main focus, and the nature of the hotel as a stage for the upper class's displays of "conspicuous leisure"³ is not of central interest, with the possible exception of *Felix Krull*. Of the four protagonists, only Gustav von Aschenbach still qualifies as a legitimate member of the upper class, but his age and the novella's philosophical underpinnings set this text apart from other hotel stories. The war veteran Gabriel Dan is a guest in what looks from the outside like an upscale hotel, but from the beginning, he appears as an underprivileged, "unfitting" guest in this establishment that only seems to tolerate his presence because the country is in disarray. Dan never tries to camouflage his situation or to participate in the leisure class's lifestyle like Christine Hoflehner, and his sixth-floor room is one of the cheapest in the hotel, high up where the upper class never visits.

Karl Rossmann and the Felix Krull of the earlier parts of the novel represent the other side of life in the hotel. They are employees, and as liftboys they are among the lowliest ones; their stories grant us a look behind the pleasurable façade of the leisure-class lifestyle to reveal the social exploitation that enables the upper class to enjoy its carefree, decadent life. In this respect, Mann and Kafka offer an almost Veblenian commentary on the frivolous hedonism that stories such as *Rausch der Verwandlung* or *Fräulein Else* criticize from a less politically or ideologically engaged angle.⁴

Thomas Mann: *Der Tod in Venedig*

Of the four texts, Thomas Mann's novella *Der Tod in Venedig* is the oldest one.⁵ Published in 1912, the work features a typical Mannian topic, the artist's struggle to reconcile art and bourgeois life. As a product of Mann's less politically engaged years, *Der Tod in Venedig* concentrates on philosophical and existential questions in the life of the individual and the artist, and the implicit social criticism present in most other hotel stories is almost completely absent. What fascinates Mann is not the microcosm of the hotel as a test station for the relationship between the individual and society, especially with regard to questions of class. Instead, Mann explores the stage-like quality of the hotel and the importance of the semi-anonymous gaze in this setting.

The story begins with the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach's resolve to leave his hometown of Munich to get away from the social and artistic pressures that have driven him into an artistic impasse as a writer. During a

mid-afternoon walk in Munich's outskirts, he realizes that rejuvenation can only occur in a different setting, and that, if he wants to continue writing, he needs to relax his overly disciplined approach to his work. After an unpleasant aborted trip to an island in the Adriatic Sea, Aschenbach decides to give in to his attraction to the city of Venice, and shortly after the beginning of the third of the novella's five chapters, Mann's protagonist embarks on a shabby ship and sails to Venice, where the rest of his story and his life unfold. The remainder of the text is set in the Grand Hotel des Bains on Venice's Lido, at the hotel's beach, and in the narrow streets and canals of the City in the Sea. All of these areas encourage visual but not personal contact between people.

Such detachment and semi-anonymity is exactly what Aschenbach needs in order to relax. In the elegant ambiance of the Hotel des Bains, Aschenbach becomes the quintessential lobby dweller as described by Siegfried Kracauer, when he starts to passively engage in the spectacle in front of his eyes — in the lobby, in the breakfast room, and at the beach:⁶

[He] arrived a little early in the hall, where he found a considerable number of the hotel guests assembled, unacquainted with each other and affecting a studied mutual indifference, yet all united in expectancy by the prospect of their evening meal. He picked up a newspaper from the table, settled down in a leather armchair and took stock of the company, which differed very agreeably from what he had encountered at his previous hotel.⁷

Wherever he goes in this hotel, the same dynamics of semi-interest in the Other, of mutual observation without any desire or reason to engage in more personal exchanges, govern human interaction. And Aschenbach seems happy with his role as an anonymous member of this distinguished formal group, aware of the fact, though, that, as an exhausted artist in search of repose, he does not belong to the group of the other, leisure-seeking guests. While they are active, taking walks along the water, playing with children, and going swimming, Aschenbach stays seated in his beach chair and lets his mind wander. He only participates in the hotel's social life during official mealtimes in the dining hall, followed by equally official social hours such as coffee after the meal, and he almost never speaks to anyone. As a distinguished artist and loner who is not there to display his wealth but to recover from an artistic crisis, he does not have to prove he belongs to the leisure class that dominates this upscale hotel.

In fact, Mann downplays the flashy aspects of social life in a fancy resort hotel almost completely. A general sense of distinction in the Simmelian sense rules the Hotel des Bains and distinguishes guests here from those at other literary hotels. As little as Mann tells us about the other guests, he emphasizes the display of "simple distinction" when he introduces the character

of Tadzio's mother: "This lady's attitude was cool and poised, her lightly powdered coiffure and the style of her dress both had that simplicity which is the governing principle of taste in circles where piety is regarded as one of the aristocratic values."⁸ Given the general tendency towards irony in this novella, this description certainly contains a good portion of criticism of this woman's obvious attempt to appear God-fearing and humble while she is obviously and proudly aware of her superior social standing; but the Hotel des Bains is certainly not a hotel like the ones featured in Zweig's and Werfel's stories, where young flappers, rich Americans, and athletic German engineers could display the glory of their wealth. A veil of reserved politeness, "[the] kind of ceremonious silence . . . which a large hotel always aims to achieve"⁹ envelops life in this hotel. People talk softly; different languages blend in the pleasurable sounds of international flair. An elegant distance separates guests from each other and from their environment. Nietzsche's Apollinian principle,¹⁰ which dominates Aschenbach's approach to his literary work, finds its social equivalent in the hotel's implicit behavioral codes and standards. If money enables people to come to this place, the hotel's "various forms of placemaking,"¹¹ including the intangible ones such as tact and style, successfully cover up the capitalist foundation of its operation. In the Grand Hotel des Bains, the distance that money introduces between the subject and the world appears as a distinguished reserve that transcends economics — Kracauer's social masks at their best.¹²

This is the mode of existence that Aschenbach chooses from the first day. It is the life of the unengaged, observing lobby dweller who enjoys all the sights there to the fullest without ever transgressing the limits that the setting dictates. And on the surface, he maintains this attitude even after Tadzio appears on the scene. Aschenbach continues to watch, from the moment the beautiful young Pole first enters the lobby until his own death at the beach. However, the intensity of his gaze and his obsessive exploitation of the possibilities for viewing that the hotel's social areas provide make his conduct questionable in terms of the behavior that is appropriate in such a hotel.

As he sits waiting in the lobby for his first dinner in the hotel, Aschenbach is struck by the young boy's perfect beauty, which sends the writer into a philosophical investigation of the nature of beauty as perfect form, an inquiry that transcends and undermines the boundaries of his own chosen form of artistic expression, language. As he continues to watch Tadzio's every move, Aschenbach's aesthetic obsession with the boy slowly turns into a much more complex attraction that the terms homoeroticism or pedophilia cannot describe completely. It is desire in general that takes possession of this poised middle-aged German, a desire that runs counter to everything that this artist, this member of "polite" society, this loner has known as the guiding principles in his life. Tadzio's appearance does not bring about, but

rather unleashes a desire to relinquish control and surrender to a long-suppressed drive, for which the boy becomes the projection screen. A perfect representative of Freud's theories about repression, Aschenbach is initially described as

[the] author of the lucid and massive prose-epic about the life of Frederick of Prussia; the patient artist who with long toil had woven the great tapestry of the novel called *Maya*. . . . [and] that powerful tale entitled *A Study in Abjection* which earned the gratitude of a whole younger generation by pointing to the possibility of moral resolution even for those who have plumbed the depths of knowledge . . .¹³

Yet this polished author dreams of leaving the structured order of his artistic and personal life and he flees to a region in which "hairy palm-trunks thrusting upward from rank jungles of fern, from among thick fleshy plants in exuberant flower"¹⁴ abound, where chaos, lust, and danger linger. The process of letting go of order starts slowly, and at various instances during this development, even after having met the beautiful Pole, Aschenbach recognizes the danger into which he has maneuvered himself. But instead of listening to his intuition and leaving the scene, he stays. His desire to stay close to Tadzio and to lose himself in desire is stronger than reason.

The striking spatial imagery of Aschenbach's arrival in the hotel foreshadows his emerging agenda to break away from form, order, norms, and tradition. Unlike the ordinary guest, he does not enter the hotel through the front entrance and the lobby to come to the reception. Instead, he reverses the regular use or sequencing of space in this hotel: "He entered the spacious hotel from the garden terrace at the back, passing through the main hall and the vestibule to the reception office. As his arrival had been notified in advance, he was received with obsequious obligingness."¹⁵ This seemingly innocent paragraph foreshadows Aschenbach's overall attitude about the hotel. As a registered guest, he is a preapproved member of hotel society and freely moves around — just as he silently turns all implicit rules upside down. When he enters the hotel "backwards," he does not openly violate the hotel's codes, but he subverts socially established norms. The same subversive approach later defines his participation in the exchange of social gazes in the lobby.¹⁶

Aschenbach's entire "Venice project" then needs to be considered highly subversive, as rational as it seems on the surface. For this prolific, driven writer, it is an expression of decadence merely to go to an exotic place, and not to his summer cabin in the mountains. He seeks a radical change to refresh his artistic energy, but he chooses a change that ultimately ends further artistic production. The ordinary wish for a temporary change of scenery is in fact the desire to leave his old life; his seemingly innocent entrance into a hotel through the back door betrays his desire to be different

from his fellow guests and expresses an anti-social resistance to the norm. Finally, the daily visual contact to the young Pole, a frequent encounter that is simply the result of normal life in the hotel, turns into a silent Dionysian experience.

It really is an orgy in which Aschenbach loses himself, even if, on the outside, he mostly stays within the confines of discreet interaction with the people around him. Aschenbach indulges in a transgressive behavior that is scandalous within the framework of appropriate conduct in a hotel, and he does so until the very last moment of his life. He exploits and subverts the spectacle-like nature of social contact in the hotel, the wordless, distanced interaction that Siegfried Kracauer describes so aptly. Seeing in itself becomes an appropriation and invasion of sorts, the only sensual extravagance that Aschenbach can realize in the early twentieth-century hotel. He knows that his desires are at least twice taboo, as society would simply reduce them to homosexuality and pedophilia. Knowing and accepting that his attraction can never turn into something more real, Aschenbach redefines the predominant mode of interaction in the hotel as an end in itself. Ogling Tadzio in this society of disinterested quick glances becomes the deviation of which Aschenbach becomes "guilty." A radical departure from his life's *modus operandi* as a man of words and thought, a break with the imperative of productiveness, and a deviation from the rules that determine the function of the gaze in the hotel: these are Aschenbach's Dionysian transgressions.

Finally, Aschenbach tries to make Tadzio's acquaintance at the beach, interestingly, just after he has finished his last piece of writing, a composition that celebrates the moment when Apollinian and Dionysian forces are perfectly balanced in him — a Nietzschean ideal. Yet he gives up, feeling too weak and too overpowered to dare a word. The superficial interpretation would diagnose the typical shyness that the admirer feels in the presence of his object of desire. But speaking with Tadzio would constitute a violation of the by-now established dynamics of Aschenbach's "affair" with the boy. Direct contact and communication would threaten to destroy the magic and illusion that are so essential to Aschenbach's "Rausch" (490), his "emotional intoxication" (133).

Aschenbach's late-night vigil in front of Tadzio's hotel room on one of the following evenings constitutes a similar infraction of the established code, a code that operates in the visual mode only and that requires a very specific setting. Not only does Aschenbach expose himself to potential ridicule and embarrassment, but his action is also incongruent with his own system. Knowing fully well and having accepted that acting on his desires in a more aggressive manner is out of the question, he bases his entire intoxication on the wordless spectacle of seeing Tadzio from afar in the hotel's social areas, as any chance to meet with him or see him in private is of course circumscribed by the hotel's behavioral code. Conversely, the joy that Aschen-

bach gains from his voyeurism reaches its climax when Tadzio, on the hotel's terrace, realizes that he is being looked at and smiles back at his admirer: "Joy, no doubt, surprise, admiration, were openly displayed on [Aschenbach's] face when his eyes met those of the returning absentee — and in that instant it happened that Tadzio smiled . . ." ¹⁷ As the two gazes lock for a brief moment, Aschenbach loses himself completely in his intoxication and proclaims his love for this boy to the night: "And leaning back, his arms hanging down . . . he whispered the standing formula of the heart's desire . . . 'I love you!'" ¹⁸ Tadzio's silent response to Aschenbach's gaze makes the older man believe that he has succeeded in establishing a level of non-verbal communication with this boy that singles him out, in spite of the mother's and society's obvious efforts to preserve a safe distance to the fellow guests and protect their privacy. Like Erna Salomonsohn, if in a much less physical way, Aschenbach has found a way around the social restrictions that govern human interaction in his vacation resort.

The Grand Hotel des Bains has a complex and crucial function in *Der Tod in Venedig*. As a place that reflects the rich guest's special social and cultural status, it is the perfect home away from home for the exhausted artist to seek relief without having to openly admit that he is experiencing an existential and not just an artistic crisis. At the same time, the hotel's location in Venice, Europe's mysterious city par excellence, surrounded by a lagoon, constitutes the complete opposite of Aschenbach's civilized, orderly Munich. With its many possibilities to see and be seen, the hotel invites its guests to participate in the spectacle of each other while mandating a physical distance between them that is difficult to overcome. The hotel's social areas become the symbol for the tension between temptation and restraint, seduction and withdrawal, desire and culture. Given these restrictions, Aschenbach adapts his socially unacceptable passions to the circumstances. The act of seeing itself becomes the Dionysian deviation from the Apollinian principle that so completely ruled the writer's life in Munich just as it rules social life in the hotel. Consequently, the lovesick Aschenbach experiences the first exchange of gazes with his object of desire as an overwhelming, almost orgasmic pleasure. Since guests cannot remain complete strangers in confined places like the Grand Hotel des Bains, Tadzio himself begins participating in this silent play with desire and withdrawal without ever presenting a real sexual possibility — unlike Francine or Erna Salomonsohn, or Tadzio's sisters, if their mother allowed them a more appealing appearance. ¹⁹ Mann introduces Tadzio as the perfect unattainable object of desire, as a catalyst for emotions, longings, and drives that Aschenbach the controlled artist can no longer suppress, and as an androgynous being whose reality gets lost amid Aschenbach's numerous projections of him, the last of which is Tadzio's role as an angel of death as which Aschenbach stylizes him as he succumbs to cholera at the beach. As he sits suffering from his illness in a beach chair, he watches

the boy play in the ocean, and dying, he feels called upon by Tadzio: "But to him, it was as if the pale and lovely soul-summoner out there were smiling to him, beckoning to him. . . . And as so often, [Aschenbach] set out to follow him."²⁰

Again, a hotel functions as a liberating setting where a guest comes to terms with his innermost drives. When Aschenbach realizes that there can be no viable way out of his new disposition and back into his old life, he chooses death over life. If the liberating hotel tempts its guests from all sides, Mann needs the figure of Tadzio to show the problematic nature of such temptation. As a teenaged boy who is too young to engage in his own adventures like Felix Krull, and as an object of a desire that is twice taboo (pedophilia, homosexuality), Tadzio is the embodiment of the ultimate impossibility of reaching the Other in the hotel. In this light, then, *Der Tod in Venedig* is not only an artist's story, but also Mann's early and far-reaching critical contribution to a discourse on the nature of a place that he knew well from his own journeys.

Joseph Roth: *Hotel Savoy*

The hotel, which I love as if it were my home country, is in one of the big European ports. . . . just like other men who return back home, to their wife and children, I come back to the hotel's lights and its lobby, to its chambermaids and its porter — and every time, I manage to have the ceremony of homecoming unfold so perfectly that it preempts that of a formal arrival at the hotel.²¹

This is how the narrator in Joseph Roth's *Panoptikum* describes his positive relationship to living in a hotel, an existence that Roth knew well as a traveling essayist and journalist. As he celebrates his life as a "citizen, a patriot of the hotel,"²² Roth's supposed alter ego rejects the idea of a personal or national home, or *Heimat*.²³ He praises the semi-anonymity of his existence in the hotel as the perfect creative environment for a writer in search of inspiration and freedom, offering him almost endless narrative possibilities: "It is here, in the lobby, that I sit all day. This is my home and my world, the far-away and the nearby, my unsuspecting gallery. This is where I begin writing about the hotel's employees, my friends. They are all characters! Citizens of the world! Judges of character! Experts of languages and the soul! Nobody is more international than they. They are the real internationals!"²⁴ The existentially nomadic if not homeless life as a "patriot of the hotel" is nothing to fear for Roth's narrator and is the precondition for broadening the mind and understanding the world in its plurality.

As positive as this setting is for the artist, the hotel has a more complex status in Roth's early and largely overlooked novel *Hotel Savoy*.²⁵ When

Gabriel Dan, the story's main character, returns from a three-year internment in Siberia following the First World War, his long walk home brings him to the "gateway of Europe" (9), the Polish city of Lodz, where he decides to stay in the big Hotel Savoy for some days to rest up and ask an uncle for some money to support his further trip westward. It is only a temporary stop for the exhausted former soldier, not a home to return to, but it is still a place that promises comfort, luxury, and relief, with its "seven storeys, its gilded coat of arms and its uniformed porter . . . its promise of water, soap, English lavatories, a lift, chambermaids in white caps . . . and beds plump with eiderdowns, cheerful and waiting to receive one's body."²⁶ However, Dan quickly discovers that the hotel caters only to those who have a lot of money to pay for its offerings and need them the least, that, in spite of the seemingly warm and generous welcome that he, the guest without luggage, receives, the Hotel Savoy is a modern capitalist business just as any other big hotel. It becomes the sobering symbol for a postwar society that allows an exploitative elite to live luxuriously while the majority of the population struggles to survive during a depression.²⁷

For, during his unexpectedly long stay at the Hotel Savoy, Dan gets exposed to almost every class that makes up the town's — and, by extension, the demoralized postwar country's — society, and he has to realize that this is not a community in which he can settle and start a new life. His attempts to associate himself with anyone or any one group assembled in the hotel all fail: neither can he fully identify with his fellow upper-floor residents who, cast away in the worst living quarters of the hotel, cannot think of a brighter future as they waste their lives in their daily struggle for survival; nor can he imagine a real relationship with Stasia, a young, beautiful dancer who lives in the room above his and with whom Dan falls in love without being able to act on it, failing to find an alternative discourse and perspective from the one available to him as a traumatized veteran. Circumstances prevent the poor residents of the hotel's upper floors to actively search for a new life and break the spell that capitalism has cast on them, but as an outsider who cannot even recognize this society as his, struggling with his traumatizing past in the war, Dan cannot offer any help in instigating necessary change. In his search to find people with whom he could identify, he meets up with his wartime comrade Zwonimir, and together, the two men leave the hotel to work in town. However, working conditions are terrible, and hunger, dissatisfaction with the workers' living conditions, and an epidemic that rages in their barracks ultimately drive the workers to rebellion. But once again, Dan is unable to join in a collective effort, and he chooses instead to return to the hotel and work for Henry Bloomfield, a native of the city turned American millionaire who is in town for his annual visit. When the workers' rebellion reaches its peak, Bloomfield flees Lodz, leaving Dan unemployed and once again on his own. When the workers set the hotel on fire, Dan has no choice

but to leave the city, joining the thousands of veterans that flood the streets on their way to the west every day, in search of a chance for a new beginning that the destruction of the Hotel Savoy could symbolize.

As a symbol of capitalism, the Hotel Savoy is already a central element in the narrative economy of Roth's novel. But it also serves as an important catalyst in Gabriel Dan's personal story, namely as his point of social access after years of isolation and loneliness.²⁸ Geographically located at the "gates of Europe," it is the place where his past in the East, first as a soldier on the Eastern front, and then as a prisoner of war in Siberia, meets his future in the West, Vienna's Leopoldstadt to which he wants to travel to rejoin his immediate family. And the Hotel Savoy also inspires his "subjunctives," that is, his visions for a future with Stasia, even if he never dares to break out of the subjunctive mood to convert such dream-visions into plans in the much more factual future tense and indicative mood.

Optimistic about his own abilities to shed his past identities as a soldier, internee, and as a wanderer, and eager to reinsert himself into a society that he thinks he knows, Dan initially approaches his stay at the Savoy as an opportunity to explore the social and personal opportunities that the assembled hotel society offers. It is in the Hotel Savoy that he tries to identify a new group to which he wants to and can belong, and it is also here that he tries to rediscover and redevelop his personal approach to the other gender (Stasia), to male friendship (Zwonimir), and to the concept of the family, as represented in the rich Bloomfield who develops into a father figure of sorts for Dan. Finally, the Hotel Savoy is also the place where Dan the aspiring writer begins to write again, and his departure from the ruins of the hotel at the end of the book marks the end of his written testimony. In fact, the reader might surmise that the destruction of the Hotel Savoy is the only way for Dan to break free from the hotel's spell and its seductive yet imprisoning narrative to finally make it to the west and work towards a new life.

The narrated Hotel Savoy is thus much more than just a setting: a symbol of capitalism, a metaphor for Dan's existentially homeless situation in life, a catalyst in his quest for a new life, and a universe that provides the narrator with the fascinating but depressing narratives of its diverse residents, the Hotel Savoy has a highly complex function in Roth's novel. Dan's unusual threshold position in life, in between in geographical, social, cultural, and economic terms, brings to the surface the variety of issues that are at stake in a literary hotel in a much more complex and pervasive manner than do most of the other texts discussed so far. In this respect, we can consider *Hotel Savoy* a novel about a hotel as much as a novel about a man in a hotel, and the fact that the hotel lends its name to the novel supports this idea further.

In a sense, the Hotel Savoy is even identical to the novel *Hotel Savoy*. For us as readers, the hotel does not exist outside of Gabriel Dan's first-

person narrative, mostly told in the present tense, and the end of Dan's narrative is the end of the Savoy as a narrated hotel: when or because the narrative comes to an end, the hotel goes up in flames, disappears. The front and back covers of the book symbolically become one with the walls of a hotel that only exists in and as language. In addition, the narrative only subsists as long as Dan stays in the hotel, and it stops shortly after the hotel has gone up in flames: the Hotel Savoy becomes the precondition for and the product of Gabriel Dan's first postwar text. Roth's skillful intertwining of the narrative's setting and the setting as narrative, that is, the Hotel Savoy as the place where Gabriel Dan stays for weeks, and the Hotel Savoy that Dan narrates, is an intriguing artistic addition in the development of the hotel narrative whose main attraction for authors has otherwise mostly been its symbolic qualities as a social microcosm and as a stage on which the modern drama of the individual's struggle to find a place in society could unfold naturally.

The entire novel gets off the ground with Dan's mid-morning arrival at the hotel. After months of walking westwards, Dan has arrived "at the gates of Europe" (9). The hotel represents everything that he has missed for years, a wonderland that promises him a peaceful, pleasant present after years of fear of having no future. At first sight, the place does not disappoint him. The hotel warmly welcomes Dan in spite of the fact that he arrives without any luggage, and an elevator that brings him up to his room spares him the effort of walking up the stairs. Even his hotel room, which comes cheap because it is on the sixth floor, confirms Dan's belief that he, the "Heimkehrer" or returning veteran, has found a place that can at least conjure up the feeling of home: "My room seemed friendly, as if I had lived there for a long time. . . . Everything was consoling and warm, like returning again to someone beloved."²⁹ It is a place where Dan begins to write about the hotel and about himself, and this also includes processing his past. Memories of his years at war, in Siberia, and on the road permeate his narrative. It seems only in the comfort of the big hotel that Dan feels able to write about all of this, even if the narrative's strange, unsystematic oscillation between the present and past tenses shows how fragile this new stability really is. The act of writing itself is not a topic anywhere in the novel and is conspicuously absent from Dan's account, except when he works as the millionaire Bloomfield's secretary. However, the hotel and the hotel room still have the same effect on the soldier now turned writer as they do on the narrator in Roth's *Panoptikum*. They provide the necessary degree of comfort and social potential for the war veteran and loner to feel connected to the world in a way the soldier never could. All in all, the Hotel Savoy appears as little less than a magic castle at the beginning of Dan's story — it opens its doors to the poor traveler and enables him to write, and to "write a hotel" that is the complete opposite of the yellow barracks in the East from which he has just returned.

However, his enchantment fades quickly when he meets those who live in the Hotel Savoy, especially on the upper three floors, and when he comes to understand the hotel's business practices. Kaleguropulos, the phantom owner of the hotel, whom nobody has ever seen, threatens the poorer guests with immediate eviction if they fail to pay their bills, and his strange, unnoticed early-morning inspections keep all employees on their toes. The ominous Kaleguropulos represents capital's power to create strategic anonymity and distance, explained in detail by Georg Simmel, which allow for an impenetrable social hierarchy in which people become suspicious and possibly afraid of each other. And suspicion is advisable: at the end of the novel Dan learns that Kaleguropulos is the same person as the strange death-figure-like liftboy Ignatz, who slips into the mask of a lowly employee to spy on the hotel's guests, employees, and people's personal interactions.³⁰ Turning upside down the rags-to-riches story of the liftboy-turned-hotel-owner, a model that initially informed Dan's approach to the hotel,³¹ Ignatz/Kaleguropulos is in fact the one who makes sure that dreams such as Dan's become hard to realize. As the elevator's exacting operator, he moves his guests precisely to where they belong. In Dan's and his beautiful neighbor Stasia's case, this means on the upper floors where the poor people and the outcasts live, as Dan has to find out the day after his arrival. In addition, Ignatz comes "to the rescue" of those guests who cannot pay their bills in his patented way, literally locking them into their misery: each time he promises to "help out" when a guest cannot pay a bill, Ignatz locks up the guest's suitcase with a big chain and lock, thus locking away the last tokens of his or her identity in the estranged space of the hotel. Thus deprived of their freedom, of anything that would allow them to better their economic situation (better clothes are among the items that Ignatz locks up), the upper floor residents are fully at Ignatz's mercy, who seems less interested in either seizing and possibly selling his poor guests' belongings to cover their outstanding bills or getting rid of his penniless guests than in exerting some sort of sadistic power over their lives. What seems like a saving gesture turns out to be a measure to ensure that these people will stay on their upper floor until the day they die, like Santschin the clown, who lives on the seventh floor (where Stasia also lives), exposed to the worst of the steam from the laundry room.

Dan's arrival at the hotel without any luggage that Ignatz could seize or lock up thus foreshadows his special, somewhat "exempt" position among the residents of the upper floors. Throughout the story, and throughout the hotel, Dan moves with a certain air of detachment and invulnerability that allows him to be friendly with people on the upper floors as well as mingle with the city's capitalists in the hotel's bar. Yet it is this distance that also keeps him from forming a committed relationship and reintegrating into any subgroup of the hotel's society. Until the end, he feels that he cannot fully identify with any group, neither with the bohemians of the seventh floor nor

with the town's striking workers, who come to attack the hotel at the end of the story. Only after tentatively joining a number of these groups does he understand that his real place is with the thousands of returnees who flood the streets of the town and who are bound together by their feeling of being lost and eternally on the move.³² What Dan takes away from his experience in the Hotel Savoy is a significant sum of money that he earns as Bloomfield's secretary — and the realization that he needs to continue his journey before he is really free to call any new place home.

