**THE POWER OF PLACE: RE-NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN HOTEL FICTION.**

**Joanna Elaine Pready**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2009**

**Abstract**

The metropolitan hotel is a rich space for exploration in hotel fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to its interesting connection with both the city and the home, and its positive and negative effects on the individual. Using spatial theory as a foundation for understanding how the hotel functions, and drawing on theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Edward D. Soja, Fredric Jameson, Yi-fu Tuan and David Harvey, this thesis offers an alternative approach to the culturally specific readings of past hotel studies; by contrast, it will draw on two alternate readings of the space: those which are concerned with the geographical and with the sociological make-up of the hotel. The ambition behind this thesis is to provide a framework for discussing novels from the realist tradition through to post-modern examples of spatial exploration.

A selection of works will be studied, including: Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel*, Henry Green, *Party Going*, Arnold Bennett, *Imperial Palace* and *Grand Babylon Hotel*, Anita Brookner, *Hotel du Lac*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled* and Ali Smith, *Hotel World*. These writers are linked through the particular use they make of the hotel and the creation of spatial identity in their novels. Spatial identity in turn arises through an awareness of the power of space, and its variable effect on an individual's identity. This thesis begins by examining past hotel research, which centred on late nineteenth-century novels by Henry James and Edith Wharton. It then introduces the theoretical studies that have informed the current thesis. Before moving onto the two central chapters, which examine the geography and sociology of space, it includes a brief 'interlude' on Richard Whiteing's *No. 5 John Street*, a work which introduces many of the themes central to this thesis. The central argument considers the agency or power of the hotel space, a concept which has been generally overlooked in criticism. The power of space in hotel fiction is exhibited in its capacity to alter events and emotions and identities in general. In this view landscape, traditionally considered two-dimensional, is no longer flat, but can be rather seen as a multifarious 'character' in its own right. This conception of the spatial environment of the hotel encapsulates what it means to function in the modern urban environment.

Sections of both the theory and the geography chapters of this thesis have been published as a result of two conferences. Therefore, special thanks go to Brunel University and the *Literary London Journal* and to the organizers of the Boundaries Conference at Loughborough University. The details of the published articles are as follows:

'The 'holiday incognito': the elusive identity in hotel fiction of the inter-war period' published in Jenni Ramone and Gemma Twitchen eds., *Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), pp. 17-30.

'Liminality in a London hotel: Henry Green's *Party Going* and the impact of space on identity' *Literary London Journal* 7:1 http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/index.html

# Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement, first and foremost, goes to Professor Josephine Guy whose undivided attention and focus on the minute details helped me see things with a clearer and more critical eye.  Her ability to understand my thought processes from inside out has been a constant source of amazement and amusement throughout my studies and her interest in my academic career has made me think of the future, rather than remaining fixed in the present.  Huge thanks also go to my examiners: Doctor David James and Professor Andrew Thacker, both of whose work has been an immense source of inspiration to me.  The delicacy with which they read my thesis, and the insights they drew from it confirmed my belief in the richness of the project and allowed me to consider exciting alternative avenues for further research. Also, thanks must go to Professor Julie Sanders who gave me more opportunities than most post-graduate students would ever hope for, and who introduced me to new inter-disciplinary ways of thinking.

A select few members of the post-graduate community enriched the whole research experience and I will look back fondly on my time spent at Nottingham University and our regular coffee breaks, shopping trips and champagne fuelled evenings, which helped to ensure that I preserved a balance between life and work.

My whole family has always been a very supportive network for me, but in particular, my mother's unwavering support and dedication is a very real and powerful force in my life.  Her continued interest in my work and ideas persistently allowed me to see my work with fresh eyes and to remain interested in the details I took for granted.  My brother, being older, has always set the bar in terms of academic achievements; his own ambition and success showed me exactly what could be possible from an early age.  My uncle, Peter Hall, broke through to the heart of my work and gave me an insight that has remained with me throughout the writing and editing process.  And finally, my wholehearted thanks go to Patch, whose continued encouragement and refusal to listen to pessimism has been a revelation to me.  His resolute belief in me and faith in my success became the cornerstone of my motivation.   His ambition in his own work and general work ethic helped me to persevere on a daily basis, and his presence in my everyday life was a constant reminder of what is important.

# Contents

**Chapter 4: Sociology**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

'The amazing hotel-world quickly closes round him […] the air swarms, to
intensity, with the *characteristic*, the characteristic condensed and accumulated
as he rarely elsewhere has had the luck to find it. It jumps out to meet his every
glance, and this unanimity of its spring, of all its aspects and voices, is […] the
essence of the loud New York story.'
Henry James, *The American Scene*.[1]

**The Hotel Dynamic**

As James's statement acknowledges, the hotel has a certain 'characteristic'.

Nonetheless, hotel writers from James's time right through to the present day

habitually find this certain characteristic indefinable and attempt to record and

classify the hotel through an analysis of the effect it has on the individual.[2] The hotel

space in the late nineteenth century was typically registered as being as unknowable

as the foreign city space surrounding it, though this unknowability represented

freedom and progress. The dichotomies between the individual and the mass, and

between alienation and community are caught up in the physical space of the hotel,

and are further complicated by the opposition between home and holiday that the

hotel rests upon. Being on holiday and away from home creates an artificial

atmosphere that is dominated by a sense of transience and instability. This

introduction will set out how what I term 'hotel novels' have been analyzed,

considering the dominant trends in hotel investigations, particularly around the turn of

the century when hotel literature – literature that relies on hotel settings for the

majority of the narrative space – became really popular. In section two I will outline

the theoretical perspectives that inform the literary analyses in later sections of the

thesis, perspectives that consider the concerns of the home, the urban and the

interactions between humans and the spaces they inhabit.

---

[1] Henry James, *The American Scene* (1907; London: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 102.
[2] Intriguingly, Monica Ali has published a new hotel novel only in April of this year (Monica Ali, *In the Kitchen* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2009)).

Today the metropolitan hotel dominates our skylines, embodies the essence of holidaying and functions as a space in which to luxuriate and live extravagantly whilst away from home. Fundamentally the hotel is a resting point and becomes a place to breathe, refresh and shelter away from the energies of travel. As a static focus point to reach for on a journey, it is the place to stop at the end of the day and re-energize before the next day's exertions, in a world that is fast-paced and energetic. The expansion of tourism over the last hundred and fifty years and the ability to travel further afield and experience new cultures, is intrinsic to the make-up of the hotel experience. The speed at which inner-city hotels multiplied at the turn of the century, due in part to dramatic technological advances in methods of construction, begin to reform the impression of hotels (what they are there for and what they stand for).[3] In simple terms, the hotel functions as a comfortable space that offers security and peace amidst the perhaps chaotic and unknowable outside spaces. However, literary representations often present hotels as the most unknown spaces of all, with complex articulations of power. It might be thought that hotels in literary fiction merely provide a backdrop against which plot and characterization is played out; but even a superficial analysis reveals that the hotel space is capable of functioning as a complex instrument in its own right, one which has a role to play in human development.

Hotels impose an existence on their inhabitants, one in which human beings are caged in an artificial world, far removed from the traditional domestic interior or country-house inn. Life in what I term the 'hotel-world' is built on contradictions; it creates both feelings of familiarity and strangeness, rootlessness and stasis, freedom and inhibition. It is a space in which humans meet and form groups but simultaneously feel alienated. The hotel space is an area in which behaviour can be

---

[3] Please see appendix for historical information.

scrutinized in microscopic detail due to the removal of inhabitants from their familiar habitat; it is a space in which uneasiness is felt at the realization that the experience is a moment out of everyday life. As a result, there is a need to re-evaluate human conditions in relation to this new and overwhelming space. The literature that focuses on hotel life questions how characters should behave in these new environments. The 'hotel-world' is a world created in a bubble, where outside influences and societal rules are enforced, but at the same time realized to be arbitrary. The confusion this creates is epitomized by the apprehensive way in which actions are carried out. Moreover, this pocket of life that the hotel experience represents is visualized by the self-contained nature of the actual building. Studies of hotel literature often consider the space as a microcosm of the city space around it – the architectural structure symbolizes the restriction that it imposes.

This link between the hotel and the city, and the hotel and the home, is first explored in detail in the literature of the late nineteenth century. There the metropolitan hotel is seen as its own enclosed community with all desired amenities at hand, from shops and bars to laundries and kitchens; every possible need of the occupant is catered for. Even as early as 1797 Dessin's Hotel was described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as 'the most extensive in Europe. It is indeed itself a town: it contains squares, alleys, gardens [∧] and innumerable offices'.[4] This hotel had its own theatre, shops and workmen who were continually on site; it was an early example of a self-contained community as well as a self-contained building, and relied only on itself for amenities and services. The hotel building can thus be considered as a walled off space within a space, a mini city within a major one, but separated by its physical boundary. The potential for alienation is thereby

---

[4] Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 172.

exaggerated by this feeling of segregation; in this way the physical hotel building became a dynamic social space for writers of the late nineteenth century.

By the early twentieth century, the traditional country inns, that provided merely food and shelter, had turned into metropolitan skyscrapers with amenities out of this world. The country inn had originally grown out of a need for a place to rest on long, dusty journeys on horseback or in stagecoaches. Such inns typically held only a few occupants at any one time and offered minimum comfort 'just the security of a warm bed and staple food; it was in essence 'a place to rest your head rather than enjoy your season 'mainly for travellers to break the journey'[5] In the early decades of the nineteenth century there were occasional monumental hotels built, such as *The Tremont* and *The Astor House* which appeared between 1827 and 1836. However, it was with the opening of *The Cecil* in London, in 1886, that the age of the grand hotel really arrived; *The Cecil* purported to be the largest hotel in Europe with eight hundred private rooms. The nature of this change from country inn to urban edifice, which took place over the course of the nineteenth century, can be seen most clearly in the lavishness that the city boarder demanded and the dramatic escalation in numbers of rooms and private facilities such as en-suite bathrooms.

One consequence of this change was that the importance of travel became submerged within the hotel experience; the time spent in hotels became as much a part of the holiday as the excursions and sightseeing trips. The hotel was no longer simply a place to rest, but one to enjoy; no longer a mid-point on a journey, it could be an end in itself. Unsurprisingly, then, several novels written in the period between 1880 and 1940 are set in hotels, as that environment allowed authors to explore the confusion felt at the dramatic changes in the society around them. Authors

---

[5] Derek Taylor and David Bush, *The Golden Age of British Hotels* (London: Northwood Publications Ltd., 1974), p. 1.

particularly concerned with the hotel space in this period include: Henry James, Edith Wharton, E. M. Forster, Arnold Bennett, Elizabeth Bowen and Henry Green. The hotel was used as the central setting in many of their novels and became a crucial location for character experimentation in this period.

Indeed, modernity and the hotel became interchangeable concepts; the hotel was a new, uncontrollable and difficult to comprehend medium which paralleled attitudes towards human consciousness at this time. The moment of transition between the nineteenth and the twentieth century has repeatedly been studied and typically contextualized in relation to factors such as urbanization and inner-city development. The hotel has occasionally been acknowledged as one of the factors used to understand this period of transition, and a group of writers (most famously Brucken, Koprince and Klimasmith[6]) have looked extensively at the dynamics of hotels, though with a very specific agenda. This otherwise informative body of work is limited, however, by its concentration on writers such as Edith Wharton and Henry James, and its focus on the role of the individual in the hotel space, with class and gender as predominant concerns.

Susan Koprince, for example, relates the gendered spaces of the hotel, and the interactions between male and female characters, to a wider debate about the role of women in society in the late nineteenth century. This study adds to more foundational studies such as those by Deborah Parsons and Lynda Nead,[7] which investigate the world of the street in relation to the city and the importance of morality, visibility and

---

[6] Carolyn Brucken, "In the Public Eye: Women and the American Luxury Hotel," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31:4 (Winter, 1996): 203-220; Susan Koprince, "Edith Wharton's Hotels," *Massachusetts Studies in English* 10:1 (Spring, 1985): 12-23; Betsy Klimasmith, *At Home in the City – Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture 1850-1930* (New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005).
[7] Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).

the gaze to femininity in the public arena.  Such contextual research allows the hotel

to be examined in relation to specific concerns such as women in public roles and

public spaces and the role of women generally in a fast paced and frequently changing

world.  Critics like Koprince use the specifics of the hotel space to draw conclusions

about the modern world and the role of the individual.  However, and as I have noted,

these studies are always predominantly character based, using the setting 再he hotel 再

as a secondary point for consideration.


## The Home and the Hotel

A dominant topic in traditional analyses of character and environment

concerns the function of domestic spaces and their inhabitants.  The home is

considered a primary space, as regards identity, one which can be compared with

other spaces in the urban environment. As Peter Williams informs us:

> The home, in a variety of ways, penetrates deeply into the core of
> our social being.  Our notions of privacy, freedom and choice are,
> for example, centred in part upon conceptions of the home as a
> location (physical and social) where these ideas may be
> exercised.  The home is a private sphere and privacy can be
> exercised at home.  There are few, if any, alternative arenas
> where this is so.[8]

The feeling of comfort and safety that is required when staying in a hotel is intrinsic

to the idea of home, but it is something that can only ever be aimed at in the hotel;

therefore, in the hotel there is always something lacking.  This lack of what might be

termed homeliness is apparent in other urban contexts, and on a wider scale within

---

[8] Peter Williams, Єonstituting Class and Gender: A Social History of the Home, 1700-1901 ψin Nigel
Thrift and Peter Williams, eds., *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society* (London: Routledge,
1987), p. 156.

the galloping expansion of megalopolis."[9] as progressive city-scapes are placed in immediate opposition to rooted domestic settings. Henry James voiced concerns about the replacement of the old by the new in a critique of city developments. He preoccupies himself with the loss of the home feeling and as Klimasmith summarizes: "where houses and churches had stood, tall anonymous buildings had risen, transforming the appearance and scale of the city James once had known intimately."[10] Anonymity is at the centre of this sense of deficiency. The individuality of a space and its personal history is what gives it a home feeling. The public nature of a hotel space, filled with temporary inhabitants who are strange to each other, and the sterile, monochrome styles of décor, highlights a lack of individuality that is inimical to a feeling of homeliness. This is the predominant mode of speculation in writing about hotels in Henry James' time.

The hotel, in other words, becomes a space trapped between the opposing ideas of home and holiday. This is a paradoxical idea in one respect, as a requirement and expectation of an attempt to enjoy oneself on holiday is to be at a distance from home life; a holiday is in opposition to, and entirely removed from, the everyday experience of home, and yet travellers still desire a home-like space while away. Homeliness implies a sense of security and the need to feel at ease within personal surroundings. The home is moreover a space that is used to evaluate other spaces that are encountered; it becomes the standard referent for emergent and atypical spaces – such as the hotel.

The literal definition of a home is a place that provides shelter and privacy; it is a safe place to fulfil basic human needs with some degree of comfort. Moira

[9] Lyn Tees, "Metropolitan Types – London and Paris Compared," in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds., *The Victorian City Images and Realities* vol. I (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 414.
[10] Klimasmith, *At Home in the City*, p. 1.

Donald questions "what is a home?" in the opening of her article "Tranquil Havens?,"[11] implying that there is something more significant in the connotation of the word that includes atmosphere, ambience and a general feeling of well-being. Donald examines this "deeper significance" what she terms "moral or emotional resonance attached to the particular building we inhabit"[12] Donald argues that English is one of the only languages to place particular significance on the word "home" In other languages house and home are identical words.[13] Feeling at home, then, brings with it a sense of security and belonging; it is therefore significant to the experience of the modern individual in a changing environment, particularly the turn-of-the-century individual who is at the centre of a shifting society. With the idea of home also comes a sense of history, and a personal connection is always made between the individual and the home in which they live. By contrast, hotel life is primarily about residing; even individuals who "live" in hotels for long periods of time, do so without considering the importance of personal connection and history. The exhilaration felt by the fresh opportunity for far-reaching and more varied travel is often coupled with this desire to create a sense of "home" even while away from home.

Donald's preoccupation with the subjective and elusive quality of home-life leads her to assess the development of the home as a public space. Naturally there is a public/private dichotomy inherent in any home-space, with the separation of private boudoirs from more public, shared spaces such as the dining-room or kitchen. Between the Georgian period and the nineteenth century, the home, according to Donald, witnessed a move towards a more public attitude towards home-life; a focus

[11] Moira Donald, "Tranquil Havens? Critiquing the Idea of Home as the Middle-Class Sanctuary" in *Domestic Space – Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior,* Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd eds., (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 103.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

on entertaining within the home made the separation between public and private more

pronounced.  As John Summerson has stated, since the late Georgian period, large

town houses had:

> immense public rooms and small squalid back bedrooms.  They
> were not built for domestic but for public life – a life of
> continued entertaining in drawing rooms, ante-rooms and eating
> rooms – where conversation would not be wholly ephemeral,
> where a sentence might be delivered which would echo round
> political England.[14]

This raised questions concerning individual etiquette as personal, familial spaces and

supposedly private behaviour were now on show; this new way of life demanded new

rules regarding behaviour and morality in the home.  The question of how public the

modern home is, and the repercussions this has on the spirit of 'home' is a dominant

concern in criticism of the nineteenth century and links it powerfully to the overtly

public space of the hotel.


**<u>The hotel in Victorian literature</u>**


Both Edith Wharton and Henry James can be categorized as writers who focus

on this connection between the home and the hotel.  Both deal with the nouveau riche

and class construction within this period.  Wharton's trepidation over the changing

nature of residential architecture, with the home becoming more impersonal, full of

strangers and with less chance of privacy, draws the home and the hotel closer

together.  The hotel is no longer associated with holidaying but with being accepted

into fashionable society; it becomes 'home' for those wanting to live life in the public

---

[14] Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles, Society and Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973), p. 20.

eye, and in this way it is presented as the epitome of nouveau riche style in this period.  Both writers are concerned with the transient nature of hotel life which in turn finds a mirror image in the trivial quality of life of the nouveau riche; Wharton's and James's works oscillate between the homes of individual characters and multiple hotel adventures.

Wharton's works are saturated with references to the different hotels that her characters pass through, often briefly and whimsically with a total lack of connection to their surroundings.  The hotel space is thus a backdrop to the events that transpire in the frantic world of high society.  Wharton's novelistic hotels have been described as: "centers of overdecorated bad taste beloved by the nouveaux riches, sites where her characters overstep or disregard social boundaries and, as a result, descend toward humiliation and despair."[15]  Koprince sees Wharton's personal distaste for hotels issuing in a series of negative associations between her characters and the hotels they inhabit: these characters, like the hotel itself, "display opulent but superficial beauty, a glittering façade, which masks [an] essential vulgarity."[16]  Koprince further argues that in Wharton's hotels:

> not only does the hotel have the worst design of any of the
> author's habitations, but it is the dwelling place of persons of
> questionable repute: those who are rootless and ill-bred, and
> those who are refined, but who have chosen to rebel against the
> mores of the social class into which they were born.[17]

For Koprince, the positivity of Wharton's hotels reside in what she terms the freedom of "to return"[18] whereby once a character has shattered conventional moral codes through his or her behaviour in the hotel, the hotel itself offers the security of a

---

[15] Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 29.
[16] Koprince, "Edith Wharton's Hotels", p. 19.
[17] Ibid., p. 13.
[18] Ibid., p. 16.

temporary escape,[19] though ultimately those actions will result in social exile. Wharton's hotels thus offer a combination of freedom and social claustrophobia. The hotel is a device Wharton uses to test her characters and reveal their inadequacies for the life they have chosen.

The conjunction between home and hotel life in Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*[20] merges a topical middle-class preoccupation with ownership of property and an alternative fashion for making home in a hotel. Of concern in this novel is the running of the household with multiple parties involved, whether that is close or distant family members, servants or lodgers. For those that dispense with the responsibility of property and move between disconnected hotel sites that require money but no level of responsibility, the transience of hotel life and the transience of the season create a heady dream-world in which responsibility and custom are dispensed with: this way of life becomes the new custom of the country. The new generation of nouveau riche are swept up in this hotel lifestyle; setting up home becomes old-fashioned in relation to the excitement and sociability of hotel life. Undine Spragg, in *The Custom of the Country,* is the epitome of a character seized by the excitement of fashion and society. She is constantly preoccupied with material concerns: the prettiness of her dresses, the buying of jewellery and other trinkets, and most of all, the luxury and display of wealth inherent to hotel life. Undine believes that, 'they could not hope to get on while they 'kept house', all the fashionable people she knew either boarded or lived in hotels.'[21] This assertion comes early in the novel; the whimsical nature of this leading character foregrounds the doom that is to follow throughout the novel: misfortune arises due to these decisions. Undine's lack of experience in the world of property, and her flippancy when it comes to the social

---

[19] Koprince, 'Edith Wharton's Hotels', p. 16.
[20] Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (1913; Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984).
[21] Wharton, *Custom*, p. 12.

world, sets the foundation for the downfall of her family and her realization at her own naiveté. Undine believes that entry into the hotel world will automatically allow her and her family admission into high society. Her recognition that this is not the case appears to come almost immediately: "the first social steps would be as difficult to make in a hotel as in one's own house"[22] and yet she continues with this lifestyle until much later in the novel – when it is already too late. Undine Spragg is unaware of the ease with which a person can be rejected from certain circles due to simple things like going to the wrong hotel or conversing with the wrong people. When entering hotel life in the beginning of the novel, "Undine found herself astray in a new labyrinth of social distinctions"[23] but is still unable to grasp the importance of these distinctions until much later in the novel. The freedom that comes with the lack of responsibility causes Undine to forget about the reality of the situation and the complexity of social life in this period. The hotel as a space, instead of opening the door to a wealthy and luxurious lifestyle, actually complicates the matter. Wharton uses this dynamic space to exemplify important social concerns at this time, concerns about money and status, fashion, class and the nouveau riche, and the role of property and ownership.

For James, by contrast, the hotel is a "realized ideal"[24] unlike the negative and problematic association between home and hotel, which we find in Wharton, in James's writing the hotel predominates as the "perfect" space, positioned hierarchically above the home as an ideal. James believed that the hotel took from the home everything it required and then improved upon it. He noticed that the need for revolution in the way society constructs itself had found expression in the hotel, as it

---

[22] Wharton, *Custom*, p. 12.
[23] Ibid., p. 56.
[24] James, *The American Scene,* p. 104.

allowed the individual "to unlearn as many as possible of their old social canons".[25] The absence of normal social rules in the hotel is not for James a negative issue, but a liberating one.  James astutely acknowledges that any change in society and class organization is responded to by the growth of, and focus on, hotels as a new mode of expression.  The old spaces of the home are no longer viable forms of representation for the individual at this time.  The "old social canons" are being reformed and the hotel allows this realignment to take place.  James thus only sees the positivity of the hotel in its modernity and the endless possibilities it offers for human advancement and action.  For example, he highlights the importance of the move from the Victorian home to the late Victorian and Edwardian hotel as a space for social interaction as he contextualises the latter with the spirit of the age and the desire for change.  The concentration on hotels, literarily and sociologically, "was just the ache of envy of the spirit of a society which had found there, in its prodigious public setting, so exactly what it wanted".[26]

Another concern of Wharton and James is the idea of gendered spaces. The hotel is a unique space as it offers private, individual rooms and grandiose public meeting rooms (in particular the restaurant, bar and lobby) in very close proximity. More importantly, public and private are never fully separate in the hotel as the supposedly private spaces are not entirely personal and are used by different members of the public in quick succession.  Studies of the nineteenth-century home, such as that by Davidoff and Hall focus on the gendered divisions of the space;[27] so public versus private also became a separation between male and female. The public, social drawing-room for example is seen as predominantly male in relation to the privacy

---

[25] James, *The American Scene*, p. 102.
[26] Ibid., p. 104.
[27] L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

and intimacy of the female boudoir.  That "male" space is also identified, as Moira Donald argues,  by the conspicuous display of wealth in the Victorian drawing-room – a room that is a "consciously contrived creation"[28] with every design or decoration decision ensuring "that its wealth and status were reflected in every aspect of its construction, furnishing and ornamentation".[29]  The hotel echoed these changes in domestic architecture in its own designs: the hotel became the extreme of the home for the display of wealth in this period.

Carolyn Brucken also concentrates on gendered spaces and the notion of public and private in her examination of the American luxury hotel.  Moving away from previous studies that focused on the growth of the luxury hotel in relation to other public services including transportation and the tourist industry (services she refers to as included in "the progressive tradition of male entrepreneurship"),[30] Brucken instead locates the rise of the luxury hotel in relation to the tradition of etiquette and the possibility of greater visibility for women in the hotel scene.  She notes the speed in which "young beaus and belles searching for a profitable marriage partner at fashionable resorts and hotels"[31] became stock figures in literature of the period.  A similar argument is put forth by Maureen Montgomery,[32] who believes that women had previously tried to find tributaries that let them gain access to the city whilst maintaining their respectability.  Earlier attempts had taken the form of charity work and part-time jobs, both of which were fairly unsuccessful on a larger scale. The more common analysis of gender in the hotel links this space to other

---

[28] Moira Donald, "Tranquil Havens?" p. 106.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Brucken, "In the Public Eye" pp. 203.
[31] Ibid., p. 206.
[32] Maureen Montgomery, *Displaying Women – Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* (London: Routledge, 1998).

environments, such as the theatre, that are tinged with sexual impropriety.[33] Theatres

were initially linked to prostitution due to their location in particular areas of the city.