The social reality in the Hotel Savoy is thus quite different from what Dan imagines when he first arrives, and he modifies his attitude towards it quickly. On his second day, when walking down the stairs instead of taking the elevator, he already notices that the lower floors are literally in a different time zone than his, since the lower he comes, the earlier it seems to be: "This is where the rich live, and the cunning Kaleguropulos lets the clocks run slow, because the rich have time."³³ A quick glance at a room on the mezzanine level also allows him an insight into the luxury the hotel offers to those who can afford it. Throughout the first of this novel's four parts, Dan gets increasingly disenchanted with the hotel. While earlier he still wondered how he could manage to move to a lower floor, he comes to understand that such moves are impossible in this hotel and in the social system that it represents:

The hotel no longer appealed to me: neither the stifling laundry, nor the gruesomely benevolent lift-boy nor the three floors of prisoners. This Hotel Savoy was like the world. Brilliant light shone out from it and splendour glittered from its seven storeys, but poverty made its home in its high places, and those who lived on high were in the depths, buried in airy graves, and the graves were in layers above the comfortable rooms of the well nourished guests sitting down below, untroubled by the flimsy coffins overhead.

I belong to the buried on high. Do I not live on the sixth floor and shall I not be driven by Fate onto the seventh? To the eighth, the tenth, the twentieth? How high can one fall?³⁴

This striking image, the paradoxical reversal of spatial qualities in this hotel — height equals social lowliness, moving to a higher floor means falling socially — serves to dismantle any illusion that social ascent could be possible in such a system. An upward movement in the "schwebende[n] Kasten" (7), the floating box that is the elevator, is in fact the exact opposite of social or personal betterment. People who live upstairs will never come down to the fourth or third floor, and as the case of Dan's rich cousin Alexanderl proves, those who are socially assigned to the lower floors will never have to mingle with the proletarians of the upper floors. In search of a cheap room where he can pursue his sexual adventures, Alexanderl considers moving

into the cheaper areas of the Hotel Savoy. When he learns that not a single room is available, he proposes to take over Dan's cheap room and either to pay for his trip further West or to procure a room for him at a different hotel. As tempting as the offer is, Dan ultimately refuses to give up his room. In the meantime, Ignatz has found another room, number 606, for Alexanderl. Yet instead of being on the fifth floor, as one could expect, following the method of number assignments on other floors,³⁵ this one is on the better fourth. Those whom life has assigned to the upper floors can never expect to move down, and those who are used to living in the better areas will never have to fear being put in upper-floor rooms.

The hotel stands as a symbol of social injustice and the impenetrable division of social classes in post-First World War society. It is this symbolic value that will also make it the target for the striking workers' protest towards the end of the novel. For Dan, this hotel and what happens there can at best provide a wake-up call to realize that his dream of economic success might meet with more resistance than he expects. But even on a personal level, the hotel is problematic for a man like Dan, who knows he has been alone for too long to easily connect with the Other again.

Parallel to his attempts to find a social group with whom he can identify (the bohemians in part one, the workers in part two, the "independent professionals" with whom he works as Bloomfield's secretary in part three), Gabriel Dan tries to form an exclusive relationship with successive individuals throughout his story: with Stasia in the first section, with his male friend Zwonimir in the second, and with the father-figure Bloomfield, the American millionaire who returns to his hometown Lodz year after year, in the third. These three approaches to the Other are closely associated with certain spaces: the top floors of the Hotel Savoy in the first part, the city as the opposite sphere to the hotel in the second, and the Savoy's public and semi-public spaces such as the lobby and the bar in the third part.³⁶ Critics have overlooked this very clear three-tiered structure that expresses a progression towards self-knowledge (realized in the fourth part), even if Dan will remain politically unengaged and in this respect socially "reactionary" until the end of his story.³⁷

The first part of the novel shows Dan on the upper floors of the Hotel Savoy. Here, he meets the beautiful Stasia and a number of her colleagues from a variety theater as well as other social outsiders who have all fallen prey to the hotel, as Dan puts it. In their misery, they form a family-like community very different from the "non-community" of those hotel guests whom we have encountered in other literary hotels. They live in the Hotel Savoy for months; they know each other well, share their sorrows and joys, and support each other to a certain degree. They turn their small, run-down and poorly ventilated rooms into shabby homes where they waste away until they die miserably, like Santchin, the clown, whose lungs cannot withstand

the laundry room's steam that pollutes the air on his floor. Assigned to the sixth floor and thus to its residents by the hotel's receptionist, Dan is destined to be a member of this family-like group even before he can actively associate with them. Maintaining distance from each other is not an option on the upper floors in the hotel, where the walls are thin enough for Dan to hear his beautiful upstairs neighbor Stasia's delicate footsteps at night.³⁸ Thus juxtaposed to another human being, Dan not only feels close to being part of a group, but also follows his desire to seek a relationship with an individual. Stasia quickly becomes Dan's most important human contact in the hotel, and it is because of and through her that he identifies with the people on the top floors of the Savoy in this first part of the novel. A few days after he has met and befriended Stasia, Dan admits for the first time that he feels connected to anyone, after repeatedly claiming that he was "a solitary person" (24): "I live in community with the inhabitants of the Hotel Savoy. . . . Certainly I do live in a community, whose sorrow is my sorrow, whose poverty is my poverty."³⁹

Needs, fears, and wants bond this community in a shared misery that instills a sense of companionship, but it cannot support the happiness of two young people in love. Throughout the book, it is clear that Dan and Stasia love each other; but as thin as the walls might be, the two would-be lovers do not manage to break through the barrier that separates them. There are no formalities among the residents of the upper floors in this hotel, but their camaraderie does not encourage the pursuit of their desire for each other, which in relation to the larger group is in a sense asocial. Failing to find a way to communicate with her beyond the discourse of the dispossessed, Dan ultimately loses Stasia to the one established and easy form of male-female relations in a hotel: that of a cheap affair with a rich man, in this case with his own cousin Alexanderl.

However, this loss occurs much later, after Dan's quest for the Other has run its course in the hotel and in the city. After his first unsuccessful search for a new place in life through his association with his fellow poor residents of the hotel's upper floors and a personal love relationship in the first part of the novel, Dan meets Zwonimir, his companion from the war, who replaces Stasia on his emotional map of the hotel and the city.

Male friendship and a man's search for work and thus an active social identity are the main topics of the second part of the novel. After the two war veterans have reconnected, Zwonimir decides to move into Dan's room at the Hotel Savoy, and Dan's relationship to the people from the upper floors fade under the influence of his friend's impressive and unimpressed presence in the hotel. Zwonimir's naïve and unmediated, uncivilized approach to the fancier parts of the grand hotel and even its more elegant guests breaks down the formal order that had separated the more affluent guests from the poor ones, the elegant lower floors from the run-down up-

per ones, the employees from the guests, and he enjoys the hotel without attaching any value to its social or cultural importance. Even though he has enough money, he does not even consider paying for the hotel room, and his physical superiority determines his relationship with Ignatz: contrary to the impression that he makes on most of the other upper-floor residents, Ignatz cannot intimidate the much larger and stronger Zwonimir. His entire demeanor in the hotel shows him to pay no heed to social differences, perhaps because such a concept is foreign to this man who is a farmer at heart, or perhaps because, as he gets involved in political agitation, he takes pleasure in violating established social hierarchies. When he arrives in town, he presents Dan with an alternative to his previous social contacts, and he also takes him outside the hotel when he procures work for himself and his friend. With Zwonimir's help, Dan gains a broadened perspective on the Hotel Savoy which seemed luminous and cozy upon his arrival. Returning from work one evening, he realizes: "[F]rom the lane the hotel looks dark and gigantic."⁴⁰

Zwonimir's relationship to the Hotel Savoy is certainly an important topic in this second part of the novel, but the main setting is now outside, in the realm of labor and in the workers' world. The soup kitchen, the freight station, hard physical labor, and the striking workers' misery become counter-scenarios to the strange, compartmentalized world in the Hotel Savoy, and the misery outside is a more political, and in this respect more real one than that on the top floors of the Savoy. Dan now experiences the world itself and its social problems instead of being exposed to them by proxy or in the microcosm of the hotel.

These new experiences still cannot save Dan from his sense of loneliness and his inability to reach out to a new Other; but in Zwonimir's company, he starts to overcome the barrier between self and other by means of a shared past. Zwonimir is a comrade from the war. He has shared Dan's experiences, including the paradoxical sense of complete loneliness shared by thousands, and unlike Stasia, he does not have to be a "Seher," a prophet, in order for them to connect: "We sat in the third class waiting-room, deafened by the noisy drunks, speaking quietly but understanding every word because we were listening with our hearts, not our ears."⁴¹ Even if Dan shares the sorrows and the poverty of his fellow upper-floor hotel residents, he knows that they do not suffer from his kind of misery or loneliness. With them, his longing for an emotional home and for having his existential loneliness understood must remain unfulfilled. Only his war comrade can really reach the man who was so eager to shed his past identities upon his arrival at the Hotel Savoy. What Dan comes to realize is that a past such as his is not just a role, but an experience that has changed him and removed him from "normal" human life. And he needs to recover this past before he can move on among the living. With Stasia, Dan cannot even find the simplest words

to talk candidly, and she cannot guess or “see” what he really wants to say. When Zwonimir again begins to use the words “Amerika” and “übt” in their conversation⁴² words that have positive symbolical meaning for him and that he used as code words at war when people around him needed to be motivated, encouraged, and cheered on, Dan feels deeply connected with this loud and rowdy friend on a level that transcends purely verbal communication. And it is this connection with which Zwonimir manages to lure Dan out of the suffocating hotel and into the world of physical labor when he finds them work at the train station to transship sacks of hops.

The work that Zwonimir procures is a physical challenge, but it creates a bond among the fourteen workers in the crew that is beyond words as Dan realizes: “We all arrived at the same time, we all ate at the same time, we all made the same movements and the hopsacks were our common ennemy. . . . And I am no longer an egoist.”⁴³ The experience of shared physical labor undoes the split between self and Other that Dan had experienced as egotism, and it allows him to become interested in the thousands of returning veterans who arrive in the city every day. Together with Zwonimir, he stands in the streets, scanning the new arrivals for a familiar face, and the two join the masses for meals at the poor people’s kitchen. Much less engaged than Zwonimir, for whose political agitation these people become an audience, Dan nevertheless feels closer to these returnees than to the people in the Hotel Savoy. However, his association does not run deep enough yet to let him fully embrace his belonging to these men. Still convinced that his nature as a “loner” makes it impossible for him to become part of an identity-assigning group, he withdraws back into the Hotel Savoy to accept the job as millionaire Bloomfield’s secretary, in the third part of the novel. It is only at the end of his three-tiered, ultimately unsuccessful quest for a new social or emotional home that he joins the returnees from war as the only group with whom he belongs. Shortly before he leaves the city, he states: “But today I am not alone in the world. I am part of the homecoming soldiers.”⁴⁴

Before he can reach this insight, he needs to go through the third phase of his stay at the Hotel Savoy, and it is the figure of Henry Bloomfield, a native of this city turned millionaire in America, who helps Dan realize his situation. As the entire city awaits Bloomfield’s annual visit in the hopes of interesting the wealthy man in business projects and charitable deeds, the phrase “Bloomfield is coming!” becomes the city’s mantra of hope and the one slogan that people in the hotel can hold up against the announcement “Kaleguropulos is coming!” If Kaleguropulos represents everything that is oppressive and merciless in the hotel, the American millionaire appears as the personification of the American dream: a poor Jew who made it big in the New World but who does not seem to have forgotten his roots. With his arrival in town, social life picks up in the hotel, and five-o’-clock dances, “soirées for ladies and gentlemen and . . . dance clubs” (108) are supposed

to suggest a perfectly intact upper-class social culture that matches what people imagine Bloomfield to desire. The hotel temporarily becomes the international meeting place that its label as a European grand hotel promises. Business people come from all over Europe to present their ideas to Bloomfield, the sought-after investor. And even the poor people in town seem to be inspired by Bloomfield's presence. After working for Bloomfield for a number of days, having dealt with dozens of more or less respectable individuals who come to propose projects such as a fireworks factory, a big movie theater, or a private "mesmerism parlor" to cure women from their headaches, Dan understands the impact that Bloomfield's mere presence has on the formerly depressed area and the imagination of its people: "It's remarkable. . . . do you notice how people are changing because my boss Bloomfield is here?" he asks Zwonimir. "Everyone suddenly has ideas for business, in this hotel and in town. Everyone wants to earn money."⁴⁵ And to give their desperate economic needs a more elegant, leisurely façade, the people in the hotel and in the city try to stage leisure-class hotel life for the millionaire. But Bloomfield remains unimpressed with such displays and shows signs of obvious boredom with life in the hotel and with most of the proposals presented to him. Still, he has returned to the city of his youth year after year to face the same situation, and Dan takes it as a challenge to find out what drives Bloomfield to do so. Understanding his interaction with people is Dan's first step towards solving the mystery.

Most everybody's dealings with Bloomfield and his employees — among them Dan — occur in the hotel's social areas, such as the lobby and the bar, spaces that suggest the least commitment. But even Dan's upper-level hotel room turns into an office and loses any sense of privacy, any home-like quality, after he begins working for Bloomfield. Dan's relations to the people whom he has to see hour after hour, day after day become distant and somewhat objectified, even if some of them are fellow upper-floor hotel residents. But instead of sympathizing with them or at least taking personal interest in their destinies as he did when he first arrived at the hotel, his job requires him to treat them as mere cases. He records their stories and requests one after another, in a series, without getting emotionally involved beyond an interest in anecdotal oddities. Earlier in the novel, Dan claimed that, as a lonely individual himself, he felt incapable of fulfilling a writer's mission of writing about people, incapable of reaching people through his writing and connecting with the world. His written reports to Bloomfield on the petitioners confirm this self-observation. It indeed proves impossible for one person to write about all the petitioners' personal stories in a manner that does justice to their problems and validates his writing as an act of communion. But Dan's obvious talent for writing these reports (Bloomfield seems quite pleased with his work) might show him the way to his future life, maybe that of a journalist who knows how to present a case in an inter-

esting yet detached manner, much in the same vein as Roth himself.⁴⁶ Very much detached from everything and everyone around him, Dan is not a member of the upper-floor hotel resident society anymore, nor does he belong to other groups of guests in the Savoy. His job with Bloomfield restores him to the middle class, which is the only one not fully represented in the hotel and the one to which his family belonged before the war,⁴⁷ and if this alone sets him apart from his former peers, he might also be the only one to receive help from the millionaire without asking for it.

For, if everybody else approaches the American to obtain material support, Bloomfield offers Dan an immaterial good: a perspective for his life. For one, the millionaire's determined offer to hire Dan as his temporary secretary reintegrates Dan into the world of labor in a more fitting way than Dan's previous job. Bloomfield is convinced that Dan is the man for the task at hand; but his rhetorical question "Won't *you* take the job?,"⁴⁸ a question that won't allow any opposition, also shows a friendly authority resembling that of a father who knows what is best for his son. There is no mention of personal bonds between the American millionaire and the young Viennese ex-soldier, but Roth intimates that the American takes special notice of Dan, and that they are on the same wavelength.⁴⁹ This impression is confirmed when Dan meets Bloomfield at the cemetery one afternoon.

More by accident than on purpose, Dan observes how Bloomfield comes to the Jewish cemetery on foot for his annual visit to his father's grave. It is the anniversary of the old man's death, and Dan realizes that he has just discovered the real reason for the strange millionaire's faithfulness to the city of his birth: "Henry Bloomfield came to visit his dead father, Jechiel Blumenfeld. He came to thank him for his millions, for his abilities, for life, for all that he had inherited. Henry Bloomfield did not come to found a cinema or a fireworks factory. . . . It was a homecoming."⁵⁰ As a "Heimkehrer" himself, Dan begins to understand Bloomfield's story through and as his own. There are various forms of homecoming, but what these men have in common is the sense that they will never really arrive anywhere. Moved by Bloomfield's willingness to share his secret with him, Dan reaches out to the older, richer man: "Life and death hang together so visibly, and the quick with the dead. There is no end there, no break — always continuity and connection."⁵¹ Much like Bloomfield, who tries to stay connected with his dead father, Dan now tries to connect with his own dead father through the figure of Bloomfield: he recognizes the American simultaneously as a father-figure and as a version of himself. Bloomfield's own attempt to restore genealogical continuity turns out to be an illusion; all that is left of the world of the fathers are the tombstones onto which he sheds his tears. Yet as Dan steps in between Bloomfield and his dead ancestors, he redefines the generational contract. For a brief moment, he represents the next generation for Bloomfield while seeking his own "Anknüpfung," his connection through

the figure of the American. To be sure, this affiliation breaks with the old principle of blood-based genealogy and introduces the idea of “elective affinities,” and it cannot cure the sense of homesickness (“Heimweh”) that Dan later diagnoses in Bloomfield, in himself, and in Zwonimir. But it does connect Dan to another, an older “Heimkehrer” in a way that allows him to acknowledge his own longing for some sort of continuity. As the men meet in the presence of the remains of generations past, they understand that the idea of continuity needs to be redefined at a time when the idea of home has receded into an unretrievable past. Almost logically then, Henry Bloomfield will not return to his hometown ever again: “Henry Bloomfield took flight in total silence. . . . He has paid his respects to his dead father and he will never come home again. He will suppress his homesickness, will Henry Bloomfield. Money cannot move all obstacles out of the way.”⁵²

The American millionaire thus serves as a father figure to and as a projection and foreshadowing of what could become of the young ex-soldier if he continued his quest for “Anknüpfung” through a return to the place of his youth. Dan’s planned return to Vienna’s Leopoldstadt, his hometown, would lead him to nothing but an accumulation of tombstones: his father and mother are dead. Even if he believed in the principle of eternal continuity through “Anknüpfung,” Bloomfield’s example teaches him to suppress his longing, as it can only lead to repeating the same disappointment with each visit to the dead. Yet as a father figure who replaces Dan’s own dead father, Bloomfield enables him to find a way into a new life: in his farewell letter to his secretary, he encloses a “princely fee” (118) for a job well done. But in the context of these men’s stories, Bloomfield’s gift to Dan is more than monetary. By providing Dan with the money needed to be independent, he tells his young friend to move on, possibly to the United States, but certainly out of the hotel whose “spell,” as Stasia and Dan call it, affects badly those who stay too long. Bloomfield’s gift, his legacy, so to speak, is thus not just a friendly invitation but an urgent call for Dan to go ahead with his life. Even if inviting his former employee to call on him if he is in the area is a standard formula, Bloomfield’s suggestion that Dan come to the country to which he himself immigrated decades earlier has a more significant dimension. It has the potential to help continue the genealogical line, in the way Dan has redefined it at the cemetery: it is the possibility of “Anknüpfung” without carrying the weight of a past that cannot be retrieved.

After Dan’s aforementioned three attempts to find a social affiliation that could provide him with a sense of integration or homecoming, he is now able to leave the hotel. The social groups with which he attempted to associate turn out to be the wrong ones for him, and his ultimate insight is that he must remain a man on the move, a “Heimkehrer” who knows about the problematic status of the notion of home. The hotel has turned out to be a trap rather than the magic, luxurious castle Dan first saw it as, and its

destruction at the end of the story is not just a symbol of hope for the end of an outdated and oppressive system.⁵³ It is also a precondition for Dan to tear himself away from a universe that tempted him with its stories and its people, and to get on a westbound train together with many other returnees, to whom he belongs. All riddles, including that of Kaleguropulos's true identity, are solved during the revolution, and Dan is now free to leave. In a three-phase progression, the hotel has changed from the initial magic castle and odd home-away-from-home to a symbol of capitalist exploitation and estrangement and finally to a place in which Dan could pursue his work without investing himself in the lives of those around him. He undergoes a process of detachment, from the hotel, from the idea that he can already connect with the Other, and from the idea that he can be part of a community, not just a bystander. In this light, Dan has turned out to be the perfect hotel guest. He is an uncommitted observer who functions best in social areas, recording what goes on around him, who has accepted that his inner substance, what he called "*the* Gabriel Dan" (emphasis added), neither makes him a complete loner nor a man who is stable enough to start a new life in this postwar society right away. He does not leave the hotel with twenty trunks, as his repeated "I could arrive at the Hotel Savoy with a single shirt, I could leave with twenty trunks" announces,⁵⁴ but he does leave it much more affluent than before, not as the Gabriel Dan who had entered it, but as a man who has been shown the way towards his future life. The novel's final line, Dan's reference to what Zwonimir would tell him if he were to join him on his journey, suggests that Dan will indeed go further west than Vienna's Leopoldstadt, and that he will follow Bloomfield's invitation, symbolically speaking, and connect his future with his past through Zwonimir's code word for all that is good and promising: "America."

Franz Kafka: *Amerika*

A decade before Roth, another young German-Jewish author sent his protagonist to "America." Franz Kafka's Karl Rossmann, from the first of his three novels, entitled variously *Der Verschollene* (The Man Who Disappeared) or *Amerika*,⁵⁵ started his literary travel west in the fall of 1912, about half a year after the *Titanic*'s catastrophic shipwreck. Even though Kafka published the novel's first chapter "Der Heizer" (The Stoker) under separate cover in 1913, the unfinished novel itself was only released to the public in 1927, three years after the author's death, thanks to Kafka's friend Max Brod who decided to disregard his late friend's wishes to burn all of his manuscripts and edited them instead to make them publishable.⁵⁶ As Brod pointed out in his first postscript to the novel, *Amerika* resembles Kafka's other two novels, *Der Prozess* (The Trial, 1925) and *Das Schloss* (The Castle, 1927), without sharing their completely pessimistic outlook. In fact, Kafka himself

classified it as “more optimistic and ‘lighter’ than anything he wrote,”⁵⁷ and part of this more positive atmosphere could, at first sight, be attributed to the setting that Kafka chose, the United States. At least in the beginning of this novel, America seems the promising young country that lured so many of the writer’s contemporaries overseas, a land of opportunities whose name Roth’s Zwonimir invokes as an encouraging code word in *Hotel Savoy*.

This is also the attitude of the sixteen-year-old Karl Rossmann. Although Karl is deported to the United States following a sexual scandal at home in Prague, the new country does not fail to make the positive first impression that we stereotypically expect: “As Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen . . . stood on the liner slowly entering the port of New York, a sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illuminate the Statue of Liberty, so that he saw it in a new light . . .”⁵⁸ Karl has no illusions about his own shortcomings — a mediocre student in school, with no money to continue his studies, he is aware of the problems that he might encounter. Nonetheless, Karl seems mildly confident that he will be able to make a living in this new country, and that his old life will not carry over to his new existence.

He does not have to wait long for the first life-changing turn of events. While he is still on board, looking for his lost umbrella, he meets a strange stoker who is about to file a complaint about his working conditions with the management of the ship. After Karl has listened to the man’s story, he decides to accompany his new friend and to support his case in front of the authorities in the captain’s cabin, assuming that his rhetorical abilities will be of help. Instead, Karl’s own destiny turns around. He meets an impressive man in the captain’s cabin who turns out to be his uncle, an immigrant who has become a successful businessman and senator in New York. The Rossmann’s cook back in Prague has notified the senator that the deported boy will need help in the New World, and thus the uncle has decided to meet the ship to look for his nephew and take him with him to his home in New York. To be sure, this turn of events does not help the stoker’s case at all, and Karl is disheartened to leave his new friend in his misery. But the arrival of the successful older family member and immigrant evokes a feeling of optimism in the reader that the inexperienced Karl may be fine in the new country — largely because similar optimism is apparent on Karl’s part too.⁵⁹

Yet the novel would not be Kafka’s if it turned into such a New World fairy tale. A disagreement between Karl and his uncle over a visit to an acquaintance’s house from where Karl returns inexcusably late lead to his expulsion from his uncle’s home after only a couple of months. After this, Karl has to make it on his own. He plans to take the train to San Francisco, but at the last minute, he decides to confine his travels to the East and seek his fortune there. When he stops at the first inn for the night, he meets two vagabonds, the Irishman Robinson and the Frenchman Delamarche, and together, the three men continue their journey — which is a bad idea, as Karl

figures out quickly. He has nothing in common with those two, and their interest in him is based on greed and their criminal instincts. On the first evening of their travels together, they take advantage of his short absence to break into his suitcase. Karl is outraged, especially since he had left the two to get them all a take-out dinner from a nearby hotel. Thus angry, he decides to separate from his new travelmates and to go back to the hotel where a friendly employee, the woman who is head cook of the hotel,⁶⁰ has already promised him a warm bed and shelter for the night.

The Hotel Occidental is thus Karl's second stop in the New World,⁶¹ and it is the place where he finds his first and only real employment. His time at the Occidental is only one episode in Karl's long story, but it is one that shatters any remaining belief in Karl and in the reader that the "wonderland America" is indeed a country where people can "arrive with a single shirt and leave with twenty trunks,"⁶² or where honesty, good intentions, and a sense of right and wrong have some importance. The Hotel Occidental, beginning with its name, becomes a symbol of the country as a whole, and of human interaction in the age of capitalism, atomization, anonymity, and bureaucracy. However, this is not Karl's first impression of the hotel. On the contrary, the Hotel Occidental initially appears as a big, bustling, promising place where he finds food and a friendly welcome, and where the head cook reveals to him the fabulous social and professional prospects that a career as a liftboy would hold for him:

How would you like, for instance, to be a lift-boy? Just say the word and it's done. If you've seen something of this country, you'll realise that it isn't very easy to get such posts, for they're the best start in life that you can think of. You come in contact with all the hotel guests, people are always seeing you and giving you little errands to do; in short, every day you have the chance to better yourself.⁶³

Amerika has often been discussed in the context of the German tradition of the *Entwicklungsroman*, that is, a novel of character development,⁶⁴ and the head cook's suggestion for Karl's further career almost reads like a socially downgraded version of Goethe's Lothario, talking to Wilhelm Meister.⁶⁵ As an access point into social life, the hotel is the platform from which Karl's good fortune could take off; and while Wilhelm Meister has to go out into the world to find his place in society, Karl just has to stay put in his lift and let the world come to him. But in contrast to his contemporary Felix Krull, who also starts his career as a liftboy, Karl will not succeed, and the question is then why this hotel turns out to be a haunted house instead of a magic castle. If Karl's story is that of a failed attempt to grow into and upward in society, why does Kafka choose a hotel as his setting?

First of all, the hotel is a quintessentially modern space. If Kafka wishes to test his protagonist's aptness for socialization, he can conduct his experi-

ment particularly well in an environment that represents the conditions of the time in the most concentrated manner. Even though the Hotel Occidental does not display the serene modern emptiness of those places that Kracauer and Thomas Mann had in mind, its hubbub of business does not change the fact that people there share nothing but Kracauer's "peripheral equality of social masks." Kafka does not tell us much about the Occidental's guests, except that those gathered in the dining hall are noisy townspeople, and that the hotel guests whom Karl has to serve are impatient members of the upper class who seem to think that employees are little more than slaves: "Some of the guests grumbled at the dislocation, and a gentleman who was escorting a lady actually tapped Karl lightly with his walking cane to make him hurry, an admonition which was quite unnecessary."⁶⁶ But with its group of ". . . rich and fussy guests who were always waiting to complain to the first hotel official they saw . . .,"⁶⁷ the Hotel Occidental paints an image of a society in which a strong part of the bond connecting the members of the privileged class seems to be their shared interest in abusing their status and displaying their might.

Furthermore, since it is not the hotel's guests but its employees who are the main players in this literary hotel, Kafka can also show the other, the darker side of life in this microcosm of modern society. Miserable working conditions and a brutal social pecking order determine all human interaction among the employees and create a deeply dehumanized atmosphere. Exploitation and abuse of hierarchically assigned power (as in the case of the head porter, who shows no signs of human interest in anyone below him) seem to be prerequisites for the Occidental to flourish as a business, and for the upper class to enjoy their stay. If guests, according to Siegfried Kracauer, become members of a unified group by virtue of their shared "peripheral sameness of social masks," employees are reduced to a lower-class version of such sameness by working conditions that strip them of any individuality. Sweaty, handed-down uniforms that do not fit serve to brand the employee as the hotel's property instead of making him or her a glamorous representative of the hotel, and they do not take into account their wearers' individual differences; names have no importance as long as the liftboy pushes the right button, and an overabundance of titles ("Oberköchin," "Oberportier," "Oberkellner") guarantees the strict and impenetrable hierarchy in the hotel's internal structure.⁶⁸ Except for Renell, Karl's slick colleague who resembles the character of Felix Krull, none of the employees can preserve their dignity under these working conditions. The alienated and alienating nature of their work has sent most of the lowlier employees into a state of lethargy and barbarism from which they no longer even wish to escape: "Often [Karl] was amazed that the others were so reconciled to their present lot, that they did not feel its provisional character, not even realize the need to come to a decision about their future occupations, and in spite of Karl's example read

nothing at all except tattered and filthy copies of detective stories which were passed from bed to bed.”⁶⁹ A suffocating sense of stagnation governs this sphere, a stagnation that the movement of the elevators seems to ridicule, and none of the prospects that the head cook had painted seem to ever come true here. Employees get lost in transition.

In his article “Ritual und Theater,”⁷⁰ Gerhard Neumann posits that *Amerika* is a “first contact” novel, a story in which the protagonist is confronted with unexpected situations that have not yet been organized by social principles such as language conventions, rules, stereotypes, or formulas.⁷¹ Karl’s arrival in New York presents the original first contact with the new country and its unknown language and order, a confrontation that is seemingly made easier by the appearance of his uncle Jacob. Karl’s employment at the Hotel Occidental represents the second first contact, this time with the world of labor and class, for which he is not prepared at all. After his removal from his uncle’s house (a repeat of his deportation from Prague), Karl needs to establish status or, less ambitiously, social identity for himself. Again, a “helping figure,”⁷² the head cook, seems to be sent to buffer this new first contact. However, time and again Karl falls into the same trap: he keeps believing in the creative or performative potential of each new situation while he is in fact fully caught in a strict ritual that he could only undermine if he were as creative and sly as his colleague Renell.

Ritual and theatricality, or what I would call performance, thus compete whenever Karl is confronted with a new first contact.⁷³ The help of the mediator turns out to be counterproductive when Karl is tempted to believe in progress where none is possible. The hotel is the most logical and effective setting for Karl to experience this tension. By definition, it oscillates between reality (ritual, order) and illusion (theatricality),⁷⁴ and not only the guest, seduced to buy into the fantasy of the “good life,” experiences this ambivalence. Karl, too, is subject to a similar manipulation. As an employee, he is supposed to ignore or accept the appalling working conditions and to proudly identify with a big, elegant palazzo and its supposed endless opportunities for professional success and social ascent. Kafka could have sent his young protagonist to work for an insurance agency or some other official, anonymous institution as he did in many of his other stories. But such a place would not have appropriately reflected the first contact situation that Karl needs to face at this moment in his life. What Kafka needs is a “total experience environment”⁷⁵ in which the young man is confined on all sides, socially, professionally, culturally, and psychologically, and the hotel, which Kafka locates in a place that is impossible to pin down, close to, yet somehow quite removed from the city of Rameses, offers this kind of complete universe. When Karl comes to the Hotel Occidental, he does so as a very young man, as a blank slate, as it were. Having lost his familial affiliation twice, he is completely on his own. As an immigrant, he has no place to call

home, and he has no experience in the world of labor. The hotel promises a remedy for this existential lack. Filled with illusions typical of a young male immigrant, Karl trusts the guidance of more seasoned members of the new society, and he believes in the ethos of hard work and discipline, virtues that would ultimately allow him to establish himself in the new world and in the hotel. The Hotel Occidental becomes a modified “home away from home” for this liftboy, an identity-assigning representative of the opportunities that capitalism promises.

Karl’s professional infatuation with the Hotel Occidental could not happen if it were not for a significant personal bonding experience that precedes his decision to work there.⁷⁶ He literally stumbles upon the hotel on his travels with Robinson and Delamarche, first entering the hotel as a customer in search of take-out food and drink. While trying to make himself heard in the loud dining hall, he meets the friendly “Oberköchin,” the head cook, a woman whom critics have often identified as Karl’s surrogate mother in *Rameses*.⁷⁷ She is happy to help him, and leads him into the restaurant’s pantry to prepare a basket of food for him. For the first time since being kicked out of his uncle’s house two nights earlier, Karl feels safe, protected, and comfortable. As a symbolic return to the absent mother’s womb, Karl’s first visit to the Hotel Occidental turns into an archetypal experience that explains further his readiness to leave his two male fraudulent companions and give up the more independent lifestyle of the road. After Robinson and Delamarche steal a photograph of Karl’s parents (along with an Italian sausage that his mother had given him and that has such sentimental value for him) Karl is completely free from any connection to his real family. Thus unanchored, Karl chooses to affiliate with a new surrogate family rather than following the open road.⁷⁸ He walks back to the hotel to arrive as an invited guest and chosen family member of one of the hotel’s most important employees, the head cook, and instead of moving into one of the hotel’s guest rooms or straight into the employees’ dormitory, he spends his first night at the hotel in the woman’s private apartment. To make his “homecoming” even more familiar, Karl also meets a surrogate sister, the young Therese, who works as the older woman’s secretary and shares the apartment with her as a daughter would. Karl seems to have found a new family, a new home, and even his first job with the help of this mother figure.

To make the family complete, Kafka also endows his protagonist with a new father figure, a typically Kafkaesque character who remains mostly in the background but ready to strike when he feels his authority is most effective and devastating. This is the head waiter, the “father” to the hotel’s liftboys, the incarnation of the hotel’s laws, in the name of whom the entire hotel machinery functions. He has a secret relationship with the head cook, and together, they represent and replace the parents (the softer, more forgiving mother, the authoritarian, punishing father) whom Karl had left behind in Europe.

Thus introduced into the Occidental, Karl must fall for the illusion of the hotel as a friendly, welcoming, and promising place. Assigned to work on the floors that are sandwiched between those areas that he associates with protection and nurture (the downstairs pantry with food and drinks, and the head cook's top-floor apartment, which offers him warmth and rest), Karl must believe that he has found a framework in which he can develop his plans for a successful life. Thus his first contact with the reality of work and class is delayed and rendered all the more more drastic. Over the nearly two months of his employment, he will not return more than three times to the head cook's private apartment that indicates the woman's superior status in the hotel and the possibility of an affiliation that is not subject to the strict pecking order there, and he will not spend any more time in the pantry either. Instead, he finds himself in areas with constant supervision and where he is nothing but a number: the lift, the dormitory, the hallway in front of the lifts, areas that are mostly downstairs, where he belongs, socially speaking. During working hours, he has no contact with either the head cook or Therese, and the influence of the punishing father grows. Karl's surrogate brother Renell turns into the bad brother from the fairy tale who helps bring Karl down; and the soft illusion of protection and comfort that the "roundness" of his first night at the hotel promises gives way to the sobering reality of a monotonous, twelve- to eighteen-hour-a-day job that offers him nothing but a linear upward-downward movement that ends on the ground floor each time.⁷⁹

Already on his first day, Karl realizes that he has signed up for an unchallenging and boring job. His lift is a modern one, for which almost no skill is needed when operated as instructed; all he has to do is press the right button. If he learns how to add some excitement to his job, it is only because he figures out a way to manipulate the elevator and increase the speed with which he sends it down to the ground floor to pick up new guests. It is a stressful, mindless, and hectic job, made worse by his colleague Renell's frequent absences, for which he has to cover. But it is the job that the head cook presented him as a promising starting point for a career in the hotel business, and Karl accepts its conditions as part of the deal. With a quasi-religious zeal, Karl puts up a fight against the danger of "losing time," be it in his lift, the speed of which determines the number of guests that he can accommodate, or be it as a member of the lowest class of employees in the hotel — to which he belongs as a newly hired liftboy — whose willingness to work longer than the assigned hours and tackle tasks that are not part of his limited job description promises faster success. While all the other boys in his dormitory spend their time off in mindless games and fistfights or smoking their pipes, Karl agrees to help Therese run errands in town, and he also begins a correspondence course in business to make up for being a late-comer to the United States. Relying on his strong sense of duty and ambi-

tion, Karl submits himself completely to the laws in effect inside the walls within which he moves, and his sound belief in pain and sacrifice as the price of a better future shows him a disciple of an ethos that Max Weber described in his influential long essay *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1920, Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism).

In this essay, Weber describes the productive power that Protestantism exerted over what we would now call the working class in the early industrial age. Religiously programed to believe that working hard and not expecting worldly rewards brought them closer to God and the possibility of an eternal life, these workers were the most important resource into which early capitalism could tap in order to achieve large profits. While religious indoctrination ceased to exert the same power towards the end of the nineteenth century, the ethos of hard work as a road to social and individual betterment still dominated much of the lower bourgeoisie's thinking at that time, and it is this legacy with which Kafka endows his protagonist. Much in the same vein as Kracauer, who draws parallels between the pre-modern member of a religious community in church and the modern guest in a hotel lobby, Kafka shows how the Protestant idea of working for an otherworldly reward and to be a worthy member of a higher order has lost its transcendental dimension without losing its integrative promise in the hotel. If Karl works as hard and fast as he can, he will eventually climb the social ladder. This reward would not only mean money (though this is in fact never mentioned in the text) but social status and recognition, first and foremost in the eyes of those people who represent the higher order for Karl. With the "good life" right in front of his eyes as he watches the hotel's guests, and strongly believing in the possibilities for professional and social ascent in this place, Karl embraces the hotel and his job there as conditions that are part of a bigger, more just plan in which he will ultimately be rewarded for his sacrifices. This is the promise or myth that has survived from the age that Weber describes in his long essay, and it is the basis of capitalism's success. According to Kracauer, churchgoers gather in churches to commune, while guests in a lobby gather to just be there, as social beings. Weber's Puritans work tirelessly to secure a place in heaven; Kafka's Karl Rossmann works as fast as he can and incessantly to secure a place where he is.⁸⁰ The result is the same: in both instances, capitalism is the one force that profits from these people's efforts, and the individual disappears behind the illusionary purpose of his work and is completely expendable if he transgresses the established order.

This happens when Karl's old comrade Robinson shows up one evening, completely drunk, inviting the liftboy to pay a visit to Delamarche, who has supposedly made it big in the meantime. The invitation is a scheme to tempt Karl to neglect his orders; but as much as he tries to avoid falling into the trap, Karl ultimately loses everything over this affair. Less moved by Robinson's worsening physical condition than concerned about the hotel's deco-

rum, Karl tries to get the drunkard out of the public area of the hotel and brings him to his dormitory to sober up. To do so, Karl leaves his post for a few minutes for the first time since he started his job; his absence is noticed, and he is fired. The trial that precedes his firing reveals the true nature of this place. With a logic that is completely consistent in itself, since it is not interested in circumstances, his two accusers, the head waiter (Karl's "father") and the head porter, dismiss the idea of human weakness as an extenuating circumstance. "It's impossible to defend oneself where there is no good will,"⁸¹ Karl understands after he becomes entangled in a number of contradictory statements. The hotel, a place built to accommodate the human being as well as possible as long as he or she is a guest, is nothing but a big business in which employees are simply small parts in the big operation in which every person has a specific function and in which there is only one answer to each question: asked by the head waiter whether he left his post in the lift, Karl has to admit that he did; the cause of his negligence, his concern for the hotel's atmosphere, has no bearing on the enquiry. Even the head cook and Therese buy into these principles when they believe the one-dimensional version of Karl's story that the two accusers present. As the two men corner Karl with questions to which he cannot find straightforward answers that would contradict their accusations and do justice to his situation, Karl gives up his fight. Instead of finding and building on a new social identity as a working, developing man in the hotel, Karl leaves it "smaller," existentially reduced to less than what he was when he first entered the place.⁸²

This reduction, Karl's symbolic shrinking relative to the space he inhabits and can claim, happens gradually, and the narrator's descriptions of the hotel serve to highlight this process. When Karl first arrives at the Occidental, it is a five-story building that he enters; shortly thereafter, he learns that there are more than 530 rooms, about fifty kitchen-maids, thirty elevators, forty liftboys and 5,000 guests — the numbers contradict each other and render the hotel a dreamlike, if not nightmarish place. In addition, the hotel initially seems to be located out in the countryside, close to a bigger city but on a "Landstraße" (113), a main road in the countryside.⁸³ But when Karl enters the hotel's busy restaurant at night, having no concrete idea where he is after wandering in the dark for a long time, he concludes that a big city must be nearby, and when he returns to his companions, traffic is heavy around the hotel. When Karl gets expelled from the hotel, he leaves it through one of the innumerable entrance doors that resemble more those of an urban grand hotel (with its revolving door in the middle and a number of conventional doors on the sides) than those of a hotel out on a roadway. As Ravy points out, we should not read these descriptions of seemingly ever-expanding places and objects around Karl in a realistic manner.⁸⁴ Instead, this magnification corresponds to or stands for Karl's symbolic shrinking in

this world and his loss of civic status and visibility (thus *Der Verschollene*, that is, “The Man Who Disappeared”).

Karl’s last unpleasant encounter with the hotel’s personnel shows this lost dignity and his inability to defend his claim to his own space strikingly. As he is about to leave, the enraged head porter orders him into his glass office cubicle, where he lashes out at his former employee. Even though the entire office is made of glass, and people can see everything that is going on inside, nobody cares about the young man in distress. The glass box becomes a symbol for the interaction between people in this modern space. It is the site of constant supervision where people ignore each other as individuals as much as they can to protect themselves against the other’s gaze:

Couldn’t the people outside see this bullying? Or, if they saw it, what did they think it meant, since none of them objected to it or even tapped on the glass to show the Head Porter that he was being watched and could not deal with Karl just as he liked?⁸⁵

Blending the private and public spheres does not lead to increased communication, even if the porter’s office is a place where people come to get answers to their questions as quickly as possible. The hotel does not create a community or any sort of bond between its people, and all interaction is according to the laws of efficiency and hierarchical obedience. Whatever Karl does, he cannot better his situation, and he finally decides to flee from the hard grip of the porter, leaving behind his jacket with his passport inside. Thus stripped of his last token of civil identity, Karl must now continue his journey as an invisible man, first escaping to and then being locked up in Brunelda’s, that is, Delamarche’s fat and threatening girlfriend’s, top-floor bohemian apartment, to ultimately join the “Nature Theater of Oklahoma” and get lost in the plains of that state.

What is achieved by sending this protagonist to the Hotel Occidental exactly in the middle of the novel as Brod reconstructed it? First of all, the American hotel functions as a sobering representative of the young, democratic America in general, the country to which the young Karl Rossmann comes filled with hopes for a better future. As “palaces for the people,” American hotels in the early twentieth century seemed to symbolize the ideal of America on a small scale,⁸⁶ where everybody is equal, and everybody’s well-being is the goal, as far as guests are concerned. As a business in the service sector, the hotel is part of a new industry that saw its first boom in the United States, and for Kafka to send Karl to this American hotel seems like a double promise of success for Karl, in spite of his lack of skills. It is an attractive, promising place, which tempts Karl to believe in his shiny uniform, even if it does not quite fit him and smells bad. His introduction to this universe is as soft as it can be. As the head cook’s guest, he experiences moving into the hotel as a homecoming to a “home away from home.”⁸⁷ Thus emotion-

ally obliged, and obviously driven by his desire to make it in the New World, he does everything he is asked to do, convinced that his hard work will earn him the status to which he aspires.

However, the hotel is, by definition, a transitory space. For Karl to believe in the possibility of “transition” in a positive social sense is problematic. No matter how hard he works, his efforts cannot even guarantee him the *status quo*, let alone help him to climb the social ladder. His first infraction against the hotel’s order reveals its true inhuman character. Kafka’s America (and all it represents) is not the place where one can arrive with one shirt and move on with twenty trunks. It takes ruthlessness, skill, and slyness to make it in this society, and the uptight, authority-fearing, passive Karl is definitely not the character to develop such qualities. Karl leaves the hotel without having found his place in society, chased away and robbed of his identity. If Kafka and his critics maintain that *Amerika* does not share the pessimistic outlook of his other two novels, this assessment might only ring true because the New World still offers spaces vast enough to let the individual disappear from capitalism’s radar screen.

Thomas Mann: *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*

At about the same time as Kafka had his young protagonist try to find his “niche” in an upscale Western hotel, Thomas Mann used a strikingly similar plot to jumpstart the career of his wittiest, most scandalous, and maybe most amusing character, Felix Krull.⁸⁸ Mann had begun jotting down ideas for this novel as early as 1905, when he, like the rest of Europe, had read and enjoyed the Romanian con artist Georges Manolescu’s autobiographies *Ein Fürst der Diebe* (A Prince of Thieves) and *Gescheitert* (Failed) (both 1905). Inspired by the possibilities that he recognized in Manolescu’s material, Mann decided to use his story as the basic skeleton for an innovative, novel-length discussion of the artist’s place in modern society.⁸⁹ However, as Mann established himself in the upper bourgeoisie following the success of his novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901) and especially after he married the rich Katia Pringsheim in 1905, he started developing scruples about the topic that felt increasingly frivolous, risqué, and “unworthy.”⁹⁰ It took Mann until 1910 to overcome these artistic scruples. In 1911, around the time when Kafka started his *Amerika*, Mann published the first part of his novel as *Felix Krull: Bruchstück aus einem Roman* (Felix Krull. Fragment of a Novel, translated as *The Early Years*), the story of Felix’s youth, which ends with father Krull’s bankruptcy and suicide. Again, Mann put the manuscript aside to write his novella *Der Tod in Venedig*, then picked up *Felix Krull* again in 1913 to write six of the nine chapters that comprise the second book today.⁹¹ But work went slowly, since it became gradually more difficult for him to main-

tain the tone of lightness and parody throughout the book.⁹² Mann's turn towards an active political engagement in the 1920s and 1930s and his exile during the Third Reich made him give up this untimely novel until 1951 (even as he published the "Buch der Kindheit" [Book of Childhood], i.e. book one and the first six chapters of book two, in 1922). As a seasoned writer, after decades of immersing himself in philosophical and humanistic topics with novels like *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain, 1924), the tetralogy *Joseph und seine Brüder* (Joseph and His Brothers, 1933–43], and *Doktor Faustus* (1948), Mann finally decided to take up the story of Felix Krull again, realizing that the text had grown from a slightly frivolous literary adventure into a Gargantuan work that occupied him off and on for almost as many years as Goethe spent with his *Faust*.⁹³ The novel we have today, which was intentionally left as a fragment, appeared in 1954, a year before Mann's death, and it shows his changed attitude towards the main character in the third book. Felix appears now less a lucky con artist than an incarnation of certain philosophical and mythical concepts with which Mann had been preoccupied throughout his mature life.

However, the genesis of Mann's last novel is not my chief interest here. Mentioning the stop-and-go history of its publication is important insofar as it shows that, even though the final version was published in 1954, this hotel novel was conceived during the same time period as all the other texts discussed in this book. In addition, the strong similarities between Kafka's and Mann's basic plots ask for a comparative reading. Mann's *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* can be understood as a counterpart to Kafka's *Amerika*, and nowhere is the complementary character of these plots more obvious than in the way their authors use the setting of the hotel as a space of opportunity and as a place where these young men try to launch their lives as adult members of society. Starting my discussion of Mann's novel with a short comparison with Kafka's *Amerika* will help highlight some of Mann's important contributions to the literary discourse on the hotel as a social and a literary setting.

In both stories, a young man has to leave his home before he has learned any trade or profession to make his fortune further west. Both men have to leave home following a scandal: Karl Rossmann fathered a child, Felix's family went bankrupt and his father committed suicide. Both young men had their first sexual experience with the family's maid, even if their experiences differ greatly from each other.⁹⁴ They both start their careers in hotels and they are both told that a hotel job offers a unique opportunity for social and professional ascent. Like Kafka's head cook, even though more cleverly and certainly thinking about more than just the conventional opportunities that present themselves to the young hotel employee, Krull's shrewd godfather Professor Schimmelpreester tells his godson's family:

Now it seems to me that in [Felix's] case a career as a hotel waiter offers the most hopeful prospects: both as a career in itself (which can lead to very lucrative positions in life) and thanks to those by-paths which open up here and there to left and right of the main thoroughfare and have provided a livelihood for many a Sunday's child before now.⁹⁵

Mann's entire novel, as well as its portrayal of this particular character, makes it more than clear that Schimmelpreester's "by-paths" are not what Kafka's head cook has in mind when she tells Karl of the wonderful professional and social prospects that the job as a liftboy promises. But all it takes for a liftboy to succeed seems to be a happy predisposition and versatility: Felix will be able to take advantage of situations as they arise.

There are other similarities between *Amerika* and *Felix Krull*: both young men have a special talent for languages,⁹⁶ an ability that makes them well-suited for a job in the international climate of a big hotel. Both are attracted to the formal beauty of the uniform that they get as liftboys and in which they feel like accepted members of the hotel staff. In their jobs as liftboys, they acquire similar skills, and both take pride in doing their jobs well, especially since each boy's task is a physical challenge, given the long hours they must work.⁹⁷ Finally, both young men also pursue additional studies in their spare time in order to advance more readily and rapidly in society than if they relied on the opportunities opened up by their tedious jobs alone.⁹⁸

A clear influence of one of the texts on the other would be difficult to prove, even though Mann and Kafka may have had access to each other's work.⁹⁹ Rather, the story of the young man who starts his professional life as a liftboy to find a glorious career in one of the flourishing business sectors of the early twentieth century may have been a fiction that was current in the Western cultural imagination, inspired by the success of famous success stories such as that of John D. Rockefeller. The way in which these two writers use this motif is then indicative of their general approach to their main characters and the message that their texts convey. The entire episode at Kafka's Hotel Occidental only proves the illusionary nature of Karl's — and the reader's — belief in social mobility and the freedom of personal growth in a modern alienated society. For Kafka to deconstruct the romantic notion of the "American dream" in this setting is the most effective way to convey his message. Mann, on the other hand, takes a more creative and subject-centered approach. He shows what kind of character and attitude it takes for a young man to get what he wants. The subject is free to manipulate his environment to maximize his personal success: he has understood the rules, adjusted to them, and is now able to exploit for his own benefit those forces that imprison the inflexible and, in this respect, pre-modern Karl Rossmann. And while the hotel becomes a perfect representative of those conditions to which Felix adjusts so well, it also offers him the stage on which he can dis-

play his skills and live out his life as a well-adjusted, savvy citizen of the early twentieth century. *Felix Krull* is the one success story set in a hotel from which all the other literary hotel guests and employees discussed in this study could learn.

Mann's decision to send Felix Krull to an upscale hotel is also the most logical one for Felix's further "career" and the ease with which he is supposed to realize it. Mann's Schimmelpreester and Kafka's head cook propose that a hotel is the one place where a person's fate can change most radically and most easily, and Felix's observations in the St. James and Albany tell us why and how:

My basic attitude toward the world and society can only be called inconsistent. For all my eagerness to be on affectionate terms with them, I was frequently aware of a considered coolness, a tendency to critical reflection. There was, for example, an idea that occasionally preoccupied me when for a few leisurely minutes I stood in the lobby or dining hall . . . watching the hotel guests being waited and fawned upon by blue-liveried minions. It was the idea of *interchangeability*. With a change of clothes and make-up, the servitors might often just as well have been the masters, and many of those who lounged in the deep wicker chairs, smoking their cigarettes, might have played the waiter. It was pure accident that the reverse was the fact, an accident of wealth; for an aristocracy of money is an accidental, an interchangeable aristocracy.¹⁰⁰

At a time when money has conquered all walks of life, social distinction is no longer an essential quality, and upper-class life has become a performance whose most important aspect is the costume in which the players appear. The hotel, with its heavy emphasis on visual signs, offers ideal conditions for the display of status. As someone who observes and reflects upon his surrounding most critically, Felix Krull recognizes the ways in which this society is vulnerable to subversion. Less shrewd intruders like Christine Hoflehner could be kept at bay with a strictly enforced code of leisure-class behavior, which requires of one who seeks to transgress it complete confidence and belief in both the system and one's ability to imitate it well enough to blend in. Felix Krull is immune to intimidation, and if he masters one skill, it is that of adaptation and imitation. Aware of the radical changes that affected European high society during the nineteenth century, he has no respect for the new "aristocracy" which, as he perceives it, derives status from objects and fetishized activities without having the right aesthetic, distinguished attitude in the way Georg Simmel defines real distinction and to which Felix fully subscribes.¹⁰¹ If all it takes to "switch sides" is to master the upper-class semiotic code, that is, dress the part and display all the important signs of belonging, Felix can easily become a member of that distinguished

group, yes, he can even do better than most. For Felix introduces a third approach to nobility and social superiority. After centuries in which blood determined one's belonging to the upper classes, that is, to the aristocracy, and after a relatively short period during the nineteenth and early twentieth century during which wealth determined social superiority, Felix believes that true nobility is a matter of inner refinement, a quality that distinguishes the rich man from the elegant and noble man. Neither bloodlines nor money can guarantee these intangible qualities, which he knows he possesses, and with an infallible sense of entitlement, Felix sets out to subvert the existing social order. As his project is not to accumulate wealth and have status as means of social or political power,¹⁰² Felix ultimately lives out Georg Simmel's ideal of real elegance, an ideal that his contemporary high society has abandoned in its relentless pursuit of ostentatious status. In this respect, Felix reverses the historical developments of the nineteenth century as he returns the upper class's lifestyle and behavior to standards that a pre-modern aristocracy cherished while downgrading birthright to a secondary factor.