The theatre building was also linked ideologically to the street outside, thus

connecting actresses and streetwalkers. There is a further association between the

role of actresses and prostitution, founded on principles similar to the Lacanian gaze,

in which female actresses are directed by the needs of an audience and must fulfil

those needs. The professional aspect of women in the theatre, the fact that actresses

get paid to parade, immediately associated female actresses of the nineteenth century

with prostitution. Brucken recounts that many of New York's grand hotels are

located in Broadway, "the axis of a commercial sex and entertainment business"[34]

this clearly elides the hotel with the theatre and sex industry due to its position in the

street. Nonetheless the hotel is a positive space for Brucken, as it offers a mediatory

point between the home and the street, and is ultimately more protective than the open

street where women are exposed to "the public gaze of strangers"[35] Again, and in

agreement with Brucken, Montgomery believes that the hotel was the first successful

space in protecting and enfranchising women: "there can be no doubt [∧] that leisure

helped to legitimize women's presence in public space"[36]

Brucken also places particular stress on the hotel space as an area that

promoted social intercourse: though observing rules of chaperonage, the hotel

nonetheless allowed women greater freedom of travel precisely through the promise

of a safe resting place: "these young women led gay, if brief, lives of dancing,

---

[33] Please see: Jad Adams, "Gabriela Cunninghame Graham, Deception and Achievement in the 1890s," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 50:3 (2007): 251-69; Kim Marra, "Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society," *Theatre Journal* 59:2 (May 2007): 320-321; Joseph Lenz, 'Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," *ELH*, 60: 4 (Winter, 1993): 833-855; Elaine Aston, *Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995); Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[34] Brucken, "In the Public Eye" p. 210.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Montgomery, *Displaying Women,* p. 12.

shopping, visiting and courting while chaperoned by parents, siblings, uncles, and aunts.[37] Previously it was only the home that maintained an image of sexual respectability:

> The fear of women being enticed into uncontrolled social as well
> as sexual relationships literally cut them off from any existence
> outside their homes or homes of relatives and friends.[38]

The hotel, in Brucken's reasoning, was a new space for women to exhibit themselves and to be seen in an environment that was safe and secure.

The hotel, Brucken argues, offers further protection for women through side or family entrances that allowed females to bypass the street:

> The architecture of the hotel aligned the ladies [sic] entrance with
> the private, domestic spaces of the middle-class home rather than
> with the grand, public and commercial architecture of the main
> entrance used by men.[39]

Brucken goes on to suggest that the separate spaces in the hotel, the parlours versus the dining-rooms, was an innovation in hotel design, which distinguished this form of building from earlier inns and taverns, that offered social spaces only for men. The hotels built in the late nineteenth century were thus the first to distinguish formally between private and social areas and to offer single-gender public spaces. Importantly, women enter the hotel unseen and inhabit only its private spaces: the aura of sexual respectability "could only be maintained by the separation of women from all monetary exchanges within the hotel."[40] Despite the separation and concealment of women in the hotel space, the very inclusion of them within the

---

[37] Brucken, "In the Public Eye," p. 206.
[38] Davidoff, *The Best Circles,* p. 80.
[39] Brucken, "In the Public Eye," p. 211
[40] Ibid., p. 212.

22

building, Brucken argues, did raise the profile of women in the public arena. Similarly, the ability of women from a certain class to gain admission to this space "established its claims to respectability".[41] There was a mutual benefit for the inhabitant who is allowed to enter but kept separate from male-centered areas, and the hotel itself whose reputation is aided by being frequented by women of a certain class.

Despite the historical association which Brucken points to, between women, respectability and the hotel, the literature of the period predominantly associates the movements of women in the hotel with either triviality or scandal. The hotel is a prime space for gossip and licentious behaviour; in the work of James and Wharton this space provides a new medium for expressing distaste over the indignity of life in modern society. Maureen Montgomery, as I have noted, discusses the possibilities for freedom and acceptance of women in the urban scene through the outlet of the hotel, but she concludes that authors were still concerned with the unsettling association of women and licentiousness. In particular, Edith Wharton, in all of her hotel novels, shows that the "crowded spaces of leisure" are presented as "socially promiscuous" and are "potentially areas for sexual promiscuity".[42] The hotel exposes the fundamental flaws in characters from a nouveau riche background; for Wharton such characters are naïve and vulnerable compared to the landed gentry. The hotel, for Wharton and James, thus proves to be a rich space for exploring these cultural concerns. The focus on the hotel in this context, however, does not itself engender a more fluid notion of how space operates. As Philip E Wegner acknowledges, writers such as James "celebrate the portrayal of the complex psychology of characters as the highest achievement of narrative art. Characters are fundamentally temporal constructs that unfold in a space, or "setting" which, once established, seems to

---

[41] Brucken, "In the Public Eye", p. 213.
[42] Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, p. 35.

remain constant.'[43]  By contrast, the authors with whom I am concerned move beyond seeing the space as the hotel, that is as simply as a setting.  For them it becomes a kind of character with agency.


## The hotel in interwar literature


Late nineteenth-century hotel fiction thus tends to use the hotel to comment on a character's position in society.  The specifics of particular hotels are lost to this larger criticism.  By contrast, another surge of interest in the hotel, which occurred in the interwar period of the 1920s and '30s, developed the trope by focusing on one hotel in relation to the characters within it; an approach very different from Wharton's and James's montage of hotel experiences.  The literature of this later period is tinged with apprehension and doubt for the future and sees individuals trying to re-align themselves with an environment that is unstable and unfamiliar; Laura Marcus characterizes literary representations of history and society at this time as a process that follows the 'movements of remembering and repetition'[44] in an attempt to reclaim the past that is still frustratingly recent.  It is a time of transition in which identity is shifting, people are uncertain of their future and places are less recognisable.  Stanley Adshead sees the period directly after the war as a chance to reinvent London: 'not since the Great Fire has so unique an opportunity occurred for carrying out schemes of reconstruction on a colossal scale.'[45]  There is an element of

---

[43] Philip E. Wegner, 'Spatial Criticism; Critical Geography, Space, Place and Textuality,' in *Introducing Criticism at the Twenty-First Century,* Julian Wolfreys ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 180.

[44] Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls 'Introduction' in Marcus and Nicholls, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 5.

[45] David Gilbert, 'London of the Future: The Metropolis re-imagined after the Great War' *Journal of British Studies* 43:1 (Jan, 2004), p. 94.

positivity in this statement — the catastrophic results of the Great War actually allow

creation and re-invention to take place.  The future is one of hope and possibility

amidst the chaos, through the necessity of change. Ambiguity is inherent in the

combination of tragedy and hope that springs from such a major realignment of

civilization.

The focus on transience and uncertainty that we glimpse in the writings of

Wharton and James is heightened and exaggerated by the political context of the

interwar period.  Joseph Conrad's 'Inn of the two witches' (1915), Joseph Roth's

*Hotel Savoy* (1924), Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* (1930) and Georges Simenon's *Hotel*

*Majestic* (1942) are just a small selection of hotel works published in this period.

This selection includes canonical novels, works of social realism, popular fiction,

short stories, melodrama and detective fiction, and they include extremes of hotel

architecture from bawdy lodging houses to grand metropolitan hotels.  What links

them is the focus on the hotel space in its entirety, as the predominant setting for

social evaluation — something entirely different to the medley of hotels that appear in

Victorian literature.

A preoccupation of the writers of this period is a concentration on style to aid

the comprehension of the space that is being traversed.[46]  These texts focus on depth

---

[46] Conrad's [0] 'The Inn of the Two Witches,' has been criticized for an over-exaggerated plot or
anecdotal storyline; as John G. Peters describes it, the plot is nothing but 'melodramatic and gothic'
(John G. Peters, *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2006), p. 106).  It is considered to have little literary value or psychological depth in relation to
Conrad's more well-received story, 'The Secret Sharer.' Moreover, little attention has been paid to the
predominance of the hotel, other than as the site of the main event.  By contrast, I argue that there is a
profound and engaging attention in the construction of the story, which complicates our view of time,
space and character.  For example, the opening narrates, in a curious style, a story second-hand; we are
told the story by a narrator who is reading the story himself in a distinctive Conradian frame narrative.
The instantaneous nature of the event is manipulated as the manuscript found by the unnamed frame
narrator was written forty years after the main event: the murder of the protagonist's friend.  Some of
the details of the story are also given by members less involved in the events.  These extra fragments
aid the completion of the story but add an element of mystery to the style of the narration because of
the multiple perspectives: 'the events and views on those events are filtered through a variety of
sources' (Peters, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 107).  Therefore the reader finds themselves questioning

of description and minutiae of detail to relate the space to the character. Joseph

Roth's *Hotel Savoy*, for example, is written in the "empathetic mode," which Sidney

Rosenfeld describes as characteristic of Roth's oeuvre.[47] This empathetic mode

relates specifically to a tension that typifies Roth's style: the need for an overarching,

inclusive national identity and the simultaneous search for a particular connection to

an individual's homeland. Roth has been described as "a wanderer in flight toward a

tragic end" and this sense of an ill-omened journey pervades his work.[48] When Roth

turns to the hotel in *Hotel Savoy*, the effect is to join this pervasive tone with a space

that embodies his preoccupation with identity and homelessness.

Roth's novels often utilize the figure of the lone soldier returning home from

war. This character has to re-negotiate the homeland of his past that has been so

dramatically altered in the present. The preoccupation of Gabriel Dan, the protagonist

in *Hotel Savoy,* is that of an onlooker; his awareness that he had no control over the

changing landscape while away leads to his feelings of disconnection from the space

when he returns; this is vivified by his physical inability to immerse himself into the

action of the novel. The narrative line simultaneously follows this character's physical

journey back to his home and metaphorical journey forward into peacetime society.

Interestingly Dan's story remains a private one: his political position is internalized

and remains a part of his personal identity rather than an outside influence. However,

his return home is to a generalized area, rather than a specific place; "home" becomes

Western Europe and is conceived as a wide-ranging and oppositional space to the

Russia where he was imprisoned during the war. His decision to reside temporarily in

the Hotel Savoy symbolizes this return to an altered home because of its liminal

---

the events of the story through the complication of time, perspective and unreliability due to the
multiple voices.
[47] Sidney Rosenfeld, *Understanding Joseph Roth* (Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2001),
p. 4.
[48] Ibid., intro. p. xii.

status, 'at the gates of Europe,' and slight remove from the familiar spaces of his past.
Here the tension between an overarching national identity and awareness of locality
comes to the fore in a space which embodies the fear and alienation of war-time
Europe, a place where 'one could live and another die.'[49]

Gabriel Dan, in the early stage of his journey, relates a mixture of present fears
and realities with hopes for the future and nostalgic recollections of the past:

> I inhabit a white world of sky and snow.  Barracks cover the
> ground like yellow scabs.  I enjoy the last sweet drag on a
> scavenged cigarette butt and read the personal columns of an age-
> old newspaper from home, repeating the names of familiar
> streets, recognising the owner of the corner grocery, and a porter
> and a certain blonde Agnes with whom I have slept.[50]

The abstract and alienating image of the blank whiteness of his world characterizes
the dissolution and confusion concerning his relationship with the outside world.  His
familiarity with the past comes from a kind of possession of the space in his memory.
He is confident in his recognition of both the spaces and the people from his past.  By
contrast, his attachment with the present is portrayed negatively by the consumptive
living spaces that infiltrate the environment like scabs; his lack of attachment or
ownership is emphazised through his need to scavenge for a cigarette.  He is
obviously a wanderer with no money to fulfil his basic needs.  The newspaper from
which he recognizes his past is an emblem of his hopes, but it is a newspaper that is
'age-old' and therefore negates the positivity of his memory in the acknowledgement
that these spaces will now have been destroyed.  The hotel is a precise space in which
concerns with homelessness can be articulated and responded to in a climate that is set
apart from the space of this memory and his idea of home.

---

[49] Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy* (1924; London: Picador, 1988), p. 52.
[50] Ibid., p. 10.

His home now, and for the majority of the novel, is a hotel, a space for wanderers, travellers and the disconnected homeless. Interestingly, Gabriel Dan's initial reaction to the space is a positive one that assuages his fears about homelessness and embraces him in a welcoming environment. He muses on his position as he is carried through the space of the hotel by the lift:

> I sway and find myself thinking that I could enjoy this upward
> motion for quite a long time. I enjoy the swaying feeling and
> calculate how many wearisome steps I would have had to climb
> but for this noble lift. As I rise ever higher, I throw my
> bitterness, my wanderings and homelessness, all my mendicant
> past, down the liftshaft from which it can never reach me again.[51]

Dan is spiritually elevated as he is physically lifted through the heights of the hotel. The speed of the movement parallels the speed with which he veers between feelings of inadequacy and confidence. Ultimately, the optimism produced by his reaction to the space is annulled by the ease with which he casts his fears aside; it is impossible to reject these fears so easily making it obvious that the hotel, his temporary site for home-building, will not necessarily support his positive feelings.

The hotel, however, does continue to support this character. As he enters his room he associates it with his memory of home:

> My room seemed friendly, as if I had lived there for a long time.
> The bell was familiar, and the doorhandle, the light switch, the
> green lampshade, the clothes cupboard and the washbasin.
> Everything was homely, like a room in which one has spent one's
> childhood. Everything was consoling and warm, like returning
> again to someone beloved.[52]

---

[51] Roth, *Hotel Savoy,* p. 11.
[52] Ibid., p. 12.

There is distinct attention to detail in Roth's equation of homeliness with the space of the hotel due to the inclusion of very specific items in the room; the doorhandle, light switch and lampshade are unimportant everyday objects that are used here to visualize a whole space.  Roth lists these individual objects to map out the space of the room allowing Gabriel Dan, and the reader, to equate the room with the rooms of childhood.  However, the insignificance and lack of *characteristic* detail given to these individual objects reveals the facile nature of the hotel space.  As Bettina Matthias finds in her account of hotel stories and the role of objectification, hotel rooms '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.'[53]  These items embody the promise of homeliness that the hotel promotes; they fulfil the needs of the inhabitant but create nothing in terms of a personal connection.  The fact that they are not distinctive in design is a way of making them available and familiar to everyone.  Dan falls into the trap of associating everyday objects with his own past.  The fact that the room *seemed* friendly and was merely *like* a room of his childhood clearly demonstrates how the separation between the reality of his situation and his feelings about it are fundamental to this character's progression.  It is not until later in the novel that he realizes 'that everyone living here had fallen prey to the Hotel Savoy.  No-one escaped'[54] and it is not until the end of the novel that the undercurrent of violence becomes a real force in the action.

Roth's use of the hotel in this instance is a powerful tool for constructing a relationship between character and space that does not just highlight the social condition of the time but embodies it.  As Rosenfeld suggests, Roth uses the hotel 'as

---

[53] Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth Century German and Austrian Literature – Checking in to tell a Story* (Suffolk: Camden House, 2006), p. 41.
[54] Roth, *Hotel Savoy,* p. 73.

a major symbolic force in the novel.[55] Rosenfeld continues by explaining Roth's

particular form of internalization, one that uses space to embody the central concerns

of the novel without explicitly having to describe the intent:

> The motley assemblage of social outcasts who inhabit the upper
> floors of the hotel, the caricature-like figures from near and far
> who frequent the hotel bar, the hotel's interior trappings,
> descriptively contrived to reflect the hierarchy of material means
> among the guests —all were meant to mirror contemporary social
> conditions in Western Europe.[56]

The argument is relevant to the understanding of the use of space, and particularly

hotel space in this period. Rosenfeld ultimately decides that Roth's project fails

because both the physical setting and the characters are too "fancifully drawn"[57] to

withstand this symbolic intention. It is valuable, nonetheless, to acknowledge Roth's

technique and the value he attaches to the space of the narrative scene.

Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* shows more similarities to James' and Wharton's

utilization of the space. The connections occur in the focus on morality in the public

sphere and the interactions of the moneyed class in society. However, as with Joseph

Roth, Baum pays attention to the importance of homelessness, not in the earlier

manner, as a fashion for temporary locations, but more as an existential questioning of

self. Bettina Matthias situates this as a particular occupation, or "an aesthetic and

poetic imperative," for German and Austrian writers after 1900, a category which

Joseph Roth also falls into.[58] The reason for this, Matthias argues, is that writers of

this period are looking for an alternative setting to the home because "the ideology of

---

[55] Rosenfeld, *Understanding,* p. 20.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 1.

the solid bourgeois home [∧] has become problematic.[59] The foundations of the home and what it represents is no longer a fitting expression for identity in the early twentieth century; it is an outdated space: [I]nstead, writers created new settings that place the literary characters out of their element in the real and philosophical sense.[60] As an alternative setting the hotel emerges with striking consistency[61] because of what it offers writers: a novel space for understanding the changing world and evolving identities.

Baum's *Grand Hotel* considers European hotels and the value of a space in which lives can intersect.  As with Henry James, the focus on characterization is on transience and opportunity for social integration, but she mixes this with an awareness of spatial intersection, which is entirely absent in fiction from the earlier period:

> The music from the tea room in the new building beat in
> syncopation from mirror to mirror along the walls [∧] Here the
> jazz band from the tea room encountered the violins from the
> Winter Garden, while mingled with them came the thin 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.[62]

In a method similar to Roth's listing of the objects of a room, Baum details the atmospheres of different rooms that mingle to create a complex network of the whole space.  The details are not imposed to secure the status of the space, as with James and Wharton, but to vivify the surroundings to a level that strains the space to a heightened moment.  The texture of this scene is based on sound, rhythm and

---

[59] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 1.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Vicki Baum, *Grand Hotel* (1930; London: Pan Books Ltd., 1948), pp. 5-6.

reverberation; despite the music from the tea-room, the sound of the fountain, the ring

of glasses and the soft rustle of furs, there is a quietness to this description, an almost

hushed silence which amplifies the tension.  Matthias characterizes the move from the

social preoccupations of the nineteenth-century hotel stories to the interconnection

between the space of the hotel and the social world as "spatial socialization"[63] a

method that more fully integrates the actions of characters into the world they inhabit.

When we consider the role of objects in the hotel space, through the eyes of a

specific character, the image of the hotel begins to change in Baum's novel.  The

doctor, Otternschlag, who in the early stages has done nothing other than loiter in the

lobby, read a newspaper and murmur to himself, meditates on his position in the

public space of the lobby:

> This is no life.  No life at all.  But where is there any life?
> Nothing happens.  Nothing goes on.  Boring.  Old.  Dead.
> Ghastly.  Every object around him was a sham.  Whatever he
> took up turned to dust.  The world was a crumbling affair not to
> be grasped or held.  You fell from vacancy to vacancy.[64]

The vagueness of "every object" in opposition to Roth's list of everyday items, draws

attention to the sham which this character feels is inherent to the hotel.  It is a

totalizing image of human frailty.  There is nothing here of the dreamy nostalgia of

Roth's novel and nothing of the exhilaration and luxury we are used to witnessing

when describing the interior of the hotel.  The world of the hotel reveals, for this

character, how life *really* is at this particular time; but this awareness of vacancy and

instability also directly exemplifies the insecurity of the world between two wars.

The mixture of perspectives and interpretations in these novels, and the juxtaposition

---

[63] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 2.
[64] Baum, *Grand Hotel,* pp. 10-11.

of nostalgic reverie with sinister clarity, embodies the spirit of the age; the ability of a space such as this to provide the answers for such a diverse and shifting period, or at least to raise pertinent questions, demonstrates how productive the hotel space is as a motif, symbol, stage and site for character exploration.

These novels are diverse in plot, style and subject matter. Nevertheless they are united in their experimentations with the hotel. Hotel novels, particularly after the interwar influx, 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'.[65] The effect of concentrating on one hotel space for the majority of the narrative is an innovation of the interwar period, and one that helps create an alternative way of conceptualizing the power of the space.

**An Alternative Approach**

To date, most studies of hotel fiction consider characters first, before then looking at the hotel to uncover similarities between characters' identities and the composition of the building. A change appears in interwar fiction, but this group of novels are tightly drawn around a particular period of political and social upheaval. As this introduction has suggested, earlier studies that have considered the hotel typically focus on specific thematic concerns such as class or gender, or they reflect on tightly drawn contexts or periods; Matthias' post-war deliberations on Austrian and German literature is one such example. These localized and highly specific readings have helped us understand this space as a nexus of socialization; in this thesis, I argue that such research needs to be augmented by a more general survey of

---

[65] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting,* p. 173.

the use of the hotel in a literary context, one which concentrates on examining the spatial (as opposed simply to social) opportunities such a site offered to writers of fiction. This thesis thus takes the concept of "spatial socialization" introduced in the interwar period, but uses it to unite novels drawn from a larger chronological sweep. I will try to ascertain the "character" of the hotel itself as a formula for understanding what happens in that space, using some of the formal experiments witnessed in the interwar narratives briefly examined here: that is, perspective, spatial socialization, the effect of texture, sound and atmosphere and the variable reactions to a particular locale. I argue that events occur *because* of the hotel, and that it is the identity of the hotel that has an overwhelming power over character. This thesis will visualize the hotel as a three dimensional space, and attempt to understand the dynamics of the space *before* linking it to the actions of the people that inhabit the space. What is distinctive about the novels acknowledged in the two main chapters of this thesis is that each hotel is a specific site, it becomes "the" hotel rather than just "a" hotel, and therefore the dynamics of particular spaces are thereby encountered and analyzed. The hotel begins to become important for its own characteristic identity, not for what it highlights in the individual.

An interesting term in hotel studies is that of the "hotel-world" used to title Ali Smith's 2001 novel (a work which also focuses predominantly on one hotel and the characters whose lives it touches). The idea of the "hotel-world" suggests an enveloping and all-encompassing space. Moreover, understanding the nature of this space, I will argue, is better approached via "spatial theory" a trend in critical theory that locates the character in their environment through an intense appraisal of the characteristics of the space itself. Seemingly disparate novels from the early twentieth century to the present day can be analyzed through concepts developed in

spatial theory.  In taking such an approach I do not mean to suggest that a novel

published in 2001 will exhibit the same reaction as a novel from 1939, for each novel

explores fundamentally different events which are specific to their period of

conception.  But I do want to claim that employing a theoretical framework that

presupposes an essential character of space, that it can have an overwhelming effect

on character, reveals important, and hitherto unappreciated similarities between

novels written at different moments in time: in short, it permits us to describe a

genre of hotel fiction.

The main body of this thesis will attempt to plot out narrative patterns across a

wide variety of works and over a time-span from around 1800 to the present.

Moreover the literary analyses that follow do not appear in a chronological order,

since my main concern is to identity *thematic* similarities between novels written at

different moments in time.  More precisely, I draw attention to what I argue to be

significant points of connection in the use of space and in intense explorations of

identity; and I further claim that what makes these similarities so striking is precisely

the fact that they occur *despite* what might seem more obvious differences in narrative

style and social context.  For example, Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and Ishiguro's *The

Unconsoled*, which I interpret as radical versions of postmodern spatial dynamics, are

considered alongside, and often intermeshed with, analyses of more traditional, social

realist works such as Arnold Bennett's two hotel novels: *Grand Babylon Hotel* and

*Imperial Palace*, or modernist works such as Henry Green's *Party Going*.  The

decision to approach this material conceptually rather than chronologically leads, I

suggest, to more fluid and generalizable readings of the hotel space, which in their

turn are necessary to constructing a preliminary account of hotel literature as a *genre*

defined in terms of a common set of themes, use of scenery and scene setting, and their effects on identity.

In the four chapters that follow I shall start by plotting out a theoretical outline for evaluating the hotel, using general spatial and sociological theories alongside conceptual and empirical approaches concerning urbanization and modernization, in conjunction with theories which are specific to the hotel, to gain insight into the fundamentals of the "hotel-world." This introduction to spatial theory draws on both cultural geography and architectural theory in conjunction with occasional literary responses to these approaches. This method is self-consciously eclectic and may on occasion introduce what appear to be somewhat contradictory responses to highly abstract conceptual material; however, I argue that it is only through a full appreciation of the diversity of spatial theories that we can begin to appreciate the complexity of the hotel space.

After my theoretical approach to the hotel space has been described, I will proceed to a series of literary analyses, beginning with a brief "interlude" that considers Richard Whiteing's long forgotten work *No. 5 John Street*, published in 1899. The purpose of this interlude is to draw together the main theoretical ideas developed in my discussion of spatial theory, and to give an explicit and precise example of how they can be deployed in the analysis of literary works via discussion of one, isolated narrative scene. Written at the fin-de-siecle this work, and more particularly the use of the hotel in the central chapter, volunteers in what is otherwise a traditional social-problem novel, useful insights into the potential of the hotel as a dynamic site for social and spatial interaction. In this way Whiteing's novel, I suggest, can be seen as the turning point in the development of a genre of hotel fiction, one which looks forward to the more radical and thorough-going

36

experimentation with space found in later works.  By the same token, the insights I establish between *No. 5 John Street* and novels by Smith and Ishiguro provide new grounds for re-evaluating this hitherto under-appreciated work.

Subsequent to this brief interlude this thesis then moves on to the two central chapters of the study, which consider what I term "geographical" and "sociological" approaches to interpreting hotel fiction. The geographical section generally concentrates on the layout and structure of the building itself, on the use, movement and function of each specific area of the space and the way architectural elements inform the interactions each individual has with it.  The sociological section considers the social implications of the building's architecture; more specifically, it examines the democratic or exclusionary elements of the space and its business workings in relation to the status of its guests.  Both the geographical and sociological elements of the hotel space are intrinsic to the make-up of its power.  My concern with identifying basic thematic connections between works written over a long term-period leads me to begin with a discussion of Ali Smith's *Hotel World*, a work where the use of space is especially marked and dramatic; from there, I trace similarities with more subtle spatial tropes in earlier works by Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Green and Arnold Bennett. As the discussion develops in these two sections, I move freely backwards and forwards through literary history in order to consolidate these thematic associations.

Finally, in the conclusion, I will draw together the main concepts of theory that have guided my literary analyses, and I reflect on the most illustrative examples from the hotel fiction examined in order to show how they help us to appreciate the development of a radical new understanding of subjectivity and identity through the dynamism of the hotel space.

# Chapter 2: Spatial Theory

**'Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile.'**
**Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*[66]**

## Defining spatiality and geography

The term 'spatial theory' embraces a variety of disciplines; space as a concept and as a way of interpreting the world is of interest to geographers, sociologists, politicians, architects and town-planners, as well as those concerned with the imaginary and artistic appropriations of these cultural issues, in filmic, novelistic and artistic representations. Space theory draws on elements of urban phenomena including: the formation of the city and the migration from rural to urban spaces, movement around spaces including focalized studies of *flânerie*, cartography and the Situationist movement, the effect of crowds and power, and the relationship between community and the stranger,[67] all of which indirectly inform our appreciation of the spatial socialization of the hotel. Any discussion of 'space' relies heavily on both geographical and sociological terminology, as Ogborn and Withers have established:

> A more general engagement across a range of disciplines with
> bodies of theory [⌒] have brought geographical issues to the fore
> [⌒] more broadly within the humanities, it is possible to trace
> the increasing influence of, for instance, Michel Foucault's
> notions of the connections between space, knowledge and power;
> Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and the public

---

[66] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* trans., Colin Gordon (Hertfordshire: The Harvester Press, 1980), p. 70.
[67] The most influential sociological studies of space are: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2003); Georg Simmel, *Sociology,* reprinted in *Simmel On Culture: Selected Writings* ed., David Frisby (London: Sage, 1997); Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* ed., Beatrice Hanssen (London: Continuum, 2006) and Claude S. Fischer, *The Urban Experience* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1984).

sphere; Raymond Williams's cultural politics of landscape; Edward Said's understanding of the discursive power of imaginative geographies, and Bruno Latour's elaboration of the production of knowledge within networks and their centres of calculation.[68]

Significantly, in the early twentieth century at around the same time that, as I have suggested, we can identify a genre of hotel fiction emerging, space itself began to be understood as a living character or 'subject'; space was no longer merely a conceptual framework, but, for some, an ontological entity in itself, more equal to the human in its conditioning capabilities. Social theorists such as David Harvey, with an intense focus on the mode of capitalism in the environment, found a limitation in the recent work that considered 'capitalism *in* space without considering how space is produced and how the processes of production of space integrate into the capitalist dynamic and its contradictions'.[69] Theorists began to question how space affects us, what space is made up of, and how it functions as a concept in its own right, drawing on some of the categories that Ogborn and Withers defined: power, knowledge, communication and imagination.[70]

What informs subsequent discussion of spatial identity is a debate concerning the reductive nature of categorization when referring to 'space' and its associated labels, a reduction equal to that of labelling humans as black or white, male or female. W.J.T. Mitchell included a preface to the later edition of his influential book

---

[68] Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers, 'Introduction: Georgian Geographies?', in Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers, eds., *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 2.

[69] David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. xiv.

[70] These studies include: Georg Simmel, *Sociology,* trans. Kurt H. Wolff (1908; New York: Free Press, 1950); Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* trans. Thomas Y. Levin. (1927; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); and later, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

*Landscape and Power*[71] as he felt it necessary to tackle the problematic relationship

between space and language, as signified by labelling.[72]  Mitchell draws together the

three terms, "space, place and landscape" to demonstrate that the term "space" is

deficient in encapsulating what a "space" actually is whilst also drawing attention to

the problematic nature of terms such as "landscape." The *Oxford English Dictionary*

gives a definition of space as "denoting time or duration [∧] lapse or extent of time

between two definite points, events, etc"[73] thus offering a temporal rather than

physical conception of space; whilst the definition of place is equally reductive as "an

open space in a town, a public square, a marketplace"[74]  In this definition place is

very simply a specific space (an open space, a public square) whilst space is just

something defined by its temporality: the fragment of time between two boundary

points. There is an obvious need for a more complex articulation of how we view and

understand the places and spaces we inhabit.  As Jameson suggests:

> I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our
> psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated
> by categories of space rather than by categories of time.[75]

Because we are "dominated" by these categories we must ensure that we are dealing

with them correctly.  Although Jameson acknowledges the importance of spatial

awareness, at the same time this reduction of space "rather than" time is still limited,

as spatial conceptualization must respond to a multitude of categories.

---

[71] W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[72] W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., "Preface" to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power,* pp. vii-xv.  The same observation is made by David Atkinson, Peter Jackson, David Sibley and Neil Washbourne, in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005) where they argue that the reduction of spatial analysis simply to space and place overlooks the importance of landscape in exploring "the differential entwining of cultural practices, representations and imaginations" (Atkinson, et al, eds., *Cultural Geography,* p. 42).
[73] "Space, *n.*" *OED Online*, March 2009, Oxford University Press (accessed 23 March 2008) <http://dictionary.oed.com>
[74] "place, *n.*" *OED Online,* March 2009, Oxford University Press (accessed 23 March 2008) <http:dictionary.oed.com>
[75] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 16.

Mitchell's problematizing of the term "landscape" is at the forefront of this discussion. According to Mitchell, we limit "space" to the abstract, "place" to the specific, and "landscape" to the two-dimensional. He goes on to state that landscape is often only seen as a background due to its associations with pictorial traditions and its opposition to a more three-dimensional conception of space.[76] Landscape can only ever remain "external," a space that was "dead, fixed and immobile" in Foucault's reasoning. Mitchell suggests that landscape is generally the "overlooked" not the "looked at."[77] He argues that the generality of the idea suppresses a concern with what the landscape actually consists of: "the invitation to look at landscape is an invitation not to look at any specific *thing*, but to ignore all particulars in favor of an appreciation of a total gestalt, a vista or scene."[78] This reductionism becomes an act of looking "at nothing."[79] Furthermore, our preconceived attitudes direct us to make subconscious decisions about spaces when we think of them specifically as a "space," a "place," or a "landscape." As John Barrell articulates:

> We can speak of the "landscape" of a country, but in doing so we
> introduce, whether we want to or not, notions of value and form
> which relate, not just to seeing the land, but to seeing it in a
> certain way "pictorially."[80]

Our understanding of spaces, then, is defined by either the language or the perspective we use to describe them; we are typically directed to see artistic representations as flat landscapes and "real" spaces as three-dimensional. The hotel is a space that confronts the problem of categorization as both a space and a place, and it is also part of the

---

[76] Mitchell, "Preface," *Landscape and Power*, p. vii.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 1.

modern urban landscape.  The hotel, I will argue, becomes an oxymoronic symbol of all things that relate to spatial awareness and the relationship between space and the individual.  Other studies attempt to confront this problematic reduction of space through language and the connection between people and places, with the aim of viewing all spaces as a network of cross-cultural, cross-media manifestations.[81]  In this view, space becomes a way of responding to the complexity of modern urban life.[82]

Such a network is realized by Edward Soja's concept of 'thirdspace' which has much in common with Mitchell's space, place and landscape trinity.  As Soja states: 'Thirdspace is a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing  milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings'.[83]  He later continues:

---

[81] The problem with language has lead spatial theorists to consider further the language of architecture and communication.  The studies that apply spatial theories to literature (particularly Helen Liggett and David Perry, *Spatial Practices* (London: Sage, 1995) and Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000) tend to focus on re-evaluating the relationship between character and environment; however, they do so from a predominantly linguistic angle, appropriating Bakhtin's concept of Dialogism in *The Dialogic Imagination* trans., Carol Emerson (Austin: University of Texas, 1981) and Sven Hesselgren's *The Language of Architecture* (London: Applied Science Publishers, 1972).  Such research goes some way to uncovering the complexity of spatial form, and by positing a 'language' of space, it understands the connection between character and environment through a concept of communication. However, it neglects the importance of space as a tangible entity in its own right, one which – as I have said – can exert an influence over character.  This link between space and the word was problematic for Lefebvre who considered '[a]ny attempt to use such codes as a means of deciphering social space must surely reduce that space itself to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to the status of a *reading*.' (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 7).  The problem for Lefebvre with a reading of this kind is due to the focus on the end product rather than the method of construction, either of the space itself or of the construction of identity and individualization in the space.

[82] Other examples of influential space/place theorists are:  Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (1958; Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Experience of Perspective* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) and Tuan, *Topophilia – A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974); Jean Baudrillard, *Mass. Identity. Architecture: Architectural Writings of Jean Baudrillard* (West Sussex: John Wiley, 2006); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) and Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace – Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[83] Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 2.

Thirding introduces a critical "other-than" choice that speaks and
critiques through its otherness. That is to say, it does not derive simply
from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from
a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their
presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar
and strikingly different.[84]

In thirdspace, as Soja notes, what matters is the multiplicity of interpretations that the
tensions within the space provide, together with our awareness of the boundless
nature of spatial conceptualization. This flexibility requires an understanding of all
aspects of space, from the imaginary, to the real and functional, or as Atkinson et al.
argue, "this is an account that sees space as "made up" through a three-way dialectic
between perceived, conceived and lived space."[85] This "three-way dialectic" has
become a prominent mode for trying to equate everyday experience with abstract
theory. Both David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre consider different angles of spatial
conceptualization; in both cases this reduction to two or three dominant modes does
not limit as with the case of reductive labels and categorization but becomes a way of
developing different levels of interpretation with the aim of uniting the real to the
fictional or abstract experience. In a similar way to Atkinson et al., Harvey argues
that theories must be translated into working models: "measuring the growth of cities
as if there were no trade, capital flow, migration, or cultural and political influence
between them makes no sense whatsoever."[86] In Lefebvre's case, his three-way
dialectic is possibly the most helpful attempt at defining space in recent times.
"Spatial practices" for Lefebvre, are the everyday, routine actions and activities that

---

[84] Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 61.
[85] Atkinson et al., eds., *Cultural Geography,* p. 42.
[86] Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience,* p. xiv.

form space in society. 'Representations of space' are the equivalent of Atkinson's 'perceived' space as those which are conceptualized by planners, architects and governments, and the 'representational spaces' are those imagined or conceived by inhabitants, or the mode in which the abstract, idealized view of the function of space is united with what really occurs there.[87] This approach most clearly sets out a way for the individual to consider the role they have in building and perceiving the space they inhabit, and to gain greater understanding of how he or she functions within it. Within Lefebvre's classification he also acknowledges the role of different 'fields': '[t]he fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical* —nature, the cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and thirdly, the *social*'[88] However, there are still criticisms of this form of definition. As Andrew Thacker considers, despite Lefebvre's success in acknowledging the multitude of forms and interpretation that are at work within spaces, 'Lefebvre does not offer many elaborated examples of how the experienced–perceived–imagined triad interacts'[89] It is at the level of the real, everyday and the local that we lose the unification of the triad, despite the attempt to impose a three-way and more complete consideration of space.

Urban studies by contrast have often focused on dichotomous relationships: those of inside/outside, front/back, city/street, east/west. But what is of interest about these boundaries, like the 'in-between' or 'other-than' of Soja's third-space, is how we traverse them. Can we be both inside and outside, or here and there, at the same time? Answering these questions means reconsidering the importance of temporality and topography, and thinking not of the boundary itself, but of how transitions are

---

[87] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 33.
[88] Ibid., p. 11.
[89] Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 20.

made across boundaries.  As Massey puts it: "the particularity of any place is [^]
constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through
counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the
specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that "beyond"[90]  The abstract
nature of these links and interconnections helps capture the complexity of space.  Yi-
fu Tuan also considers the binary, highlighting the positivity of recognizing a third, or
what he calls the "mediating third" as a way of reducing the distinction between the
boundaries.  The reduction of the world into separated categories, or binaries, comes
from our human desire to make sense of the world, to bring it into "coherent
system"[91]  A more complete way of doing this, Tuan argues, is to reflect on the
concept of harmony in negotiations of the world through the symbol of the circle; the
circle is a complete image that is Tuan's own form of thirdspace as it is a symbol of
perfection, sacredness, complexity and understanding.

Here the term "threshold" a concept usually deployed to demonstrate
liminality, is used in spatial theory to denote this elusive idea of a "beyond" Derrida,
for example, uses the idea of a threshold to point not to the boundary, but to its other
side — to a notion of futurity.  This idea of the threshold gives the city and the human a
certain kind of identity:

> Sometimes a city is also to be found at the threshold — not simply
> inscribed within the figure of the threshold but at the very
> threshold of a new figure, of a still invisible configuration which
> it must provide for itself. [92]

In a utopian sense, the threshold is open and free, as opposed to the boundary; it is the
brink of hope rather than the cut-off point of experience.  To be on the threshold is to

---

[90] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), p. 5.
[91] Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 18.
[92] John Knechtel, *Alphabet City 6: Open City* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998), p. 12.

be at once on this side, on the other side and also in the liminal position of somewhere between the two.

## Considering Sociology

As I have suggested, there is a wealth of architectural studies that introduce new and creative ways of thinking about space as an evolving and interpretive entity.[93]  In a more specific sense, and of particular importance to this analysis, is the ways in which *social* location, as well as spatial location, within cities can be a powerful tool for the construction of identity.  Social location in turn means thinking about the historicity of seeing, of walking, of being both solitary and part of a group; also, of thinking about how space, place and landscape combine in acts of imaginative reconstruction. This imaginative reconstruction can itself be understood in terms of  reading spaces, a term used by William West,[94] and Jonathan Raban,[95] and an idea that is taken, fundamentally, from Bachelard.[96]  The idea of reading a space as you would a text is, as I will show, especially productive in relation to hotel theory.   Reading space, it is important to stress, is not a literary activity, but a theoretical approach to understanding the space under consideration.  Once a space has been  read  interpreted, digested, reconfigured, it results in a more complete conceptualization and deeper understanding of its abstract qualities.

To understand space we must also consider the figure of the individual in relation to that particular space, whether it is the character set within the literary

---

[93] More of these studies include: Neil Leach, ed. *Rethinking Architecture – A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997); Henrik Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis – Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture* (London: The MIT Press, 2004); Helen Liggett and David Perry, *Spatial Practices* (London: Sage, 1995) and Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000).
[94] William N. West,  Reading Rooms: Architecture and Agency in the Houses of Michel de Montaigne and Nicholas Bacon  [Spring 2004]
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3612/is_200404/ai_n9374581/pg_1
[95] Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (1974; London: Picador, 2008).
[96] Bachelard, *Poetics,* p. 14.

46

framework of the space or the individual reading the space. As Atkinson et al. have argued, drawing on Edward Relph's formulations of 'people-place' relations, it is important to move beyond the idealisation of an objective analysis of space to strive for a more human-centred and empathetic understanding of the lived experience of place.[97] Although it is important to consider the space individually and in its entirety to deal effectively with its constituent parts, we must not ignore the subjective and interpretive quality that the individual brings to the space: we need to consider how the space functions in relation to the individual.

The interpretive quality of the people-place relation can transform spaces into altered realities. Here the work of theorists such as John Agnew is valuable. Agnew studies how spaces become 'places' arguing that there are different elements needed to be instated for this to occur: the space must be a specific location, it must have a locale that is defined by its outward appearance (walls of a room or building, or the streets of a city in a wider sense) and, finally, to become a place, a space must have a 'sense of place,' the physical connection or attachment that *people* have with a place, or the 'subjective orientation that can be engendered by living in a place.'[98] Bernard Tschumi, similarly, studies this connective process between two beings, or 'two camps' the architectural and the human.[99] His concern is not with defining 'space' as an aspect of 'place,' as it is with Agnew, but rather to understand the role architecture has to play in forming identities. Tschumi's theory focuses on balance and locates the architectural form as not fixed but capable of change and development. He considers the human inhabitant as the aggressor who changes the equilibrium of the space; the movement of the human entering the space has a heightened and violent effect on the

---

[97] Atkinson et al., eds., *Cultural Geography,* p. 42.
[98] John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 6.
[99] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 122.

space itself: [e]ntering a building may be a delicate act, but it violates the balance of a precisely ordered geometry. Bodies carve all sorts of new and unexpected spaces, through fluid or erratic motions [∧] The body disturbs the purity of architectural order.[100] There is a dialectical relationship between the space and the individual, and it is true that humans create built space through conception and production and have some effect on the space itself through usage: the architecture has to evolve due to different types of characters entering the spaces and using it in different ways. But there is also an under-examined element on the other side of this reciprocal relationship and that is the profound effect that the space itself has on the reaction of each person, as Tschumi does later admit: [if] bodies violate the purity of architectural spaces, one might rightly wonder about the reverse: the violence inflicted by narrow corridors [∧] the symbolic or physical violence of buildings on users.[101] The relationships between space and place, that is, are determined by interactions with individuals, and the individual's role is in its turn determined by that space or place. Therefore, these relationships draw on both geographical and sociological features aligned with space. The hotel, for example, as a site (another locational signifier that can be seen as problematic) is a space that is turned into a place by those who inhabit it; it is *not* a fixed or given landscape or background against which individuals act, as it constantly transforms alongside them and has a visible effect on the transactions and events that take place within it. The combining of sociological and geographical elements is not, as I've suggested, unusual. As Charles Withers and Gerry Kearns note, there is an inevitable link between the spatial and the social: when trying to understand class organization, they argue, [it] is striking how important

---

[100] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 123.
[101] Ibid.

topographical metaphors [are]; quite obviously high and low, but also ideas about flow and stagnation."[102]

An important element connecting the geographical to the sociological is the question of "validity": a space is deemed valid if it performs or "functions" correctly – if, that is, it conforms to what we expect of it.  In other words, a value system is attached to the space which allows us to categorize its utility.   From the point of view of spatial theory, the question to consider is whether a particular space, be it the localized and specific space of a room or the sprawling and generative space of a city, achieves what the plan for the space apparently inscribes: does the reality of a space live up to our pre-conceived and imagined requirements for it?  To phrase this question in sociological terms, how do different "types" of characters use the space? And what "value" attaches to those characters in the eyes of society? Are they valid members of the "hotel-world" or does their status brand them as incongruous in the hotel environment? The hotel as a luxury and commoditized object needs to be considered in relation to a subject's economic background, and how that background impacts on the usefulness of the space for accentuating status.  Put another way, the validity of a subject's social status is super-imposed onto the question of the validity of the space.

This sociological perspective draws attention to the possibilities for the human in this environment. As Henry James explains vis-à-vis the Waldorf Astoria:

The moral in question, the high interest of the tale, is that you are
in presence of a revelation of the possibilities of the hotel [∧] a
use and a value; leading it on to express so a social, indeed

[102] Gerry Kearns and Charles W. J. Withers, eds. *Urbanising Britain – Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 9.

positively an aesthetic ideal, and making it so, at this supreme

pitch, a synonym for civilisation.[103]

James' employment of the terms 'use' and 'value' in relation to social and aesthetic

ideals locates the everyday alongside the extraordinary, the real with the abstract.

The exhilaration felt in the hotel is due to the realization of the possibilities intrinsic

to the space, through the discovery of intense and multifarious reactions to the same

set of stimuli.  Within spaces like the hotel, there are numerous occasions for

encountering individuals from mixed backgrounds, a situation that can easily create

confused class structures.  James continues his account of the Waldorf by noting that

the hotel operates 'by laws of [its] own and express[es] after [its] fashion a complete

scheme of life'.[104]  The 'laws of [its] own' refers both to the subjective power of the

space and, I will argue, the realignment of sociological structures in the hotel.  The

hotel is a business in which money and profit are of overriding concern, and it is

money rather than birth or lineage which is used as a lever for advancement in the

metropolitan hotel.  What needs investigating is whether the 'laws' of the 'hotel-

world' like those of a maturing capitalism, dictate that it is therefore the wealthy who

are the most successful in the hotel space. Can the particular spatial arrangements of

the hotel empower other social groups, those whose financial or social status in the

world 'outside' the hotel is less secure?

When discussing the social organization of space the obvious place to start is

with Henri Lefebvre.  Lefebvre used space theory to reduce particular buildings or

organizations to the essentialist qualities of 'work' and 'product' simplistically, these

concepts refer to the conception, idea or plan for a building ('the work' in relation to

the actual end-product, the building itself ('the product').  He differentiated between

---

[103] James, *The American Scene*, p. 102.
[104] Ibid.

the creative or artistic nature of 'work' and the labour intensive aspect of the 'product' – a discussion between aesthetics and pragmatics – and the problems that are encountered when these two elements come together in the production of a particular space. Again we see here the commingling of the ordinary with the abstract and aesthetic, which Lefebvre encapsulates in the example of the city that is reliant on social activity. The city is 'composed' by people in an artistic sense but has no intentional character like an 'art-object' due to its very multifariousness.[105] We see here a parallel to Julian Wolfreys' discussion of the plurality of London which I will discuss later. The hotel is more confined than the city due to the enclosed nature of the space, but it nonetheless takes on the same kind of multiplicity because of the super-imposed use values.

Lefebvre uses these suppositions about exterior space to consider how interior space is produced, what occupies space and how that occupation takes place. The argument in *The Production of Space* is that space is a social product based on values which affect perception. It is therefore an ideological construction which follows patterns of production, realization and domination. However, Lefebvre is also concerned with the particularity of spaces; spatial practices, that is, activities which take place within spaces, are dependent on the unique identity both of the space and of those housed within it. The multiple interactions between these variables, and the complex networks of socialization they give rise to, is, I will argue, applicable to the hotel:

> We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each
> one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next:

---

[105] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 74.

geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological,
political, commercial, national, continental, global.[106]

As a Marxist, Lefebvre's concern is with the production of what might be termed
'capitalist' space and the hegemonic dominance of the west.  He therefore
understands spaces in terms of strict hierarchies. His arguments are wide-ranging, all-
encompassing and reliant on 'abstract universality' there is a split in the 'micro' and
'macro' levels, a split he believes cannot be eradicated through connecting theories
such as spatial practice.  Any attempt to connect, he believes, results in repetition that
defeats uniqueness.[107]  However, the hotel as a space of un-relatedness does not
conform to the repetitive strain he so despises because it cannot be interchanged with
any other social space.  It is repetitive only in its own form.  The formulaic principles
Lefebvre distinguishes in producing or creating space can be re-evaluated in relation
to the hotel which re-moulds the fixed hierarchies of capitalist spaces.

There is also a requirement in social studies to analyze the relevance of
hierarchical divisions to networks of spatial and social performance.  As Gerry Kearns
and Charles Withers explain, the traditional method for observing class was to treat it
'as a set of pigeon-holes, or a scale from high to low, a filter through which data was
passed before it was mapped'[108]  They continue: 'there is a risk that far too static a

---

[106] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 8.
[107] Ibid., p. 75.
[108] Kearns and Withers, *Urbanising Britain*, p. 7. The class categories have also been undergoing a
process of re-definition in an attempt to acknowledge the dynamic complexity of class relations.
Evidenced by Neale, the three major categories of class in society have been criticized for their
totalizing and generalizing effect.  Neale instead argues for a five class model rather than a three class
model that splits the working class into smaller categories (working class A and working class B) and
adds a middling class between the middle and the working class.  Despite the possibility here for re-
negotiation of the more static tripartite class model this method still enforces boundaries on large
groups of individuals who resist categorization.  R. S. Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth
Century* (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 30.

conception of class will result.'[109]  Derek Gregory and John Urry make a similar point:

> The normal mode of analysis of industrial and social geography
> [∧] lacks any understanding of structuration, or of the
> incorporation of space into the process of class formation
> itself.[110]

They, too, criticize the restriction, or sorting, of individuals into separate boxed social categories.  What is important, for Kearns and Withers, and also for Gregory and Urry, is to see society and social beings as a network, or 'set of relations'[111] that is constantly transforming and therefore impossible to reduce to the static or singular.  It is impossible to pigeon-hole categories of space or society; inevitably there is overlap, continuation, simultaneity, diversity, alterity, disjunction and multiplicity – just some of the elements of social space that cause friction once categories are imposed.   Once again we see the relevance of these ideas to the transience and heterogeneity which characterizes the social relations of the 'hotel-world'.[112]

David Harvey's conception of spatial socialization in *Consciousness and the Urban Experience*[113] highlights money as the previously overlooked constituent for understanding the abstract organization of society.  He reduces his spatial analysis to three points: money, space and time, in order to 'clear away some of the clutter of detail and lay bare the frames of reference within which urbanization proceeds'.[114]

---

[109] Kearns and Withers, *Urbanising Britain*, p. 7.
[110] Derek Gregory and John Urry, eds. *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 165.
[111] Kearns and Withers, *Urbanising Britain*, p. 7.
[112] An alternative method for understanding socialization is offered by Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams. They theorize class concerns by identifying three analytical categories – class conflict, class capacity and class consciousness. (Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams eds., *Class and Space – The Making of Urban Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 8). However, like Kearns and Withers and Gregory and Urry, they too recognize the importance of individuals and their relations to others, as well as appreciating the mutability of social networks.
[113] David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).
[114] Ibid., p. 1.

This is a risky strategy due to the possibilities for confinement of such diverse stimuli, but in Harvey's case this method is more successful than previous attempts at classification due to his awareness of everyday spatial practices, and his constant reiteration that components such as capital must be "conceived as a process and not reified as a thing."[115] His resulting argument states that "each [of these three concepts] in its own way seems to have more power over us than we have over them"[116] a conclusion similar to the geographical formulation of spaces that sees external forces rather than human subjectivity regulating spaces.  For Harvey, money and commodity culture create openness; in a world which is ruled by money there are no fixed outcomes. Again we are reminded here of James's possibilities; space and money are inextricably linked in the structure of the hotel as the space itself is bought or rented for a fixed amount of time, but the transient arrangement also creates a sense of freedom.  However, and as I hinted earlier, the modern grand hotel is a site that relies more on money than class; the hotel is nominally welcoming and promoting of inclusiveness to all those who can afford to pay. At the same time, though, it still has its own strict hierarchies which are related to, but not exactly coterminous with, definitions of status in the outside world.  It is the tensions between these different forms of social organization, and the nature of the hierarchies between staff and guests, that creates some of the difficulties for the individual inhabiting the hotel.

**The Hotel in Spatial Theory**

It is my argument that the conception of the hotel, which we find in hotel fiction, requires further classification; it is somewhere between the division of subject and object, becoming closer, as I have noted, to a subject in its own right.  The hotel

---

[115] David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience*, p. xviii.
[116] Ibid., p. 1.

possesses some form of agency, or subjectivity, which nonetheless is not exactly similar to that predicated of a human subject. However, this level of agency and the sense of subjectivity within the hotel affects the lives of the characters that inhabit it. Here there are some comparisons to be made with analyses of the city which has also been evaluated for its ontological status, though generally with the conclusion that it cannot be granted such an identity due to its multiplicity.

Theorists often refer to specific cities, and predominantly capital cities, to unite the abstract concepts of urban theory to actual lived and 'known' sites. Julian Wolfreys, Peter Brooker, Peter Ackroyd, Andrew Thacker and Alex Murray, for example, take London as the site for exploration.[117] Joseph Rykwert discusses globalization through a process of Manhattanization in his study of New York,[118] whilst Lynn Tees and Will Self pay attention to the comparison of sites: London to Paris, or London to New York.[119] The focus of these studies is on movement between spaces, notably the position of city spaces and their relation to the outside space of the suburb or the country and how individuals traverse these wider spaces. Often attention is directed towards the uneasy and uncontrollable sense of expansion witnessed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lyn Tees refers to a 'galloping expansion' describing both Paris and London as a 'megalopolis'.[120] In such analyses cities like Paris and London stand as emblems of the modern city; 'as if

[117] Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London :The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998); Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: Materiality, Memory, Spectrality* vol. II (London: Palgrave, 2004); Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: Inventions of the city* vol. III (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London – The Social Scene in Early Modernism* (London: Macmillan, 2007); Peter Brooker, *Modernity and Metropolis – Writing, Film and Urban Formations* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001); Andrew Thacker, 'Imagist Travels in Modernist Space' *Textual Practice* 7:2 (Summer, 1993): 224-46; Alex Murray, *Recalling London* (London: Continuum, 2007).
[118] Joseph Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place. The City in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 2000).
[119] Tees, 'Metropolitan Types – London and Paris Compared,' in Dyos and Wolff eds., *The Victorian City Images and Realities* vol. I (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 413-428; Will Self, *Psychogeography* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).
[120] Tees, 'Metropolitan Types' pp. 414.

they possessed both the best and the worst that the nineteenth century city had to offer.[121]  Here it is worth noting that such studies owe a considerable debt to other literary and theoretical accounts of specific cities: Derrida's Prague,[122] De Certeau's New York,[123] Paul Auster's New York,[124] Iain Sinclair and J G Ballard's Londons,[125] and, even earlier, Baudelaire and Benjamin's Paris and Dickens' London.