Felix's rise into these formerly exclusive circles is only possible because the display and performance of higher status in modernity have been moved from the private to the semi-public realm, especially to the upscale hotel. If status is proven through performance, anyone who wishes to be acknowledged needs an audience. The special qualities of the hotel as a stage-like arena make it such an ideal setting for Mann's story about this con artist — and all his potential fellow con artists, literary or real, who take to heart Walter Serner's detailed guidelines for a successful career in that "profession" in his *Letzte Lockerung* (Last Relaxation, 1920), an amusing dadaist manifesto in which he endorses the grand hotel as one of the most lucrative and fitting settings for men who wish to practice theft and betrayal as an art form.¹⁰³

What Mann then writes is what I would call the total hotel novel. It is a novel about a man whose entire adult life is based in the hotel in the physical, cultural, economic, and spiritual sense, a life that could not be led anywhere else. Mann creates a main character whose natural aversion to any kind of commitment and whose joy in innumerable theatrical manifestations of the self respond perfectly to the basic nature of the hotel. He writes a narrative that portrays almost any imaginable life lived under a hotel's roof, from liftboy to royal guest, and he tells a story whose many settings include every area in an upscale hotel, from dormitory to bedroom suite, from kitchen to restaurant, from basement to attic.¹⁰⁴ Now that the stage is set and marked, it is time to check in with Felix and test his talents in action.

Felix first enters the hotel as a future employee, even if through the "wrong" entrance, the guest entrance, foreshadowing his later discovery that class is really just a matter of appearances and seizing opportunities. Fully convinced of his higher calling in social life, but still inexperienced enough not to claim superiority, he tells us about his first entrance into the hotel:

“... modesty bade me choose, not one of the two revolving glass doors through which the guests were entering, but rather the side entrance through which the porters passed. The latter, however, whatever they may have taken me for, motioned me back; I was not one of them. Nothing remained for me but to go in through one of those magnificent revolving doors, my little bag in my hand.”¹⁰⁵ Felix is a pragmatist, and he has no intention of rebelling against the existing social order to climb the social ladder. When his future employer Generaldirektor Stürzli suspects him of socialist leanings, Felix cleverly retorts: “No, indeed, *Herr Generaldirektor!* I find society enchanting just as it is and I am on fire to earn its good opinion.”¹⁰⁶ He is neither a revolutionary nor a passive executor of assigned duties like Karl Rossmann. Instead, Felix chooses to play along and apply his amiable qualities to whatever service he is assigned to perform, in a way that taps into a potential that Karl does not know how to use: the guests’ need for human warmth. Clever enough to assess situations and opportunities as they arise, Felix charms his way up in society to a point where even his criminal energy becomes a favorable quality: his hotel lover Madame Houpflé, the bored wife of a rich Alsatian toilet-bowl manufacturer with literary ambitions and a vivid sexual imagination, begs him to steal her jewelry so that she can be aroused beyond the pleasure that routine sex would give her. Given his uncommitted and therefore happy general approach to the world that guarantees him affection without rendering him vulnerable, he risks nothing when he showers the guests with his well-placed gestures of human attention, warmth, and fondness.¹⁰⁷ Even the most established members of this circle, like the distinguished Scott Lord Kilmarnock or the rich, young Eleanor Twentymen (a teenage version of Erna Salomonsohn?), forget all social taboos and surrender to their attraction to the charming young servant. For Karl Rossmann, the job in the hotel is an assignment on a given level in society, a duty that he follows to the letter in the hopes of moving up to the next level and thus making it within the institutional order. It is an approach that allows him to avoid the freedom that not being associated with anyone or anything would mean.¹⁰⁸ For Felix Krull, his job is a starting point that gives him the opportunity to excel and thus advance within a human, emotional, and aesthetic order that transcends the social. Karl is a “Hotel-Beamter,” a duty-ridden hotel servant. Felix is a hotel artist. Karl believes in the “what” of his job, Felix focuses on the “how,” on style and form in everything he does. In this respect, he is the better, the more modern hotel employee of the two, considering that hotels are businesses in the service sector that rely heavily on these intangible qualities to make their offerings more appealing than those of their competitors. But these qualities also make Felix the perfect hotel guest. He thrives in the theatrical, illusionary atmosphere of the place, and he neither expects nor needs his stay at a hotel to have a substantial impact on his emotional or intellectual development, let

alone on his identity. These aspects, Felix's versatility and his independence from external sources of identity, make it possible for Mann to metamorphose Felix's station from that of a dedicated lowly employee to that of a traveling Marquis de Venosta impersonator within ten pages.

What makes this lofty and frivolous adventurer such a success in society — and what elevates this character to a modern artist figure — is his perfect mastery of social form, that key concept resonating through all theories about modernism.¹⁰⁹ And form is, as we have seen, the one behavioral imperative that guides life in upscale hotels. From early on in his life, Felix has fully internalized those skills and effects that Georg Simmel determines as crucial in the display of real distinction and elegance, and he can apply them masterfully to any given situation in his playful pursuit of a career as a con artist and social butterfly, a talent that converts his lack of a substantial identity, which Koopmann has commented on,¹¹⁰ into an existential versatility that is the best road to success and independence. Hans Wysling, in his monumental *Narzissmus und illusionäre Existenzform: Zu den Bekenntnissen des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*, sums up the major driving force behind Felix's success in society when he connects his aesthetics-based outlook on life to social power: "Felix is not interested in becoming a member of the aristocracy; rather, he is fascinated by the idea that he could imitate through play what he perceives as the aristocracy's forms of aesthetic expression. As he accepts these forms, he is able to triumph over them."¹¹¹

Life as a perfectly choreographed play with endless possibilities, as a series of adventurous gallant episodes, as a projection of his inner scenarios that he can change as quickly as a costume: this is Krull's approach to being in the world, and the hotel provides a setting in which this episodic rhythm is naturally accommodated. As he moves from hotel to hotel, Felix can assume any identity without having to fear the consequences — hotel guests have neither a past nor a future. However, it is not enough for Felix to be detached from any "self" in order to climb the social ladder. Hence Mann endows him with a special talent for all those activities that we have encountered in other hotel stories and that Veblen and Simmel identified as crucial to a person's belonging to and being accepted in polite society. I already mentioned Felix's talent for languages, according to Veblen an important factor in a person's display of conspicuous leisure. With the same astonishing ease and speed with which he learns languages, Felix picks up tennis during his stay in Lisbon. He quickly absorbs new "useless" knowledge — about Greek mythology from Madame Houpflé, about paleontology from his new acquaintance Professor Kuckuck in Lisbon — that he can recycle strategically in subsequent social situations. And already as a liftboy in Paris, he starts going to the opera, not because he is interested in music or canonic culture per se,¹¹² but because he knows that attending such cultural events is part of the performative behavioral code of the upper class. He is a master of

the art of social conversation and flirtation, and his taste in dress and accessories is impeccable. When he arrives in Lisbon after having swapped identities with Marquis Louis de Venosta, he appears as the young man “*von Familie*,” that is, “of family,” not only “of a *good* family,”¹¹³ on his semi-mandatory *Grand Tour*, and his travels are yet another sign of conspicuous leisure in Veblen’s sense. All of these faculties and occupations make him a stellar representative of those qualities that Simmel demands from perfect social interaction (“*Geselligkeit*”) and an effective player on the stages of the leisure class.

And Felix possesses one more “talent” that makes him such a successful, suitable hotel resident and feeds his career as a modern adventurer. If we believe his own account, and judging from the reactions that he provokes, Felix Krull exudes sex and eroticism, and he claims to be an excellent lover. His aura wins him the favors of many female and some male hotel guests while he still works in the lift, and his abilities as a lover begin to pay off when he starts his affair with Madame Houpflé. Once he has made it onto the other side of the social divide, his sexual abilities constitute yet another quality that matches well with the customs and behavioral code that the upper class has set for its hotels. As mentioned earlier, part of a hotel’s appeal is its erotic promise. The close proximity of public and private areas facilitates the transformation of a chance encounter into a sexual adventure. The possibility of meeting someone with whom such an adventure could happen are high in a hotel, not just because there are many people to choose from, but because the aura of the place might instill sexual desire in the respective other. The ultimately impersonal nature of the hotel room guarantees more or less consequence-free sexual freedom, and the ease with which one can sneak from one room into another, without necessarily being seen or regulated by unwanted observers, adds to the excitement that hotels instill. As he relishes in his amazing talents as a lover and in his devotion to this kind of “service” to the women he meets, Felix makes the perfect male guest who delivers what certain guests hope for, and who responds to the place’s implicit invitation or expectation in the most appropriate manner.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, his pleasurable sexual encounters with members of the leisure class are also proof that Felix is literally and fully “embraced” by the upper class in their places of leisure where status is of the utmost importance. The hotel accommodates the two aspects of Felix’s often-stressed “*Liebesbedürfnis*,” his desire to be loved, both socially as well as sexually, to the fullest.

Felix knows that the hotel is the best habitat for him, and he has a special relationship to these palaces of the rich. Wherever he goes, he notices the most minute details about the lobby, the reception desk, or the design of the rooms. More than any other literary hotel guest we have encountered so far, he paints a vivid picture of the upscale places he visits. Everything he sees and hears and feels registers more profoundly with a person who lives fully

in the here and now, not distracted by past concerns or future projects. Every interior becomes his personal theatrical set, and the more elegant the place, the more detailed his description becomes, and the more elevated he feels as someone who has a right to this place:

I took special pride in the walls of the salon, lofty expanses of stucco framed in gilded moulding, such as I have always greatly preferred to the more bourgeois wallpaper. Together with the white-and-gold doors, which were tall, too, and were set in niches, they gave the chamber a decidedly palatial, princely aspect.¹¹⁵

Taking obvious pleasure in providing such details, Mann lets his main character indulge in his descriptions of these European grand hotels, and slowly, Felix's biography begins to resemble a guidebook to Europe's nicest hotels.¹¹⁶ As a "Hotel-Mensch," he lives in all areas of the hotel and notices everything around him; and while his account may not provide us a full picture of any particular hotel, his recurring descriptions of certain areas common to many hotels allow us to assemble what we might call the "hotel of his life," a generic place in which he changes roles as soon as he changes rooms.

While the "Marquis de Venosta" puts on his mask for his first appearance in the city's streets in his first-floor suite,¹¹⁷ the liftboy Armand returns to his top-floor dormitory after a long shift. A young cultural tourist straightens his light flannel pants, getting ready for a mid-afternoon bullfight as the gallant waiter Felix serves tea, cigars, and cognac to English aristocrats in the hall. The bon vivant Felix Krull, a young man of modest wealth, enjoys his pre-opera dinner at the rooftop restaurant in the company of an elegant friend, while the busboy Armand clears the dishes from the tables. And after hours, the young boy-toy sneaks into the bedroom of a rich older woman to satisfy her wildest sexual dreams with his youthful potency. Finally, a sly, quiet thief makes his rounds in dark hotel rooms on the hunt for riches. As Mann tells the adventurous story of a young man's life and social ascent using an episodic technique in which the episodes are marked spatially by their occurrence in specific areas in a hotel, he also tells the story of the different lives that may gather under one hotel's roof. It is in this synthesizing, synchronic image that the author transforms the hotel into a narrative in which space, time, and language merge.

Much has been written about *Felix Krull* as a parody of the German "Bildungsroman," about its indebtedness to the picaresque novel, its allusions to the travel novel, and to the genre of confessional erotic literature. It has been read as Mann's response to the experience of exile, as the story of a modern "man without qualities" (except for theatrical talent), and as Mann's last contribution to the discussion of the artist's place in modern society. For Wysling and his followers, *Felix Krull* is a modern reworking of various

Greek myths; for others, the novel offers a variation on the fairy-tale motif of “rags to riches.” However, such a literary overdetermination would be hard to digest if it were not for Mann’s clever choice of setting. No other modern space could justify, accommodate, facilitate, and generate all of these different motifs, influences, traditions, and discourses better than the hotel. No other place could say more about the main character and his existence in space and time. By superimposing a number of traditional narrative genres that can no longer stand alone in modern times, Mann creates a narrative space beyond time and geography in which progressive and innovative storytelling can succeed without breaking with the past. The hotel becomes the one necessary ordering, unifying principle that allows Mann’s “homeless” story to be told as a modern myth in postmodern fashion.

Notes

¹ Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, trans. John Hoare (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1986), 7–123, here: 10. In the German original, this reads as follows: “Im Hotel Savoy konnte ich mit einem Hemd anlangen und es verlassen als Gebieter von zwanzig Koffern — und immer noch der Gabriel Dan sein” (Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy* [1924; rpt. Munich: DTV, 2003], 7).

² This is Gilbert Ravy’s main focus in his study of *Hotel Savoy*, *Amerika*, and *Felix Krull*. For him, the protagonist’s arrival at the hotel corresponds to and thus symbolizes the young man’s transition into a new social and human environment whose rules need to be learned and mastered before the young man can be successful. Gilbert Ravy, “L’Hôtel Symbolique: Remarques sur l’Utilisation d’un Espace Romanesque chez Kafka, J. Roth et Th. Mann,” in *Études Allemandes et Autrichiennes: Hommage à Richard Thieberger* (Nice: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice, 1989), 353–63, here: 359.

³ See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899, rpt. New York: Dover, 1994), 23–42.

⁴ There are other novels and novellas from the 1920s and 1930s that one could add to the texts to be discussed in this chapter — Erich Kästner’s *Drei Männer im Schnee* and Hermann Hesse’s *Der Kurgast* both revolve around the experiences of men in hotels. However, Kästner’s comedy of errors does not foster deeper insights into the individual’s struggle to maintain his or her identity in the unsettling atmosphere of the hotel; in fact, it is the stability of the three male protagonists’ identity that accounts for all the humorous twists and turns in the story. And Hesse’s *Der Kurgast* is set in a sanatorium, a place that does not fit in with the other hotels considered in this study.

⁵ Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig*, *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 8, *Erzählungen, Fiorenza, Dichtungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), 444–525. All English quotes from Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, *Tonio Kröger*, and *Other Writings*, trans. David Luce, *The German Library* vol. 63 (New York: Continuum, 1999), 95–161.

⁶ Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," trans. Thomas Levin, in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–58. Kracauer refers to *Der Tod in Venedig* when he describes the pseudo-holy silence observed in hotel lobbies. After quoting from the novella, Kracauer concludes: "The contentless solemnity of this conventionally imposed silence does not arise out of mutual courtesy, of the sort one encounters everywhere, but rather serves to eliminate differences" (57). Since Kracauer's observations are so clearly based on Mann's literary representation, one wonders whether Kracauer's abstractions should really pass as general and valid observations about hotel lobbies and not as one of many interpretations of Mann's text.

⁷ *Death in Venice*, 115. "[Er] fand sich . . . ein wenig verfrüht in der Halle ein, wo er einen großen Teil der Hotelgäste, fremd untereinander und in gespielter gegenseitiger Teilnahmslosigkeit, aber in der gemeinsamen Erwartung des Essens, versammelt fand. Er nahm eine Zeitung vom Tische, ließ sich in einen Ledersessel nieder und betrachtete die Gesellschaft, die sich von derjenigen seines ersten Aufenthaltes in einer ihm angenehmen Weise unterschied" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 469).

⁸ *Death in Venice*, 117. "Die Haltung dieser Frau war kühl und gemessen, die Anordnung ihres Kleides von jener Einfachheit, die überall da den Geschmack bestimmt, wo Frömmigkeit als Bestandteil der Vornehmheit gilt" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 471).

⁹ *Death in Venice*, 118. "Die feierliche Stille, die zum Ehrgeiz der großen Hotels gehört" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 473).

¹⁰ In his *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music, 1872), Nietzsche distinguishes between two artistic driving forces which shaped the Greek tragedy, the topic of his inquiry. These two forces are the Apollinian and the Dionysian principles, designating the aesthetic will to form, order, tamed beauty, and calm on the one hand (Nietzsche refers to the "veil of Maya"), and the artistic drive toward unmediated, unmitigated expression, an original power ("Urkraft") that defies any order and lets us see the realm of death, destruction, chaos, and ecstasy. Where both forces balance each other, tragedy can succeed; where the Apollinian principle takes over, tragedy must necessarily turn stale and go down — which is exactly what happened to the Greek tragedy with Euripides, according to Nietzsche. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870–1873*. Vol. 1 of *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden* (Munich/Berlin/New York: DTV/De Gruyter, 1988).

¹¹ Marc Katz, "The Hotel Kracauer," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Critical Studies* 11.2 (1999): 134–52; here: 148. See also my discussion at the end of the second chapter of this study.

¹² This is one of Kracauer's main ideas in his essay "The Hotel Lobby." For him, guests in the lobby display nothing but a "peripheral equality of social masks" (56).

¹³ *Death in Venice*, 100. "Der Autor der klaren und mächtigen Prosa-Epopöe vom Leben Friedrichs des Großen von Preußen; der geduldige Künstler, der in langem Fleiß den figurenreichen, so vielerlei Menschenschicksale im Schatten einer Idee versammelten Romanteppich, 'Maja' mit Namen, wob. . . . und der einer ganzen

dankbaren Jugend die Möglichkeit sittlicher Entschlossenheit jenseits der tiefsten Erkenntnis zeigte . . ." (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 450).

¹⁴ *Death in Venice*, 97. "[Er sah] geile[s] Farrengewucher, aus Gründen von fettem, gequollenem und abenteuerlich blühendem Pflanzenwerk haarige Palmenschäfte nah und ferne emporstreben . . ." (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 447).

¹⁵ *Death in Venice*, 114. "Er betrat das weitläufige Hotel von hinten, von der Garten-seite, und begab sich durch die große Halle und die Vorhalle ins Office. Da er angemeldet war, wurde er mit dienstfertigem Einverständnis empfangen" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 467).

¹⁶ One could speculate whether Thomas Mann also wanted to drop an early hint as to Aschenbach's sexual orientation. His entrance into the hotel is clearly backwards, "andersherum," a term that is colloquially used to describe homosexuals.

¹⁷ *Death in Venice*, 139. "Überraschung, Bewunderung mochten sich offen [in Aschenbachs Blick] malen, als sein Blick dem des Vermissen begegnete, — und in dieser Sekunde geschah es, daß Tazio lächelte" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 498).

¹⁸ *Death in Venice*, 140. "Und zurückgelehnt, mit hängenden Armen, . . . flüsterte er die stehende Formel der Sehnsucht . . . 'Ich liebe dich!'" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 498).

¹⁹ Schnitzler's, Zweig's and Werfel's stories have clearly shown to what extent pretty young women are considered a "prey" in hotels at this time. It is this threat that might lead Tazio's mother to impose such an ugly dress code onto her daughters: "Die Herrichtung der drei Mädchen, von denen die älteste für erwachsen gelten konnte, war bis zum Entstellenden herb und keusch" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 470). ["The system adopted for the three girls, the eldest of whom could be considered to be grown-up, was austere and chaste to the point of disfigurement" (*Death in Venice*, 116)]

²⁰ *Death in Venice*, 161. "Ihm war aber so, als ob der bleiche und liebliche Psychagog fort draußen ihm lächle, ihm winke; . . . Und, wie so oft, machte [Aschenbach] sich auf, ihm zu folgen" (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 525).

²¹ "Das Hotel, das ich wie ein Vaterland liebe, liegt in einer der großen europäischen Hafenstädte. . . . Wie andere Männer zu Heim und Herd, zu Weib und Kind heimkehren, so komme ich zurück zu Licht und Halle, Zimmermädchen und Portier — und es gelingt mir immer, die Zeremonie der Heimkehr so vollendet abrollen zu lassen, daß die einer förmlichen Einkehr ins Hotel gar nicht beginnen kann." Joseph Roth, *Panoptikum, Gestalten und Kulissen. Gesammelte Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 3 (Cologne/Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1956), 229–388; here: 234; translation BM.

²² In German: "Hotelbürger, Hotelpatriot" (*Panoptikum*, 237).

²³ Edward Timms discusses Roth's general preference for geographical and political "limbo-situations" ("Joseph Roth, die Grenzländer und die Grenzmenschen," in *Viribus Unitis: Österreichs Wissenschaft und Kultur im Ausland. Impulse und Wechselwirkungen*, ed. Ilona Slawinski and Joseph Strelka [Bern: Peter Lang, 1996], 419–32). Timms's article discusses mainly Roth's journalistic work, but his fiction shows similar tendencies, especially that of the earlier phase. Margarita Pazi ("Exil-Bewußtsein und Heimat-Illusionen bei Joseph Roth," in *Wider den Faschismus: Exilliteratur als Geschichte*, ed. Sigrid Bauschinger and Susan L. Cocalis [Tübingen

und Basel: Francke, 1993], 159–90) locates Roth's real "home" in the non-material realm of emotions and the intellect. She quotes from Roth's *Der Antichrist* (1934): "Wo Gutes getan wird, dort ist meine Heimat" (176). [Wherever good is done is my home. BM] More specifically, Roth's fervent fight against fascism and the Nazis provided him with a distinct sense of identity and ideological home: ". . . das eigentliche Verwurzelungsgefühl liegt in dem unerbittlichen Kampf gegen den Faschismus . . ." (Pazi, 179). [. . . a real sense of belonging comes from fighting unwaveringly against fascism. BM] Towards the end of his life in 1939, Roth adopted a much more conservative, nostalgic attitude and praised the then-lost world of Habsburg Austria.

²⁴ "Hier, in der Halle, bleibe ich sitzen. Sie ist die Heimat und die Welt, die Fremde und die Nähe, meine ahnungslose Galerie! Hier beginne ich über das Hotel-personal, meine Freunde, zu schreiben. Es sind lauter Persönlichkeiten! Weltbürger! Menschenkenner! Sprachenkenner, Seelenkenner! Keine Internationale neben der Ihrigen. Sie sind die wahrhaft Internationalen!" (*Panoptikum*, 237–38).

²⁵ Very little has been published on this novel so far. More extensive contributions to an understanding of *Hotel Savoy* are: Gilbert Ravy's discussion of the hotel in Roth's novel, Kafka's *Amerika*, and Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull* ("L'Hôtel Symbolique"); Ingeborg Sültemeyers discussion of this novel in the context of Roth's earlier works (*Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths 1915–1926: Studien und Texte* [Vienna: Herder, 1976]), and Stefan H. Kaszynski's very short article "Die Mythisierung der Wirklichkeit im Erzählwerk von Joseph Roth" (*Literatur und Kritik* 243/44 [1990]: 137–42).

²⁶ *Hotel Savoy*, 9. ". . . das Hotel Savoy mit seinen sieben Etagen, seinem goldenen Wappen und einem livrierten Portier. Es verspricht Wasser, Seife, englisches Klosett, Lift, Stubenmädchen in weißen Hauben. . . und Betten, daunengepolsterte, schwellend und freudig bereit, den Körper aufzunehmen" (*Hotel Savoy*, 5).

²⁷ David Bronsen and Stéphane Pesnel both base their interpretations of *Hotel Savoy* on this symbolic value that they assign to the Savoy. See David Bronsen, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1974), 251, and Stéphane Pesnel, *Totalité et Fragmentarité dans l'Oeuvre Romanesque de Joseph Roth* (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2000), 35.

²⁸ This is Ravy's main idea in his interpretation of literary hotels in the three novels by Roth, Kafka, and Mann.

²⁹ *Hotel Savoy*, 12. "Mein Zimmer scheint mir vertraut, als hätte ich schon lange darin gewohnt. . . Alles heimisch, wie in einer Stube, in der man eine Kindheit verbracht, alles beruhigend, Wärme verschüttend, wie nach einem lieben Wiedersehen" (8).

³⁰ Spy characters appear frequently in Roth's earlier fiction; see Bronsen, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie*, 249–51.

³¹ Repeatedly, Dan insists: "Im Hotel Savoy konnte ich mit einem Hemd anlangen und es verlassen als Gebieter von zwanzig Koffern — und immer noch der Gabriel Dan sein" (*Hotel Savoy*, 7). ["I could arrive at the Hotel Savoy with a single shirt, I could leave with twenty trunks and still be the same old Gabriel Dan" (*Hotel Savoy*, 10).] He clearly identifies the hotel as a place that could offer him possibilities for economic success.

³² In this respect, Dan is the typical Roth protagonist, a person in limbo, undecided and not yet defined, a “Grenzmensch” in the existential sense.

³³ *Hotel Savoy*, 13. “Hier wohnen die Reichen, und Kaleguropulos, der Schlaue, läßt absichtlich die Uhren zurückgehen, weil die Reichen Zeit haben” (*Hotel Savoy*, 9).

³⁴ *Hotel Savoy*, 33–34. “Mir gefiel das Hotel nicht mehr: die Waschküche nicht, an der die Menschen erstickten, der grausam wohlwollende Liftknahe nicht, die drei Stockwerke Gefangener. Wie die Welt war dieses Hotel Savoy, mächtigen Glanz strahlte es nach außen, Pracht sprühte aus sieben Stockwerken, aber Armut wohnte drin in Gottesnähe, was oben stand, lag unten, begraben in luftigen Gräbern, und die Gräber schichteten sich auf den behaglichen Zimmern der Satten, die unten saßen, in Ruhe und Wohligkeit, unbeschwert von den leichengezimmerten Särgen. Ich gehöre zu den hoch Begrabenen. Wohne ich nicht im sechsten Stockwerk? Treibt mich das Schicksal nicht ins siebente? Gibt es sieben Stockwerke nur? Nicht acht, nicht zehn, nicht zwanzig? Wie hoch kann man noch fallen?” (30).

³⁵ Dan’s room number 703 is on the sixth floor. Consequently, room number 606 should be on the fifth in this hotel.

³⁶ Roth also associates a temporal dimension to Dan’s attempt to connect with people and spaces. Stasia represents the present and, given the problems that these star-crossed lovers encounter, Dan’s difficulty in dealing with his current situation. Dan’s friendship with Zwonimir clearly connects him with the past, and Bloomfield might point into the future, with certain limitations, as we will see. The last part of the novel (part 4) then serves as a kind of synthesis: it features the workers’ upheaval and the destruction of the hotel, and Dan’s ultimate departure from Lodz.

³⁷ This is one of Ingeborg Sültemeyer’s chief points of criticism about Gabriel Dan as a character. Since Sültemeyer is one of the few critics who discusses *Hotel Savoy* in depth, her extremely negatively tainted reading of the veteran who seems to fall short of all her expectations — as a man, as a former soldier, as a politically engaged citizen — needs to be considered very carefully. In her harsh critique of Dan’s generally passive attitude towards the events in Lodz, she applies a standard that does not take into account the age of Roth’s protagonist, his past and his struggle to come to terms with it, a struggle that he never addresses explicitly in his narrative but that becomes clear if one is sensitive to what is said between the lines. Ingeborg Sültemeyer, *Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths*.

³⁸ The motif of walking is a recurring one in *Hotel Savoy*. Dan returns from Siberia after months of walking, Stasia keeps Dan awake with her odd midnight walk across her hotel room, and later, Dan keeps looking for his comrades from the war among the many returnees who have walked for months to come back from their internment. Bloomfield walks to the graveyard on the day of his late father’s birthday instead of using his limousine. Walking becomes a mode of inquiry, a quest for a home that people like Zwonimir, who have a purpose in life for which they fight, do not need: symbolically, Zwonimir arrives in Lodz by train.

³⁹ *Hotel Savoy*, 65–66. “Ich lebe in Gemeinschaft mit den Bewohnern des Hotels Savoy. . . . Gewiß, ich lebe in einer Gemeinschaft, ihr Leid ist mein Leid, ihre Armut ist meine Armut” (*Hotel Savoy*, 63).

⁴⁰ *Hotel Savoy*, 85. “[I]n der engen Gasse sieht das Hotel aus wie ein düsterer Riese” (84).

⁴¹ *Hotel Savoy*, 64. “Wir saßen im Wartesaal dritter Klasse, umtobt vom Lärm der Be-trunkenen, und sprachen leise und verstanden dennoch jedes Wort, denn wir hörten mit dem Herzen, nicht mit den Ohren” (61).

⁴² In the English version of the novel, Zwonimir’s strange term of encouragement “übt” is translated as “right” (63); this does not accurately convey the meaning of the verb “üben,” to practice or to train.

⁴³ *Hotel Savoy*, 75. “Alle waren wir gleichzeitig da, alle gingen wir gleichzeitig essen, alle hatten wir dieselben Bewegungen, und die Hopfenballen waren unser gemeinsamer Feind. . . . Und ich bin kein Egoist mehr” (73).

⁴⁴ *Hotel Savoy*, 114. “Heute aber bin ich nicht mehr allein in der Welt, heute bin ich ein Teil der Heimkehrer” (118).

⁴⁵ *Hotel Savoy*, 103, translation modified. “Es ist merkwürdig, . . . siehst du, wie sich die Menschen verändern, weil Bloomfield . . . da ist? Jeder hat plötzlich geschäftliche Ideen in diesem Hotel und in dieser Stadt. Jeder will Geld verdienen” (103).

⁴⁶ Sültemeyer maintains that the entire character of Dan resembles that of a reporter or journalist as she defines it, namely someone who takes anecdotal, passive interest in stories and people but remains at a luxurious distance to them and their distressing, war-torn lives in order not to have to deal with the issues at stake (*Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths*, 119). It is therefore only logical that he does a good job as Bloomfield’s secretary — and that he might do well in the United States (as the stereotype has it) if the novel’s end, Dan’s departure from Lodz and his final reference to Zwonimir’s symbolic code word “America” (123), does indeed foreshadow such a development.

⁴⁷ In this context, Sültemeyer observes: “Auffällig ist jedoch, daß die Hauptgestalt und der Vermittler der Geschehnisse kein Proletarier ist . . . , sondern ein gebildeter, im Augenblick mittelloser Bürger des unteren Mittelstandes” (*Das Frühwerk Joseph Roth*, 120). [It is interesting to note that the main character, the one reporting all events, is not a proletarian . . . but a well-educated, currently impoverished member of the lower middle class. BM]

⁴⁸ *Hotel Savoy*, 95. “Wollen *Sie* nicht die Stellung annehmen?” (95).

⁴⁹ Bloomfield’s straightforward job offer is the most obvious sign of the liking that he has taken to Dan. There are several other hints, such as Bloomfield’s first question after his arrival at the hotel, which he directs at Dan: “Es ist Ihnen schlimm ergan-gen in der Gefangenschaft?” (92). [“Did you have a bad time as prisoners?” (92).] Short and basic as it seems, this question shows Bloomfield to be sensitive to the trauma that the soldiers suffered.

⁵⁰ *Hotel Savoy*, 106. “Henry Bloomfield kam, seinen toten Vater Jeziel Blumenfeld zu besuchen. Er kam, um ihm zu danken für die Milliarden, für die Begabung, für das Leben, für alles, was er geerbt hatte. Henry Bloomfield kam nicht, um ein Kino zu gründen oder eine Fabrik für Juxgegenstände. . . . Es war eine Heimkehr” (106).

⁵¹ *Hotel Savoy*, 107. “Das Leben hängt so sichtbar mit dem Tod zusammen und der Lebendige mit seinen Toten. Es ist kein Ende da, kein Abbruch — immer Fortsetzung und Anknüpfung” (107).

⁵² *Hotel Savoy*, 118, translation modified. "In aller Stille ist Henry Bloomfield geflüchtet. . . . Er hat seinen toten Vater besucht, er wird nie wieder in die Heimat kommen. Er wird seine Sehnsucht unterdrücken, Henry Bloomfield. Nicht alle Hindernisse kann Geld aus dem Weg räumen" (121).

⁵³ Ravy doubts that the destruction of the hotel even signals the beginning of a new and better era; see "L'Hôtel Symbolique," 359.

⁵⁴ *Hotel Savoy*, 10, 56, and 97. "Im Hotel Savoy konnte ich mit einem Hemd anlangen und es verlassen als Gebieter von zwanzig Koffern" (*Hotel Savoy*, 7, 53, and 97).

⁵⁵ Franz Kafka, *Amerika* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp TB, 1997). All English quotes from Franz Kafka, *Amerika*, trans. Edwin Muir (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1940).

⁵⁶ It was Max Brod who named the novel *Amerika*. That title was commonly used until 1983, when further research determined that Kafka might have had *Der Verschollene* in mind; see Patrick Bridgwater, *Kafka: Gothic and Fairytale* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2003), 106. The difference between these two titles is significant in terms of the novel's focus and is a common topic of critical discussion. In the following, I will use the title under which it is still commonly published, *Amerika*.

⁵⁷ Recounted by Max Brod, "Postscript to the first edition," *Amerika*, 298. ". . . hoffnungsfreudiger und 'lichter' als alles, was er sonst geschrieben hat." Max Brod, "Nachwort zur ersten Ausgabe," *Amerika*, 307.

⁵⁸ *Amerika*, 3. "Als der sechzehnjährige Karl Roßmann . . . in den Hafen von New York einfuhr, erblickte er die schon längst beobachtete Statue der Freiheitsgöttin wie in einem plötzlich stärker gewordenen Sonnenlicht" (7). However, Kafka continues his description with the following much-discussed sentence: "The arm *with the sword* rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven" (3, my emphasis). ["Ihr Arm *mit dem Schwert* ragte wie neuerdings empor, und um die Gestalt wehten die freien Lüfte" (7).] As we know, the "real" Statue of Liberty in New York carries a torch in her hand. For Kafka to change this detail or rather Karl's perception of this object is an important first indication to the reader to understand America not as an entirely unproblematic country for the newcomer.

⁵⁹ The end of the first chapter raises questions about this positive impression, though. As Karl and his uncle leave the ship in a little rowboat, Karl starts to inspect his uncle more diligently, and his feeling is not entirely enthusiastic: "Karl took a more careful look at his uncle . . . and doubts came into his mind whether this man would ever be able to take the stoker's place" (37). ["Karl faßte den Onkel . . . genauer ins Auge, und es kamen ihm Zweifel, ob dieser Mann ihm jemals den Heizer werde ersetzen können" (39).] Emotionally, Karl feels deprived when he leaves the ship. Socially, his emotional loyalty to the "underdog," that is, the stoker, already points to a "fault" in Karl's character that will become a constant factor in his further development, that of siding with the "wrong" people.

⁶⁰ The English translation of Kafka's novel refers to this character as the "Manageress," a translation that does not mean the same as "Oberköchin," the head cook. Furthermore, manageress does not convey properly the nurturing qualities that Kafka

wants the reader to associate with this woman — after all, a cook provides food to people while a manager administers and oversees. Given Kafka's generally negative representation of people working in administrative jobs in most of his works, the term "manageress" would shed a less sympathetic light on this character from the start. I will therefore use the term "head cook" in this discussion.

⁶¹ Of all the hotels discussed in this study, only Kafka's Hotel Occidental and Vicki Baum's Grand Hôtel are purely inventions of their creators (that is: do not and never did exist in reality). While Baum locates her hotel in Berlin and thus roots her novel somewhat in reality, Kafka's invented hotel is close to the equally fictitious city of Ramses (Rameses in the English translation), apparently in the state of New York.

⁶² Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, 10, 56, 97.

⁶³ *Amerika*, 134. "Hätten Sie zum Beispiel Lust, Liftjunge zu werden? Sagen Sie nur ja und Sie sind es. Wenn Sie ein bißchen herumgekommen sind, werden Sie wissen, daß es nicht besonders leicht ist, solche Stellen zu bekommen, denn sie sind der beste Anfang, den man sich denken kann. Sie kommen mit allen Gästen zusammen, man sieht Sie immer, man gibt Ihnen kleine Aufträge; kurz: Sie haben jeden Tag die Möglichkeit, zu etwas Besserem zu gelangen" (*Amerika*, 129).

⁶⁴ See for example Northey, who uses the categories of sexuality, the body, and the intellect to determine Karl's growth. Northey concludes that *Amerika* is everything but an "Entwicklungsroman." Instead, he calls it a "Verkümmerungsroman" (a novel about stunted development, 193). We will return to this idea later. Anthony Northey, "Sexualität, Körperlichkeit, Intellekt: Die Frage von Karl Roßmanns Entwicklung," in *Der Verschollene/ Le Disparu/ L'Amérique — Écritures d'un Nouveau Monde?*, ed. Philippe Wellnitz (Strasbourg: PU de Strasbourg, 1997), 181–95.

⁶⁵ Lothario is one of the core members of the so-called Tower Society in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), and his vision for Wilhelm's further social development, laid out in the "Lehrbrief" that Wilhelm receives from the secret society, reveals a related agenda to that of the head cook as far as the young man's prospects for social integration are concerned.

⁶⁶ *Amerika*, 160. "Es gab Gäste, die von Unordnung sprachen, und ein Herr, der eine Dame begleitete, berührte Karl sogar mit dem Spazierstock, um ihn zur Eile anzutreiben . . ." (154).

⁶⁷ *Amerika*, 165. "nervös[e], reich[e] Gäste, die nur darauf warten, dem herbeilaufenden Hotelbeamten eine Beschwerde mitzuteilen . . ." (159).

⁶⁸ Gilbert Ravy explores this idea further in his "L'Hôtel Symbolique" (357).

⁶⁹ *Amerika*, 157–58. "Oft staunte er [=Karl], wie die anderen mit ihrer gegenwärtigen Lage ganz ausgesöhnt waren, ihren provisorischen Charakter — ältere als zwanzigjährige Liftjungen wurden nicht geduldet — gar nicht fühlten . . . und trotz Karls Beispiel nichts anderes lasen als höchstens Detektivgeschichten, die in schmutzigen Fetzen von Bett zu Bett gereicht wurden" (151–52).

⁷⁰ Gerhard Neumann, "Ritual und Theater. Franz Kafkas Bildungsroman *Der Verschollene*," in *Der Verschollene/ Le Disparu/ L'Amérique — Écritures d'un Nouveau Monde?*, ed. Wellnitz, 51–78.

⁷¹ For a discussion of this term, see Neumann, "Ritual und Theater," 57.

⁷² Patrick Bridgwater, in his *Kafka: Gothic and Fairy Tale*, connects the “helping figure” of the head cook to Vladimir Propp’s famous list of “agents” in fairy tales (113), a connection that serves as one of his backdrops to read Kafka’s novel in the tradition of the fairy tale.

⁷³ This is not to suggest that the two forces are mutually exclusive. In fact, Neumann shows how these two modes often overlap and clash; see “Ritual und Theater,” 61–62.

⁷⁴ Elaine Denby’s entire *Grand Hotels: Illusion and Reality* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1998) explores this basic dichotomy of hotels as magic castles and modern big business.

⁷⁵ I use this term in analogy to Carol Berens’s observation that the most elegant hotels offer a “total design environment” (Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* [New York et al.: McGraw-Hill, 1997], xiv).

⁷⁶ It is also important to note that Karl accepts the job offer after considering that his uncle would most likely approve of the head cook’s line of thinking (*Amerika*, 128, 133 Engl.). Not only does the new job offer a promising path into professional life, but it also seems a way to reconnect indirectly with his family, through a professional situation that he knows they would endorse. This link explains further the complex nature of Karl’s situation in the hotel.

⁷⁷ In addition to the motherly relationship between Karl and the head cook, Kafka also suggests an erotic tension between the young man and the older woman. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, in his article “La Quadrature de l’Oeuf, ou le Schème Infini de l’Écriture Parabolique” (in *Entre Critique et Rire: ‘Le Disparu’ de Franz Kafka*, ed. Godé and Vanoosthuysse, 47–57) elaborates on this idea further.

⁷⁸ Philippe Zard, in his “Un Récit d’un Exil Occidental,” identifies the loss of one social group as a precondition for Karl to move on to the next: “Aussi l’itinéraire américain de Karl peut-il être lu comme un approfondissement de la condition orpheline. . . . C’est au moment où il n’est plus personnel . . . qu’il peut entrer dans une nouvelle alliance” (Philippe Zard, “*Der Verschollene*: Un Récit d’un Exil Occidental,” in *Entre Critique et Rire*, ed. Godé and Vanoosthuysse, 99–116, here: 113). [Karl’s itinerary/ travels in America could also be read as a deepening of his orphaned condition. . . . It is right at the moment when there is nobody left anymore . . . that he can enter in a new relationship with someone. BM].

⁷⁹ In his poetic essay “La Quadrature de l’Oeuf,” Lefebvre traces Kafka’s use of geometrical figures in *Amerika* and relates them to the idea of the proverbial “Columbus’s egg,” a symbol that Lefebvre uses to describe the situation that Neumann calls Karl’s first contact to America. Lefebvre notes how references to round versus angular forms and linearity create a web of interpretative hints that undermine the readers’ expectations for Karl’s possibilities in the Occidental and in America. According to Lefebvre, round forms such as the egg, vaulted ceilings and curved lines suggest an environment that is beneficial to Karl’s development. However, the narrator’s descriptions of America (its landscape, the cityscapes) abound with references to angularity and linearity, and this is especially true for the descriptions of the Hotel Occidental, even its employees, who are in some position of power (“La Quadrature de l’Oeuf,” 54–55).

⁸⁰ The concept of time and wasting time is crucial in Weber's analysis of the Protestant work ethic, and it also dominates much of Karl's thinking. In his chapter "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," Weber writes: "Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God, according to the definite manifestations of His will. Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins" (Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958], 157). ["Nicht Muße und Genuß, sondern *nur Handeln* dient nach dem unzweideutig geoffenbarten Willen Gottes zur Mehrung seines Ruhms. *Zeitvergeudung* ist also die erste und prinzipiell schwerste aller Sünden"] (Weber, Max. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* [Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1934], 167, emphasis Weber's).

⁸¹ *Amerika*, 188. "Es ist unmöglich, sich zu verteidigen, wenn nicht guter Wille da ist" (182).

⁸² Northey follows the motif of physical height or lack thereof throughout the novel. If Karl finds himself in places that seem to grow over time, he is also constantly confronted with people who seem much taller than he is and intimidate the young boy with their mere physical presence; see Anthony Northey, "Sexualität, Körperlichkeit, Intellekt," 186. Karl's relative symbolic shrinking is the physical expression of his stunted development, his "Verkümmerung" that leads Northey to call the novel a "Verkümmerungsroman" (193) as I pointed out earlier in this chapter.

⁸³ The English translation simply gives "main road" (117) which does not render the important rural aspect.

⁸⁴ For Ravy, the narrator's strategically scattered descriptions of objects, people and spaces that seem to get bigger and increasingly more intimidating serve to convey Karl's psychological experience with his environment and to underscore the impossibility of the individual ever gaining control over or even understanding that experience. (See Ravy, "L'Hôtel Symbolique," 355–56).

⁸⁵ *Amerika*, 199. "Sahen die Leute draußen diese Gewalttätigkeit des Oberportiers nicht? Oder, wenn sie es sahen, wie faßten sie denn auf, daß keiner sich darüber aufhielt, daß niemand wenigstens an die Scheibe klopfte, um dem Oberportier zu zeigen, daß er beobachtet wurde und nicht nach seinem Gutdünken mit Karl verfahren dürfte?" (193).

⁸⁶ See my discussion of the development of European and American hotels in chapter two of this study.

⁸⁷ In an ironic twist, the Hotel Occidental is indeed a "home away from home" insofar as Karl's experiences with justice, authority, and especially violence very much resemble the conditions under which he lived back in Prague and could have been part of Kafka's symmetrical plan or architecture of the novel on which Brod based his editorial work. For a discussion of this question, see especially Northey, "Sexualität, Intellekt," and Michael Scheffel, "Paradoxa und kein Ende. Franz Kafkas Romanprojekt 'Der Verschollene,'" in *Der Verschollene/ Le Disparu/ L'Amérique — Écritures d'un Nouveau Monde?*, ed. Wellnitz, 7–25.

⁸⁸ Thomas Mann, *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Der Memoiren Erster Teil, Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990),

263–661. All English quotes from Thomas Mann, *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man. The Early Years*, trans. Denver Lindley (New York: A. Knopf, 1955).

⁸⁹ Werner Frizen, *Thomas Mann: Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*, Oldenbourg Interpretationen mit Unterrichtshilfen 25 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988), 11; Thomas Sebastian, “Felix Krull: Pikareske Parodie des Bildungsromans,” in *Der moderne deutsche Schelmenroman. Interpretationen*, ed. Gerhart Hoffmeister, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 20 (1985/86): 133–44; here: 133.

⁹⁰ See Frizen, *Thomas Mann*, 13.

⁹¹ In his article “The Effect of Interruption In the Composition of *Felix Krull* Caused by *Der Tod in Venedig*” (in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 52 [1978], 271–78), James Northcote-Bade suggests that various elements of the novella from 1912 influenced Mann’s further conception of his *Felix Krull* when he picked it up again in 1913. Northcote-Bade mentions the theme of homosexual attraction, which became more prominent in Mann’s continuation of *Felix Krull* after he had engaged the topic so deeply in *Der Tod in Venedig*. It is also possible that the setting he had used in *Der Tod in Venedig* — a hotel, that is — appealed to Mann so much that he sought further literary use for this symbolic space.

⁹² Helmut Koopmann, in his “Narziss im Exil. Zu Thomas Manns ‘Felix Krull’” (in *Zeit der Moderne: Zur deutschen Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hans-Henrik Krummacher, Fritz Martini, Walter Müller-Seidel [Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1984], 401–22), observes that *Felix Krull* had also become problematic at a time when the “Künstlerproblematik,” the problematic status of the artist in society, still loomed large for Mann, and he quotes from a letter from Mann to Félix Bertaux, dated 21 November 1933: “Ich weiß nicht, warum ich damals steckengeblieben bin. Vielleicht, weil ich den extrem individualistischen, unsozialen Charakter des Buches als unzeitgemäß empfand” (Koopmann, 404). [I do not know why I got stuck back then. Perhaps I just felt that the novel’s extremely individualist, asocial character was not right for the time. BM]

⁹³ See Koopmann, “Narziss im Exil,” 404–5.

⁹⁴ Johanna Brunner, the Rossmann’s servant, forces Karl to have sex with her; Felix actively seeks initiation into the world of sex from the Krull’s maid Genoveva, who enjoys this “honor” quite a bit.

⁹⁵ *Confessions*, 68. “Da ist es denn nun die Hotel-, die Kellnerlaufbahn, die, wie mir scheint, in seinem [=Felix’s] Falle die günstigsten Aussichten bietet: und zwar in gerader Richtung sowohl (wo sie denn auch zu sehr stattlichen Lebensstellungen führen kann) wie auch rechts und links auf allerlei Abweichungen und unregelmäßigen Seitenpfaden, die sich schon manchem Sonntagskinde neben der gemeinen Heerstraße aufgetan haben” (*Bekenntnisse*, 333).

⁹⁶ The difference in the narrator’s presentation of these skills is symptomatic of the character’s different senses of self. Kafka stresses the hard work and effort that Karl invests in mastering the English language as fully as possible in only two months. Mann, on the other hand, lets Felix brag about his natural talent for absorbing any language, even if his mastery of his French, for example, is the result of formal schooling. For Karl, nothing can be achieved without hard work; Felix just flies

through life, and everything he knows and has is the result of his happy predisposition as a “Felix.”

⁹⁷ Mann outdoes Kafka here in his portrayal of the exploitation of liftboys. Karl works twelve-hour shifts and gets twenty-four hours off when he switches from the day shift to the night shift. Felix’s shifts are longer: he works from seven in the morning until midnight. This detail is one of the few but significant elements in the critical subtext of the story of this hotel employee. Far from portraying Felix’s life as nothing but fun and play, Mann makes sure that the reader understands the world that Felix is about to undermine is one that deserves to be subverted. Mann also manages to describe Krull’s execution of his job in such a way that we retain some degree of respect or sympathy for the clever swindler, who does work very hard after all.

⁹⁸ The nature of these “studies” is quite different, though. While Karl works through his business correspondence courses, Felix spends hours at the opera, in coffeehouses, and at the theater to learn the lifestyle of the leisure class.

⁹⁹ Thomas Mann seems to have first come across Kafka’s work in 1921. In a diary entry from August 1 of that year, Mann notes: “Zum Thee L. Hart, der mir Prosa eines Pragers, Kafka, vorlas, merkwürdig genug” (Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn [Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979], 542. [L. Hart here for tea, he read to me some prose of a writer from Prague, Kafka, odd enough. BM]) Shortly before the English publication of *Amerika* in the United States in 1941, a translation for which Mann’s son Klaus provided the introductory remarks, Mann mentions writing to the novel’s American publisher in a diary entry dated 3 November 1940 (Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1940–1943*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn [Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982], 174), and on 28 February 1946 Mann praises the way in which Kafka presents Karl Rossmann’s interrogation by the head waiter and his later engagement at the great theater, that is, the nature theater of Oklahoma where Karl’s journey ends. (Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1944–1946*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn [Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986], 310). Finally, Mann expresses his respect for Kafka’s novel in a letter to Emil Praetorius, dated 11 March 1952: “So las ich neulich, an einigen Abenden, eigentlich zum ersten Mal, den frühen Roman von Kafka, ‘Amerika,’ mit unbeschreiblicher Angeregtheit und Verwunderung, wenn nicht Bewunderung” (Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1948–1955 und Nachlese*, ed. Erika Mann [Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1965], 246–47). However, given that Mann conceived most of his protagonist’s early adventures before he first mentioned Kafka in his personal writings, it is unlikely that *Amerika* has a significant impact on Mann’s conception, and an influence of Mann’s novel on Kafka’s cannot be proven.

¹⁰⁰ *Confessions*, 224. “Ich kann mein inneres Verhalten zur Welt, oder zur Gesellschaft, nicht anders als widerspruchsvoll bezeichnen. Bei allem Verlangen nach Liebesaustausch mit ihr eignete ihm nicht selten eine sinnliche Kühle, eine Neigung zu abschätziger Betrachtung, die mich selbst in Erstaunen setzte. Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist der Gedanke, der mich zuweilen beschäftigte, wenn ich gerade . . . einige Minuten müßig stand und die von den Blaufräcken umschwänzelte und verpflegte Hotel-Gesellschaft überblickte. Es war der Gedanke der *Vertauschbarkeit*. Den Anzug, die Aufmachung gewechselt, hätten sehr vielfach die Bedienenden ebensogut die Herrschaft sein und hätte so mancher von denen, welche, die Zigarette im Mundwinkel, in den tiefen Korbstühlen sich rekelt — den Kellner abgeben können.

Es war der reine Zufall, daß es sich umgekehrt verhielt — der Zufall des Reichtums; denn eine Aristokratie des Geldes ist eine vertauschbare Zufallsaristokratie” (*Bekenntnisse*, 491–92). Frizen points out that this paragraph is a direct quote of an observation that Thomas Mann had made in 1916 as a hotel guest. As he was about to send a postcard to his mother that showed a hotel lobby with guests lounging around in arm chairs, he noted on the back: “Hôtel-Halle. Moderne ‘Aristokratie.’ Der Kellner könnte ebensogut ‘Herrschaft’ sein und jemand von der Herrschaft Kellner. Es ist der reine Zufall, daß es umgekehrt ist.” Mann never sent the card but put it in his collection of materials for the novel. See Frizen, *Thomas Mann*, 84.

¹⁰¹ See my discussion of the term in chapter two of this study.

¹⁰² Referring to unpublished notes from Mann’s literary estate, Hans Wysling explains Mann’s approach to Felix’s penchant for an upper-class lifestyle as follows: “Luxus ruht bei [Felix] nicht auf kapitalistischer Grundlage, sondern ist vielmehr ein glänzendes Bohémétum, eine Atmosphäre, die seine Persönlichkeit ganz von sich selbst und um sich selbst schafft . . .” [Luxury is not a capitalist pursuit [for Felix]; rather, it is an atmosphere of glamour and bohemian abundance that is the result of his personality and its effect on his environment; BM] (Notizblatt 597/98, quoted in Wysling, *Narzissmus und illusionäre Existenzform: Zu den Bekenntnissen des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* [Bern & Munich: Francke, 1982] 84, footnote 6).

¹⁰³ Walter Serner, *Letzte Lockerung: Ein Handbrevier für Hochstapler und solche, die es werden wollen* (1920; rpt. Munich: Verlag Klaus Renner, 1981).

¹⁰⁴ Koopmann’s main argument in his article “Narziss im Exil” is that *Felix Krull* can be read as an exile narrative, as some sort of wish-fulfillment that Thomas Mann the exile, the man who was forced out of his homeland, created as a positive version of his unsettling experiences when he had to leave Nazi Germany: instead of conjuring up a new home in his work, Mann redefined the existence of the person without a home as a desirable state. The setting of the hotel fits well into Koopman’s thesis if we keep in mind that the “existentially homeless person” is, in some way, a person in exile — this is where the ideas of exile and living in a hotel merge.

¹⁰⁵ *Confessions*, 125. “Dennoch riet Bescheidenheit mir, statt einer der beiden gläsernen Drehtüren, durch welche die Reisenden eintraten, lieber den seitlichen offenen Zugang zu benutzen, dessen die Gepäckschlepper sich bedienten. Diese aber, wofür immer sie mich halten mochten, wiesen mich als unzugehörig zurück, so daß mir nichts übrigblieb, als mit meinem Köfferchen in einen jener prächtigen Windfänge zu treten . . .” (*Bekenntnisse*, 393).

¹⁰⁶ *Confessions*, 149. “Nicht doch, Herr Generaldirektor! Ich finde die Gesellschaft reizend, so wie sie ist und brenne darauf, ihre Gunst zu gewinnen” (417).