Julian Wolfreys recognizes the problem of ascribing ontology to city spaces through their sheer immensity as the city resists definition, and thus any form of identity.  This vastness leads theorists to break the city down into parts, or to try and recreate a whole out of the chaotic fragments that impinge our vision of the space around us.  As Peter Brooker discusses in relation to Ford Madox Ford's *Soul of London*,[126] this fragmentation derives from the city itself as 'the impersonality of the city has fragmented both the city and its citizens who can only know London in part and never as a whole'.[127]  The splintering effect of the city requires a certain thought process to conceptualize it.  As Raban states, seeing the city in a particular way, reading it with a particular purpose in mind:

> may be a simple convenience, a way of glueing together those
> visual fragments that compose the city in our head.  The sheer
> imaginative cumbersomeness of the city makes us frequently
> incapable of distinguishing its parts from its whole; and moral
> synechdoche, the utopia/dystopia syndrome, is part of our
> essential habit of mind when we think about it.[128]

---

[121] Tees, 'Metropolitan Types', pp. 414.

[122] Jacques Derrida, 'Generations of a City: Memory, Prophecy, Responsibilities,' in *Alphabet City 6: Open City,* ed. John Knechtel (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998), pp. 12-27.

[123] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[124] Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

[125] J. G. Ballard, *High-Rise* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975); Iain Sinclair, *London: City of Disappearances* (London: Penguin, 2007); Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk around the M25* (London: Penguin, 2003).

[126] Ford Madox Ford, *Soul of London* (1905; London: J. M. Dent, 1995).

[127] Peter Brooker, 'Our London, my London, your London' 'The Modernist Moment in the Metropolis,' in Marcus and Nicholls eds., *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature,* p. 120.

[128] Raban, *Soft City*, p. 29.

Here we also find fruitful comparisons between hotel and city. The hotel replicates the tensions of the city; it is part of the space and representative of it, whilst also maintaining its own identity. The hotel is one fragment of the city experience that can be attended to in conspicuous detail. When trying to consider the 'whole' city, London is just a label for Wolfreys; 'the name of a being of which there is no being, as the name for that which is beyond being or presence'[129] Here, as I've noted, Wolfreys rejects ontology due to the vastness of such an indefinable and diverse space. He also rejects singularity in favour of plurality, and thereby vivifies London as a space lacking a centre or core, both in reality and in narrative representations. For theorists such as Wolfreys, it is only the particular representations or visions of the city which can possess ontological status; at the same time, any single representation is necessarily partial and temporary 'just one element of an ever changing 'system' of competing ontologies.

However, when talking about more specific sites, rather than the city as a whole, it is possible to take a different approach. Urban narratives often consider smaller, more identifiable places: the garden, the shopping-centre, the park, the high-rise, the M25, the skyscraper 'all of which become focalized areas for discussions about the city.[130] The hotel, I want to argue, also functions as a microcosm for city life, though by virtue of being a condensed and discrete space, it functions more successfully and completely than the other spaces I have mentioned: as a public space that is also meant to be lived in, the hotel is more absolute and self-contained than either the isolation of a high-rise or the completely public surveillance of a shopping

---

[129] Wolfreys, *Writing London* vol. III, p. 11.
[130] See for example: George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (1897; London: J. M. Dent, 1997); Henry James, *Washington Square* (1881; London: Penguin, 2007); J.G.Ballard, *High-rise* (1975; London: Harper Collins, 2006); Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk Around the M25* (London: Penguin, 2002); Don Delillo, *Cosmopolis* (London: Picador, 2003).

centre. In one investigation into the small-scale, Julian Wolfreys discusses the nature of suburbia. He states that: "constituent elements of suburban London identity arise through repetition [^] a kind of quasi-mesmeric disorientation brought about by incessant recurrence of architectural form"[131] This idea of repetition through architectural form has particular resonance for the hotel. Decorated in a universal, or generalized style, monotonous and sterile – these are qualities often attributed to hotels, yet these same qualities are also, I want to argue, what give hotel spaces their peculiar power. That is to say, the hotel is given its stronger and more stable identity in relation to the characters which inhabit it *because of* its generality.

The hotel is built upon a tension between opposites: the public and the private, alienation and inclusiveness, freedom and inhibition. Its lines are drawn as binaries, but we must consider what comes out of, or is produced from, the liminal intersection of space – what, as I hinted earlier, becomes "other-than" these boundaries. As such, the hotel is the perfect arena in which to examine characters' reactions to space, reactions that are often intensified due to a lack of connection to the "hotel-world". Urban theory seeks to find a connection between the individual experiencing the space and the space itself, or "the taking place of a process between the materiality of location and the immateriality of the perceiving mind"[132] though the link between the modern city and the modern hotel is paradoxically through disconnection. As the city and the hotel space grow together the connections multiply but so do the areas of disconnection. A further link between the hotel and the city is that of artificiality – the simulated lifestyle of the hotel can be seen as a concentrated simulacrum of the expansive city, and serves to stress the profound importance of the relationship between individual or group identity and the imposed surroundings of the real-life

---

[131] Wolfreys, *Writing London* vol. III, p. 16.
[132] Ibid., p. 43.

ever-changing city or the imaginary hotel.  In late nineteenth-century hotel literature

we are encouraged to compare the hotel to the home, an identification that creates

complex associations.  In later hotel fiction, the link between the hotel and the city

serves to create greater feelings of disconnection and disorientation, and provides

even more room for ambiguity.

Marc Katz describes the hotel as a 'vertical city,' drawing attention to its

disconnected dominance.  This metaphor positions the city as a narrow and artificial

image that dominates the skyline; it is reminiscent of Raban's distaste for high-rise

apartments where space 'has been sliced, horizontally and vertically, into a higgledy-

piggledy pile of chunks of living space [∧] There are strangers, not on the street, or

across the square, but in the very next room.'[133]  This visualization is also reminiscent

of Matthias' concerns over the separation of individuals despite the close proximity of

their living quarters: 'So many lives sandwiched under one roof, ignorant of each

other's existence, walking past, across, underneath each other without feeling

anything.'[134]  The organization of the edifice performs a certain process in living and

spatial practices.  A similar idea is articulated by Derrida in his thoughts on Prague,

which in turn draws on Kafka's portrayal of iconic sites within this city.  What makes

community possible for Derrida (and by association, Kafka) 'is the paradoxical

renunciation of the absolute tower, of the total city which reaches the sky.'[135]

However, despite the alienating and imposing facet of the vertical space, the terms

'absolute' and 'total' also imply a vision of progress a city, an image and a building

that can actually reach the sky is limitless in its possibilities.  Derrida goes on to

describe the city as an 'ensemble' built by human interaction and pieced together out

of fragments.  Derrida's account acknowledges the space as 'open to its proper

---

[133] Raban, *Soft City,* p. 7.
[134] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 60.
[135] Derrida, 'Generations of a City' pp. 16.

59

transformation."[136] The focus here is on continuation and transformation: once

complete, the building, whether it is an office block, hotel or a tower, keeps on

building itself: "[a] city must remain open to knowing that it does not yet know what it

will be,"[137] a powerful acknowledgment of the unrelenting and prevailing nature of a

space that constantly changes.

Perspective has a dramatic affect on interpretation. Fundamentally, being able

to see out of a top-storey window across an impressive city-scape creates a totally

different effect than looking up at the hotel from the street. Similarly, a large,

grandiose entrance will produce a different effect to a small doorway in a narrow

townhouse hotel. The relationship between the hotel and the street, and the interior of

the hotel to its exterior, therefore create a variety of viewpoints and perspectives that

collectivize into a heady experience for the individual, one that often results in

feelings of alienation.[138] Raban's discussion of these moments, moments that allow

the "softness" of the city to surface, are important to the understanding of the

flexibility of the space:

> For at moments like this, the city goes soft; it awaits the imprint
> of an identity. For better or worse, it invites you to remake it, to
> consolidate it into a shape you can live in [∧] Decide who you
> are, and the city will again assume a fixed form round you.
> Decide what it is, and your own identity will be revealed, like a
> position on a map fixed by triangulation.[139]

The malleability of the soft city – the city of interpretation as opposed to the hard city

of maps and structures – simultaneously allows identity to form whilst imposing

---

[136] Derrida, "Generations of a City," pp. 16.
[137] Ibid.
[138] A result that is experienced by Esther in Patrick Hamilton's *The West Pier*; the hotel Metropole stands for her as a "palace of mad, oriental opulence [∧] that vast cathedral to Mammon outside which she has so often lingeringly passed, and through those revolving doors she had caught glimpses of fur coats and cigars – the Metropole was too much for her." Patrick Hamilton, *The Gorse Trilogy* (1951; London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1992), p. 85.
[139] Raban, *Soft City,* p. 2.

restriction upon that burgeoning identity.[140] The manipulation of space through

interpretation is paralleled by an equivalent manipulation in the human subject;

rigidity and pliability are at war, creating possibility and restraint concurrently.

It is impossible to be everywhere at the same time or to view every angle, and

yet there is still a need to strive for a complete experience. De Certeau questions why

we are so intent on 'seeing the whole' and suggests that distance increases

perspective. He argues that viewing the city from the top down, allows one to gather

the most information about the space encountered. In a now somewhat poignant

account De Certeau describes the view from the top of the World Trade Center:

> Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea
> in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street,
> sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of
> Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates
> off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its
> agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is
> immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology
> in which extremes coincide – extremes of ambition and
> degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts
> between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash
> cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space.[141]

---

[140] A similar distinction is made by De Certeau's discussion of the 'map' and the 'tour' (Michel de
Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* pp. 118-121). De Certeau's 'map' corresponds convincingly to
Raban's hard city as it refers to the cartography of the city space, whilst his 'tour' refers to the
actualization of space through human occupation, the weaving of stories through the use of spaces; the
human interaction in De Certeau's stories suits Raban's version of the 'soft' city that evolves through
interpretation. Thacker further elucidates the division between these two modes – the map and the tour
– as like that between 'discourse that lists where sites are located [∧] and one that describes a
location through a set of actions' (Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 33). Another comparison to
be made is to Yi-fu Tuan who makes a two-fold classification between the 'carpentered' and the 'non-
carpentered' – the carpentered world is replete with straight lines, angles, and rectangular objects [∧]
nature and the countryside, in contrast, lack rectangularity.' (Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 76). Tuan is
focusing on the visuality of spaces in contrast to Raban's consideration of the malleability of space
through interpretation; interestingly, Tuan's 'hard' abrasive space is the urban, rectangular world,
whilst, in opposition, Raban's urban space becomes soft through subjectivity.
[141] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 91.

Attention is again focused on the vertical, defining the pointed structure of the distant skyline. The city is halted before De Certeau; it becomes static like the building which encompasses him. He goes on to try and separate the building from the space around it:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be
> lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by
> the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law
> [∧] When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that
> carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or
> spectators.[142]

The power of the city is reduced by the spatial distancing of the individual; the only possibility the individual has on the street is to be one of a mass of spectators. By contrast, the inhabitant of the top-storey of a skyscraper has the god-like authority to exert his or her own influence, and yet there is paradoxically little sense of agency in one who is lifted by an unseeing hand out of the city's grasp. Despite De Certeau's faith in this all encompassing vision of New York, the distance ultimately limits understanding, reducing the possibility of malleability in Raban's concept of the soft city. Again, what is needed is an awareness of continuity. Henri Lefebvre argues that:

> Visible boundaries such as walls or enclosures in general, give
> rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces
> where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space
> of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense
> from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private
> property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. [143]

---

[142] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 92.
[143] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 87.

"Social morphology," a term defined by Lefebvre, is used to describe space's limitless form. Space as a theoretical, or abstract, construct, Lefebvre continues, is infinite and made up of air and atmosphere that fills the space with personality. We can relate this discussion back to Soja's concept of third-space and Massey's discussion of the "beyond"; what in fact looks like a limiting boundary (walls or enclosures) is more positive in the discovery of what is in-between. The separation is only an "appearance" and is easily removed by the realization that there is an "ambiguous continuity." Despite the physical boundary of the building, whether the iconic World Trade Center (whose absence after 9/11 ironically helps to signify its presence), or a metropolitan hotel, the space is always part of the surrounding city, multiplying the possibilities for sensory perception and creating a network of possibilities between continuous spaces.

As stated, a possible method for making spaces "real" or more continuous, is to take into account the experience of the individual. To consider De Certeau's thoughts on pedestrians:

> Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of
> singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces.
> They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian
> movements form one of these "real systems whose existence in
> fact makes up the city."[144]

The collection of singularities created by the walker is in essence just the same as that of the hotel boarder; the multiple reactions weave together to create a collective experience. Just as the individual walker is part of a collective, so is the individual in a hotel full of strangers. Moreover, the attention to walking and moving and visiting differing aspects of the hotel allows a three-dimensional mapping out of the space to

---

[144] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 97.

take place.  The descriptions of views from the street, across the street, in the doorway or out of the uppermost window create points and angles in which space is drawn and connections are made through links between them, ultimately creating a refreshing mix of associations and cross-references.

I have introduced through this analysis the concept of the site, particularly the hotel, as having an identity of its own.  In this way, I want to move on from trying to ascertain the "characteristics" of the hotel, to seeing the hotel as a character in its own right.  The adaptability of the hotel, its ability to transform itself and have a profound impact on the identity of its human inhabitants is entirely distinct from the concept of space as flat and two-dimensional:  as a static site, the hotel is merely a physical resting place; considered as a "third-space" it is grounded in malleability and fluidity.

This notion of the hotel space has, as I've noted, been influenced by studies of the city.  However, there are also studies concerned entirely with the hotel space.[145] Seigfried Kracauer is the most dominant hotel theorist to have recognized the inherent power of the hotel space.  Indeed, the relationship between Simmel (Kracauer's tutor) and Kracauer marks the shift between viewing space as a product of character consciousness, and seeing space as having a consciousness of its own.  Simmel believed that "the individual was the only spot at which social threads joined; the personality was only the way in which this joining occurred."[146]  Simmel also thought that space was devoid of personality and functioned only as a container in which socialization could take place.  In later life, Simmel's views began to change, as Frank J. Lechner has observed:

---

[145] These hotel studies include: Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997); Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Derek Taylor and David Bush, *The Golden Age of British Hotels* (London: Northwood Publications, 1974) and Jean D'Ormesson, *Grand Hotel* (New York: The Vendome Press, 1984).
[146] Georg Simmel, "The Problem of Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 15 (1909), 290.

While he shows how space is in some ways socially formed, he
does not treat space as simply a social construct.  It retains a
reality of its own.  Simmel's overall position, then, lies
somewhere between spatial determinism and social
constructionism.[147]

This element of ambiguity in Simmel's later work is what allowed Kracauer to

experiment so dramatically with theories of social space in general, and theories of the

hotel in particular.  Kracauer followed Simmel's interest in 'the small detailed work's'

(or 'psychological microscopy'), and it is this attention to the minutiae of behaviour

which I will argue gives hotel literature its depth and complexity.[148]

Kracauer's understanding of space evolved from an appreciation of film,

literature and architecture, a characteristic acknowledged by Gertrud Koch who sees

Kracauer as someone with a 'special talent and inclination for spatial thought and

imagination'.[149]  More importantly, Kracauer was the first theorist to focus on the

hotel lobby as an isolated space, a space that represents the hotel in its entirety as a

synecdoche that stands for the alienation of modern existence.  He attends primarily to

the function of space, and tries to fill empty space with a purpose that will give it a

distinct character.  As Henrik Reeh points out:

The discourse of most urban planners can be said to deal with the city
as a *space for construction and administration*.  Kracauer, on the other
hand, analyzes the metropolis as a fragmentary and contradictory *space
for subjectivity*.[150]

Kracauer's problem with modern, urban spaces, and in particular with the hotel or

hotel lobby, is that they are devoid of function (in opposition to, say,  the church or

[147] Frank J. Lechner, 'Simmel on Social Space,' *Theory, Culture and Society* 8:3 (1991), 198.
[148] David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity – Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p. 118.
[149] Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction,* trans., Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 7.
[150] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis*, p. 4.

museum); individuals are left to fend for themselves in a space that they do not understand and which has an unidentifiable hold over them:

> The hotel lobby accommodates all who go there to meet no one. It is the setting for those who neither seek nor find the one who is always sought, and who are therefore guests in space as such –a space that encompasses them and has no function other than to encompass them.[151]

The alienation that the individual feels due to urbanization is thus characterized, according to Kracauer, by such spaces as the hotel. Kracauer further argues that individuals in the twentieth century have become lifeless in relation to their surroundings, and that the hotel space represents an extreme example of how space can overpower an individual.

Akin to Soja's concept of third-space, Lefebvre's trialectics and Mitchell's trinity of space, place and landscape, Kracauer too rejected a 'binary' understanding of space in an attempt to fill empty space with something tangible. He attributed the tensions in space to an overpowering sense of nothing. Kracauer's theory of nothingness focuses on the lack of connection between the individual and the space, trying to uncover the element 'other-than' that which has previously been recognized. As I have noted, he conceptualizes the hotel in opposition to the church; it is a purposeless void with no element of congregation, or community; the hotel guests materialize and form a group, but lack a purposeful relation to God, which is brought about in a Church: 'the house of God is dedicated to the service of the one whom people have gone there to encounter, the hotel lobby accommodates all who go there to meet no one.'[152] Put more generally, Kracauer specifies that actions are dependant

---

[151] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 175.
[152] Ibid.

on the foundation they are built upon; if this foundation is "nothing" then the production of action is greatly affected. The hotel, he argues, "reduces to the level of the nothing out of which it wants to produce the world"[153] Having "nothing" to build upon inevitably causes extreme reactions in individuals: "they drip down into the vacuum with the same necessity that compels those striving in and for reality to lift themselves out of the nowhere toward their destination"[154] This vacuum, or disjunction, in Bernard Tschumi's eyes is due to the lack of relation between the concept of space and the experience of space: "the meeting of these mutually exclusive terms could be intensely pleasurable or, indeed, so violent that it could dislocate the most conservative elements of society"[155]

It is interesting that Kracauer creates a link between the hotel, the church and the museum through the relationship of function to experience. The three spaces each have an independent function (the hotel as a place that welcomes guests, the museum that exhibits art or artefacts, and the church as a place of worship) that is fundamental to the ambience and understanding of each space. The vacuous space of the hotel lobby became, for Kracauer, the symbol of homelessness, as the emptiness of the space simultaneously welcomes and alienates the individual. The lobby is the central space in the hotel; it is the main gathering space and therefore site of sociability. It is the room that welcomes and entices but also limits experience, as it is devoid of personality; it can be sterile and imposing. For Kracauer the hotel guest is a transient figure, held aloft in space unable to connect with the area around him. The hotel becomes a space in limbo and responds dynamically to the alienation and disorientation of the modern individual. Kracauer sees the individual hotel guest in relation to the mass; the individual becomes unidentifiable in the faceless crowd.

---

[153] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 183.
[154] Ibid., p. 176.
[155] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 16.

67

Anonymity becomes inescapable as names and personal characteristics are lost in the vastness of the hotel space. Kracauer paints a picture of the hotel lobby as a place where "[r]emnants of individuals slip into the nirvana of relaxation, faces disappear behind newspapers, and the artificial continuous light illuminates nothing but mannequins,"[156] an almost unnerving repetition of the image of the loiterer already encountered in Baum's *Grand Hotel.* There is a tension between what the lobby promises and how the hotel actually functions in relation to the individual experience of the character. Kracauer's focus on the void draws on a main concern of space theory, the idea that too much "nothing" can have an overpowering and negative effect on a character. Too much nothing, in other words, ultimately becomes a powerful something; the significance of absence as the greatest presence, thus, the intangible nothingness of space (and the difficulty of understanding space due to this lack of materiality), can have a profound consequence for the individual.

As noted, the lobby specifically is a place for fast-paced movement and bypass and symbolizes the abstraction witnessed in the hotel as a whole. Kracauer focuses on the un-relatedness of the subject to the space, and the absence of the sort of connection which would help to create a sense of familiarity. The knowledge that someone has occupied the space before you, and has had experiences there other than yours, leaves behind a sense of history that is both more powerful but also more alienating than a strong sense of familial history that you would find in a home. This abstract sense of strangers' pasts that fills the space adds to the powerful disconnection felt within the hotel. However, alongside this is the notion of transience which is epitomized by the revolving door, another element of the hotel which has become a locus for theories of spatialization in the hotel. As Matthias

---

[156] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 183.

argues, the characters in hotel novels "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."[157]

For Kracauer, the lobby is a space where people find themselves "vis-à-vis de rien" or face-to-face with nothing, this lack of connection leaving a "mere gap" or void, into which the individual finds him or herself falling.[158] Individuality and personality are suppressed, whilst conformity and inaction take over. The hotel space is lacking purpose and imposes this lack on the inhabitants within it. To use his words, it is a "space of unrelatedness"[159] where strangers meet and ready-formed groups disintegrate. The boundaries between exterior and interior, substance and emptiness, meaning and futility are examined in a space that exemplifies these tensions and explores settings that are out of the ordinary to everyday existence within a world that is complex, varied and incomprehensible.

It is the inability to get inside the structure, and understand it as a subject, that brings about the alienation of the individual. I will argue that in the novels that focus on the hotel space, anxiety created through a character's relationship with the "nothing" produces extreme reactions: either extreme lifelessness as the impossibility of acting in any particular way; or extreme wildness as the freedom and openness of the void allows a character to express him or herself in uncharacteristic ways. The hotel is thus a space that opens the stage for a psychologically intense method of characterization. Indeed, the explosion of interest in the hotel space in the early twentieth century, by theorists and novelists, is, for Henri Lefebvre, due to the potential power inherent to spaces such as these:

---

[157] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting,* p. 12.
[158] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 176.
[159] Ibid., p. 179.

It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the
medium in which strategies are applied, but it has now become
something more than the theatre, the disinterested stage or
setting, of action [∧] The outcome is a vast movement in terms
of which space can no longer be looked upon as an essence, as
an object distinct from the point of view of [∧] subjects, as
answering to a logic of its own [∧] its role is less and less
neutral, more and more active, both as an instrument and as goal,
as means and as end.[160]

Although the fixed site of the hotel has become, as I have shown, an important location for urban theory there is only a relatively small body of work that focuses predominantly on the spatiality of the urban hotel in relation to *literature*.  Most notably there is: Douglas Tallack's focus on the hotel space in American fiction,[161] Marc Katz's exploration of Kracauer's theory,[162] Wayne Koestenbaum's dynamic experiment with narrative form and hotel theory in his novel/theoretical manifesto *Hotel Theory*,[163] Zeynap Kezer's discussion of Foucault and Turkish heterotopias,[164] Bettina Matthias's dealings with the Austrian post-war hotel and inhabitant,[165] Jameson's appraisal of the post-modern hotel,[166] Jonathan Needham's reconfiguration of Jameson's theory[167] and Dylan Trigg's discussion of ambience and interiority of

[160] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* pp. 410-11.
[161] Tallack's works include: *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London: Longman, 1991); *City Sites: Multi-media Essays on New York and Chicago* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2000) and his essay on the hotel lobby in American literature 'Waiting, Waiting: The Hotel Lobby in the Modern City' in *The Hieroglyphics of Space – Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis* ed., Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 2002): 139-152.
[162] Marc Katz, 'The Hotel Kracauer' *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11:2 (1999): 134-152.
[163] Wayne Koestenbaum, *Hotel Theory* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2007).
[164] Zeynap Kezer, 'If Walls Could Talk: Exploring the Dimensions of Heterotopia at the Four Seasons Istanbul Hotel,' in Dana Arnold and Andrew Ballantyne eds. *Architecture as Experience – Radical Change in Spatial Practice* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 210-233.
[165] Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early 20th Century German and Austrian Literature - Checking in to tell a Story* (Suffolk: Camden House, 2006).
[166] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
[167] John Needham, *The Departure Lounge: Travel and Literature in the Post-modern World* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1999).

the space.[168]  This is a surprisingly small group of critical works for such a multifarious and dynamic space that appears so repetitively in novels over the last two centuries.  It points towards the need for a more accumulative study that tries to link periods and styles through the attention to the specifics of the hotel—a study, as I have noted, that aims to delineate the characteristics of a *genre* of hotel fiction.

Jameson's appraisal of the Bonaventure Hotel requires some consideration at this point.  In his discussion of postmodernism and the 'mutation' of built space in this period, a mutation which the human inhabitant has not been able to keep pace with, he considers this hotel as a case study, and in particular, the effect on the individual of a grand metropolitan space such as this.  The complexity, Jameson begins by arguing, comes down to the totality of hotel constructions, or the ambition to be a complete entity:

> The Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world,
> a kind of miniature city; to this new total space, meanwhile,
> corresponds a new collective practice, a new mode in which
> individuals move and congregate, something like the practice of a
> new and historically original kind of hypercrowd.[169]

There is a disjunction here between what the hotel 'is' and what it 'aspires' to be, or between what it promises and how it actually functions.  It therefore corresponds to this new form of space that Jameson is highlighting in the postmodern period; there is a mutation in function as well as the developing space itself.  Jameson also recognizes that this hyperspace also needs a 'hypercrowd' humanity that immerses itself in the hotel needs to learn new methods for functioning, rather than relying on old forms of socialization.  This is Jameson's formula for success in the space and is a positive

---

[168] Dylan Trigg, 'Furniture Music, Hotel Lobbies and Banality' *Space and Culture* 9:44 (2006): 418-428.
[169] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 40.

insight because he aims to unite spatial awareness with social awareness. Jameson then adds his own experience to the critical appreciation of the abstract space:

> A constant busyness gives the feeling that emptiness is here
> absolutely packed, that it is an element within which you yourself
> are immersed, without any of the distance that formerly enabled
> the perception of perspective or volume [∧] What happens when
> you get there [the lobby] is something else, which can only be
> characterised as milling confusion, something like the vengeance
> this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it.[170]

We see similarities here to Kracauer's impressions of the hotel space; the 'packed' 'emptiness' and feeling of 'immersion' uses terminology that we are familiar with from Kracauer and other hotel theorists. Jameson, like Kracauer, isolates the lobby as a condensed element of the hotel, where its effects are all the more powerful. The tone of the narrative then becomes more aggressive in the description of the vengeance taken on those inhabitants who persistently use the space. Jameson's awareness of the disjunction between the space and the character highlights no positive alternative.