¹⁰⁷ Since Felix’s *raison d’être* is to charm people into giving him things that they would never volunteer under “sober circumstances,” it is problematic to speak of strategy or calculation here. His charming way with people is part of the glamorous character with which Mann endows his jester, and to isolate it does not do justice to his complexity.

¹⁰⁸ Typical of his servile attitude towards the institutional order and his fear of being proactive and assertive, Karl has only this to answer when the head cook asks him whether he is a free man: “‘Yes, I’m free,’ said Karl, and nothing seemed more

worthless than his freedom" (*Amerika*, 133). ["Ja, frei bin ich," sagte Karl, und nichts schien ihm wertloser" (127)]. For a discussion of this passage, see Nicole Pelletier, "Nicht einmal Herr im eigenen Hause": La Représentation du Sujet Moderne dans *Le Disparu*," in *Entre Critique et Rire*, ed. Godé and Vanoosthuyse, 147–57, here: 152.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Spuler ("Im Gleichnis leben zu dürfen": Notions of Freedom in Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 220 (1983): 343–50) explains how Krull's attraction to form and his uncompromised need for freedom work together. In his interpretation of the famous end to the "Musterungsszene," Felix's physical exam with the army, Spuler writes: "Freedom means 'living metaphorically.' The choice of imagery, the soldier, is itself metaphorically significant: if Krull were actually to become a soldier, he would be required to wear a *uniform*, a single 'form.' Form, however, is precisely Krull's domain, his realm of freedom. And by that token it is also the opposite: nothingness, since Krull's freedom — his art — is created at the expense of matter, whose own realm is 'violated' for the sake of beautiful form. . . . Krull's concept of freedom can thus be seen as relative rather than absolute, as working within certain prescribed — and dissoluble! — limitations" (343). Spuler's interpretation applies equally to Krull's take on the existing class system and his participation in it.

¹¹⁰ In his "Narziss im Exil," Helmut Koopmann explains this lack of identity: "Identitätsverluste kennt er nicht, weil er keine Identität kennt — und hier geraten die Formulierungen zwangsläufig wieder ins Absurde, weil er nur dort mit sich identisch ist, wo er nicht mit sich identisch sein muß" (417). [He does not know of a lost identity since he does not know identity — and this is where any attempt to explain this further must necessarily turn absurd: Felix is only identical with himself when he does not have to be identical with himself. BM]

¹¹¹ Wysling, *Narzissmus und illusionäre Existenzform*, 148. Translation BM. "Was ihn fasziniert, ist nicht der reale Einstieg in die Aristokratie, sondern nur die spielerische Imitation ihres formal-ästhetischen Gepräges. Dieses Gepräge akzeptierend, triumphiert er gleichzeitig darüber."

¹¹² Krull's often-quoted statement about Gounod's *Faust*, and, by extension, Goethe's *Faust* on which Gounod's opera is based, illustrates his cultural dilettantism: "Über die angenehme Mahlzeit hinaus sah ich einem genußreichen Abend entgegen, denn in der Tasche hielt ich ein Billett für die Opéra Comique, wo man heute meine Lieblingsoper 'Faust,' des verstorbenen Gounod melodienreiches Meisterwerk, gab" (499). ["I was looking forward to a delightful evening after an agreeable meal, for I had in my pocket a ticket to the Opéra Comique, where *Faust* was to be given that night, my favourite opera, the melodious masterpiece of the late Gounod" (*Confessions*, 231).] And during his visit to the Museum of Natural Sciences in Lisbon, he states: "So geht es ja in Museen und Ausstellungen: sie bieten zuviel. . . . Übrigens sage ich das aus einmaliger Erfahrung, denn ich habe später kaum je wieder solche Belehrungsstätten besucht" (575). ["That is how it is in museums: they offer too much. . . . I speak, however, from a single experience, for later I hardly ever visited such places of instruction" (*Confessions*, 301–2).] However, Felix's obvious interest and engagement in this first visit make the reader wonder

whether he is not more invested as a consumer of cultural offerings than he wants to appear.

¹¹³ Felix himself philosophizes about the difference that one small adjective can make: to be “of family” means to have an aristocratic background; to be of a “good family” indicates lower social status. See *Confessions*, 234; *Bekenntnisse*, 502.

¹¹⁴ The so-called Houplé episode is a case in point. Madame Houplé seems to specialize in hotel adventures as inspiration for her writing of romantic novels. Hotel boys seem the natural choice for this salacious woman since they are always available, in the right environment: “Nur euch Knaben hab’ ich je geliebt von je, — als Mädchen von dreizehn war ich vernarrt in einen Buben von vierzehn, fünfzehn. Der Typus wuchs ein wenig mit mir und meinen Jahren, aber über achtzehn hat er’s, hat mein Geschmack, hat meiner Sinne Sehnsucht es nie hinausgebracht . . .” (445). [“It’s only you boys I have loved from the beginning — as a girl of thirteen I was crazy about a boy of fourteen or fifteen. The ideal grew a little as I grew, but it never went above eighteen; my taste, the yearning of my senses never reached beyond that . . .” (*Confessions*, 176).]

¹¹⁵ *Confessions*, 281. “Was meinen besonderen Stolz ausmachte, war die Wanddekoration des Salons — diese hohen, in vergoldeten Leisten eingefästen Stukkatur-Felder, die ich immer der bürgerlichen Tapezierung so entschieden vorzog und die, zusammen mit den ebenfalls sehr hohen, weißen und mit Gold ornamentierten, in Nischen gelegenen Türen, dem Gemach ein ausgesprochen schloßähnliches und fürstliches Ansehen verliehen” (*Bekenntnisse*, 552).

¹¹⁶ In his *Narzißmus und illusionäre Existenzform*, Wysling mentions that Mann meticulously collected flyers, postcards, advertisements, and other illustrations from hotels that he visited while traveling, and from magazines at home, to render his descriptions more colorful and authentic. “Die Bilder, die Thomas Mann seit 1910 aus Illustrierten zusammengetragen hat, zeigen alle das Leben der großen Welt: ‘Reisen,’ ‘Kur- und Lustorte,’ ‘Elegante Festlichkeiten,’ ‘Weiblichkeit,’ ‘Intérieurs’ hat er einige der Dossiers und Notizabteilungen angeschrieben” (*Narzißmus und illusionäre Existenzform*, 84). [The pictures and images that Thomas Mann started to collect since 1910 all show life in the great world: “Travels,” “Spas and Places of Pleasures,” “Elegant Festivities,” “Femininity,” “Interiors,” he entitled some of his dossiers and collected notes. BM]

¹¹⁷ Felix himself uses the term of putting on a mask when he comments on his preparations to appear in public upon his arrival in Lisbon: “Immer hatte es ein wenig vom Maske-Machen des Schauspielers, obgleich ich zu eigentlicher kosmetischer Nachhilfe bei der ausdauernden Jugendlichkeit meines Äußeren nie versucht gewesen bin” (*Bekenntnisse*, 553). [“It somewhat resembles an actor’s preparations [literally: mask-making], although the actual use of cosmetics has never tempted me because of the enduring youthfulness of my appearance” (*Confessions*, 282).]

6: *Menschen im Hotel*

WE HAVE ARRIVED AT OUR LAST STOP, Vicki Baum's Grand Hôtel in Berlin's city center.¹ The time is March 1929, the global economic crisis has not yet hit, and modernism rules in Weimar Germany's capital. The electric-lit streets are lined with shops and filled with cars and noise; people rush from one end of the city to the other, and technology and mass events structure their use of time. The revolving door of the elegant Grand Hôtel never stands still, creating a constant exchange between the street and the inside, and as Baum sweeps us into the hotel on the first page of her novel, we enter a universe that she herself thought of as a "symbol of life" in modernism.² Given this concept, the novel neither attempts to portray an individual guest's story nor to discuss the complex relationship between the individual and the hotel setting in the way many other texts do. As the programmatic title *Menschen im Hotel* (literally: people in a hotel) suggests,³ people in general are the topic, and only the novel's German subtitle "Ein Kolportageroman mit Hintergründen," a "dime novel with backgrounds,"⁴ promises more information. The novel's generic-sounding title announces one of the book's basic aesthetic principles, which finds itself mirrored in the important symbol of the revolving door: Vicki Baum is about to tell the story of random people in a random hotel whose only thing in common is the fact that they all stay in the same place at the same time.⁵

To make their destinies more relevant to each other, Baum makes five of the novel's six characters next-door neighbors on the hotel's second floor. This setup achieves two effects. On the one hand, the fact that these characters are neighbors implies that a story could be told about any number of neighbors on any floor of this grand hotel. A hotel is not just an architectural structure but also a rich source of stories into which a narrator need only dip in order to find material for a modern novel. On the other hand, making them neighbors is a strategic decision on Baum's part to motivate the intertwining of these otherwise unrelated characters' lives. If room assignments seem accidental at the beginning of the novel, they start to look like destiny as the story or rather the stories unfold. Baum leaves it up to her readers to decide whether or not there is higher logic involved in her arrangement.⁶

This is the basic aesthetic premise of Baum's novel, a genre for which American critics have coined the term "group novel."⁷ Her formula has found numerous imitators since *Menschen im Hotel* first appeared in the

Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung in 1929,⁸ becoming a best-seller within weeks. Baum abandoned the concept of a protagonist and a linear plot, instead following the anti-individualist aesthetic principles of the New Objective movement, redefining the focus of her narrative as the setting where stories happen. The hotel becomes a major player in the novel, and as Lynda King puts it “in some sections the narration seems to be coming from the walls of the hotel, in effect making the hotel itself a character observing the actions of the guests.”⁹ The Grand Hôtel is the one steady factor in an otherwise fast-moving narrative that jumps constantly between characters, narrative strands, and sub-settings.¹⁰ It keeps the seemingly disconnected pieces of this text together, similar to the front and back cover of the novel, without which we would not have a book but a stack of loose pages.¹¹

This principle may have led less talented authors to tell hotel stories that are only held together by the formal unity of the setting (the American Arthur Hailey and the Frenchman Peter Mayle are just two examples that come to mind), thus camouflaging their inability to create inner narrative tension through character and plot development.¹² In Baum’s novel, on the other hand, the hotel and its semi-anonymous nature rise to the status of a conceptual force in the novel’s overall poetics. Only more recently have critics discovered Vicki Baum’s important contributions to the movement of the New Objectivity; among these discussions of Baum’s work and *Menschen im Hotel* in particular, Sabina Becker’s essay “Großstädtische Metamorphosen” points out the complex function of the hotel in this novel as a symbol of and guiding principle for the text’s “innovative literary-aesthetic procedures and dimensions.”¹³ For Becker, *Menschen im Hotel* figures prominently among the new “Großstadttromane” (“metropolitan novels”), in many ways equal to Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which is considered a prime representative of the “Großstadtliteratur” (metropolitan literature) of the early twentieth century. In her study, Becker explains, with reference to ideas that Peter Sloterdijk puts forth in his *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Critique of Cynical Reason, 1983),¹⁴ how Baum uses the hotel as an effective symbolic space for the phenomenon and experience of the modern big city:

Only Vicki Baum’s novel *Menschen im Hotel* with its setting, the hotel, represents “one of modernism’s central aesthetic ideas.” It “accommodates naturally . . . the big city’s perceptive modes, the urban revue-like, polythematic, and simultaneous experience.” The hotel should be considered the paradigm of the big city and modernity, and Vicki Baum was the first to recognize this connection in her literary work. . . . The hotel is an adequate symbol for the metropolis that is Berlin — their basic nature as public places connects them directly.

. . .

And Baum does not just approach Berlin as a motif. It is through the novel's aesthetics that the big city becomes tangible; the novel's form conforms completely to its content.¹⁵

If Baum considers the hotel in her novel a striking symbol of life, and Becker understands it as a paradigmatic urban modern space, I wish to explore Vicki Baum's *Grand Hôtel* as a paradigmatic modern literary setting and, more specifically, as a quintessential literary hotel. Decades after the publication of her novel, Baum called it an "experiment" with "the most hackneyed figures and situations," which she endowed with a "light that illuminated them from within."¹⁶ Yet by applying her guiding aesthetic principle to all levels of the story, Baum created from a typical combination of literary stock elements a work both consistent and generic. It is an "almost individual story," much like the hotel is "almost home." Neither the hotel nor Baum's "dime novel" require or allow their visitor-readers to engage on an individual level with the universes they comprise, and both rely heavily on generic standards to satisfy the customers' expectations. We check into Baum's narrative just like we check into a hotel, and what we get is colorful, well-crafted, yet familiar services and entertainment that do not require us to focus too extensively on any individual aspect of these offerings.

There is hardly anything entirely new in Baum's story, and many of her contemporaries as well as scholars well into the 1960s and 1970s blamed her for lack of originality and her work's dangerous proximity to "Trivalliteratur," often basing their verdicts on later adaptations of *Menschen im Hotel* that have little in common with the original.¹⁷ What these critics did not acknowledge, though, is that this novel is based on the idea of complete congruence between its subject matter and its aesthetic premise, namely Baum's decision to resist the temptation to delve into the story's potential "third dimension," that of psychological depth or complexity. It is not by accident that the novel's designated observer in the lobby, the severely disfigured war veteran Dr. Otternschlag, has a glass eye. Common knowledge has it that people with one eye can only see two dimensions,¹⁸ and even if the pitiful, sick bookkeeper Kringelein, who comes to the hotel to live out a dream before dying, is the novel's secret protagonist, Otternschlag is the character whose perspective is closest to the narrator's. A permanent lobby dweller, much in the way Kracauer describes him, just sitting there, waiting without ever experiencing substantial change, Otternschlag personifies the vantage point of the lobby, the narrative place where all of the novel's strands cross and become public, where everything begins and ends. Sedated by morphine half of the time, Otternschlag does not care about any of the events that his newspapers report, and he misses the most dramatic turns of events such as the killing of gentleman thief and fellow guest Baron von Gaigern by another guest, the industrialist Preysing, at the end of the novel.¹⁹ Once

Ottersschlag learns about the crime, it registers as something that happened somewhere in the hotel, behind one of its many alienating doors, but it does not assume a deeper meaning for him. As far as life in the hotel is concerned, von Gaigern's killing might as well not have happened. And this uninvolved stance equally characterizes the narrative voice in this novel. A prime example of a literary work that subscribes to the aesthetics of the New Objectivity, *Menschen im Hotel* presents people, events, and developments in a factual, anti-individualist manner; scenes are juxtaposed like pictures that hang next to each other on a wall (or are arrayed like hotel-room doors, for that matter); psychological explanations are rare, and the narrator's main task is to relate events, not to embellish, contextualize, or explain them in depth. The reader's identification with the fate of any one character is not the goal, and Baum's oftentimes sober narration of even the most momentous events serves to maintain this overall objectivity — a case in point is the narrator's description of the scene following the killing of von Gaigern: "Gaigern lay on the carpet in No. 71. He was dead. Nothing more could happen to him. No one now could harass or pursue him. He would never now find himself in prison. And that was good. He would never now keep his appointment in Vienna with Grusinskaya. And that was sad."²⁰ Unemotional, matter-of-fact descriptions like these create a distance that ensures that the literary guests' stories are understood as nothing but examples of innumerable similar stories that happen daily in a hotel. The morning after Preysing has killed von Gaigern *in flagrante delicto* in his (Preysing's) hotel room, after the terminally ill bookkeeper Kringelein has miraculously recovered unknown strength and willpower and conquered the affection of the hotel's young secretary Flämmchen, after a night of irreversible change in the lives of these four guests, the hotel betrays no sign of upheaval: "It was then ten o'clock. The hotel wore its customary aspect. The charwoman swept out the lounge with damp sawdust. . . ."²¹

Much ado about nothing? Maybe not quite that, but maybe all that is possible at a time when the country had barely recovered from the trauma of the First World War, when modern life was unfolding with a speed that was hard to keep up with and that led to an atomization of experiences and perceptions, when people hid behind what Simmel calls modern man's necessary inner distance to the world and to each other to protect themselves from sensory and emotional overstimulation. Baum cautions her readers to be mindful of this fragmentation of the modern other when they attempt to tell stories about people:

The events that happen in a big hotel do not constitute entire human destinies complete and rounded off. They are fragments merely, scraps, pieces. The people behind its doors may signify much or little. They may be rising or falling in the scale of life. . . . And anyone who attempts an account of what he sees behind those doors runs the risk of

balancing himself precariously on a wobbly tight-rope between falsehood and truth.²²

Life in modern times has erected invisible walls, Baum's closed doors, between people. The narrator who attempts to tell the full story of an individual's life runs the risk of being a fabricator. Many of the writers of the earlier twentieth century shared Baum's skeptical approach to the idea of "complete" literary characters, and interestingly, a number of them — among them Zweig and Roth — frequently chose the hotel as a setting for these characters in their novels and novellas. Yet while Zweig and Roth decided to show the collision between the fractured selves and the new realities and used the symbolic setting of the hotel to express their agendas, Baum abandoned the idea of a complex individual protagonist. The "peripheral equality of social masks" that Siegfried Kracauer criticizes in hotel guests is too opaque for a penetrating and thorough look behind the façade.²³ There are too many guests and too many masks. And as only one piece in the kaleidoscope of the hotel's endless narrative possibilities, the individual guest almost disappears in the sea of possible narratives. His or her experiences are no longer distinctive, or at least they cannot be recognized and narrated as such. If Baum's narrator continues to pay closer attention to several particular guests, it is not because of their status as individuals. Rather, it is the typical in these people and their stories that is of interest, general traits to which readers can easily connect even if they are denied the identification-figure of a central character. The story of the lowly employee who comes to the grand hotel with his life's savings to really live for once is as much a stock-motif and stock-character of fantasies about elegant hotels as are the figures of the elegant playboy, the hotel thief, or the lonely traveling artist who spends his or her life in grand hotels. Stereotypical reductiveness becomes Baum's saving strategy for telling stories about people in modern times and space; as the novel's narrator muses: "Perhaps there is no such thing as a completed destiny in the world, but only approximations, beginnings that come to no conclusion or conclusions that have no beginning."²⁴ At a time when lives and reality seem fragmented beyond repair, the hotel offers an artificial totality, a minimal solution to the problem of storytelling under the modern predicament. The lives and fates of characters are limited to the part they spend as guests in the hotel, and their experiences are only told as long as they can be told as hotel experiences. Everything else is up to the reader.

The potentially incoherent impression caused by presenting six different characters simultaneously needs to be balanced well if the novel's plot is to be successful. Baum's recipe is an easy one: if the narrative technique and the novel's shifting focus have the potential to confuse, reliance on established conventions, that is, stereotypes, traditions, and "eternal truths" that permeate the different parts of the story, serves to establish a general stability. For

one, the characters are types or at least rely on supposedly typical features of the social and cultural groups they belong to (the industrialist/capitalist, the aging artist, the exploited lowly employee, the playboy etc.). Second, their stories revolve around the same basic themes, love (both emotional and physical), death, and money, even if the combination of factors varies from character to character, and it is this limited range of issues that helps to tie together the seemingly disconnected plotlines. If the setting of the hotel provides an alibi for very different people to live under one roof and to get involved with each other, the three themes of love, death, and money provide the stable narrative coordinates in which all of these different lives and stories are inscribed.²⁵

Following a devastating failure on stage in one of Berlin's big theaters, the famous Russian dancer Elizawetha Grusinskaya plans to commit suicide in her hotel room to escape the depression that aging and the loss of her public appeal as an artist and as a beautiful woman cause her. She only survives because Baron von Gaigern, who sneaks into her room to rob her at night, rescues her by falling in love with her at first (or perhaps second) sight. The thief turns into a benefactor; instead of losing her precious pearl necklace, Grusinskaya is given the gift of love and life.

Love appears for a time to be Grusinskaya's saving grace, but this proves to be illusory, as it indirectly leads to the death of the object of her affection (and the novel's liveliest character), von Gaigern. Since he cannot steal the dancer's expensive necklace, he needs to rob someone else to get money to pay off dubious debts and make a living, since his title is all that is left of his family's aristocratic existence. Thus, after having spent the day following his night with Grusinskaya proving that he can survive the most reckless adventures (such as a high-speed drive in a car or an airplane ride), riding on the "high" that his newfound love causes, the baron breaks into Generaldirektor Preysing's empty hotel room at night only to be caught and killed there by the industrialist.

The bookkeeper Kringelein comes to the hotel a terminally ill man, fully aware of the fact that his days are numbered and ready to spend his life's savings on what he imagines to be "real life" (as he repeatedly calls it) before it is too late. Money is the great enabler that allows him if not to conquer death, then at least to postpone its influence on his last weeks. Ultimately, money also enables him to win the affection of the young flapper Flämmchen, who turns to the "Moribundus" Kringelein (19) at the end of the novel after the object of her desire, Baron von Gaigern, has been killed, and when Generaldirektor Preysing, who had offered to pay her for sexual favors, goes to jail for killing him.

The entire novel consists of ever-new kaleidoscopic reshufflings of the same three themes, creating a tightly knit narrative from whose grip the reader cannot and does not want to escape. They form the basic grid within

which all seeming commotion is contained; as fundamental human truths or drives (as which Freud and Schnitzler saw them), the motifs of love and death add a universal, timeless quality to the novel that transcends its symbolic value as a story about life in modernism. If the hotel's transitory nature mirrors man's existential predicament on earth, the stories happening in this setting fit right into the existential narrative of life, as a struggle with Eros and Thanatos that has driven literature since its beginning. More specifically, the consistency with which Baum exposes almost all of her characters to death, no matter their social background, follows a principle similar to that of the medieval dance of death (whose roots go back to the middle of the fourteenth century) and the Baroque literary form of the *Theatrum Mundi* (the theater of the world, whose thematic roots go back even further, to Plato and Horace).²⁶ In these forms of early literary social commentary, characters are sent (by God) onto the "stage" of life as representatives of people from all walks of life, ranging from emperor to beggar, to meet with the great equalizer, death, and to recognize the insignificance of status and worldly possessions. While such far-reaching and religiously informed social criticism was not Baum's goal in writing *Menschen im Hotel*,²⁷ the structural and thematic similarities between the famous older literary genre and the novel allow a reading of it as a modern, secularized *Theatrum Mundi* that elevates its literary status well above that of a "dime-novel." Thus anchored in the realm of human truths, Baum could go about her main project, namely to tell a gripping and entertaining story about people in 1929.

The most important modern aspect of this novel is certainly its emphasis on money's omnipresence in the Grand Hôtel and in the lives of its inhabitants. Everybody deals with it, and the luxurious hotel guarantees that none of the guests will ever forget what it takes to live the good life. Having or not having money seem to determine the characters' existence almost as much as breathing and not breathing; and they can in fact only exist in the novel as long as they have the money to support their stay. As soon as they have to check out, they will no longer be part of the story, will no longer be "Menschen im Hotel."

The entire hotel exudes opulence and seems the incarnation of all that hotel architects and designers would desire to build, all that the average person would dream of when hearing the term "grand hotel." With great attention to detail, the narrator conjures up the imaginary Grand Hôtel as soon as we start reading the novel: twice within the first ten pages the narrator introduces us to the most social area of this place, the lavishly designed main floor. The novel begins with a close-up description of the telephone booths. The hotel's concierge, Senf, has just left one of the booths to cross the hall on his way back to his desk. As the narrator follows Senf back to work, the reader gets a first multi-sensual impression of this "palace for the rich." He passes a tea room from which live Jazz music can be heard and a lavish din-

ing hall whose succulent scents of expensive, delicious foods spread across the whole area, while the white salon next door offers a sumptuous cold buffet for a different appetite. When Senf arrives at the lobby, “the jazz band from the tea room encountered the violins from the Winter Garden, while mingled with them came the faint murmur of the illuminated fountain as it fell into its imitation Venetian basin, the ring of glasses on tables, the creaking of wicker chairs, and, lastly, a soft rustle of the furs and silks in which women were moving to and fro.”²⁸ It is the typical lobby, filled with all the signs of elegant “waiting” that Kracauer’s essay expounds, and the symphony of sensual impressions is complete when Baum adds: “A cool March air came in gusts through the revolving doors whenever the page boy passed guests in or out.”²⁹ To accentuate this hotel’s modern appeal, Baum injects her narrative with descriptions of contemporary innovations such as light effects in the white salon and across the hotel’s façade.³⁰ To be sure, many of the Western grand hotels provided their guests with such opulence and grandeur. Yet instead of setting her novel in a particular and identifiable establishment, perhaps the Adlon or the Kempinski, Baum creates the generic Grand Hôtel, whose details she can describe without pinning down her reader’s imagination to one specific place.

In this typical space, people display typical manners. Respect and a formal politeness govern the employees’ attitude towards their customers, no matter how much their own lives are uprooted, as the case of the tormented expectant father Senf illustrates. Conversations between guests and employees consist of well-rehearsed rituals that have no real communicative function, as in the following exchange between Dr. Otternschlag and Senf:

“Any letters for me?” The porter knew his cue in this little comedy. He looked in pigeon hole No. 218 before he replied: “Not this time, Herr Doktor.”

...

“That man’s enough to drive one silly,” said the porter to little Georgi, [a young hotel boy.] “Everlastingly asking for letters. Every year for ten years he’s spent a month or two here, and not a letter has he ever had and not even a dog has ever asked for him.”³¹

All employees at the reception desk know that this guest is lonely, but no one tries to break through the invisible wall that separates people from each other. Trying to reach out for the other would be a breach of the unwritten laws of Kracauer’s hotel lobby. It is a perfectly choreographed situation in which movement from place to place follows given trajectories, in which costumes, not natural light, indicate the time of the day, and where any expression of the self has to match the environment. There are a lot of people in the lobby, but the general atmosphere is quiet, and when “page boy No. 24” calls for “Baron Gaigern’s chauffeur!,” the narrator quickly

comments: “too loud for the dignity of the lounge” (4). The narrator’s entire description reads like an illustration of Kracauer’s “Hotel Lobby,” without its polemic undertones. Given Baum’s active participation in Berlin’s intellectual and artistic debates in the 1920s, it is possible that she knew Kracauer’s essay when she began writing her novel almost five years after it was published. All elements are there — the “solemn silence,” a sense of uselessness and immanence that envelops those who sit and wait, the disengaged attitude of lobby dwellers vis-à-vis each other, the drinks and newspapers that keep people busy and provide a reason not to look at each other. Once in a while, the turn of the revolving door lets a new breath of air into the hall, and the appearance of elegant guests like Grusinskaya or Baron von Gaigern livens up the otherwise inert atmosphere of the lobby. However, such scenes only add yet another typical hotel occurrence (guests arriving in and leaving the hotel) to the typical lobby atmosphere.