Critics after Jameson have suggested that his conception of this one hotel fails to acknowledge dominant, positive forces in the function of the space. As Kathleen Kirby notes:

> The implied 'I' there or the frequently used 'we' is not the native
> entering a transformed world, as he would have us believe, but a
> foreigner exploring new and unfamiliar terrain. Surely if he
> visited this site frequently, as a shop girl or maintenance man, he
> would gain a working knowledge of it, as much as he might also
> come to detest it.[171]

---

[170] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 43.
[171] Kathleen M. Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries, Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1996), p. 57.

Jameson's use of the first and third person implies a collective identity of people who respond to the same stimulus in the same way. His response, he believes, is the same as yours, mine and theirs. This view aims to provide an empathetic reading, which is intrinsic to our personal interpretation of the hotel, and yet his overarching pronouncements are too generalized to evoke this connection. As Kirby argues, this system is more alienating than it is inclusive, as it only acknowledges the tourist, not the frequent visitor or employee. These groups may eventually experience similar effects, but it is the failure to recognize the importance of opposing perspectives that is the main limitation of Jameson's theory.

John Needham is also intrigued by Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure Hotel, and with an interesting method, he decides to challenge Jameson's attempt at uniting a very subjective response with a collective theory. Needham decides to test the interpretation himself and makes the trip to Los Angeles, armed with Jameson's article, to analyze every aspect of the theory through the immediacy of his own response. As an "infrequent traveller"[172] he corresponds naturally to the artificial visitor that Jameson aligns himself with, rather than the native that concerns Kirby. Needham paraphrases Jameson's central argument in the following way: "the post-modern structure of the Bonaventure undermines our fundamental perception of space"[173] As Jameson situates the local effect of this in the lobby and entranceway, this is where Needham begins his exploration, humorously finding it appropriate that he has difficulty in finding the entrance to the hotel at all. When he does locate the entrance his perception of this space is immediately undermined by the disorientation he feels when the map and directions fail to correspond to where he thinks the

---

[172] Needham, *Departure Lounge,* p. 1.
[173] Ibid.

building stands, and by the lack of any ornate or grandiose gateway, or any formal

advertising from the street:

> Jameson, I then discover, has somewhat exaggerated the mystery
> of the entrance. From Flower Street you simply walk up three
> steps, and push a great rectangle of plate-glass, which smoothly
> yields to admit you to what is evidently the hotel-lobby.[174]

There is nothing mysterious in Needham's experience of the main part of the

hotel, the section of the hotel that usually contains so much complexity. The

space is obviously a lobby and is performing its function adequately as he

passes smoothly into the space. He goes on to notice the ease and comfort of a

group of businessmen conducting a meeting and is reassured by their

familiarity. Once he becomes more immersed in the space, however, he takes

in elements of the design and feels the impact of their arbitrary devices:

> But then a slight feeling of oddity sets in. Overhead for instance,
> perhaps suspended from —or supported by? —the central column,
> looms the great disc of a mezzanine floor, and at intervals on its
> circumference are a number of oval appendages; though clearly
> of considerable weight and bulk, they seem as lightly attached as
> petals on a flower-head [∧] The atrium is circled by yet more
> columns, each with a broad concrete spiral staircase [∧]
> Alcoves, usually corners enclosed by all the reassuring logic of
> structure, are here attachments that look in danger of crashing to
> the ground —or floating up into the heights [∧] At the edges of
> all this the relation between the circles of shops and the central
> cylinder of the atrium dissolves into uncertainty; it seems that the
> spiral staircases on the fringe may belong to other structural
> principles altogether, unseen, and that the great central column

---

[174] Needham, *Departure Lounge*, p. 2.

might not really be supporting anything.  In short you begin to see Jameson's point.[175]

Now he is experiencing a feeling that is fundamental to the understanding of spatial theory: the space seems to have become unbalanced and exerts some force over this inhabitant.  He no longer feels as if the space "yields" to him but has had his perception of the space undermined, just as Jameson predicted.  Needham touches on differing notions central to the understanding of space, just within this one passage.  He accounts for his failure to understand the logic of the structure itself, his awareness of the business side or function of the space, and his varied reactions to different elements of the space.  The mezzanine floor does not function in the way he expects due to the arbitrariness of its appearance and the implausible relationship between suspension and structure.  Needham's tone has abruptly changed in this paragraph.  He no longer describes the space with a familiar tone that reflects his feelings of hospitality, but describes, in a style that reflects his confusion, the "appendages" that are weighty but attached with the appearance of weightlessness.  His awe at the detail and design is apparent but so is his alienation and this can be attributed to his inability to understand.

Others, not just Jameson and Needham, have experienced this "oddity" when viewing the platform at the top of this particular hotel.  As Baudrillard finds when witnessing the moving platform:

> In the end I get to see the whole city revolve around the top of the
> hotel.  A dizzy feeling, which continues inside the hotel as a
> result of its labyrinthine convolution.  Is this still architecture,
> this pure illusionism, this mere box of spatio-temporal tricks?[176]

[175] Needham, *Departure Lounge*, p. 3.
[176] Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 59.

Baudrillard's account is positive in the use of perspective and the ability to position oneself above the city and encapsulate it in one complete image, an idea reminiscent of De Certeau's distancing from the top of the World Trade Center.  However, the ultimate impression received by this moving platform that appears to be hovering unsupported in space is the problem that these critics consistently return to: logic and function, or lack of, predominate in creating a disconnection between the individual and the space.

Needham's reaction is evident in the tonal change due to the inexplicability of the space, but despite his disclosure that he could 'begin to see Jameson's point'[177] he criticizes Jameson for forcing feelings of disorientation by deliberately confusing his journey through the space.  Logic in this case predicts that 'shooting up through the ceiling in one of Portman's 'people-movers' and traversing the glassy surface of one of the residential towers, before plunging his sensorium back into the enigmatic spaces of the lobby'[178] is surely going to elicit feelings of disorientation.  Again, as with Kirby's thoughts on Jameson, this criticism removes Jameson's experience further from a 'real' and natural interpretation of the space.  However, Needham does acknowledge that sense of space may be *subconsciously* disrupted.  He becomes critical of the intense localized attention which is central to Jameson's account, and which sees Jameson act as an entirely conscious agent in his own disorientation. What we can take from Needham and Jameson is the focus on these central tenets of spatial theory – atmosphere, proportion, the importance of logic, function and movement – in their particularized accounts of one hotel, to consider how novelists deal with the diversity of this space.

---

[177] Needham, *Departure Lounge,* p. 3.
[178] Ibid.

Novels that focus on specific hotels as the predominant setting for action often situate characters in different locations —walking the grounds, travelling in the lifts, sitting at dinner —in order to experiment with perspective and create varied responses to the same environment; they also draw on the urban theories outlined earlier. Alongside descriptions of individual reactions to different spaces such novels also typically pay close attention to the layout of the rooms and the organization of the hotel to try to envisage the building in its entirety, using architectural and geographical concepts to analyze events and emotions. In each case there is an element of narrative possibility, a focus on visuality and, ultimately, a tension directed towards the struggle between characters and the spaces they inhabit. Hotel life also influences identity through the sociological organization of the building —how, that is, different characters work together in the space in relation to hierarchies created through social interactions and class-based relationships.

**The inhabitant of the hotel – Guests and staff of the establishment.**

Hotels, as with streets, parks, museums and other public buildings, naturally enforce the mutual convergence of strangers. Lofland has studied the inner-city experience in detail, and in particular what it means to exist in a world of strangers:

> The city [⌃] is a place where people are continually brought together who do not, and in most cases will never, know one another at all. It is a place where, on its sidewalks and its parks, on its buses and subways, in its restaurants and bars and libraries and elevators, in its depots and terminals, people are surrounded by persons whom they do not know and with whom their only basis for relationship is that they happen to occupy the same territory at the same time.[179]

---

[179] Fischer, *The Urban Experience*, p. 95.

Again, the nature of strangers and strangeness is double-sided – the realization that you inhabit a space entirely devoid of connection to another living being can be overwhelming and threatening, but the excitement caused by meeting new people and "encountering exotic strangers"[180] adds a *frisson* of delight into an otherwise frightening experience. Guests in hotels are usually individuals, or small groups who are lifted from their natural setting and tossed into this artificial environment. The sheer impossibility of meeting all the individuals in the hotel crowd marks it as a new force in urban experience: the fact that these faces are *unknowable*, rather than as yet unknown, creates a sense of powerlessness akin to the attention associated with the modern city. The "strange" element of the crowd is inflexible; the strangers will remain this way because of the unyielding environment in which they are first encountered. Claude Fischer states that "[u]nknown people fade into the background"[181] Paradoxically, however, an unearthly sense of community can be formed between the members of the faceless crowd, as the anonymous collective identity becomes a force in its own right; although often voiceless it can nonetheless manipulate and control the individual.

Claude Fischer goes on to argue that there needs to be a balance between "intimate and enveloping social groups" on the one hand, and individual "freedom from social shackles" on the other.[182] We will see exactly this tension played out in the hotel. Fischer also explains how a sense of kinship can be formed through the development of sub-communities composed of individuals who perceive themselves as possessing connections more personal or intimate than the group as a whole; these might be common beliefs, opinions, or a common upbringing. These smaller groups, Fischer suggests, can "clash with one another, divide the community, and draw the

---

[180] Fischer, *The Urban Experience*, p. 96.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., p. 18.

allegiance of their members away from the community as a whole.'[183]  As we shall

see, such sub-groups or sub-communities, and the tensions and conflicts between

them, are particularly significant in the hotel; they contribute to the transience of the

space.

Ferdinand Tönnies also focuses on the developing friction between

'community' and 'society' (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*),[184] pointing to an

individual's role in a close-knit family as compared to the wider 'society' of a city or

'the mere co-existence of people independent of each other.'[185]  Tönnies' latter phrase

might usefully describe the tensions created in the modern hotel where strangers mix

in an artificial setting.  Although Tönnies has been criticized for romanticising the

past and being too disparaging of his present, his ideas are helpful in understanding

the process of urbanization.  Alongside the inherent unease felt by the speed of

expansion (a reminder once again of Lynn Tees' 'megalopolis') there is always a

sense of threat and imposition from crowds and unknown spaces; at the same time,

the very speed of expansion allows a new sense of excitement and opportunity.  The

hotel as a microcosmic example of the city replicates these tensions in concentrated

detail.

To return to Harvey's ideas about wealth, the hotel offers a new space where

ownership is not necessarily as important as it is with other spaces such as the home.

This is something we have already encountered in the nineteenth century, but it

becomes more achievable in the twentieth-century urban environment.  The display of

wealth and consumerism involved in 'hotelling' with style negates the need for

---

[183] Fischer, *The Urban Experience*, p. 115.
[184] Claude S. Fischer's book *The Urban Experience* covers similar issues to those encountered by Tönnies.  He focuses on human experience in the city space but creates a divide, as Tönnies does, between community and strangers and returns to issues of crowds and power which can be seen as progressive from the mid-Victorian concepts explored by writers such as Dickens.
[185] Dyos and Wolff eds., *The Victorian City,* p. 110.

ownership; instead, the focus is on staying in the grandest hotels as an emblem of taste, status, wealth and class – something that can be acquired more easily and on a more temporary basis than owning your own home.  However, no spaces in the hotel are totally private or personal as they are used continually by people who have no connection to them; the inhabitants of the hotel do not own, and therefore do not control, the space.  The locked doors of the 'private' rooms may promote a sense of security and privacy, but ultimately the guest lacks ownership of the space around him, despite paying for a room.  This payment is more like a loan agreement; it does not offer the possibility of financially securing the space.  The privacy of the individual hotel room is thus a transient negotiation, a temporary agreement between the guest and the real owners of the space.  Moreover, that privacy is only ever notional, since the hotel staff have keys to the room and may enter it without the paying guest's permission.  Power lies, therefore, with those that own and loan the space (notably the hotel manager or owner): there are thus different 'levels' of inhabitants of hotels, and these hierarchies do not necessarily correspond precisely with those in the world outside.

The focus on financial ownership of spaces directs us to look at the business side of the home and the hotel.  The relationship between work and home is in constant flux; traditionally the two enterprises were more closely aligned.  Davidoff and Hall studied the changing relationship between home and work over the course of the nineteenth century; in earlier periods the home and business were interchangeable as family labour centred on the production of tools, goods or food for local and personal use.[186]  The nineteenth century witnessed a move to wider networks of production and consumption, separating the home from the workplace almost entirely.

---

[186] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 364-370.

The home, certainly during periods of low house-price inflation, generally has little function as a business, and this places it in direct opposition to the hotel. In fact the home is more usually a refuge for nineteenth-century middle-class men, away from the world of business. The two locations are entirely separate for this class of characters, but for the servants who occupy the middle-class home space, home and work is one and the same. When thinking of 'home' we immediately think of the owners of that home; servants are secondary, despite the fact that they have to do what they can to make the space home for themselves.[187]

The servants who were responsible for the maintenance of the home became separated from those that enjoyed rest and relaxation; they had a hidden life below stairs that was entirely focused on the efficient running of the space they inhabit. That is to say, the smooth running of the home is dependant on servants whose business it is to service the space in which they live, but which they have no ownership or personal connection to. The simplistic connection between the master and his home is analysed by Max Weber in a discussion of the patriarchal domination in the home:

> Under patriarchal domination the legitimacy of the master's
> orders is guaranteed by his personal subjugation [∧] the fact that
> this concrete master is indeed their ruler is always in the minds of
> his subjects. The master wields his power without restraints, at

---

[187] There is a great deal of literary scope for these characters to go unseen within narratives and therefore become part of the underground network at the heart of detective and sensation novels. This device is predominantly used by Mary Elizabeth Braddon in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862; London: Penguin, 2004) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863; Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998), where she often uses servants to uncover information, witness private events and use secret information to initiate the events of the novel. This issue has been studied widely, particularly by Millicent Bell, 'Jane Eyre : The Tale of the Governess' *The American Scholar* 65:2 (Spring: 1996): 263-269; Eve M. Lynch, 'The Masquerade of Servitude in Victorian Literature' *Pacific Coast Philology* 31:1 (1996): 88-106; Rosie Cox, *The Home Life of a Global Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris and Company, 2006) and Susan Yates, *Maid and Mistress: Feminine Solidarity and Class Difference in the Private Sphere* (New York: P. Lang, 1991). But especially interesting is the criticism surrounding Henry James's depiction of the governess in his 1898 thriller *The Turn of the Screw* (London: Penguin, 1998). Alongside this is Adrian Poole's assessment of James's unique depiction of a governess with a modernist consciousness in *Henry James* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

his own discretion and above all, unencumbered by rules insofar

as it is not limited by tradition or competing powers.[188]

The localized nature of the home limits the constraints of the master's patriarchal

power.  There is little room for negotiation between the servant and the employer, or

the servant and the space.  The ruler and the ruled are more distinct categories in this

space because there is less chance for competing powers to battle for supremacy,

although this began to change from the middle of the century. A similar argument is

offered by Lewis Coser who recognizes the capacious power of the master in the

home-space; the relationship works (success here is categorized by the maintenance

of distanced roles, not satisfaction on either side) because of the total absorption of

one person by another; the servant is tied to the home in a 'totalistic manner.'[189]  This

view is a little outdated however, and not representative of the long nineteenth century

which witnessed dramatic changes in the role and power of the serving community:

throughout this period the transgression of boundaries through sexual relations

between master and servant, petty crime, and the changing nature of domestic service,

allied to a dwindling in employee numbers, and made the retention of skilled workers

a difficulty.[190]

Pamela Horn, in a comprehensive analysis, plots the historical changes in

domestic service across the last three centuries, showing the seventeenth century to

---

[188] Max Weber, quoted in *Economy and Society*, Vol. III Guenter Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 1066.

[189] Lewis A. Coser, 'Servants: The Obsolescence of an Occupational Role,' *Social Forces* 52:1 (Sep, 1973), 31.

[190] As Samuel Menefee finds, female servants were 'increasingly exposed to sexual exploitation without protection from parents, kin, neighbours, ministers, or local opinion, these girls were easy victims of seduction by their masters, who then dismissed them when they became pregnant' (Samuel P. Menefee, 'Master and Servant: A Divinitory Class Dream,' *Folklore* 99:1 (1988), 90).  These issues have also been considered by John P. Locke and Barry Godfrey, 'Ontological Boundaries and Temporal Watersheds in the Development of White Collar Crime,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 46 (2006): 976-992, and Brian W. McCuskey, 'The Kitchen Police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-Class Transgression' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28 (2000): 359-375.

have clearly defined roles and sustainability in professional service, as opposed to the turn of the twentieth century when this strictness began to change:

> In the ensuing forty or so years up to the outbreak of the First World War the position of employers proved rather less favourable [⌒] the rate of progress slackened off [⌒] and the wages of female servants increased by perhaps a third during the period 1871-1901.[191]

Harvey suggests that, "conflicts in the living space are [⌒] mere reflections of the underlying tension between capital and labor."[192] In the home, where the master stands for capital and the servant stands for labour, the master/servant power dynamic is in theory non-negotiable; in practice, however, this relationship from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards was open to manipulation due to the changing status of domestic staff.[193] The master was expected to provide support to his servants, including: food, money, shelter and protection, and the servant was expected to be at the disposal of the master. Simplistically, servants are required to fulfil duties that the master or mistress set for them, menial duties that improve the general living conditions of the family. On a more widespread, emblematic level, servants fulfil a possibly more important role in maintaining the status of the home and the family for outsiders; the number of servants employed by a household was a method for categorizing the class of the householder. To prove and uphold one's status in society individuals felt the need to display the number of servants to others in their

---

[191] Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 24.

[192] Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience,* p. 57.

[193] In the nineteenth century the divide between master and servant is separate and distinct and is a relationship based on a hierarchical division through class, power, money, social standing and even the architecture itself, as servants' quarters occupied entirely separate spaces to those of the family. It is a relationship that "officially" rarely merges, except for the evidence of servant abuse, and affairs with masters, as considered in John R. Gillis's "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy in London, 1801-1900, and in Judith Lowder Newton, Mary P. Ryan and Judith R. Walkowitz eds., *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 114-145.

community. Therefore, retention was more problematic for the family. Often, despite financial concerns, servants were employed or retained because of the very public nature of middle-class life in this period and the need to maintain the appearance of respectability and eminence. The link between visibility and class — particularly in the development of the nouveau riche — finds in the home a dynamic space for literary experimentation. The dichotomous relationship between visibility and privacy in the home has always been a concern of class studies, as both the working-class home and the aristocratic manor deal with this problem, albeit from opposing viewpoints.

There is a simplistic argument that slum inhabitants need or want less privacy than those of the higher classes. Slum housing has an open-door approach to privacy, the lack of sustenance and luxurious items means there is no requirement for security. Moira Donald tackles this rudimentary notion, arguing that the nineteenth-century middle-class home is in fact less private than the working class equivalent. The reason for this is the multiple guests, family members and servants that co-habit the space at the same time:

> In the wealthiest middle-class Victorian households the domestic
> arena would have been populated by children of various ages,
> scullery maids, a cook, a butler, a lady's maid, a nanny, the
> master and mistress of the house and often a resident relative
> from beyond the nuclear family [∧] From the daily visits of shop
> boys with groceries, through afternoon calls amongst female
> acquaintances, to visits from the family doctor or solicitor, to the
> regular dinner parties that were a feature of well-to-do Victorian
> society, there was typically a regular stream of visitors.[194]

The constant stream of visitors makes the home more of a gathering place than a space for intimate family life — a space somewhat closer to that of the hotel. The

---

[194] Moira Donald, 'Tranquil Havens?' p. 111.

sociability of life in a middle-class home is represented by the constancy of these visitors. These houses are filled with non-family members (servants and guests) and are therefore public on a local level, behind closed doors the master and mistress continuously share a space with people unrelated to them, never experiencing a real sense of privacy. The co-habitation of multiple people in one space is of interest to the class concerns of the hotel.

Within the home servants who live in the same space as the master or mistress never fully experience its comforts as it is not their own and a notorious complaint about the working conditions of servants was the long working hours, often up to twenty hours a day. In fact, for those servants that "live-in" we can say that they actually work twenty-four hours a day as they never leave work for home, the two spaces merge into one.[195] This lack of connection makes them more detached from the space, as compared to the hotel employees who only need to connect to the space for work purposes. As Coser suggests, "[l]iving at the residence of the master severely curtails, both factually and symbolically, servants' privacy and freedom of movement [∧] they are constantly observable, not only when they work but even when they do not."[196] For servants in the middle-class home the onus is on work and living rather than enjoying the space around them; the master rules their time as well as their service, and as ninety-eight percent of female servants lived in their master's home at the turn of the nineteenth century, this was particularly a problem for the majority of those in employment in the early decades.[197] Although after World War I this began to change, as servant keeping was not as easily available to the middle classes and became only a privilege of the upper classes. Small households in

---

[195] Until the end of the nineteenth century the master had the legal right to punish his servants, just as he would punish his children. The servant was not expected to have a private life outside of the home (please see Coser, "Servants: The Obsolesence of an Occupational Role" pp. 32).
[196] Ibid., p. 33.
[197] Ibid., p. 32.

particular were not able to sustain employment as young girls, supposedly destined

for domestic employment, could find better paid work in factories, shops, or even

hotels.[198]  Service became more an occupation rather than a way of life in the first

decades of the twentieth century.

The servant lives a life very separate from the owners of the house operating a

half existence in relation to the people he or she is serving:

> The feelings of the maid who rose early in the morning to
> blacklead the grates in the upstairs rooms would have been very
> different from those of the male house-holder first entering the
> room to the welcome of the blazing fire.  The silver which shone
> in the firelight may have been a source of pride to the master and
> mistress.  To the maid who polished it the silver represented
> hours of elbow grease and perhaps more.  It may have been
> symbolic of the great social and economic gulf which divided the
> inhabitants of the same domestic world.[199]

The home, then, is not one space but two spaces simultaneously, because of the two

types of individuals that exist within them.  The two existences run parallel and

although the characters meet and co-exist they never experience the space in the same

way; as Donald asserts: their reading of the same space would have been very

different.[200]

In wider spatial studies the possibility of reading a space objectively is of

paramount importance.  Spaces interact with individuals and no space will ever be the

same for different people.  As John Donat states:

> Places occur at all levels of identity, my place, your place, street,
> community, town, county, region, country and continent, but

[198] Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 151.
[199] Moira Donald, Tranquil Havens? pp. 107.
[200] Ibid.

places never conform to tidy hierarchies of classification.  They

all overlap and interpenetrate one another and are wide open to a

variety of interpretations.[201]

Although the house is technically the master' through ownership there are different

ways of interpreting how we 'own' spaces.  The home has a multitude of available

readerships; these readerships are differentiated by knowledge of the space,

experience of the space, and ultimately, ownership of the space.  The room or place is

responded to in a multi-contextual way.  Donat reveals the complexities involved in

analyzing ownership and readership of spaces; he points specifically to the

impossibility of conforming to 'tidy hierarchies of classification' in specific spaces

such as the home (and the hotel), as well as more universal and generic spaces such as

'community' and 'region'.  Interestingly, Donat places possessive pronouns 'my' and

'your' only in front of the word 'place' which could be substituted with the word

'home'.  The home is one of the only spaces in which ownership, financial or

otherwise, is possible; within the hotel, ownership becomes harder to classify.  The

wider spaces of street, town or country, further resist this classification of ownership.

Again, returning to Relph, '[a]ll places and landscapes are individually experienced,

for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences and intentions,

and from our unique circumstances'.[202]  The attitudes, experiences, intentions and

circumstances of the servant are all in direct opposition to those of the master/owner

of the space.  Therefore, we come back to Donald' illustrative example of the half-

life led by the servant; the impossibility of financially owning the home, despite living

permanently within it, precludes a positive reading of the space.

[201] John Donat ed., *World Architecture 4* (London: Studio Vista, 1967), p. 9.

[202] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Ltd., 1976), p. 36.

The fluidity of the changing home space and the eradication of visible boundaries between master and servant throughout the nineteenth century leads us to draw connections between this space and the complexities of the grand hotel. The constantly increasing size of metropolitan hotels demanded frequent re-evaluation of hotel design and new layouts to suit the increasing number of guests. Interestingly the upstairs/downstairs divide was inverted: with the rapidly transforming spaces of the metropolitan hotels, the growing number of floors and rooms, and the new phase of the skyscraper that gained momentum in this period, a new structure of multiple layers and divisions, rather than the simple segregation of upstairs/downstairs emerged. The invention of the lift, and its widespread implementation, also dramatically altered the idea of an upstairs and downstairs and the traditional relationships between the position of servants' living quarters to their masters. In particular, before the widespread building of lifts, the term "penthouse" (as we understand it) never existed, as without lifts and layer upon layer of winding staircases it was very far from luxury to have to stay in the upper apartments. The top section or attic of hotels was always reserved for servants who had to traverse the stairs and corridors every day after leaving their masters.[203] The modern grand hotel employs people to service the space and serve paying guests. Staff are no longer required to live and work in the one space but have separate spaces for these separate aspects of their lives.[204]

The hotel space, more than any other, provides the servant a space in which to form an attachment due to an element of ownership, and the separation of this space

---

[203] This spatial design made it easy for the "madwoman in the attic" scenario of Victorian fiction to emerge. Servants and transgressors could easily be locked away in the attic and hidden from view for eternity. The understanding that sections of houses were out of reach to and cordoned off from public view, made this theme in literature very realistic. The merging of the spatial boundaries at the turn of the century has made spatial and class boundaries more complex.

[204] Please see appendix for details on these features.

from the traditional home.  Importantly, this sense of ownership is not financial;

rather it arises out of familiarity with the space.  The time a hotel employee spends in

a space allows a greater sense of connection between individual and the space.