This is our mental image of the lobby when the poor Kringelein appears on the scene. We know enough to feel instinctively that he is in the wrong place, and Baum makes sure to endow her “intruder” with enough additional signs of non-belonging and shabbiness (his coat, his suitcase, the old sandwiches that fall out of his pocket onto the carpet) that even the most inattentive reader feels the insult to the space. Kringelein is the literary brother to Zweig’s Christine Hoflehner and Erich Kästner’s Schulze, alias Geheimrat Tobler, from his *Drei Männer im Schnee*, and he gets treated exactly the way we expect: he meets with opposition to his presence in this elegant hotel. Since politeness is part of the hotel employee’s job description, the personnel at the reception desk cannot be openly hostile. But only after Kringelein has put up a serious fight is he allowed to check in.

Before he goes to his room, he takes a thorough look around, and as readers, we adopt his perspective for this second multi-sensory “take” on the lobby. His 360-degree scan of everything around solidifies our mental image of this opulent room, but Kringelein’s awestruck perceptions also introduce a value judgment, a sense of appreciation that is absent from the narrator’s first take on the lobby:

He saw the marble pillars with stucco ornament, the illuminated fountain, the easy chairs. He saw men in dress coats and dinner jackets, smart cosmopolitan men. Women with bare arms, in wonderful clothes, with jewelry and furs, beautiful, well-dressed women. He heard music in the distance. He smelt coffee, cigarettes, scents, whiffs of asparagus from the dining room and the flowers. . . . He felt the thick red carpet beneath his black leather boots. . . . The lounge was brilliantly illuminated and the light was delightfully golden. . . . A waiter flitted by carrying a silver tray on which were wide shallow glasses with a little dark-golden cognac in each . . . but why in Berlin’s best hotel were the glasses not filled to the brim?³²

Lynda J. King, in her *Best-Sellers by Design*, has shown in detail how and why Baum privileges Kringelein's perspective and attitude towards the hotel in much of her novel.³³ If one of Baum's goals is to create the total literary grand hotel, she needs a character in whose conscience even the most minute details register. Unaccustomed to the luxury and lavishness of a grand hotel's offerings, yet expecting to find nothing less than the best, Kringelein is the necessary fresh sounding board to justify repetitive and thorough descriptions of that which impresses him. Much in the same vein in which she created "hackneyed figures and situations" with whom to bring her literary hotel to life,³⁴ Baum certainly created a cliché of a grand hotel with the typical luxury and the typical guests. But as a skillful and conscientious author, she also knew how to accentuate what is special in the typical in order to keep her audience's interest. Detailed spatial and atmospheric descriptions, rendered from the perspective of the deeply impressed bookkeeper Kringelein, have the expressive power to conjure up a magic castle in the reader's imagination. From his perspective, typical offerings in an upscale hotel are elevated to the status of *Schlaraffenland*-like indulgences — Kringelein's elegant room No. 70 with its hot water-filled bathtub can even make his painful health problems disappear,³⁵ and the room's interior design, with its elegant furniture, its still-life paintings and its "bronze inkstand in the form of an eagle" (15) overwhelm the uninitiated guest enough to assure him that he must be in the right place if everything feels so luxuriously unfamiliar. As a narrative device, Kringelein's perspective becomes a crucial factor in providing the atmospheric framework in which Baum's various plotlines can unfold.

While Kringelein certainly receives sympathetic attention from the narrator, he is still just one of the types that drive the novel, the shy intruder who comes to the hotel with all his savings ready to indulge himself for once in his life. Everything he experiences in the hotel corresponds to what the reader would expect from his situation until the novel's climax, the killing of Baron von Gaigern. But all the other characters are also types, representatives of those groups of people who made up the increasingly diverse clientele of upscale hotels in the late 1920s. The impoverished aristocrat von Gaigern reminds us, the readers of cultural histories of the hotel, who the "legitimate" members of the European hotel society used to be and what has become of them since the end of the First World War; Generaldirektor Preysing, an industrialist who comes to the hotel to strike a business deal and who also happens to be Kringelein's former boss, represents a whole new group of guests, business travelers; the flapper Flämmchen first appears as one of the hotel's part-time employees to later be redefined as a woman who likes to meet men in expensive hotels and expand her services to them to those of an escort. The dancer Grusinskaya represents yet another typical professional guest in an upscale urban hotel, and only Dr. Otternschlag

seems to come to the hotel in the spirit of the normal, leisure-seeking hotel guest, to plug into a preestablished social order to which he seems to belong. However, the length of his stay and his complete isolation in the hotel show that he too is by no means part of the upper-class clientele that celebrates its carefree lifestyle in these places of pleasure.

By populating her literary hotel with these socially diverse people, Baum achieves two effects in one: first, the six characters cover a broad range of social backgrounds, thus making her *Grand Hôtel* truly a modern theater of the world. Second, the confrontation of these types with the unique setting that is the hotel suggests — indeed, almost predetermines — plot developments that Baum needs only combine in clever ways to make her novel work.

However, there is a third side to Baum's choice of characters that reaches beyond the level of the dime novel or of a modernized world-theater. *Menschen im Hotel* is not just a "symbol of life" in Baum's sense of a metaphor for life's universal transitory nature. Her title also makes us think back to Georg Lukács dictum of man's "transcendental homelessness" in modern times that he posited in his *Theory of the Novel*.³⁶ Upon closer inspection, all of Baum's characters are in fact homeless in a way that goes well beyond the individual's loss of orientation in the modern world or a metaphysical homelessness already explored extensively in the *memento mori* literature of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. If all of Baum's types, her representatives of modern society at large, are homeless in this existential sense, the novel makes a general statement about the precarious position of human beings in modernism, thus showing Baum to be a more perceptive critic of those tendencies that serve her novel so well than many critics have assumed.

Who are these existentially homeless "Menschen im Hotel"?

Dr. Otternschlag

As suggested earlier, the disfigured war veteran Otternschlag provides the novel's vantage point. Of the six characters, he is the first to be introduced, as a lobby dweller whose purpose in life seems to be to sit and wait. He is a victim of the war who has survived his own death, "a living suicide" as he puts it,³⁷ a representative of a lost generation not dissimilar to Joseph Roth's Gabriel Dan, even if older and more devastated emotionally.³⁸

With less enjoyment than the typical lobby dweller, but also more persistently, Otternschlag spends his days in the lobby's easy chairs, leafing through newspapers, smoking cigarettes, drinking cognac, walking up to the desk to engage in short, ritualized, empty exchanges with the concierge. He rarely leaves the hotel, and when he does, he does not stray from the beaten track of Berlin's tourist sites and cultural centers. He lacks the energy of younger hotel guests like von Gaigern, a former soldier, and the juxtaposi-

tion of these two men shows us what was needed for war veterans to survive their traumatic experiences and turn the state of postwar homelessness into an opportunity: health and youth. Lacking these, Otternschlag resorts to drugs. Morphine helps him forget his physical and emotional pain, and his modest hotel room becomes the site where this depressed and depressing drug addict finds solace in his trance. As the only character who reaches the end of the novel completely unchanged and the only one who does not leave the hotel after the fateful five days that the novel covers, he becomes part of the lifeless inventory of the hotel, a marionette for whom living in a hotel has become a necessity as well a symbol of his own desolate existence.³⁹ When on several occasions he refers to the hotel as a symbol of life, he suggests a reading of the text, acting, perhaps, as Baum's mouthpiece. His detachment from everything around him makes him a sobering representative of a segment of Germany's postwar society that, after experiencing the trauma of the war, can no longer engage life.

Baron von Gaigern

Baron Felix von Gaigern's first appearance in the novel is indicative of the type that he represents, and it shows his approach to the hotel as a stage on which to display his charisma and his style. At least on the surface, he is the most typical modern hotel guest. Even before he arrives, his appearance is announced and anticipated with enthusiasm by hotel boy No. 24, who expresses the generally positive view of the young and dashing aristocrat. A strong "smell of lavender and expensive cigarettes" (5) announces the baron's arrival, and when he crosses the lobby, everything and everyone around him seem to blossom. His appearance is almost perfect — but not quite, and the imperfection is self-consciously intentional (Baum points out more than once that he wears a blue overcoat over his black tuxedo), and the self-assured, worldly manner with which he interacts with life in the lobby betrays a man who is sure of his superior social status, at ease with himself in this stage-like setting. As a member of the impoverished aristocracy who has actually turned to theft and fraud in order to finance his elegant lifestyle, and as a former soldier with no formal education, he has lost any stable place in life that he could claim as his, and Europe's grand hotels have become his glamorous asylums that offer him rich booty and the possibility to cash in on his good manners and elegant allure. Unlike Dr. Otternschlag, the experience of war has not left von Gaigern lifeless, even if he is homeless in more than just the literal sense.

Since he is young, and the time is 1929, Felix von Gaigern has shed his class's snobbery and is happy to interact with whomever is in the hotel. In the bar, he dances with the beautiful flapper, Flämmchen, who of course falls for him right away. After meeting poor Kringlein, whose confused plans

and desires he has sympathy and understanding for, he takes him under his wing, though for somewhat dubious reasons, since he hopes to gain financially. He enjoys confronting the inelegant Generaldirektor Preysing when the latter treats Flämmchen and Kringelein disrespectfully. Von Gaigern goes to the theater, goes flying, gambles, falls in love, dances, drinks: he is a perfect member of Veblen's leisure class, a "Lebemann," that is a charming playboy. He is a perfectly modern man with perfectly honorable ancestry, in short, all that the other Felix, Thomas Mann's Felix Krull, has to learn and portray when he begins his journey under the alias of the Marquis de Venosta. And also like the other Felix, von Gaigern makes his living as a criminal, since money is the one element that is missing for him to truly be a perfect grand hotel guest. One possibility for this young, attractive, and pleasant dandy to make a living in a hotel would be as a gigolo; an equally possible and lucrative career is that of the well-mannered con artist. Since *Menschen im Hotel* is a novel populated with types, Baum seizes the occasion and crosses the two types in Baron von Gaigern, creating a literary figure that also illustrates the Janus-faced nature of leisure class culture in the "Golden Twenties." It takes money to support one's belonging to this class, but the origin of this money, Baum suggests, is not always noble.

However, since von Gaigern is a character in a self-identified dime novel, Baum barely explores this critical potential or the type's philosophical and artistic underpinnings, unlike Thomas Mann, whose Felix Krull is acutely aware of the issues that are at stake in his double existence. Von Gaigern goes about his robberies in an athletic manner, almost more interested in the physical thrill of overcoming obstacles than in maximizing his chances for success. If his background included wealth, he would not be a thief but a hunter or a sportsman, unlike Felix Krull, who from his youth on approaches theft and fraud as a mental exercise and an intellectual challenge. When Gaigern breaks into Grusinskaya's room, he comes as a thief, but once he meets her, he turns into a lover. He can switch roles with amazing speed, but he cannot combine them — whereas Felix Krull leaves his lover's bedroom after a night of passion and intimacy with his pockets filled with jewels and other riches, von Gaigern cannot reconcile such seemingly contradictory attitudes, making him a character who is neither complex nor funny. Once Baum has decided to have her amiable thief fall in love with Grusinskaya, he turns into an old-fashioned romantic who wants nothing more than return to a state of premodern harmony that has long ceased to exist.⁴⁰

Ideologically at home neither in the old nor the new order, the character of von Gaigern falls short of the expectations that Baum sets when she first introduces her modern hotel dandy. After falling in love with Grusinskaya, he turns into a sentimental romantic whose character is out of touch with the general direction of the novel and the conditions of his own success.⁴¹ Almost unavoidably then, he must die at the end of the story.

Grusinskaya

The Russian dancer Grusinskaya is introduced early on in the novel, but her presence in the hotel is initially more as the subject of other people's conversations, a fleeting appearance in the lobby, than as an actual character who appears in the action of the novel. The first thing we learn about her is through employees' gossip, when the young hotel boy Georgi tells the concierge of her angry reaction when her chauffeur did not arrive right on time, a behavior that suggests that this woman is high-strung at best. Later, as she leaves the hotel for her evening performance, Grusinskaya's appearance on the "stage" of the lobby is brief, and, as she crosses the lobby hidden in her enormous fur coat, consciously inconspicuous, very non-theatrical for a dancer of her caliber and stardom. It is only because the narrator follows von Gaigern's every move on his way out of the hotel that he — or she, as it were — even notices Grusinskaya trying to leave through the revolving door just as von Gaigern reaches it. The international star Elizawetha Grusinskaya is far from using the lobby or the hotel as a backdrop to stage herself — bigger, more famous stages were at her disposal for decades. As an accomplished, internationally acclaimed dance artist, Grusinskaya has traveled the world, staying in hotels all along the way, hotels that simply served the purpose of providing a bed and rest to the exhausted dancer. After years of living like this, much of her life now lies behind her as an endless string of isolated episodes, but there has never been time to connect with any one place, and none of the people in her entourage are important to her on a personal level: her personal assistant Suzette's devotion serves Grusinskaya's temper well but meets with little more than a sense of entitlement; her young dancing partner and occasional lover Michael is only good company as long as his youth makes her feel younger; both conductor Witte and ballet master Pimenov know her well enough to tiptoe around her and accommodate her need for approval whenever she experiences a crisis, but neither seems to matter profoundly; finally, the reader eventually learns that Grusinskaya has a daughter, but even she does not seem to matter much to her.⁴² The degree to which this woman is existentially homeless is reflected in the seemingly random mixture of French, Russian, and German in which she communicates, and only her worn-out slippers, which she keeps neatly placed in front of her hotel bed, suggest that she has some sort of a private routine, something that expresses continuity and identity and is her own. As her artistic success and her appeal as a woman fade, the lack of a room of her own, of a real home that could balance her increasing loss of confidence intensifies her loneliness, and it becomes a crucial factor in her reaching an existential crisis that leads her to contemplate suicide. Returning from a disappointingly attended dance performance in town to her anonymous hotel

room and seeing her self in the room's mirror, her sense of loneliness, her fear of aging and losing her appeal become most acute:

Inside the room meanwhile, Grusinskaya had come up to the cheval glass with its two wings. . . . and turning on the light over the center of the mirror she grasped its frame with both hands and pressed her face close up to the glass, as though she meant to plunge right into it. The attention with which she then studied her face had something probing, greedy, and gruesome about it.⁴³

Like Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, Thomas Mann's *Gustav von Aschenbach*, or Stefan Zweig's *Christine Hoflehner*, the dancer tries to retrieve herself from her reflection in the rented mirror — life seems to have abandoned her, and the split between self and image has become painful. But she cannot: all that the mirror allows her to embrace is her aging, insufferable body, and the “non-home” of the rented room does not quite enable her to have an exhilarating out-of-body experience like Schnitzler's *Else*:

Grusinskaya fixed her eyes on her face as though on the face of an enemy. With horror she saw the tell-tale years, the wrinkles, the flabbiness, the fatigue, the withering; her temples were smooth no longer, the corners of her mouth were disfigured, her eyelids, under the blue paint, were as creased as crumpled tissue paper. . . . Enough, she thought, enough. Never again. Finished. Enough.⁴⁴

Thus wounded, Grusinskaya — again, like Schnitzler's *Else* — is thinking of resorting to an overdose of Veronal to escape the further pains of life when, suddenly, she finds the jewelry thief von Gaigern in her room and in her life. The hotel room, the place that is so symbolic of Grusinskaya's existential homelessness and the site of her potential lonely suicide, thus becomes the setting for an unexpected erotic adventure, an adventure which, happening between two complete strangers who just give in to their erotic attraction to each other in the there and then, knows of no before or after. Only after the two have had sex does Grusinskaya ask von Gaigern's name, and it is their conversation after their physical union that turns the adventure into a fateful event that goes beyond the limits of the typical “love in a hotel bed” scenario. Baum nicely combines two typical motifs of hotel narratives (the lonely woman and artist on the verge of suicide, the sexual adventure between two strangers), thus affecting change in her female character's life that serves to prove one of the narrator's last proverbial statements in the novel: “No one exits the revolving door the same as they were before.”⁴⁵ However, having had her hotel-room adventure and leaving for her next engagement in Vienna and, ultimately, for her villa in southern France where she plans to reunite with von Gaigern, will not cure Grusinskaya's existential homelessness: von Gaigern lies dead in his coffin by the time she leaves through the revolving door.

Kringelein

Otto Kringelein is the unacknowledged protagonist of the novel and the link between the von Gaigern-Grusinskaya storyline and the second storyline, that is, the story of secretary Flämmchen and her temporary employer Preysing, who is also Kringelein's much-hated former boss in the province.⁴⁶ Kringelein may also be the novel's most developed character.⁴⁷ However, if Vicki Baum accuses herself of creating a "Kitsch"-figure with the character of Baron von Gaigern — in her memoirs she scolds herself that "[i]t never does any good if an author falls in love with one of his characters . . ." — her Kringelein is not above comparable criticism either. His story seems heavily indebted to "The Ugly Duckling," and if the narrator does not treat him with unconditional love and affection, then certainly with a strong air of pity. Kringelein is still portrayed with a hint of irony early on in the novel, but this critical stance disappears almost completely once he starts adapting to the hotel culture in the Grand Hôtel.

Kringelein comes to the hotel the stereotypical misfit. Suffering from an incurable disease of the stomach, he has decided to leave his loveless, childless marriage and home in the province behind to live the "real life," as he calls it repeatedly, in the big city, even if only for a very short time. And thanks to von Gaigern, who helps Kringelein translate his lifeless stack of money into the expressions of the semiotic code of the leisure class, he is granted access to the world of his dreams. However, throughout the novel, Kringelein remains a visitor in the elegant world. His amazed and uncritical appreciation of everything that von Gaigern dangles in front of his nose betrays him as the uninitiated member of this group, and his stubborn desire to spend money on whatever he deems desirable and an expression of the "real life" indicates that he has not gotten past the idea that comfort, a real *joie de vivre*, and an elegant lifestyle are quantifiable. The bookkeeper cannot get past his numbers. His transformation is still mostly external, and his approach to life and to himself is still informed by a sense of humility, servility, and obedience. Wearing the right clothes allows Kringelein to be on stage, so to speak, but he still needs his prompter and talisman von Gaigern to actively pursue a lifestyle of which he knows nothing. If in the end he does assert himself more strongly, it is because those whom he had considered superior before have been dismantled by exterior forces: his former employer Preysing has become a murderer, von Gaigern is dead, and the distressed Flämmchen needs Kringelein's help when she discovers that her would-be sugar daddy Preysing has just killed the lovely von Gaigern.

Kringelein's transformation in the Grand Hôtel is thus a relative one. By the end of the novel, he has gained enough skill and self-confidence to continue his quest for his dream of living well a little longer, now in the pleasant company of the beautiful young Flämmchen, and he has enough money and

the right clothes to make their weeks together pleasant and to be admitted to those places that meet his expectations for luxury. But he has neither found a place in life that would be truly home (his quest for the “real life” will certainly not lead to a permanent, identity-assigning place in life), nor does he even have the time to establish himself in such a way: his illness will kill him within weeks, and his remaining time on earth will be spent in the feverish pursuit of excitement. However, his stay at the Grand Hôtel still needs to be considered a success. Within his limits, he has found what he sought, and the hotel, with its beautiful decor, its lavish offerings, and its excitement has certainly brought color to a life that felt so wrong back home. For a man who has no time to even assess his state of homelessness, the hotel has turned out to be a magic castle indeed.

Preysing

Unlike the previous four characters, Generaldirektor Preysing does not appear on the scene until later in the novel. However, as an abstract presence, he gets introduced early on, when Kringelein tries to use his acquaintance with the Generaldirektor as a ticket to a room in the hotel. But as the concierge’s lukewarm response to Preysing’s name-dropping already signals, this director cannot be such a powerful man. He is just a normal business traveler who comes to the Grand Hôtel to conduct a crucial business meeting. In this function, he represents a new group of guests who began to inundate the world’s elegant hotels around this time and for whom staying in these places is mainly a business expense. They are the ones who populate the hotel’s public areas early in the morning when the traditional leisure-seeking guest and vacationer is still fast asleep, and while they are there, they also change the atmosphere from that of an elegant leisure-class social space to that of a busy trading site.

Unlike Grusinskaya, whom we could also consider a professional traveler, Preysing has a home with which he fully identifies when he first comes to Berlin. He is a member of the upper middle class with a comfortable home in the province, a wife, and two daughters, a devoted husband and father who, when he initially checks into the hotel, resents his absence from home. The place feels strange; daily routines such as shaving, smoking, or getting dressed take more time than at home, and Preysing feels unsettled by the speed and the modernity of this “unheimliche,” this “unhomely” place. Time and again, Baum stresses that this industrialist is an honorable, good-natured man, but lacks the experienced social and professional superiority of a modern businessman who would never lose track of himself, no matter where he is. Deep-down, he is a provincial tradesman, a newly rich person pushed into modern modes of doing business by his father-in-law. Not surprisingly, then, the difficult negotiations in which he is involved, combined

with the strangeness and indifference of the place in which they take place, completely derail him. During crucial talks with potential business partners, Preysing lies about his company's prospects and affiliations to tempt the other party to agree to a merger. This lie is his last resort, since his previous, old-fashioned and honest, fact-based strategy impressed no one. Yet once he has put out his lie successfully, he falls victim to an intoxicating spell. Inebriated by a new sense of power, he pursues a sexual affair with his young and sexy secretary Flämmchen, and carried away by his new aura of worldly sophistication which he seems to equal with manliness, he intends to suspend his bourgeois identity for as long as he stays in the tempting, corrupting halls of the hotel. Preysing signals a newly emerging clientele in upscale hotels — but succumbing to the non-committing and alienating atmosphere in this place, he also represents a whole class of people who struggle to stay true to themselves when entering modern life. The hotel's atmosphere becomes the most powerful catalyst in his exploration of his drives and the dangerous and rapid spread of what the narrator identifies as that “merest trace of some inflammation, some microscopic speck on the irreproachable purity of his moral waistcoat . . .”⁴⁹ As the one coming from the most stable background, Preysing is the character who undergoes the most drastic change in the hotel: the “Biedermann” Preysing leaves the hotel in handcuffs, accused of murdering Baron Felix von Gaigern, having lost his home, his freedom, and himself.

Flämmchen

This young woman is the only character who does not initially live in the hotel. Nonetheless she represents a type whom we can readily associate with hotels and their culture at the time. The sister of one of the hotel's full-time secretaries, she works as a part-time hotel stenotypist when needed, but she also makes money working as a nude model as well as an escort for rich older men. As many critics have pointed out, she is the stereotypical flapper of Weimar Germany, a “new woman” who knows exactly what she wants and how to address these wants in material terms. As a modern woman, she has no illusions about love, life, or men. Attractive men like von Gaigern are her preferred playing partners, but as life is expensive, she does not sit around to wait for a Prince Charming to rescue her from her life as an unmarried woman. She is the stereotypical false “daughter” or “niece” for the older men with whom she checks into hotels. If she does not qualify as a call-girl or even as a prostitute, it is mainly because she does not count on making a living that way and diversifies her “professional portfolio” instead. Flämmchen adds fun and beauty to the assembled society in a hotel's bar or dancing salon, but she has no ambitions to become a member of the class that invites her to have fun with them. However, she is the one who associ-

ates with the highest number of other characters in this novel — she flirts and dances with von Gaigern, with whom she would undoubtedly like to have sex; following her flirt with the baron, she becomes Preysing's paid companion and is intimate with him shortly before he kills Gaigern in the adjoining hotel room. Finally, Flämmchen ends up in Kringelein's bed, and even if it is unlikely that they have sex that night, the novel's ending with their departure for Paris together suggests that they will eventually consummate their relationship. Her connection with the three men is well motivated in the plot and tightens up the story — her relationship to them and their interest in her connect the men's destinies closely and even physically by one degree of separation, and they add the idea of male competition. But Flämmchen also represents an element of luck that influences social interaction in modern hotels: completely unattached to anyone outside or even inside the hotel, not a guest herself, she shows how easy it is to meet people in the hotel's social areas, and how different these acquaintances can be if all that matters is that all are assembled in the same room. In her pursuit of pleasure after her working hours, Flämmchen does not distinguish much between the men who seek her company, and they seek her out because she is there, attractive, and available. As people gather in bars, salons, and even the lounge, often under the influence of alcohol, they gravitate towards other, attractive guests for the evening, an option that simply seems preferable to going back to an empty hotel room alone.

* * *

Six random guests in a random hotel whose lives get entangled in only five days. Confrontations and attractions that lay bare life's elemental forces in a setting that functions as a laboratory and as a catalyst. The hotel as a stage on which the human drama unfolds, as a symbol that mirrors man's existential predicament, but also as the realm where the mediated and often enforced artificial nature of human relations in modernism is obvious. This is the basic recipe for Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel* that has fascinated people for decades, perhaps beyond the novel's literary value. However, "literary value" is hard to define, and if the novel's plot and the way the author presents her characters' trials and tribulations feels too stereotypical and unsophisticated to some, no one can deny Baum's contribution to the development of the hotel narrative. As she brings content and form to complete congruence in her novel, Baum creates a new literary aesthetic concept that eschews a central character — the individual — to zoom in on the setting for human life and action in the construction of her narrative. The hotel rises to the status of the story's central focus and endows the modern narrative with a new, objective and lasting stability at a time when the individual and his or her story have become fragmented beyond repair.

Notes

¹ Vicki Baum, *Menschen im Hotel* (1929; rpt. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1957). All English quotes from Vicki Baum, *Grand Hotel*, trans. Basil Creighton (New York: Doubleday, 1931). The following discussion will be limited to Vicki Baum's novel and will not consider either the movie *Grand Hotel* from 1939 for which Baum herself wrote the screenplay, nor the many adaptations for the screen, the stage, and the radio that followed this first multi-media success. As I pointed out in the introduction of this book, a discussion of the movie would require additional theoretical considerations that cannot be introduced here. Furthermore, my inquiry takes as one of its foci the relationship between the written narrative and the setting of the hotel, in other words, the construction of this space in language. The construction of the hotel universe in and through film is a very different issue. Finally, more general observations about the novel's modernist use of character types and the representative function of the hotel as a modern social setting apply to the novel as well as to its adaptations.

² In her memoirs *Es war alles ganz anders* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1962), Baum remembers: "Ich wollte das Hotel zu einem Symbol des Lebens machen" (384). ["I wanted the hotel to be a symbol of life as such." Vicki Baum, *It Was All Quite Different* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964), 286.]

³ The title of the English translation of the novel is *Grand Hotel*, that is, just the hotel's name. However, this rendition fails to communicate the message that the German original conveys.

⁴ There is no subtitle in the English version. The exact meaning of the German original is hard to determine since Baum's use of the word "Hintergrund" in the plural here is as unusual as the plural of the word "background" would be in English. In the English edition of her memoirs *It Was All Quite Different*, Baum herself points out the impossibility of translating this subtitle: "In the German original, the novel had an ironic, almost untranslatable subtitle: 'A dime novel with undercurrents' is as near as I can come to it" (287).