Unlike the traditional relationship between master, servant and the home, the hotel is

more home-like to the 'servant' (a label I will apply briefly to the hotel employee)

than to any other character within the space because of the time spent within it and

their knowledge of that space.  The space is no longer 'owned' by merely paying for

it.  As E. Relph has observed:

> In both our communal and our personal experience of places
> there is often a close attachment, a familiarity that is part of
> knowing and being known here, in this particular place.  It is this
> attachment that constitutes our roots in places; and the familiarity
> that this involves is not just a detailed knowledge, but a sense of
> deep care and concern for that place. [205]

The specificity of the hotel as a fixed location is what Relph describes as 'this

particular place'.  Although I am not concerned with the service industry per se,

Relph's premise can nonetheless be usefully applied to the network that is created

between the servants and the space that they are rooted in and familiar with.  It creates

a sense of ownership that battles with the financial form of ownership in hotel novels.

It could be argued that the hotel proprietor or manager has more right to 'ownership'

than the servant; but I would argue that *knowledge* of the space is more empowering.

Also, recognition must be given to the communal power of employees, as compared

to the single employer or proprietor.  Servants as a collective body of people, a

community of workers, create a network of familiarization overpowering the

possibilities of control attempted by the manager.  The proprietor is immediately

---

[205] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, p. 37.

distanced from both the space and the other characters; as an individual and authority figure in the space his totalizing power cannot be maintained in relation to the multitude of servants that fill the space. The managers' ability to oversee the organization of the hotel is a necessary function of hotel management but the impossibility of knowing each and every element of the workings of the hotel machine means that delegation is equally necessary and when delegation occurs so does the realignment of power and experience. The larger the hotel and the more employees the space has the more difficult it is for the individual manager to retain knowledge and ownership of the space. The loyalty of the servant network creates a solid framework of experience that is hard to disturb. Servants, I suggest, ultimately possess some level of ownership of the hotel space due to the unique knowledge that they acquire.

The obscurity guests feel because of the need to try and create home in the hotel, and the fact that it fails to live up to this supposition, is not a concern for the staff who have one function in the hotel space. The hierarchy of the hotel enforces the subservience of staff to the guests, but concerns other than money and prestige allow these characters to express themselves and sometimes dominate the guests. If we are questioning success in the hotel, and how valid certain types of characters are within this space, then surely the owner/manager has the greatest chance of success due to financial backing and knowledge of the space that comes from a permanent connection with it.[206] The master of the hotel is much closer in status to those in his

---

[206] There are a number of manuals dating from the nineteenth century that look at the rules for successful hotel management. In a similar vein to *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) these manuals are devised for didactic purposes to enhance leadership and management qualities in new managers. They range from Lucius Boomer's old fashioned, chauvinist account of efficient hotel management in *Hotel Management: Principles and Practice* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1931), a treatise on The Waldorf-Astoria, to Jeffrey Robinson's light-hearted and semi-fictional account of the secret details of Claridge's management system in *The Hotel: Upstairs, Downstairs in a Secret World.* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996), to the more entertaining accounts of calamities and hospitality hiccups from the world's hotels in Derek Picot's

employment, than the master of the home; the servants work in the hotel and deal with the manager as an employer, rather than an almost familial relationship. The boundaries between the two are more closely aligned and the position of the servant in the hotel is less restricted as they often provide for themselves and live life outside of the space. The manager, in essence, is a servant himself as he serves the guests and is employed by the space itself. The owner of the hotel shows some similarities to the master of the house due to his equal status as proprietor, and yet the employees of the hotel are not there to directly serve this 'master'; the inclusion of guests as the maintenance of the hotel's existence diversifies the relationship witnessed in the home – the proprietor is a kind of servant himself as he relies on the movements of those entering his establishment and paying for his services.

The hotel guest comes a very pitiable third in the hierarchy of ownership of space. Guests have no ties and usually little or no experience of the space; they therefore lack any authority other than the façade of 'the customer is always right'. The material wealth of customers in grand hotels initially helps in gaining authority but has little relevance in relation to ownership. Although guests have paid for their private space, the temporal insecurity of that purchase is no defence against the servant who lives and works permanently in the space, and therefore understands it entirely. The servant (or employee) attains a very unusual and significant position in society due to their knowledge of, and familiarity with, the hotel space, and their permanent location within it; such circumstances raise their status above that of the transient guest. It is impossible to contain servants/employees because of the openness of the space in which no role is clearly defined. The differences in space

*Hotel Reservations* (London: Robson Books Ltd, 1993). Efficient management, administration, training and employment are at the heart of these accounts and demonstrate that there are similar concerns in the first grand hotels in the early twentieth century as there are in Claridge's in the twenty-first century.

between the home and the hotel allows for a greater level of complexity in class considerations; the sheer number of people involved in the hotel space makes the interactions more varied, with greater scope for a more intricate social system to operate.

Generally speaking, spaces, places and even sites can be understood either geographically or sociologically; moreover, both forms of categorization are a way of positioning characters in relation to the space they occupy, and thus determining how they are able use it (or whether, as I have hinted, the space uses them).  The argument of this thesis is that the hotel exerts power through both its geographical and sociological organization. There is little research on class within fixed locations such as the hotel.  In the hotel, the possibilities for encountering a variety of individuals from mixed backgrounds are vast and can easily create confused class structures, despite the fact that the hotel does have a hierarchical structure (in terms of both the employees and the guests).  Characters in hotel novels often react to the intensity of their surroundings by exercising extreme reactions to events that occur within the area due to both the hierarchies of class and the geographical notion of space.  It is the aim of this thesis to uncover how the hotel does this.

This thesis will thus focus on the role of the individual in relation to the spatial environment of the hotel, whilst also considering the individual in relation to other inhabitants of the hotel.  The focus will be on actions and emotions that are created *because of* the special character of the hotel space.  I will argue that it creates an atmosphere that has a discernible effect on the individual and will divide the chapters into geographical and then sociological strands bringing together the topics introduced here (particularly form and function, validity and success, perspective, movement and stasis, possibility, vacuousness and impersonality) and showing how they are

presented in a group of works that span the late nineteenth century to the present day — the genre, that is, that I term hotel fiction. I have argued here that the hotel is a microcosm of the city around it and responds to similar tensions and concerns that have been identified in the wider field of urban studies. Problems with how we name and categorize space are particularly relevant to understanding the hotel space. Recognition of the limitations of binary or two-dimensional views of space, and the use of new terms and expressions such as "third-space" and "threshold" go someway in re-conceptualizing everyday spaces in the city. The development of a three-way distinction of space/place/landscape is helpful too, though other terms may be needed, such as "site" which encapsulates the static nature of the space that is paradoxically in constant flux.

The two central chapters will concentrate on geographical and sociological approaches to understanding spatial theory. The geographical chapter rests on a theoretical understanding of the layout of the space and a consideration of important concepts such as place, space and location — relying on interesting differentiations between inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. The sociological chapter will consider the abstraction of space in the hotel, social hierarchies, construction of community and individual difference — in an attempt to discover what makes the hotel embody such a dominating "characteristic".

**Interlude:**
**Richard Whiteing's *No. 5 John Street***

Before moving on to the analyses of those literary works that most clearly relate the geographical and sociological power of space, I would like to dwell briefly on one novel that includes a snapshot of intense spatial identity in an otherwise traditionally realist novel. In realist literature, the scenes that take place within inns or hotels simply mark specific events in the plot. For example, in Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), when planning a day-trip into the country Mr Bell allows time for refreshments: '[w]e'll take a snack, and order dinner at the little inn'.[207] The inn only offers a space for necessary refreshments and does nothing to alter our perception of the character. Ultimately, the space or setting, whether or not it is a hotel or inn, forms the background to the action; the characters fill the space and become the central element of the picture the novel is trying to create. In early nineteenth-century literature the hotel and the inn both tend to have the same function and do little to show the space as a subject in its own right: '[t]he spatiality of history and social life was, for the most part, frozen into the background as an "external" container, stage, or environment for social action'.[208] Whereas, in the late nineteenth and twentieth century a distinction arises between the inn as a quaint, traditional resting-place in the country and the hotel as a metropolitan edifice, a place of luxury and lavishness.

Richard Whiteing's largely forgotten *No. 5 John Street* marks a moment of transition when the use of the hotel as a literary trope begins to change. This novel, published in 1898, contains just one scene set in a hotel, which, as I shall show, is an interesting precursor to the experimentation in the later novels explored in this thesis.

---

[207] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1855; London: Penguin, 1994), p. 458.
[208] Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 44.

In a brief scene in the middle of the novel Whiteing sees the potential of the hotel, and establishes it as a space ripe for exploration.

*No. 5 John Street* is set at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897. It takes the royal procession to St. Paul's Cathedral on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1897 as its framework, but the central plot line follows the main character as he moves from his middle-class home to the London slums, his intention being to experience life as it really was on the poorer side as a work of social investigation. The title of the novel is entirely location specific even down to the use of the house number 5, creating a very personal account of specific events in a precise place. However, the impersonality of the common street name John Street was chosen by Whiteing to reflect every slum in London, and all the slums in all the capital cities across the world.

The hotel scene offers a brief moment of repose between these alternating settings. This scene is the exact centre of the novel and becomes a moment set apart from his new world, encapsulated in a bubble by the physical surrounds of the hotel and by the perimeters Whiteing sets around it. After three months in the slums the protagonist - Charles - returns to his own environment to have lunch with his friend in a luxury hotel. In this respect, it seems initially to function in the same way as earlier nineteenth-century realist novels: the hotel acts as a background to the action and supposedly functions as an exemplary instance of what we habitually understand 'landscape' to be. But as the narrative moves between alternating settings in very swift succession, this brief interlude adds to the confusion and disjunction that the character feels and has a visible effect on his emotions. The lack of familiarity with the surroundings of a hotel environment, the uniform nature of the hotel rooms and the impossibility of ever feeling at home in such a sterile space, is important to the development of this character in his present situation.

Having recently spent so much time in the opposing squalor of slum life, Charles takes time to adjust to the attack on his senses. On reaching the hotel he is overwhelmed by the immensity of the space:

> That stupendous hotel! It overlooks the river, to say nothing of the English Channel, which, I should think, must be visible from the upper floors. I forget the count in hundreds of bedrooms, in halls fit for the banquets of Belshazzar [∧] Over a dozen lifts, I believe, are at it day and night, giving the inmates a foretaste of their ascent into heaven. Rightly looked at, this is quite a devotional exercise, and it makes a capital substitute for morning and evening prayer for busy men.[209]

The chapter opens with Charles voicing a very specific intention: 'to ask young Seton a question'[210] but he is then overpowered by the 'stupendous hotel'[211] and within just a few moments he states: 'I fancy I came to ask you something [∧] but I can't be quite sure'[212] Charles forgets how many hundreds of rooms there actually are which again highlights the imposing nature of the building, as well as demonstrating the repetitive nature of the hotel space, in particular the bedrooms, which are just numbered with no acknowledgement of their inhabitants. The rooms lack an identity, and all blur into one, which paradoxically gives it an overwhelming sense of its own identity, through its stability; the magnitude of the building as a whole is shown in the realization that it could go on forever. The lift as a room in itself is featureless and usually comprises a totally enclosed space without windows; its purpose is only to move people from space to space. Travelling only on vertical lines, the movement of the lift in relation to Whiteing's description of the sweeping movement of the eye across the river shows the uniform spaces from different aspects. Whiteing's use of

---

[209] Richard Whiteing, *No. 5 John Street* (1899; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1906), p. 146.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid., p. 151.

the lift then moves away from this repetitious and purposeless existence, through the introduction of religion in the ascent to heaven and the whole movement as a 'devotional exercise'. This links to the comparison between the hotel and the church in hotel theory and the detrimental lack of function in Kracauer's theory. The advent of religious purpose gives the lift space a new function but in fact it still remains tinged with negativity. The 'busy men' replace their traditional religious devotions with an entirely cosmopolitan exercise that is devoid of meaning. The similarity between the use of the lift and the exercise of prayer is only through its repetition. Both actions are just something that happen every day and have no other connection to each other. Therefore, the initial reaction that the link to religion gives this space a new purpose is in fact shown to be outmoded. The continual to-ing and fro-ing of the people inside the lifts, and the movement of the lift itself, pushes forward and then retracts so there is in fact no real progression. This aids the impression of monotony and a repetitious existence, the fact that 'we move, if only in spite of ourselves'.[213] The sense of confusion produced by the distinctive environment is an early example of what we see in later manipulations of the hotel. It exemplifies the transition between what can be termed 'functional' space and space that is used to exploit complex interactions between the character and their environment; it is the hotel in this novel that makes this interaction available to us as readers.

As a companion to the opening detail of the hotel, Whiteing then positions Charles on the balcony of his friend's hotel room, while he waits for him to get ready. His earlier view of the hotel features his immediate impression and what he 'thinks' the view will capture. Now, positioned physically at the top of the building, he can ruminate directly on the city below him:

---

[213] Whiteing, 'Preface' *No. 5 John Street*, p. vi.

I wait for him in the balcony, and see the busy river and the bridges and all beyond, as though a cutting in the hedge of Paradise. The toil and moil are just in the right place to heighten, by contrast, the sense of peace. Seen from this distance the carman's fustian is but a softer gray in the picture. The roar of the traffic, reduced to a murmur, is positively soothing. The busman's blasphemy, the Cockney vowel, cannot travel so far; no fumes of manufacture reach us from the picturesquely grimy Surrey side. All is movement, without shock, an effect with no coarsely dominating note [∧] The little post of observation is odour, coolness, and shade, all combined in one delicious impression.[214]

Whiteing draws the eye from the rooftops of buildings to the crowds below to give an impression of the physicality of individual buildings, creating a similar effect to that of De Certeau's view from the top of the World Trade Center. Analyzed alongside his first impression of the hotel, the imposing and 'stupendous' nature is reinforced by the fact that it overlooks the river and *possibly* has a view of the English Channel from the upper floors. When we actually get to witness this view firsthand the 'busy river' is 'beyond' and therefore distanced from the observer. This widens the perspective and draws attention to his heightened position at the top of a large and grandiose building; for example, the river that Charles describes is reduced in importance in relation to the building, as it is not given a name. Positively, this sense of distance removes the imposition of the city's smells and sounds, but, negatively, the balcony also helps to show that what is 'beyond' is unattainable; due to its position as a liminal space the distinction between the two opposing realities is clearly defined. The references to the river and the scenery below highlight the impossibility of experiencing the outside environment which is visible but out of

---

[214] Whiteing, *John Street,* p. 148.

reach whilst in the hotel.  Similarly, the picture that is given to us is seen through a cutting in the hedge, again limiting the experience through the tunnelled vision. Whiteing's character is neither inside nor outside, but held aloft between the two whilst he is expectantly waiting for his friend and the rest of the plot to unfold. This literal impression of dislocation from the surroundings parallels Charles's metaphorical dislocation, created by his unease in the hotel and his lack of connection to anything other than his new friend Seton.

After considering the view from the outside, and the view from the inside out, Whiteing now moves to the description of the interior of the hotel rooms, which is as important to the understanding of the space, for it creates a more three-dimensional and complete picture of the environment.  The variation in textures, smells and sounds throughout this passage fills the space and creates an atmosphere, which becomes easier to visualize, and is paralleled by the attention to the muted sensory experience of the balcony.  The rooms Whiteing describes, and in particular this hotel room, do not just evoke feelings in characters, but seem physically to respond to them in a mutual exchange of action and reaction, filling the spaces with qualities that cause physical reactions in the characters who occupy them.   This is clear when our attention is drawn to [a] lay figure, moulded exactly to [Seton's] shape, which stands in a corner, clad in his latest suit.'[215] The mannequin seems to exude an element of Seton's personality; it provides the reader with a sense of who he is. Inanimate objects within the room take on the appearance of their master, which just so happens to be a temporary master in this case and thus heightens the effect of a responsive environment.  In fact, Whiteing gives the whole room an identity that is

---

[215] Whiteing, *John Street,* p. 160.

separate from the characters within it, one which is formulated before any of them enter and which remains an impenetrable force once they are inside.

The opulence of the hotel, the luxurious fabrics and furnishings creates a feeling of overabundance and claustrophobia:

> Hundreds come hither every day, hundreds depart; yet the place is as quiet as any other asylum for the insane.  Thick walls keep the patients apart: to judge by the abundance of tapestry, there are many padded rooms.  For the difficulty of finding your way in it without guidance, it is another labyrinth of the Twelve Kings.[216]

The 'hundreds' of people give a human feel to the hundreds of rooms acknowledged earlier, and yet, the speed with which they are replacing each other only signifies these individuals as a marker of transience.  The reference to the inhabitants of the hotel as 'inmates' and the description of 'thick walls' and an over abundance of tapestries which turn the hotel rooms into 'padded rooms'[217] metaphorically associates the hotel room (primarily a place of luxury and relaxation) with a cell of a prison or psychiatric ward.  This shows how easily an apparently comforting space can be turned into something overpowering and uncontrollable.  There are now two 'personalities' that fill the room, the human and what might be termed the 'spatial' one; moreover, the sometimes overbearing animate space can become unproductive to the characters' development.

Whiteing also considers the staff of the hotel, and is impressed early in the scene that the doorkeeper remembers his friend's name: '[t]he surest sign of my friend's social importance'[218]  This constitutes a significant part of Seton's experience in the hotel as, in some small way, he becomes differentiated from the

---

[216] Whiteing, *John Street*, p. 147.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., p. 146.

hundreds'. The doorkeeper is an unchanging presence and an existence that can be relied on; the fact that he remembers Seton's name gives this character permanence in the unstable and impersonal space, although the relationship is not reciprocated and the doorkeeper himself remains nameless.  It is unclear whether the doorkeepers do this because of Seton's reputation and standing or whether he has been there so long he is remembered.  If it is the latter it is a depressing realization as this building is the closest thing he has to home.  The narrator notes that to be remembered 'in establishments of this size [⌒] is a patent of distinction'[219] thereby reinstating Seton's hierarchy above other 'inmates'.  Seton is distinguished from the masses; no longer a mere number, he has a name, personality and history.  The resulting feeling is that this interaction with staff, and the establishment of an identity, is unusual in such a sterile and formulaic space.  The crowd milling and passing through the doors is a repetitive force, and it is more usual for individual identity to be lost in the grouping together of people as the individual is just one of the hundreds that pass every day.

As Charles moves through the building, before entering his friend's room, he is escorted through the space by porters:

> Three chamberlains in livery successively take charge of me as I
> pass from the hall to the private rooms.  They transfer me from one
> to the other with looks of reverence; they take receipts for me in
> expressive glances; and Seton's own man nods a final
> acknowledgement of delivery intact as he opens the door of his
> master's suite.[220]

It is the servants or 'the chamberlains in livery' who know the space intimately and who are able to guide him through it.  He becomes a possession that needs delivering and is transferred to his final destination in a systematic method.  There is no ability,

[219] Whiteing, *John Street*, p. 147.
[220] Ibid.

here, for Charles to relax and wander and take in the surroundings as his traverse through the space is businesslike and efficient. Charles needs to be guided through the space by people that know it personally; he is passed from one nameless person to another in swift and ready succession, and becomes as inanimate as a package that is delivered to its final destination intact. This is made explicit by the reference to the "receipt" that is taken on arrival. The employees of the hotel are placed in opposition to characters such as Seton who pay to inhabit it; the employees have a much closer involvement with the spaces around them. They seem to "know" the spaces much more than the paying guests do and their knowledge of the space allows them to work with such a degree of accuracy, creating an odd relationship between different classes within this artificial environment. Charles creates a connection between himself and Seton through their friendship, and Charles' familiarity with the hotel is aided by Seton's high status within the hotel hierarchy.

The meeting with Seton is the reason for the introduction of the hotel space to the narrative; without Seton's developing relationship with Charles the hotel scene would not be needed. Therefore, it is interesting that the progression of Charles through the hotel space and his reaction to it is described in considerable detail before Seton even enters. Seton's name keeps reappearing through this section of the narrative, but he is an elusive presence. When Seton does finally enter, the narrative returns to conversation and a more personal interaction between servant and employer; Charles is removed to the background. Seton is thus used as a reference point to help position the hotel space within Charles' everyday life. Charles' only connection to the scene is his friendship with Seton, so the initial removal of Seton is instrumental to our understanding of the sense of dislocation that is implicit in the description of the hotel.

I would like to suggest that in this brief scene Whiteing demonstrates how difficult it is to create a connection with the spatial environment of the hotel. Of particular importance is the language that Whiteing uses to describe the space, the way it acts in accordance with its characters, and how it manages to have a personality of its own. Charles' uneasiness in returning to his home-life (that is now so changed due to his experience away from it) is heightened by the unusual nature of this meeting with his friend. Despite the negative association of fear and unease, there is also a sense of excitement at the uncovering of new relationships and experiences; it is therefore fitting that their meeting takes place in the glamorous world of a luxury hotel. The dual nature of this experience is encapsulated in Whiteing's oxymoronic phrase 'ghastly lightness of heart' that he uses to preface *No. 5 John Street*, drawing attention to the concurrent feelings of freedom and threat that dominate these areas. The spaces are no longer just two-dimensional landscapes on which characters are placed, but are joined in a three dimensional unity, moving away from the flat surface of a painting or photograph to an organic and complete experience. The space becomes separate from real life, an experience that is out of the ordinary and although it may exude luxury, paradoxically the more it tries to create a comfortable and lavish experience the more alienated the characters become.

I have used Richard Whiteing's novel here as an example of how the focus on space, and particularly the hotel, began to change in the late nineteenth century. This scene is a snapshot, which if removed from the story would do nothing to alter the plot; it would only alter our perception of the characters and the relationships between them. It is an isolated strategy on Whiteing's part, but one that aids our impression of the characters and environment and this overall sense of dichotomous excitement and anxiety. Whiteing's novel draws together some of the concerns of spatial theory and

highlights how intensely a character can be influenced by the space around him due to

the mixture of influences that make up that space and the altered sense of reality

created through intense focus on atmosphere and effect.

# Chapter 3: Geography

As Alex observes in Henry Green's *Party Going,* '[p]laces alter circumstances'[221] an apparently simple deduction that certainly needs explaining.  How exactly do places alter circumstances and what is the effect of this alteration?  In the above quotation what might be termed a 'normal' or common-sense understanding of causality seems to have been reversed: so the external conditions affecting an action (the usual meaning of 'circumstances') are themselves seen as determined by what is usually considered as that static or fixed entity – 'place' – against which actions are played out.  Put more simply, 'place' has been given the agency usually attributed to circumstances – 'place' can exert power over a subject.  In the case of the hotel, there is something in its make-up which affects the individuals who inhabit it.   In what I have termed 'hotel fiction' the hotel is a space that is devised and created to have a personality of its own, a discrete identity that is capable of producing reactions in those that come in contact with it.

Critics such as Linda Hoffman see the city as an open space 'in which people come alive, where they expose, acknowledge, and address the discordant parts of themselves and one another'[222]  Here there is an element of passivity on the part of the city: its influence is not coercive for it is the subject who is given primary agency in the sense that he or she is 'doing' the exposing, acknowledging and addressing.  The city just offers a space in which these activities can take place.  By contrast, the argument of this chapter is that the hotel as a space, and a constituent part of the city, plays a much more active role.  Instead of merely being a space in which new kinds of actions take place and self discoveries are made, the hotel actually enables such events and determines the forms they take – it 'alters circumstances'. This chapter

---

[221] Henry Green, *Party Going* (1939; London: Vintage, 2000), p. 119.
[222] Linda Hoffman, 'Walter Benjamin's Infernal City,' *Washington State University Research Studies* 52 (1983): 354.

will focus on the geographical aspect of hotel organization, analyzing how the layout and function of hotel rooms and the hotel site in general comment on human relations and behaviour in a context set apart from the everyday world. The removal of characters from their familiar context creates, I will argue, a hyper sense of unreality which in turn allows the production of strange reactions and emotions. Once inside the hotel, individuals are unable to function 'normally' – their 'abnormal' surroundings have disconnected them from what is habitual or 'everyday'. I will go so far as to suggest that the hotel space has some form of ontology – it is, in a sense, a character (with agency) in its own right. How this ontology is established and how it functions will be the prime focus of this chapter.

This chapter will consider, primarily, the works of Henry Green and Elizabeth Bowen, writers whose works are dramatically different in terms of style and technique but are united by subject matter. Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* (1927) and Henry Green's *Party Going* (1939) both address the nature of community in an apparently groundless society; both authors focus attention on bonds between characters through detailed examination of events within the space of the hotel. *The Hotel* is set on the Italian Riviera, a popular site for British tourists. The novel opens and closes within this setting; the guests have already arrived and stay until the end of the novel. The action takes place almost entirely within the surrounding area of the hotel and the only characters involved are the guests and the staff of the establishment.

In *Party Going,* too, the majority of the action takes place within the hotel and the main characters are all connected through links in the outside world, although no bond formed within the hotel has a lasting connection or relevance in the outside world. The characters are drawn together in a strange sense of interconnection – the majority are only a friend of a friend of another member of the group; it is thus a

somewhat anomalous collection of characters that come together in the hotel. In this respect, the dislocation or dissociation of the group is inherent in the very foundation of their friendships. The illusory atmosphere, and these fragile connections between characters, creates a framework in which identity is malleable and characters flit between emotions and opinions, and vacillate between friends, lovers and cliques.

Green's novel follows a group of characters that are stalled on their travels by a dense fog that comes down like a blanket over the station they are travelling from. Green juxtaposes the heady emotions of a group preparing for a holiday, with the ethereality of the fog that quilts the knowable environment; thus, like Bowen, he skews the normal connection between the characters and their space. The characters remove themselves to the station hotel in order to find a safer atmosphere, where they can rest and contemplate their situation. Time, then, stands still, as their journey is halted. The narrative progresses from a starting point that was never imagined by the characters. To them the hotel space is sterile and the knowledge that the experience is temporary, a place from which they will either return home or move on with their journey, inhibits their ability to form relationships. The main character Max is the organizer of the group and is the link that joins them all together. The rest, as I have noted, are held together by the tenuous connection of merely being a friend of a friend. Yet, Green removes Max for a large portion of the narrative; he is left drinking alone in the bar while the rest of the group tread wearily along without him.