⁵ Sabina Becker, in her essay "Großstädtische Metamorphosen: Vicki Baums Roman *Menschen im Hotel*" (in *Jahrbuch zur Literatur der Weimarer Republik: Frauen in der Literatur der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Sabina Becker [St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2000], 167–94; here: 180), connects Baum's overarching narrative setup to the movement of the "Neue Sachlichkeit" when she points out: "In kaleidoskopartigen Szenen und mit wechselnder Perspektive schildert Baum Menschen und Vorgänge in einem Berliner Grand Hotel. . . . Gemäß dem neusachlichen Prinzip des Antiindividualismus verzichtet Baum gänzlich auf die Gestaltung von Einzelschicksalen." [Baum tells us of people and events in a grand hotel in Berlin through kaleidoscope-like scenes and changing narrative perspective. . . . Fully in line with the new objective principle of anti-individualism, Baum gives up any portrayal of an individual story. BM] Baum's allegiance to the aesthetic principles of the "Neue Sachlichkeit," the New Objectivity, will be discussed later in more depth.

⁶ Lynda J. King, in her *Best-Sellers By Design: Vicki Baum and the House of Ullstein* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988), tries to identify Baum's position on this question, but she ultimately ends up puzzled: "There is an unseen force at work behind the

scenes of Baum's hotel: fate, destiny, or chance. Why do these particular individuals come together in this particular hotel? . . . The answers to these questions seem to be mere chance, but it is what Baum calls fate or destiny (*Schicksal*). . . . But Baum's portrayal of the role of fate is confusing . . ." (169).

⁷ Sabina Becker ("Großstädtische Metamorphosen") explains this term and how it applies to Baum's novel as follows: "Die amerikanische Literaturkritik . . . fand für Baums Romantchnik die Bezeichnung 'Group novel': Ihr Hauptmerkmal ist die dissoziierende Blickführung der Erzählweise, d.h. die Konzentration auf nur einen Romanhelden bzw. eine Romanheldin ist zugunsten der Darstellung des Kollektivs aufgegeben" (181). [American literary criticism . . . coined the term of the 'group novel' for Baum's narrative technique: its main feature is the dissociating narrative perspective; instead of focusing on one protagonist, it is the collective that gets all the narrative attention. BM]

⁸ Vicki Baum complained about the fact that many writers adopted her "recipe" after the publication of *Menschen im Hotel* in the hope of fast and guaranteed success: "Und es erging mir wie dem Zauberlehrling — ich konnte den alten Besen nicht verhindern, sich fortzupflanzen, sich in Formen zahlloser Nachahmungen zu vermehren. Was ich als Gleichnis oder Symbol des kurzen Aufenthalts, den wir Leben nennen, gesehen hatte . . . das alles wurde rasch zum mechanischen Spielzeug. Ein Rezept, auf allen Märkten verkauft und gekauft" (*Es war alles ganz anders*, 404). [" . . . like the sorcerer's apprentice, I couldn't stop the thing from propagating and reproducing itself. What I had conceived as a symbol of the brief stopover we call life . . . all quickly became a mechanical toy, a formula to be bought and sold on the market" (*It Was All Quite Different*, 302).] While most of her imitators have long been forgotten (almost every critic mentions them, but names are hard to come by), the American Arthur Hailey may have been the most successful of her successors, most notably with his novels *Hotel* (1965) and *Airport* (1968), the latter of which was subsequently made into a blockbuster movie; see Becker, "Großstädtische Metamorphosen," 181; King, *Best-Sellers by Design*, 156.

⁹ King, *Best-Sellers By Design*, 160. Carol Berens, in her *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York et al.: McGraw-Hill, 1997), comes to a similar conclusion: "Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* epitomized the Europe that did frequent its hotels. Through all the personal sagas and all the public displays of private events, the hotel was the main character, the perfect stage (and metaphor) upon which all lives intersected" (146).

¹⁰ This narrative technique resembles that of film. The reader gets the impression that various cameras are running all the time and that the editor-narrator decides at which point to switch from one camera to another. This trait is mainly responsible for the relative ease with which the novel could be adapted for the screen — and which makes it harder to produce on stage.

¹¹ The novel first appeared in fourteen installments in the Ullstein Verlag's *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* between March 31 and June 30, 1929, allowing the magazine to skyrocket in popularity. The success of this novel as a serialized publication shows that it is not the fact that we hold bound pages in our hands that creates the impression of an artistic whole. Rather, it is at least in part the power of the stable setting that counters the centrifugal instability of Baum's narrative "revolving door principle," that is, the tempo with which the novel switches its focus among its characters.

¹² Interestingly, Vicki Baum herself tried to repeat the success of her first hotel novel in several novels that she published in the 1930s and 1940 (*Hotel Shanghai* [Shanghai '37, 1939], *Hotel Berlin* '43 [1943], *Hier stand ein Hotel* [Here Stood a Hotel, 1944]), but most critics agree that none of her later novels lives up to the standards that *Menschen im Hotel* set.

¹³ Translation BM. Becker speaks of Baum's "innovativen literarästhetischen Verfahrensweisen und Dimensionen." Sabina Becker, "Großstädtische Metamorphosen," 179.

¹⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983).

¹⁵ "Der Tatsache, daß das Hotel eine 'zentrale ästhetische Idee der Moderne' darstelle, da es 'wie von selbst [. . .] den revuehaften, polythematischen, simultanen Erfahrungsformen der Großstadt' entgegenkomme, hat erst Vicki Baum mit ihrem Roman *Menschen im Hotel* Rechnung getragen. Das Hotel darf als Paradigma der Großstadt und der Moderne gelten, Vicki Baum gebührt das Verdienst, diesen Zusammenhang erkannt und erstmals literarisch gestaltet zu haben. . . . Das Hotel ist ein adäquates Symbol für die Großstadt Berlin, der öffentliche Charakter beider Orte verbindet sie aufs engste. . . . Über die motivliche Gestaltung hinaus offenbart sich Berlin dem Leser in *Menschen im Hotel* durch die Ästhetik des Romans, seine Form paßt sich dem Inhalt des Buches an" ("Großstädtische Metamorphosen," 188–89, translation BM). The quotes in Becker's statement are from Peter Sloterdijk's *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, vol. 2, 898.

¹⁶ *It Was All Quite Different*, 287, translation modified. "Nehmen wir die abgedroschensten Situationen und die abgedroschensten Figuren . . . [und] ein Lichtlein, das sie von innen erhellt . . ." (*Es war alles ganz anders*, 384).

¹⁷ In her essay "The Image of Fame: Vicki Baum in Weimar Germany" (*German Quarterly* [Summer 1985], 375–93) as well as in her extensive study *Best-Sellers by Design*, Lynda King provides detailed accounts of the many negative reactions that Baum's novel, as a literary product that had been written with its marketability in mind, provoked. It was only in the 1970s, when literary scholarship began to reassess the value of what had been labeled "Trivalliteratur" or "Unterhaltungsliteratur" (entertainment literature) that critics took a second, closer look at Baum's work and her contributions to Weimar Germany's literature. Jörg Thunecke, in his "Kolportage ohne Hintergründe: Der Film *Grand Hotel* (1932). Exemplarische Darstellung der Entwicklungsgeschichte von Vicki Baums Roman *Menschen im Hotel* (1929)," in *Die Resonanz des Exils: Gelungene und misslungene Rezeption deutschsprachiger Exilautoren*, ed. Dieter Sevin [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992], 134–53) also explains the damage that later and much more shallow adaptations and versions of *Menschen im Hotel* have done to the critics' assessment of Baum's novel.

¹⁸ The effect that the loss of one eye has on depth perception was first discovered in 1833, in Charles Wheatstone's experiments on what he coined stereopsis, the fact that the right and the left eye do not deliver the exact same image to the brain, which causes us to perceive objects as three-dimensional. Consequently, the loss of one eye would lead to the loss of depth-perception. While the brain is fully capable of compensating for lost stereopsis, filling in stored information where the organ fails, it was and still is a widely held belief that having only one eye causes the loss of depth per-

ception. Given the many veterans who had lost their eyesight during the First World War, it is more than likely that there was a heightened awareness for this belief in the 1920s and that Baum could thus use it in a metaphorical sense in her novel.

¹⁹ Otternschlag's sedated reactions illustrate and exaggerate Georg Simmel's theories about the inner distance that modern man adopts towards everything around him. News of such gigantic proportions as Otternschlag finds in the newspaper (earthquakes, wars, fires) cannot register anymore, cannot make an impression on him, and get lost in the "buffer-zone" of what Freud calls modern man's "Reizschutz," here made more impermeable by the morphine that makes its user numb.

²⁰ *Grand Hotel*, 289. The effect of the narrator's objectivity and lack of involvement is even more obvious in the German original, since Baum uses the present tense, whose sudden immediacy estranges, and a more simplified syntax that stands in contrast to the more complex style and the past tense in which most of the novel is told: "Gaigern liegt auf dem Teppich von Nr. 71 und ist tot. Nichts mehr kann ihm geschehen. Niemand mehr auf der Welt kann ihn bedrängen, verfolgen, nie wird dieser Baron Gaigern ins Zuchthaus kommen, und das ist gut. Nie wird er in Wien eintreffen, wo die Grusinskaya auf ihn wartet, und das ist traurig" (*Menschen im Hotel*, 236).

²¹ *Grand Hotel*, 306. "Das ist um zehn Uhr morgens. Das Hotel zeigt das gewohnte Gesicht. Die Putzfrau wischt mit feuchten Sägespänen in der Halle auf . . ." (*Menschen im Hotel*, 250).

²² *Grand Hotel*, 299, translation modified. "Was im großen Hotel erlebt wird, das sind keine runden, vollen, abgeschlossenen Schicksale. Es sind nur Bruchstücke, Fetzen, Teile; hinter den Türen wohnen Menschen, gleichgültige oder merkwürdige, Menschen im Aufstieg, Menschen im Niedergang. . . . Und wer es etwa unternehmen wollte, zu erzählen, was er hinter den Türen gesehen hat, der käme in Gefahr, zwischen Lüge und Wahrheit zu balancieren, wie auf einem schlaffen, pendelnden Seil" (*Menschen im Hotel*, 244).

²³ Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," trans. Thomas Levin, *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–58; here: 56.

²⁴ *Grand Hotel*, 299. "Vielleicht gibt es überhaupt keine ganzen Schicksale auf der Welt, nur das Ungefähre, Anfänge, die nicht fortgeführt werden, Schlußpunkte, denen nichts voranging" (*Menschen im Hotel*, 244).

²⁵ The character of Dr. Otternschlag is the least inscribed in these three coordinates. Death is certainly an important motif in Baum's conception of Otternschlag, and the narrator stresses the complete absence of affection in Otternschlag's life a number of times. However, as the one who is mainly there to observe, comment, and relativize, he is not really part of the group of characters that rely so heavily on the use of the three motifs mentioned.

²⁶ The genre of the *Theatrum Mundi* experienced a renaissance in the works of Baum's contemporary, the Austrian Hugo von Hofmannsthal. In 1897, the twenty-three-year-old Hofmannsthal wrote *Das Kleine Welttheater* (The Little Theater of the World), and twenty-five years later, he used Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *El Grand Teatro del Mundo* (1635) as the basis for his *Das große Salzburger Welt-*

theater (The Salzburg Great Theater of the World) which premiered at the Salzburg Festival in August 1922 under the direction of Max Reinhardt — coincidentally the same Max Reinhardt who directed Vicki Baum's dramatic adaptation of *Menschen im Hotel* in Berlin in early 1930. Given how famous the Salzburg Festival quickly became in Europe after its first summer in 1920, and Baum's involvement in literary and cultural discussions of the time, especially as a native Austrian, as well as her acquaintance with Reinhardt, it is more than likely that she was aware of the genre of the theater of the world and its underlying dramatic and aesthetic principles when she wrote her novel.

²⁷ Lynda J. King discusses the lack of social criticism in *Menschen im Hotel* in her *Best-Sellers by Design* (191–92).

²⁸ *Grand Hotel*, 2. “Hier traf die Jazzmusik des Tea-rooms mit dem Geigenschmachten des Wintergartens zusammen, dazwischen rieselte dünn der illuminierte Springbrunnen in ein unechtes venezianisches Becken, dazwischen klirrten Gläser auf Tischchen, knisterten Korbstühle, und als dünnstes Geräusch schmolz das zarte Sausen, mit dem Frauen in Pelzen und Seidenkleidern sich bewegten, in den Zusammenklang” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 6).

²⁹ *Grand Hotel*, 2. “Bei der Drehtür schraubte sich die Märzkühle in kleinen Stößen hinein, sooft der Page Gäste ein- und ausließ” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 6).

³⁰ Interestingly, though, Baum seems to suggest that these modern innovations, especially the electric lights, detract from the hotel's perfection. On the first page already, we learn that the huge electric display on the hotel's façade causes problems with the internal electrical wiring. A little later, when, after having broken into Grusinskaya's room, Gaigern tries to get out of it in order not to be found by her when she is about to enter, the failure of the outside lighting causes him a significant delay that leads to his personal encounter with Grusinskaya; with her pearls in his pockets, he starts to fall in love with her and decides to restore them to their rightful owner. This, in turn, determines his further fate. In other words: had technology been flawless and the lights been functioning, Gaigern could have taken the pearls and would not have had to break into Preysing's room to steal from him and thus would not have been killed. But he would also not have found love.

³¹ *Grand Hotel*, 3–4. “‘Post für mich gekommen?’ Der Portier seinerseits fand sich auch zu einer kleinen Komödie bereit. Er schaute erst in das Fach Nr. 218, bevor er antwortete: ‘Diesmal leider nicht, Herr Doktor.’ . . . ‘Der Mensch kann einen schwächen,’ sagte der Portier zum kleinen Georgi. ‘Ewig das Gefrage wegen der Post. Seit zehn Jahren wohnt er jedes Jahr ein paar Monate bei uns, und noch nie ist ein Brief gekommen, und kein Hund hat nach ihm gefragt’” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 6–7).

³² *Grand Hotel*, 12–13. “Er sah: die Marmorsäulen mit den Gipsornamenten, den illuminierten Springbrunnen, die Klubstühle. Er sah Herren in Fräcken, Herren in Smokings, elegante, weitläufige Herren. Damen mit nackten Armen, mit Glitzerkleidern, mit Schmuck, Pelz, ausnehmend schöne und kunstvolle Damen. Er hörte entfernte Musik. Er roch Kaffee, Zigaretten, Parfüme, Spargelduft vom Speisesaal und Blumen . . . Er spürte den dicken roten Teppich unter seinen gewichsten Stiefeln. . . . Es war sehr hell in der Halle, angenehm gelblich hell. . . . Ein Kellner flitzte vorbei, trug ein silbernes Tablett, darauf standen breite, flache Gläser, in jedem

Glas war nur ein bißchen goldbrauner Kognak . . . — aber warum wurden im besten Hotel Berlins die Gläser nicht vollgefüllt?” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 14).

³³ King explains this favored perspective as necessary for Baum’s success with her target audience, the middle class. The unfitting guest who comes from a petty bourgeois background becomes the reader’s “Sympathieträger,” the one who appeals to the reader’s sympathy without being his or her social peer. Such “sympathetic identification,” as King calls it in her *Best-Sellers By Design* (179), does not require the reader to fully identify with a character who seems pitiful at times, but it guarantees a positive attitude vis-à-vis Kringelein throughout the story.

³⁴ *It Was All Quite Different*, 287.

³⁵ Baum heightens the effect of room No. 70 on Kringelein when she has him first assigned to an unexpectedly dark and inelegant room (No. 216) where nothing lets Kringelein forget his miserable former life and background. In contrast to room No. 216, room No. 70, which he gets after filing a complaint with the reception desk, seems twice as wonderful as it actually is.

³⁶ Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (1916; rpt. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 41. See also my discussion in the introductory chapter of this study.

³⁷ Otternschlag uses this paradox himself when he tells Gaigern one evening: “Ich, wie ich hier sitze, bin also ein Selbstmörder vorher. Mit einem Wort: Ich bin ein lebender Selbstmörder, eine Rarität, werden Sie zugeben” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 200). [“I, as I sit here, am a suicide before the event. To put it in one word, I am a living suicide, a rarity, you will agree” (*Grand Hotel*, 245).

³⁸ Becker also compares the war veterans in Roth’s *Hotel Savoy* with Baum’s Dr. Otternschlag; see “Großstädtische Metamorphosen,” 186–88.

³⁹ The narrator’s description of Otternschlag’s posture conjures up the image of a puppet: “In der Halle erhob sich ein Herr aus seinem Klubstuhl, ein langer Herr, dessen Beine wie ohne Gelenke waren” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 6). [“A tall gentleman in the lounge got up stiffly out of an easy chair and came with bent head towards the porter’s desk” (*Grand Hotel*, 3).]

⁴⁰ Regarding the change in Gaigern’s character, Lynda King observes: “Sportsman, flyer, a man with tempo: this is Gaigern. . . . The modern man had no illusions and acted soberly on the basis of facts, not emotions. . . . But Gaigern has not actually abandoned traditional values, and upon discovering that values such as warmth and friendship do exist in a different form from what he has been taught, he realizes that he still believes in them. Gaigern dies after he makes this discovery, with a vague explanation that he cannot live in the world of brutal reality of which he is now a part while still holding with those values” (*Best-Sellers By Design*, 175–76).

⁴¹ This is a general shortcoming in Baum’s novel: whenever she has characters leave their carved-out role as one specific modern type, she has a hard time remaining true to her own premises, and her types deteriorate into sentimental surrogates of older if not outdated, less convincing versions of themselves.

⁴² It is only when Grusinskaya addresses Baron von Gaigern as “Du — Mensch (*Menschen im Hotel*, 103, poorly translated as “You — man” (124)) shortly after they have met that she experiences a human, emotional breakthrough. Considering the importance of the word “Mensch” in Franz Werfel’s “Die Hotelterre” (the lack

of a “Mensch” in that hotel is what causes Francine to commit suicide), one can appreciate the depth of this encounter between von Gaigern and the Russian dancer much better.

⁴³ *Grand Hotel*, 115. “Die Grusinskaja drinnen im Zimmer näherte sich indessen dem dreiteiligen Ankleidespiegel . . . , drehte die Birne über dem Mittelspiegel an, umfaßte mit beiden Händen den Spiegelrand und zog sich so nahe an den Spiegel heran, als wolle sie sich hineinstürzen. Die Aufmerksamkeit, mit der sie ihr Gesicht dann prüfte, hatte etwas Grabendes, Gieriges und Schauriges” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 95).

⁴⁴ *Grand Hotel*, 115–16. “Die Grusinskaja starrte in ihr Gesicht wie in das Gesicht einer Feindin. Grausam sah sie die Jahre, die Falten, das Schlawe, das Angestrenzte, das Abwelkende, die Schläfen waren nicht mehr glatt, die Mundwinkel verfielen, die Augenlider lagen unter dem Blau zerknittert wie Seidenpapier. . . . Genug, dachte sie, genug. Nie mehr. Aus. Genug” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 95–96).

⁴⁵ *Grand Hotel*, 305, translation modified. “Keiner verläßt die Drehtür so, wie er hereinkam” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 249).

⁴⁶ Baum made Kringelein’s function as the link between these two storylines even more obvious by assigning him to a room sandwiched between those of the novel’s other main characters: he occupies number 70, exactly in the middle of the five rooms on the second floor occupied by these characters. Number 68 is Grusinskaya’s room, number 69 is Gaigern’s, Preysing occupies room number 71, and Flämmchen the adjoining number 72.

⁴⁷ This, at least, is Baum’s own opinion: she explains how this character took shape in her imagination over the course of almost twenty years (see *Es war alles ganz anders*, 381–82; *It Was All Quite Different*, 284–85).

⁴⁸ *It Was All Quite Different*, 301. “Es kommt nie etwas dabei heraus, wenn man sich in eine Figur verliebt . . .” (*Es war alles ganz anders*, 403).

⁴⁹ *Grand Hotel*, 174. “Trotzdem muß da eine mürbe Stelle in ihm sein . . . eine kleinste Entzündung, ein mikroskopisches Fleckchen auf der bürgerlichen Reinheit seiner Weste . . .” (*Menschen im Hotel*, 143).

Epilogue

WE ARE AT THE END OF our literary journey. All that remains to do is pack, check out, and depart. What will we put in our bags? Our belongings: souvenirs, gifts, and, of course, our books. And our knowledge that the time that we spent in these rooms will probably not leave a substantial trace. New guests will come to exercise their right over these temporary homes. They will see themselves reflected in the room's mirror, will rearrange pieces of furniture, move accessories. They will put their clothes in the closet, lie on the bed and press their bodies onto its mattress. New people will use these hotels in new ways, make their own experiences here, build new memories.

Still, we will remember our visits, and we know that they may leave a more permanent trace in our biography. As we visited hotel after hotel, witnessed, shared, and dissected the protagonists' struggles, we became characters ourselves, connected our own experiences, in real twentieth- and twenty-first-century hotels, to theirs. Even if just for a brief moment, we became the missing roommate who heard them when nobody else could or would. We embraced their stories: Else, Christine, Karl and all the others now populate our own imaginary hotel, and we want to tell them "Just open the door, there are many like you, you are not the only *Mensch* in this hotel!" Yet is that not what happened, in a way? And has this not undone part of the aesthetic premise on which hotel narratives were initially based, as stories that reflected the individual's complete existential isolation in a seemingly homogenous, alienated modern society? When writer after writer decided to set their stories in hotels, they started an intertextual dialogue that had the potential to open the symbolic doors that separated *Mensch* from *Mensch* and create a literary space in which isolated voices of homelessness echoed as a loud and critical choir. And as they did so, they also paved the way for the hotel to lose its status as a symbol of the writer's aesthetic and existential homelessness. Instead, they became the founding fathers (and mothers) of a strong literary tradition that has since inspired popular writers, filmmakers, television producers, and painters to explore the setting's fascinating narrative potential.

As far as it concerns each individual story, this intertextual dialogue changes neither the situation of the protagonist nor what the texts say about the hotel in early twentieth-century society: the hotel is and remains the breeding ground for and symbol of capital's power over inhabited space and

interpersonal relations in modernism. As such, it is a powerful foil to the traditional setting of the bourgeois “home,” which, for many of these writers, had lost its appeal as a site where modern existential, philosophical, economic, social, and cultural conflicts could be staged, negotiated, and told. At the same time, choosing the hotel as a setting also meant to subscribe to an aesthetic approach that did not seek a complete break with traditional modes of artistic representation. At a time when many modern movements such as expressionism, dadaism, and cubism denied the artist a realist, holistic approach to a world whose alienating nature left nothing but fragments of a former idealized whole, the hotel as a setting allowed the writer a temporary relief from such fragmentation without positing a restoration of the old order. As “homeless” writers repeatedly housed their modern characters in “homes away from home,” these literary hotels became temporary “homes” for those writers who were in search of new, more modern modes of writing but had not yet fully broken with the literary traditions with which they had grown up.

Yet, much like hotels, which have become places from which we simply expect a certain set of amenities and familiar features, the hotel narrative of the later twentieth century generally does not offer significant new insights into the interaction between the individual and his or her society. Writers of the early twentieth century set examples for the literary hotel and its inhabitants and explored the symbolic and metaphorical dimension of this new setting. Many imitators since then have adopted the most common and predictable features of the older stories, recognizing their narrative potential and the marketable fascination that still surrounds hotels and social life in them. However, the struggles that we witness in early twentieth-century literature — for women’s freedom and self-determination, and the individual’s struggle with capitalism and alienation — have ceased to be the driving force behind these tales. A century ago, writers chose the hotel as a metaphor for their vision of life in modernity and as a tool for social criticism. Today this setting no longer possesses the same symbolic or critical potential. Modern technology has changed our interaction with our immediate spatial environment significantly: with the push of a button, we can transport ourselves virtually to the other side of the world. These new technologies have also invaded hotels, where they serve to distract the guest from his or her strange, ambivalent situation there. There is little difference between watching television or logging onto the internet at home and doing so in a hotel. Our ability to leave home without stepping out of a room has become the most important source of a new kind of isolation of individuals from each other, and has made direct, personal communication just one among many options.

Hotels still attract us with their elegance and luxury, but they no longer have the power to unsettle as they did in the literature of the early twentieth century. As the cases of Francine, Christine, and Else show, women were es-

pecially vulnerable to the ambivalent nature of hotels as a setting that instilled both feelings of liberation and alienation. Young women without a stable identity beyond their familial one had nothing to hold onto in the semi-anonymous realm of the hotel. Society and women's roles within it have come a long way since then. The Second World War opened the door to more powerful and assertive roles for women. A generation later, the sexual revolution, with the invention of the birth control pill, and women's arrival in the workplace and the financial power it brought have changed the way women see themselves. The domestic sphere of home has long lost the identity-assigning importance it had when young women were seen primarily as daughters, and married women as wives. Our culture still associates hotels with the possibility of sexual adventures and a break from the routine, at least occasionally, but the thrill of the forbidden is gone, and we no longer need these spaces as "asylums" for limited liberation or emancipation.

Many hotels have seen a drastic change in their clientele, from the elites of a century ago to middle-class travelers today who find a special deal on the internet, and hotel managements have adapted accordingly. Dress or luggage do not have to meet certain standards anymore, and evening social life in the hotel is only one of many competing options for guests. Many older grand hotels have either gone out of business or have been bought by big international corporations. Meanwhile, American-style hotel chains have sprung up all over the world, promoting a new concept of hotel hospitality: that of total predictability. This wholesale comfort still seeks to please the guests and make them feel good but does not target their psyche the way the older concept of the individual "home away from home" did. The modern hotel culture has indeed developed into a more democratic one. Veblen's codified signs of "conspicuous leisure and consumption" may still be valid for some of the world's most elegant hotels, but in general, mastery of this code is not as important in most hotels today.

* * *

Where will we go once we have left our hotel? Moving on to the next one will be redundant. We will not find anything new to observe; we may, in fact, be disappointed by the familiarity of its features and offerings. We could go back home, and it seems that a number of our writing friends have recently decided to return to that old-fashioned place to see what has happened during our absence. Or we could go to a cyber-café, log on to the internet and begin chatting with people whom we have never met, whose only identity is one constructed in their words. We could move from "room" to "room" without ever assuming that any one of these virtual rooms could offer us anything useful in searching for ourselves or reaching out to the other in this twenty-first century.

Cyberspace as the heir to salons, cafés, hotels? That would be an inquiry worth exploring.

* * *

In the meantime, we pack up: Else's black dress, Christine's silky underwear, tennis rackets, uniforms, passports, books, pajamas, and we realize that we did indeed "arrive with one shirt and leave with twenty suitcases."¹ One last look into the mirror from which Else, Christine, Aschenbach, and Grusinskaya stare back at us, presenting us the multi-layered narrative of lives lived in a hotel room. The experience becomes an uncanny one; we leave the room, close the door, walk past the staircase, wary of its mesmerizing magnetism. We take the lift down, physically alone but in the virtual company of the one-armed Ignatz, of Karl, Felix, nameless other liftboys. Finally, we arrive on the main floor. One last time, we all meet in the lobby . . .

Notes

¹ Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, 7.

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