Another novel that is necessary to consider in this chapter is Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (2001) which shows distinct similarities to the work of Bowen and Green: in its conceptualization of the hotel it develops techniques witnessed in the earlier two works and it also develops suggestions of a hotel 'personality' seen in Whiteing's work. The un-describable and indiscriminating sense of the power of space

encountered in *Hotel World* radically exploits the spatial dynamics of the hotel. The characters involved are: a young homeless girl (Else), who lives on the streets outside the hotel; a chambermaid (Sara), who had recently died at the hotel and now acts as narrator; a successful career girl (Penny), who stays at the hotel and witnesses many of the events; and the hotel receptionist (Lise), who takes pity on Else and pays for her to stay in one of the rooms. Else enters the hotel for refuge; she encounters friendliness from the staff but is utterly overwhelmed by the extreme luxury of the space. As in Bowen's and Green's novels, Smith's hotel space is an active force over character before the novel even begins. The narrative opens with a section entitled 'past': the major event in the life of Sara (namely her death) has already taken place and she backtracks to relate the cause of her demise and the events that lead up to it: '[h]ere's the story; it starts at the end'.[223] This is similar to Bowen's opening, as the chapter that focuses on 'The Quarrel' narrates the repercussions of an event that has already occurred. However, space in Smith's novel exerts a more unyielding sense of its own power; its identity is already formed and the novel examines how characters function in relation to the presence of what I have termed a 'spatial personality'. Both Bowen's and Green's novels open in a more tentative manner.

I will also refer briefly to Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*, works which also share a deep concern with the hotel as a geographical structure. Smith, Brookner, Bowen, Ishiguro and Green all deal minutely with the intricacies of how individuals traverse and utilize spaces, creating a dynamic impression of the relationship, or power balance, between the character and what is, as I have said, usually assumed to be a static structure. These writers also show a particular fascination with the effects of perspective on our interpretation of

---

[223] Ali Smith, *Hotel World* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 3.

spaces; the representation of one room can change dramatically when the focus is slightly shifted or obscured.

Again, returning to Bowen, there is a great deal of discussion about the author's role in creating space and character in her collection of essays *The Mulberry Tree*.[224]  When discussing how she writes and how she forms her characters, her own agency is lost in the process:

> Plot might seem to be a matter of choice.  It is not.  The particular
> plot for the particular novel is something the novelist is driven to.  It
> is what is left after the whittling-away of alternatives.  The novelist
> is confronted, at a moment (or at what appears to be the moment:
> actually its extension may be indefinite) by the impossibility of
> saying what is to be said in any other way [the novelist is forced by]
> a mass of subject matter that has accumulated 'impressions
> received, feelings about experience, distorted results of ordinary
> observation, and something else'.[225]

As with her characters, Bowen's writing process is formulated on vagueness and indirection: 'impressions', 'feelings', and 'distorted results' all accumulate into one mass and direct the writer in the ordering of these abstract gatherings.  The 'something else' she speaks of is later defined as 'extra matter' that which is superfluous and not fixed, but is readily carried along in the process: '[i]t is luggage left in the hall between two journeys, as opposed to the perpetual furniture of rooms'.[226]  In Bowen's reasoning the author is on a journey as much as the characters. When these characters find themselves in the hotel, their intentions, along with the control of the author, are lost in the maelstrom of the hotel network.

---

[224] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree*, ed. Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986).
[225] Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree,* p. 35.
[226] Ibid.

Later, in Bowen's description of character a similar lack of agency is envisaged. The actions of characters seem to be more important than the creation of a solid character itself; first and foremost "[t]he characters are there to provide the action. Each character is created, and must only be so created, as to give his or her action [∧] verisimilitude"[227] They are not made but "found"[228] The focus here is on chance, the coming upon a character in which the creator, the author, has no influence in the creation. When we get to her description of a novel's scenery there is more agency in the tone, and yet the agency is more on the side of the space itself: "[t]he locale of the happening always colours the happening, and often, to a degree, shapes it"[229] Later, she continues along the same thread and is even more explicit: "[s]cene is only justified in the novel where it can be shown, or at least felt, to act upon action or character. In fact, where it has dramatic use"[230] As a precursor to later experimentation, Bowen's, and similarly Green's, *colouring*, or *shaping* of character through the power of space is an indication of the later *formation* of character through space in Smith's and Ishiguro's novels. For Bowen and Green this colouring is a way of exemplifying the "anaesthetized and bewildered present"[231]

## Radical hotel experimentation

### Movement and Perspective

Ali Smith's *Hotel World* radically exploits the spatial dynamics of the hotel. Smith takes a specific hotel and follows the storyline of five separate characters who

---

[227] Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 36.
[228] Ibid., p. 37.
[229] Ibid., p. 39.
[230] Ibid., p. 40.
[231] Ibid., p. 5.

are equally involved with the building but who have different functions within the story; therefore, each character brings a different viewpoint to the hotel and its function in the narrative.  This novel, as with the others included in this section of the thesis, follows the characters from the outside in, dealing first with the exterior and surrounding area, and then its relation to the interior spaces.  My analysis will follow a similar route, examining the prominence of the hotel and its identity within the street, before moving on to the experiences in its interior.

Interestingly, it is when outside the hotel that Else, the homeless girl, feels the protection of the building as she is literally supported by the hotel walls: '[t]he sky is the ceiling, the buildings are the walls; she has the hotel wall behind her back now, holding her up'.[232]  For her, in this instance, the hotel is more solid and protective than any other space and the street is positioned as the alienating and threatening 'other'.  The power of the hotel's identity is apparent as it commands the street around it, proving that it can exert agency over other spaces as well as the humans that reside within it.  However, when she crosses the road and looks at the hotel from a distance Else's perspective changes:

> From over this side of the road you can't not see the hotel.  It's like
> the street exists just for the hotel to be there in it [∧] It is lit up from
> outside; up-lights spaced all along its front make it look rich,
> expensive and strange [∧] With its awnings either side of its door,
> the building has a kind of face.  The awnings are the eyelids, the
> word GLOBAL scarred across them both.[233]

Here the street's existence is dependent on the hotel, ascribing to it an ontological status.  Of course, Else's status as a homeless girl in a large city immediately alienates

[232] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 40.
[233] Ibid., p. 64.

her from a space such as the grand metropolitan hotel which promotes an open-door policy, but a policy that only remains open if you are the right 'type' of person. This is re-iterated by the capitalization of the word GLOBAL and the universality of hotels such as these which constantly reproduce similar experiences in different people; their aim is to include the general population, but outcast individuals like Else. The personification of the space adds to this tension due to the ambiguity of a 'kind of face' that is 'scarred' and de-familiar. Her views of the hotel from outside are further complicated by her entrance into the hotel and her attempt to luxuriate in the surroundings. When offered a room free of charge by a kindly hotel employee she enters the hotel space, and from then on the sense of support she had earlier experienced diminishes; she begins to acknowledge the power of the space due to her altered perspective. Her physical movements trace a line from the wall, to the opposite street, to the interior of one of the private rooms, and thereby help to visualize the space and relate it to her constantly changing feelings towards the hotel.

Once inside the hotel room, the immediacy of Else's alienation is apparent. She luxuriates in the bath and contemplates the randomness of all the tiny individually sealed cosmetics, an immediate and stultifying image of transience. Despite her attention to the sumptuousness of the bathroom the image that stays with her is that of her own body reflected in the shiny silver taps: 'distorted, pink and smudged, squeezed small and tight [∧] she looms at herself, small and misshapen'[234] Whilst on the outside of the hotel Else has to survive as an adult but as soon as she enters the hotel room her physicality is reduced to that of a child. She even starts to act like a child, investigating the bottles of cosmetics with an infantile

---

[234] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 71.

112

intensity: "she had already opened one and tasted it on her tongue."[235] Just like a

small child she tries to comprehend this new world through the use of all her senses.

Curiously this child-like element is juxtaposed with a more mature and sensuous

portrayal of the water running down her breasts reminding us of her real age as she is

on the brink of adulthood.  Her adolescence is marked by this intriguing interplay

between youth and maturity, particularly sexual maturity.  She is a liminal character

who is affected by the sensual onslaught that the hotel provides.  The bath becomes

her nemesis, her antagonist as it has produced such a strange reaction in her.  The

threat becomes more heightened as she constantly refers back to the taps repeating the

same phrases: "[T]hey're just taps. They're just stupid fucking taps."[236]  Interestingly,

she draws attention to the possibility of their influence beyond the realm of their

materiality: "[a]ll they can do is do what you make them do.  They can't do anything

else. Anything, Else."[237]  Her need to question what the taps can possibly do seems, if

analyzed out of context, flippant and paranoid, and yet alongside this intoxicating

atmosphere in which her identity flips from strength to weakness, childliness to

adulthood, across just a few pages, the question of threat is located in the complexity

of the space and how it can overpower those individuals encapsulated within it.

Smith transforms the words "anything else" into an inwardly turning repetitive

reminder to herself, Else, that the taps can't do anything.  This does nothing to

confirm our belief in what she is reiterating.  Instead, it reaffirms exactly what she is

trying to dispel; the taps, as representative of the hotel's power can and will do

"anything." Else then actively tries to become the antagonist, turning the taps on full

blast with a defiant attitude; but then has to step out of the bath because the water is

too hot.  Everything in the room becomes too hot.  The bath fills almost to the top

---

[235] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 70.
[236] Ibid., p. 75.
[237] Ibid.

before she thrusts her hand in to pull out the plug.  She leaves the bathroom having learnt nothing other than a newfound sense of fear, paranoia and instability.  The taps become symbolic of the wider threat of the hotel and have sufficient power to produce overwhelming feelings of disorientation in Else.

Her bedroom suite has a threatening aspect similar to the bathroom.  When back in the bedroom she remembers a newspaper article written about her by a local reporter.  She closes her eyes and pictures the print.  Beside the article, 'her name. ELSPETH'[238]  Never before has she referred to herself by this name and never again does she do so in this narrative.  Although not directly linked to the events passed in the bathroom space, a pattern is recurring concerning an unstable sense of her identity.  The inclusion of her full and more formal name defamiliarizes her from her own view of her self, and us, the reader, from our original view of her character. ELSPETH is someone else entirely.

This sense of disorientation is not experienced only by Else; anonymity is as alienating for other characters as it is for Else, despite the differing social positions and greater right to the space that paying guests have.  Lying on her bed Penny, the journalist, dreams of 'the ideal place, the flawless place'[239] (something that could be conceived as coming true for both of these characters due to the reality of such 'perfect' surroundings).  This fanciful vision sets up this hotel as a utopia.  However, interlaced with this unreal image is Penny's unease and isolation and her realization that the room is actually under-maintained and in need of repair. She speaks out loud, listing the faults she has found, and the room around her responds 'by closing in on her. Its walls loomed down, its ceiling lowered like the threat of bad sky'[240]  The room in Smith's novel reacts immediately to the communication from the subject,

---

[238] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 77.
[239] Ibid., p. 130.
[240] Ibid.

forming an interaction, as if between two characters; the closing of the walls acts as repetition of the scene in which the taps transform Else ☞ idea of herself. It is a lack of connection that is the problem for both characters; because Else does not belong in the hotel she is unable to survive within it (here it is worth remembering that her lack of belonging is stronger than that of the official, paying guests). Penny ☞ lack of connection arises through a lack of understanding: her reality fails to correspond to the idealized expectation and therefore creates a disjunction. The speed with which Else ☞ life and habitat change from street to luxurious apartment, even though only temporary, intensifies the feeling of disconnection. The juxtaposition of these vastly opposed spaces is reminiscent of Richard Whiteing ☞ fast-paced narratorial movements between slums and five-star hotels. We begin to see some connection between the use of the hotel in late nineteenth-century realist literature and that of a post-modern novel. Else is an extraordinary character whose function in the novel is to frame the space and consider its function whilst dealing with the alterity of its viewpoints.

**Death and identity**

One character that Else ☞ narrative intertwines with is that of Sara, the dead chambermaid. Space, very simplistically but also specifically, manages to exert its power here as this character falls to her death in the opening of the novel, at the hands of the hotel itself:

> Wooooooooo ☞
> hooooooo what a fall what a soar what a plummet
> what a dash into dark into light what a plunge what a
> glide thud crash what a drop what a rush what a swoop
> what a fright what a mad hushed skirl what a smash

> mush mash-up broke and gashed what a heart in my
>
> mouth what an end.
>
> What a life.
>
> What a time.
>
> What I felt.  Then.  Gone.[241]

Rather like concrete poetry, the form of the novel in this section dramatically traces this plummet as the description is laid out on the page in a narrow paragraph that follows the vertical line of the character falling down the narrow shaft of the broken dumb-waiter.  The punctuation, or lack of, corresponds to the speed and exhilaration of the fall, which is then counter-poised by the short, choppy and dramatically visual sentences that describe the end of Sara's life, resulting in the last sentence that contains just one word: 'Gone.'  This rhythmical description of both a character's physical movement and her internal musings on the most dramatic event of the novel is further accentuated by the alliteration of the soft, tonal consonant sounds, particularly at the beginning of the line, and the repetition of rhyming words: 'mush, rush, mush.'  The velvety quality of these sounds are placed alongside the harsh quality of 'broke' and 'gashed' which illuminates the violence being wrought on her body.  The intense and varying feelings in this account, and the heartbreaking beauty of the description, are clouded by the knowledge that Sara is about to die: here the space overpowers a character in the most final way possible.

Ironically, with the narrator now dead ('Dead leg.  Dead arm.  Dead hand.  Dead eye.  Dead I.'[242]) the space becomes correspondingly more animated; the traditional relationship between an active character and an inert or fixed scenery is reversed, fulfilling the 'grave promise'[243] afforded to the space in the opening scene.

---

[241] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 3.
[242] Ibid., p. 4.
[243] Ibid., p. 8.

There, the spatial arrangement of the words on the page immerse us, via the reading process, in space, so we feel, as we read, that we are actually falling through the void along with Sara.  The juxtaposition of this elastic sense of interior space, with the movement of the walls that Penny experiences in the hotel suite, serves to concretize this threat that is instantiated by the property of the space.  As I will demonstrate, throughout the novel, characters battle against this 'spatial' threat but consistently fail in their attempts to break free from it.

It might be thought that the death of Sara in *Hotel World*, and her ghostly presence for the remainder of the narrative, would grant her greater liberty as a character, empowering her to move through space unseen and without limitation, and thereby possibly ascribing to her some of the properties, particularly those of fluidity and flux, that belong to space itself.  However, the opposite seems to be the case, for it is in fact the materiality of life that Sara misses, including her own sensate body: 'I will miss red. I will miss blue and green.  I will miss the shapes of women and men.  I will miss the smell of my own feet in summer.  I will miss smell.  My feet. Summer.'[244]  Here, the personal pronoun 'Sara's attempt at assertiveness over, we might say, that disorientating spatial void she has fallen through 'is prominent; but the pronouns progressively diminish, alongside Sara's deteriorating confidence, in the narrative.  At this point Sara is nostalgic for her old position as an 'everyday' character, as someone who can touch and smell and live.  Her death, her fall through space, is depriving her of her sense of 'self' 'of the 'I' which realist fiction typically constructs by reference to material things, to objects or possessions. Sara finds herself in a new and altered reality 'the powerful reality of 'space' which has its own kind of presence.

---

[244] Smith, *Hotel World,* pp. 7-8.

This concern with the connection between what it means to be human in space is explored throughout the novel with Sara's exhortations on the human body.  In his article on modern culture and the Bonaventure Hotel Jameson states that:

> For the newer aesthetic the representation of space itself has come to be felt as incompatible with the representation of the body: a kind of aesthetic division of labour far more pronounced than in any of the earlier generic conceptions of landscape.[245]

The incompatibility between space and the body, and therefore between Sara's character and the (new) environment in which she finds herself, is evidenced in the friction, in Smith's novel, between the dead character and the living space (normally, as I have said, we expect to encounter living characters acting in fixed environments).  Although the dead Sara *is* able to flow through physical boundaries in space, she does so to try to regain some form of corporeality.  The most striking instance is the scene where she returns to her own grave and tries to re-enter her own body:

> Down I went far further than stupefied bulbs till I passed through the lid of the wooden room, smooth and costly on the outside, chipboard-cheap at the centre.  One last time I slipped into our old shape, hoisting her shoulders round me and pushing down into her legs and arms and through her splintery ribs, but the fitting was ill, she was broken and rotting, so I lay half-in, half-out of her under the ruched frills of the room's innards, cold I reckon, and useless pink in the dark.[246]

This liminal world that she faces, and obviously does not understand, is represented by the stark visuality of the ghostly figure that is lying 'half-in, half-out' of her own dead body.  The constant slipping between the pronouns 'I', 'our', 'her', and 'me'

---

[245] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 34.
[246] Smith, *Hotel World*, pp. 14-15.

shows how fragile the balance is between the animate and inanimate, death and life. It also indicates, as I noted earlier, the deterioration in Sara's sense of self, a process which continues in the next part of the narrative as she forgets the words for certain human features; so her eyes —significantly one of the primary sense organs —become merely "[t]he things she saw with".[247] The past tense, "saw", draws attention to her lost materiality. The natural physical boundaries of earth and wood are made fluid as the character moves through them. The description of the inside space as "innards" draws attention to the animate and bodily space inside the coffin. The space is more human than the character; senses and bodily descriptions are transferred from human to space and back again. They almost melt into one, but remain "half-in, half-out". Ultimately, however, the power of space is reinforced as the character begins to comprehend she will never experience real life again. Sara's fear of the "nothing", a concept which links all novels dealt with here (usually in relation to the loss of identity, here it is the loss of life), leads to her pursuit of physical sensation as a way of reversing the descent into meaninglessness, a fear we have witnessed in Kracauer's examination of empty hotel spaces.

The use of the dead narrator is relevant for another reason, as the ghost-like presence creates an intermediary somewhere between that of a living character and the existence of space. Sara —as I noted —has the ability to move through rooms unobserved and to sit on "the beds of people who sensed no one there, no one else in the room but them".[248] This indicates the naiveté of individuals who believe that they have power over their own world, and who have no recognition that there may be other forces that fill space. This marginal, half-living, half-dead narrator, helps to position the reader in something like Soja's concept of the thirdspace, something

---

[247] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 15
[248] Ibid., p. 7.

other-than an appreciation of the conventional character or the opposing space. Thirdspace as a concept is not sanctified in and of itself.  The critique is not meant to stop at three, to construct a holy trinity, but to build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known.[249] Smith allows us to see the possibilities of multiple interpretations and experiments with space.  These possibilities in turn are foreshadowed, as I noted, in Whiteing's assessment of space, and we can see some similarities between Smith's and Whiteing's techniques through their attempts to focus on the in-between state of the hotel.  The liminal space of Whiteing's balcony scene has, however, developed into something more revolutionary in Smith's *Hotel World*.


## Noise and Nothingness

*Hotel World* also deals with the emptiness of the hotel space as epitomized by the attention to silences and the effect that silence has on a space.  On her own in the hotel room, Penny (the career girl) feels its impact:

> What an infernal noise, Penny thought, blinking.  What a terrible
> endless noise.  It's just as well we aren't actually able to hear it [︿]
> But with the TV off and the sound of her own laugh fading she could
> hear too much silence now, and round behind the silence the
> anonymous shiftings of people in this dreary building who had no
> idea who she was or that she was even there, and the anonymous
> streetlit scufflings of this dreary one-theatre late-evening town
> beyond the hotel in the high view from her window.[250]

Again, it is the overwhelming feeling of nothingness that comes with the deafening silence.  Penny realizes this clearly through her fear that no-one knows she is there. In the first sentence, in the above quotation, the noise is linked to consciousness as

[249] Soja, *Thirdspace,* p. 61.
[250] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 129.

Penny thinks and tries to absorb the unwelcome intrusion into her own personal space. The fact that she blinks to try to block out the noise invokes another sense and thus reminds us how insidious silence actually is and the effect of its almost physical presence. This pervasiveness is again made explicit by the reference to "too much". The silence is too much to deal with because it is *so* silent. Silence is an extreme characteristic of the hotel space, and creates a sense of terror in the individual because of its almost physical inception. The monotony of the "endless" noise is an element of the monotony of hotel life in general, created by the uniformity of the hotel. The ethereality of the space is further stressed in the ghost-like "anonymous shiftings". The movements of the people around Penny are no comfort as their anonymity makes the trepidation worse and allows for no connection between her and the other inhabitants. The unknowable nature of the silence is strengthened by the occasional mysterious noise that filters through, but does nothing to dispel the threat.

We also encounter the issue of liminality in this passage; in a manner similar to Whiteing's balcony scene, Penny tries to draw the outside in through the window. There is a reference to the view "beyond" but again Penny is distanced from that "beyond" because of her "high view" and elevated perspective. There are similarities, too, to De Certeau's view from the top of the World Trade Center, as Penny looks down on the world below, trying to make sense of her position in it. Yet there is little of De Certeau's positivity as the distancing is so concretized. Penny has no connection to that beyond. Intriguingly, the silence of her immediate space is cut-off from the "anonymous shiftings" that occur "behind" the silence, which in turn is distinct from the "streetlit scufflings" of those below. The access to those other areas is denied to her by the solidity of the silence that encompasses her. As Kracauer notes, it is silence that "compels one downward into the equality of the encounter with

121

the nothing, an equality that a voice resounding through space would disturb.'[251]

Penny listens to her own laugh fading into silence; the disjunction between the laugh and the silence can only compel her downward and further away from any possibility of transgressing the wider spaces of the hotel and street that remain 'beyond' and 'behind' her.

The three 'levels' of character used in the hotel space of Smith's novel (from the living, through the dead, to the animated space) are suggestive of its complexity. Similarly, as all characters (whether dead or alive) have intense reactions to the space, we are left with a cacophony of responses that can only make us reflect on the power of the space. Smith's dealings with lifelessness, movement, the importance of silences, the effect of the nothing and the interactions between different characters, show interesting similarities to other hotel works. Smith's post-modern novel is generally commended for its radical experimentation; however, as I will now show, her animation of space is linked to earlier works of hotel fiction through the intense examination of hotel subjectivity.

<div align="center">

**Interwar explorations**

</div>

**Movement and Perspective**

Henry Green's 1939 novel *Party Going* opens with a small group of hastily assembled characters converging in, or making their way to, the railway station, on their way to a holiday in Europe – an intention that is never actually realized. The sense of holidaymaking establishes the station hotel as suspended somewhere between home and holiday, and between station and city. This in turn makes us realize that there is something else beyond – something 'other-than' what is available to the characters in

---

[251] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 181.

their resting place, and to us in the hotel. The knowledge that it will never become available makes the space more threatening. When intense fog envelops the city the characters are halted on their journey and take refuge in the hotel. This creates a sense of anticipation which is never fulfilled and which leaves the characters vulnerable ま unsure of how to act and behave in the static environment. The characters constantly question what is happening outside, and dream of the holiday that is waiting for them:

> Indeed, this promise of where they were going lay back of all their
> minds or feelings, common to all of them. If they did not mention it,
> it was why they were in this hotel and there was not one of them [へ]
> who did not every now and again most secretly revert to it.[252]

The static nature of this site is traversed imaginatively by those immersed within it as they constantly dream of the beyond, the future. The promise of the hotel is intertwined with the mutual promise of the future that never seems to come. The stasis of the site overpowers and supersedes all sense of travel. The refuge soon takes a sinister turn as those unable to enter the hotel become trapped on the station concourse where they are swept up in a frenzy of panic and claustrophobia. Initially, a fragile sense of community is formed between those characters who are able to occupy and take refuge in the hotel. It is an odd sense of refuge, however, for they do, of course, remain in the city where they live; yet at the same time they are removed from their everyday life and hemmed in by external circumstances (that is, by the obscuring fog and the steel shutters). When Max takes charge and rents them a room, they at least have a space to rest and recuperate. The middle section of the novel, however, only really consists of conversation, word-play, gossip and flirtation ますuperficial relations that underline the seriousness of their predicament. When actions do occur they appear so over-exaggerated that they become absurd. Green

---

[252] Green, *Party Going,* pp. 41-42.

continuously plays with point of view giving different descriptions of entrances and exits in order to juxtapose various characters' reactions to the same space, highlighting the distinctions between interior and exterior space.

The tension initially derives from the characters' discomfort in the defamiliarized space. As Tim Parks has stated in the introduction to the Vintage edition of the novel: 'We should be familiar with the scene. A major railway station in central London [⌃] Yet no sooner have we read a paragraph of Green's prose than we know that this is not the case.'[253] The form of the novel and its intensely stylized prose correspond to the alienating nature of the subject matter. The opening paragraph is just two lines long: '[F]og was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead, at her feet.'[254] The bird is the subject of the opening sentence whilst the unnamed woman remains incidental. As the bird falls at her feet she has no agency or contact with the event; she is a bystander to the main narrative. Human subjectivity has no impact on the opening of the novel. The odd punctuation, sentence structure and the monosyllabic rhythm add a lilting, staccato effect to the narrative, which is continued throughout. It is similar to that achieved by Smith in the description in *Hotel World* of the plummet through the lift-shaft, though it is also more sterile due to the absence of human input. We are left wondering whose feet the bird drops at and why such an odd event opens this novel. The disorientating image creates a sense of unreality which turns out to be characteristic in a novel which focuses on the way illusory events impinge on everyday lives. Tim Parks goes on to argue that Green is using stylistic techniques to

---

[253] Green, *Party Going,* intro., p. v.
[254] Ibid., p. 1.

become the ’abettor of our disorientation.’[255]  Parks foregrounds this statement with the following description of this very technique:

> As if the ghostly material had seeped into the writer’s mind and syntax, obliging him, and us, to advance with hands outstretched in constant fear of some unexpected obstacle.[256]

The description of the fog and the other strange events is given form by this curious writing style.  The reader has to work to understand the events of the novel, and to uncover the deeper meaning as well as the feelings of the individual characters; in this sense we are following a process similar to that of the characters themselves, becoming physically involved in the hotel narrative and the anomalous environment; again, this is a similar process to that undergone by the reader that plummets with Sara in Smith’s *Hotel World*.

The strength of the simple opening clause (fog was so dense) immediately plunges the reader, like the characters of the novel, into an unknowable environment. The ethereal quality of the thick, dark and impenetrable fog has a disorienting effect, one so extreme that the characters lose sight of their own identity, as Julia Wray discovers: ’[a]s she stepped out into this darkness of fog [∧] she lost her name and was all at once anonymous.’[257]  Her lost name and identity is reminiscent of Else’s temporary metamorphosis into the unknown ELSPETH.  The fog fills the space with a forbidding presence, one that confuses and frightens the crowd, leaving individuals ’mesmerized in darkness.’[258]  The mesmeric quality sets the tone for the rest of the novel.

---

[255] Green, *Party Going* intro., p. v.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid., p. 6.
[258] Ibid., p. 7.

The narrative starts with this one unnamed female in the interior space and then tracks the others to the same resting point.  Green is careful to detail a collection of journeys that follow different routes and include characters both walking and arriving in cars.  We see cars turning round and their headlights sweeping, while pedestrians cross each others' paths just as the pigeon crosses the path of the unnamed woman.  Everyone is hurried; there is no wandering slowly, no calmness to the movements.  The station draws them in through its tunnels, again altering our perceptions, disconnecting the different spaces from each other as we move from the street to the darkness of the tunnel and then out into the openness of the interior that is crowded full of people.  There are strict lines between each space and each character has to traverse them.

All directional and positional statements are non-detailed and non-specific. 'Downstairs, open space, the street, the car'  There is nothing distinctive about them. The reader knows it is London because they are reminded of this occasionally, but the absence of any precise detail removes the obviousness of the London landscape; the indefiniteness of the description reinstates this hotel as global and typical. Paradoxically, in narratives of the city, the metropolis is often most visible when it is invisible, when the representations lack surface detail and topographical references to specific streets or areas and rely instead on ambience and suggestion.  As Julian Wolfreys states: 'knowing rather than just showing the city involves a response to colour and form, and not simply to what is there'[259]  Colour and form is represented in Green's novel by the strangeness of the dead bird which sets the tone for the dislocation later experienced by the main characters.  After five pages of strange

---

[259] Wolfreys, *Writing London* vol. III, p. 90.

dialogue and the carrying of the dead pigeon, its disposal and subsequent retrieval,
only then do we get locational description that acts as surface, or even surplus detail:

> The main office district of London centred round this station and
> now innumerable people, male and female, after thinking about
> getting home, were yawning, stretching, having another look at their
> clocks, putting files away and closing books.[260]

Other than the mention of London (despite the generalized and unnamed 'main office
district' that qualifies it) the descriptive style is the same in that it focuses on the
'innumerable' 'people', who are a collective group of males and females with no
perceptible individual identities.  As they leave work they come out in twos or threes
and the halted, tired movements of their yawning and stretching dramatically changes
as they join the fast-paced movements of those outside.  They flood out of the doors
and spread in a parasitic mass on the streets.  Their collective identity is defined by
their mutual desire to get home after work.  The traffic is gridlocked and motionless
while the mass moves down the street to the station, united in a desire to get home.
The main characters in the narrative are moving in the same direction but for an
entirely different purpose: a sightseeing trip on the continent.  These multiple and
diverse movements are reminiscent of Wolfreys' vision of the city:

> The reader is invited in turn to shift his or her perspective, from
> merely seeing to knowing London, not as a whole but, successively
> and serially, in impulses and surges; across the surfaces of its
> architectures, its topographies, its lines of flight, its shifting
> articulations, and in its intersections of flux.[261]

---

[260] Green, *Party Going,* p. 5.
[261] Wolfreys, *Writing London* vol. III*,* p. 134.

The hotel is one of those 'architectures' which becomes a static 'intersection' for further discoveries.  The hotel is epitomized by travel, transition and disconnection and yet there is some rigidity in the symbolic nature of the space.

This description of the generic group of commuters also shows a striking resemblance to De Certeau's characterization of the pedestrian introduced earlier:

> Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities.
> Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces.  They weave
> places together.  In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of
> these 'real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.'[262]

Green's commuters are also 'innumerable,' 'a collection of singularities,' but these singularities are not given voice.  De Certeau's individual walkers draw together as a positive force, an assembly of the multitude of experiences associated with the city, or on the street, or in the hotel.  Green, by contrast, fearsomely moulds his commuters together so their singularity is indistinguishable.  It is not a group of narratives joined, but lumped together, so we can only hear one voice, and that voice is deafening.  De Certeau's pedestrians have a real presence in the city and characterize a particular element of it; his individuals capture the positive element, the multiplicity, of the innumerable. Green's 'innumerable' by contrast, represents the opposite: the purposelessness of the crowd and the mundane nature of their travels.  Multiplicity, in this respect, is negative because of the repeated and meaningless motion of the journey, backwards and forwards every day.

As the fog comes down the traffic slows and the roads become congested; it is only those on foot who are able to move, but the growing crowds and the disorientation of the strange fog and darkening sky slow Green's characters.  Julia Wray feels this disorientation:

---

[262] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 97.

> Where hundreds of thousands she could not see were now going
> home, their day done, she was only starting out and there was this
> difference that where she had been nervous of her journey and of
> starting, so that she had said she would rather go on foot to the
> station to walk it off, she was frightened now.[263]

It is a mixture of the strange weather conditions, her unusual decision to walk, the

direction she is taking, away from home rather than towards it, and the growing

crowds and ethereal atmosphere that create this disorienting effect.  This

disorientation is made agonizing by Green's powerful twisting of syntax in this

sentence, and throughout the novel as a whole.  There is anxiety and nervousness in

the description; it is not the exhilaration of holidaying or the prospect of a new

adventure, but a real sense of fear that follows this character to the station and the

start of her real journey.

This dark shadow of fear follows all the characters to their destination and

tinges the holiday with a sense of apprehension rather than enthusiasm. This is

followed up by a later passage that sees Julia return home as she had forgotten

something:

> It had been bare as though she had never lived there.  Her curtains
> were down, they were being sent to be cleaned, her mattress had
> gone and her pillowcases were humps under dustsheets in the middle
> of her bed [∧] Julia had fled by taxi this time.[264]

It is interesting that Julia associates a sense of home with the recognition of

furnishings rather than more personal belongings.  It is not photos or keepsakes that

had been moved; we are not aware whether she possesses sentimental items such as

---

[263] Green, *Party Going*, p. 6.
[264] Ibid., p. 15.

these or whether they are just unimportant to her. It is the speed with which the room has been cleaned up that astonishes her. There is no remnant of her morning activities and no evidence that she had spent the night in this bed or the room. Strangely it is the homes the characters are leaving that have become unfamiliar in the transitional space of the journey to a new location. The minute they leave their impermanent surroundings their presence is eradicated and they are expected to move on and create roots in a new setting. The novel as a whole shows characters frozen in time and in place, in the liminal space of the station. The time spent in the station and its hotel is not a planned aspect of their journey and can therefore be seen as removed from time and place. As the space is impermanent, transient and impersonal they cannot take root in their new surroundings, but when they try to return home, as Julia does, this is no longer welcoming. Even their real lives are altered by the space. It is the removal of all evidence that she ever functioned in the room ま the erasure of her recent past ま that characterizes this loss of identity and feeling of homelessness for her.

The fact that she then decides to take a taxi back to the station is equally significant. She is conscious of the trouble she had on foot and is determined to learn from the experience. However, her traversal over the same ground, a repetitive action like that of the commuters, removes this sense of agency in the decision to choose another method of transport. Our knowledge that the streets are getting increasingly crowded and gridlocked with cars shows the negative effect of this decision. We are left with an impending and increasing sense of doom that her choice to travel by car will prove even less successful.

The sense of claustrophobia that the fog had instigated is continued by the close proximity of the station to the hotel. When the station is shut those that are able to secure hotel space are segregated from the crowd that gathers outside, and which

130

does not have the luxury of a resting place.  As the anxiety heightens the barriers become more pronounced and the endless flow of people into the station coagulates into a sinister mass.  Green describes them as having "pale lozenged faces"[265] faces that are reminiscent of the inhuman and deathly quality of Munch's *The Scream* (1893).  This sinister tone is continued when Julia looks down on the crowd from the window:

> [A]s she watched she saw this crowd was in some way different.  It could not be larger as there was no room, but in one section under her window it seemed to be swaying like branches rock in a light wind and, paying greater attention, she seemed to hear a continuous murmur coming from it [∧] and she heard them chanting beneath [∧] there was a shriek from somewhere in the crowd, it was all on a vast scale and not far above her was that vault of glass which was blue now instead of green, now that she was closer to it.  She had forgotten what it was to be outside, what it smelled and felt like, and she had not realized what this crowd was, just seeing it through glass.  It went on chanting WE WANT TRAINS, WE WANT TRAINS from that one section which surged to and fro and again that same woman shrieked, two or three men were shouting against the chant but she could not distinguish words.  She thought how strange it was when hundreds of people turned their heads all in one direction, their faces so much lighter than their dark hats, lozenges, lozenges, lozenges.[266]

Julia's position, raised above the crowd below, separates her from it.  When she opens the window, removing the transparent boundary, she feels closer to the crowd but more timorous due to the menacing sounds of their chanting and the random shrieks of the individual woman.  The fact that they are all looking at something we cannot

---

[265] Green, *Party Going*, p. 91.
[266] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

see from Julia's position adds to the disjunction of the scene in which different senses are employed to develop the level of threat between the two groups: the individual on the inside and the group outside. It is not just sight and sound that is affected but also smell; her inability to smell the atmosphere from inside adds to her separation and the impossibility of empathetic understanding. Despite the ominous quality, she does feel a need to connect with the crowd, and this is what causes her to open the window, yet the assault on her senses and the deathly quality of the noise only serves to alienate her further. She is aware of her position held aloft and also considers what is above her; being positioned under the 'vault of glass' reduces her own importance. The detail about the glass — that it has changed colour — displays the total, all-encompassing nature of the space that envelops and transforms quickly and without warning. The lack of punctuation in the quoted passage allows the impression of different aspects, along with her thoughts, to converge into one mass impression that is as foreboding as the mass below. Space and character merge: the movements of individuals are formulaic and systematic — the heads moving in unison to a directed point of space somewhere outside of the narrative viewpoint are as sterile and mechanical as the space around them — in a total vision of disjunction and isolation that overpowers the main characters who can only watch and react to the sensory overload.

Green's segmentation of space, the division between inside and outside through the use of the solid, mechanistic shutters or the fragile glass window, is also continued in his preoccupation with labelling particular spaces. In the first few pages the public spaces of 'DEPARTURES'[267] and 'LADIES'[268] are highlighted and in both instances it is open spaces (the mouth of a tunnel and a staircase) that Green contains

---

[267] Green, *Party Going*, p. 1.
[268] Ibid., p. 2.

by labelling in such a definitive way. This continues when Max enters through the "HOTEL ENTRANCE"[269] brutally dividing the hotel space from the station and separating the action in both spaces from each other. These labels aid our conceptualization of the space and help the characters that have come in from the bewilderment of the fog, but also heightens the animosity felt by the group outside. Interestingly Green's rigidity in defining space only helps to highlight the fluidity of his characters' identities. This is again stressed by the juxtaposition of the description of the steel shutters closing off the hotel from the station and the outside crowds who are looking for a place to rest. Green's claim that the entrance is now "impenetrable"[270] serves to increase our perplexity when we realize that one character, Amabel – a character whose more fluid form of identity will be considered later in the chapter – was able to enter the hotel after the crowds had formed and the shutter had been brought down. This technique of Green's draws our attention to the mutability of character, especially Amabel's, and is a symbol of her image as unpredictable and flexible in the changing environment. Despite Amabel's power in being able to apparently slide through rigid boundaries, the lack of acknowledgement in how she does this, or even why it is necessary to include this feature in the narrative, makes the ascription of power to her as a character dubious. The rigidity of the space is repeatedly affirmed throughout the narrative but is juxtaposed with a similar sense of elasticity. It is this acknowledgement of fluidity that enables Amabel to enter the hotel when no one else can. It is because the space allowed her to – an observation that in turn suggests the singular nature of her agency.

We are able to follow the actions of those held in the hotel with more scrutiny as they are held imprisoned within the space: they are contained and therefore

---

[269] Green, *Party Going*, p. 19.
[270] Ibid., p. 36.

controlled by it. Those outside the hotel, held back by the shutters, are uncontrollable and therefore more sinister. The physical barrier of the building protects the group inside the hotel, and as the fear mounts outside, this protection is strengthened by the raising of steel shutters, which blocks the view of the crowd outside. However, their removal from sight further increases the state of alienation: the hotel becomes more self-contained than ever as it is physically divided from the outside space. Moreover, as the feeling of protection increases so does the feeling of claustrophobia as the characters sheltered by the hotel are simultaneously trapped within its walls. Because of their unexpected arrival in the hotel, they pay no attention to it; they merely see it as an impediment to their journey. The unease is due to the unexpected crisis and the uncertainty of their outcome in a space that they do not understand.

The issue of movement in Green's novel is represented by the tone and structure of the entire narrative. Anxiety and tension mounts with increasing feelings of entrapment and claustrophobia and then is dispersed as the fog fades and the crowds scatter. Green focuses on travel through closed spaces, that is, down staircases or up elevators, to enhance this tension. As the crowd disperses and a thin line of people move through the gates to fill the larger space of the empty platform, the narrator comments that they now "became people again and were no longer menaces as they had been in one mass."[271] The minute the crowd moves this change takes place, showing abrupt changes in identity. As the narration follows the movements of the crowd, a frenzied tone characterizes intense moments of stagnation (when the crowd is trapped); the narrative pace returns to normal as the characters feel relief at their escape: "[s]he could even smile at them [∧] for they were safe now."[272]

[271] Green, *Party Going*, p. 153.
[272] Ibid.

The uneasiness continues throughout *Party Going* until, in the final pages, the fog clears and the characters are told that they can leave the hotel.  This creates a dramatic sense of release, as if the space has opened to allow the characters to breathe and feel safe again: Julia 'felt she was living again and with that feeling she wondered if she had not been rather ridiculous perhaps'[273]  The news of their impending release comes just a few pages before the end and we are left to watch it spread between the characters, as they plan whether to continue with their holiday or return home. However, the novel ends before any of them actually leave, allowing the reader to dwell on the ambiguity of the relationship between the hotel space and the characters that remain inside forever.   These characters are held in the grip of the hotel; the lure of Europe is unrealized as they remain inside the London interior.

My attention so far has been predominantly on the general relationship between the individual and the room, or interconnecting rooms, rather than the movements between them.  In his short story 'Death in Venice' Thomas Mann explores the idea of the lone wanderer through the urban surroundings using the traditional trope of the *flâneur* alongside a 'hotel-world' Aschenbach, as well as being a typical *flâneur,* is the epitome of what Kracauer envisages a hotel character to be.  He sets out alone from his house in the centre of Munich 'for an extended walk'[274] taking in the scenery and surroundings as an aid for relaxation and a break from work.  He wanders, as the typical *flâneur* does, and veers away from the inner city gardens, as they are full of pedestrians and unknowable members of a formidable crowd, and heads towards Aumeister, where 'the paths were solitary and still'[275]  The element of threat seen in the opening to Green's novel, particularly in the negotiation

---

[273] Green, *Party Going*, p. 150.
[274] Thomas Mann, 'Death in Venice' *Stories and Episodes* (1912; London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), p. 3.
[275] Ibid.

of the streets leading to the hotel, is apparent here. Yet Aschenbach has the choice of

removing himself from the danger; taking a voyeuristic and more passive role, his

intention is to stroll with no direct purpose, as opposed to those who are headed

directly to the station or the hotel. His deliberate decision to avoid the crowd is

followed by the desire to watch it from a distance as he stops "while to watch the

lively crowds in the restaurant garden with its fringe of carriages and cabs"[276] This

choice is not available to the characters in Green's novel. Mann's narrative separates

the garden from the restaurant and surrounds the space with a border of vehicles.

These ringed spaces are removed from the protagonist as he is positioned outside the

inner space looking in. In this respect, we see similarities to Green's handling of

spaces. In one respect, Green divides his narrative world into city, station and hotel,

all interconnected but also separated by strict divides and associations. He uses a

similar technique to deal with the more local sites of the interior room, as I will show

in later analyses of his application of simultaneous scenes going on in interconnecting

rooms. The characters of Green's spaces are more immersed than Aschenbach and

can move more freely between spaces; nonetheless there are important similarities in

the effect caused by this multiple application of scenes.

The description of Aschenbach's sojourn takes on the element of voyeurism

that is fundamental to the understanding of *flânerie*. Aschenbach watches the group

of strangers, who have no bearing on the story or on his life, and takes a moment to

reflect on the situation of the flurried crowd and his opposing stillness. Aschenbach is

in control of this situation and very aware of his surroundings and the choices he

makes in the direction of his travels. It is when he no longer feels in control and

accidental meetings take place that the description becomes mysterious and takes on

---

[276] Mann, "Death in Venice" p. 3.

the element of the 'strange'. Interestingly, the most mysterious moments of the story

take place in the hotel, which he repeatedly finds himself drawn back towards.

Oddly, when he arrives at the hotel he enters through the back – an unconventional

route that avoids the overwhelming richness of the public spaces – but then 'strode

through the enormous lobby'[277] the complete antithesis of what is expected in this

space. What you expect of those in the lobby is to 'sit around idly'[278] with a sense of

disinterest, not to stride with a purpose. This active verb also negates his existence as

a *flâneur,* in which strolling is more appropriate than striding. Aschenbach's striding

rather than strolling prevents his voyeurism, for he is unable to observe as he strides,

and he can no longer take in the surrounding space. Moreover, his discomfort is very

evident. As a *flâneur* he should feel at ease with the requirements of the hotel lobby:

'an aimless lounging, to which no call is addressed'[279] is the perfect requisite for a

man with his interests. If you were to replace 'lounging' with wandering then the

expected behaviour in the lobby corresponds directly to his comfortable occupation of

and movement around the outside spaces in the first half of the story.

However, Aschenbach as a practised professional soon regains control. After

he returns from his room, 'he sought a table in the lobby and buried himself in the

newspapers' an almost uncanny resemblance to Kracauer's description of lobby

loiterers quoted in the theoretical introduction: '[r]emnants of individuals slip into the

nirvana of relaxation, faces disappear behind newspapers, and the artificial continuous

light illuminates nothing but mannequins'[280] Despite his rediscovery of his *flâneur*

personality, the fact that this identity is so prescribed by this space means that it is no

longer his to rediscover. He becomes a mannequin. The generality of the space

---

[277] Mann, 'Death in Venice' pp. 25.
[278] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament,* p. 177.
[279] Ibid., p. 179.
[280] Ibid., p. 183.

forces him to do so.  He then reacts defiantly, if somewhat unconsciously, by rushing

through the space into his room, but soon returns to the magnetic pull of aimless

wandering, even if it is represented in static form.  Here we have the most vivid

example of the hotel's inherent dominance, although it does appear to be fairly subtle:

the hotel has transformed this character into what he has always been.

Anita Brookner's novel, *Hotel du Lac* is an interesting counterpart to Green's

*Party Going*.  Brookner opens her novel from inside a hotel and despite the more

accessible writing style the desolation at the oppressive atmosphere is as apparent

here as it is in Green's opening: '[f]rom the window all that could be seen was a

receding area of grey'[281]  Everything in the vicinity is grey and decaying and lacks

any sense of positivity; similarly everything within the interior is labelled as

sickeningly 'teal-coloured'  Although the two colours are distinct enough to remain

separated the monotony of everything in eyesight being awash with either grey or

brown is as oppressive as Green's fog.  As the main character is already secluded

within the space she acts as a receptacle to receive the infiltration of negative

influences.  The stillness of her watching from the window corresponds to her

passivity.

The function of the hotel in this narrative is different to those previously

analyzed as it is prescribed as a form of recuperation;[282] therefore, the purpose of the

space and what it needs to fulfil, is perhaps more important to this novel than in any

other works I have discussed.  The opening paragraph refers to the space as an

'anaesthetic'[283] the numb quality of this opening description promotes the vision of

the space as a tranquilizer that sucks the life out of its inhabitants.  The 'grey garden'

---

[281] Anita Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* (1984; London: Vintage, 1995), p. 7.

[282] Acknowledgement also needs to go to Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* (1924; London: Vintage, 1999) as the treatise on literature that uses the hotel with a recuperative function and deals fundamentally with the elusiveness of perception, reality and the symbolization of space.

[283] Brookner, *Hotel du lac,* p. 7.

and 'vast lake 'that 'spreads' have a monotonous dream-like quality that inhibits the protagonist's ability to function; the sedative of the 'hotel-world' has already taken effect.

Edith, the protagonist of this novel, constantly reiterates that other people are the reason for her occupation in the hotel; her passivity is at its height here as she takes no responsibility for her position in this space.  She is doing it for the sake of others.  Despite her belief that she is perfectly healthy she decides not to leave, perhaps not a totally altruistic decision.  Similar to the narrative order used by Green, Bowen and Smith, within the first few pages Edith starts her tale by tracking back to relate how she came to be in this space.  Reflecting on her earlier arrival she is clear in her feelings of displacement:

> I am out of place! Milling crowds, children crying, everyone intent
> on being somewhere else, and here was this mild-looking, slightly
> bony woman in a long cardigan, distant, inoffensive, quite nice eyes,
> rather large hands and feet, meek neck, not wanting to go anywhere,
> but having given my word that I would stay away for a month until
> everyone decides that I am myself again.  For a moment I panicked,
> for I am myself now, and was then, although this fact was not
> recognized.[284]

Immediately her self-awareness is inhibited as she questions what 'myself' means to her past, present and future.  She feels out of place because there is no purpose for her in this space.  Her constant excuses and reliance on her belief that she does not need to be in the hotel further corroborates this impression.  Her catalogue of simple physical characteristics is an attempt to validate her character and to ascribe to it a certain sense of normality.  This is emphasized by the honesty and simplicity of the description: she is so clear about her physical characteristics when looking in the

---

[284] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* p. 10.

mirror, but is nonetheless unable to locate a solid sense of identity due to her placelessness and instead relies on outside observations.

Again, almost immediately, the hotel fails to live up to what is expected of it. However, the narrative is painfully aware of this failure, more so than in any other novel I have discussed. Once Edith is registered in the hotel we get very specific details about the hotel design and decoration 'a stolid and dignified building'[285] with attention focused on the 'establishment as a family run business that is reputable and traditional.'[286] We then get formulaic descriptions of the interior: '[I]ts furnishings, although austere, were of excellent quality, its linen spotless, its service impeccable'[287] However, the descriptive style then changes tack:

> As far as guests were concerned, it took a perverse pride in its very absence of attractions, so that any visitor mildly looking for a room would be puzzled and deflected by the sparseness of the terrace, the muted hush of the lobby, the absence of piped music, public telephones, advertisements for scenic guided tours, or notice boards directing one to the amenities of the town. There was no sauna, no hairdresser [∧] the bar was small and dark, and its austerity did not encourage people to linger.[288]

The process of nullification that the hotel boarder goes through is due in part to the atmosphere, spacelessness and this need to linger, to remain static. The hotel is usually designed to reduce this impression. In Kracauer's view, the hotel surreptitiously sets up an unreal sense of protection, an artificial comfort zone in which characters feel alienated but cannot understand why. The hotel du lac, by contrast, is obvious in its unattractiveness. Inhabitants are not required to enjoy

---

[285] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* p. 13.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

themselves or the amenities because there are none.  People feel alienated but this time they understand why.  The function of this hotel as a curative place, and not one for tourists, has much to do with this altered perception: significantly, however, though the hotel's function is different, the effect it has on its inhabitants is just the same as the hotels we see in other hotel novels.  Edith's character is given a different level of consciousness to the characters in the other novels as she seems to show some awareness of the ability that the space has to alienate, distract and produce unwanted feelings.

The disinterest of the space causes Edith to question her past actions and demeanour:

> The next morning, dressed in her tweed skirt and long cardigan,
> Edith reflected that she had perhaps been a little lax in presenting an
> appearance to the world.  And if the world had not shown much
> interest in her appearance [︿] then it was perhaps her fault.[289]

Edith unreservedly submits to the guilt that the space prescribes.  The sterility of a space in which you must get better, but have no real means for entertainment or genuine socialization (epitomised at the end by the strange and disconnected partnership she makes with Mr Neville), causes these intense feelings of unworthiness, not just in the space but throughout her memories.  The inhabitant of this space is openly requested to fulfil a job set out for him or her: ﹝I]t was assumed that they would live up to the hotel's standards, just as the hotel would live up to theirs'[290]  It is obvious that it is somehow more unsettling if the character does not fulfil this obligation.

[289] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac*, p. 44.
[290] Ibid., p. 15.

Throughout the narrative we are inundated with contractions in time and the unreliability of perception: "[t]ime dissolved; sensations expanded"[291] she "bent her head obediently to her daily task of fantasy and obfuscation"[292] Edith responds to the unreality of the space by slipping into miasma herself. The dream-world becomes progressively more intense as she no longer manages to distinguish between truth and fiction:

> She was not sure whether she had in fact remained downstairs to
> witness the scenes which came into her mind, or whether, in some
> over-active recess of her brain, she was making them up. She was
> aware that her night was agitated, that the only alternative to waking
> up was to undergo more of these strange sequences, half dream, half
> memory. Everything seemed vivid, potent with significance. But
> the significance was hidden.[293]

The more positive stance she exudes in the opening, through her awareness of her function and that of the hotel, is now lost due to this slackened grip on reality. The truth has now become hidden. Her liminal position in life that is "half dream, half memory" is reminiscent of Smith's liminal narrator who is "half in, half out" of her own body. These abstract liminal states of being, in both cases, are due to the same cause: the space has changed the characters. Edith's reliability is diminished due to this admission of a failing memory, but the hotel remains dominant in its ability to produce extreme reactions. The hotel has fulfilled its task, possibly not that set out by Edith, but one that has become prescriptive of the space: alienation and the breakdown of human subjectivity.

---

[291] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac*, p. 52.
[292] Ibid., p. 50.
[293] Ibid., p. 64.

Ishiguro's disorientating novel *The Unconsoled* exaggerates this anaesthetized quality of the hotel narrative by maintaining a narrative voice that is built around intrigue, subterfuge and illusion. As with Smith's novel, the reader is plunged into this strange narrative, not through the plummeting death of the narrator, but through the almost suffocating style of the language and descriptive technique. The protagonist continuously feels fatigued and finds himself falling asleep at almost any opportunity; so too does the reader feel the need for rest as the smooth narrative tone creeps across our senses and lulls us into an ambient relaxation. It is perverse that the novel creates this feeling due to the stultifying and almost terrifying threat that is instated in every twist of the story.

The novel opens in the lobby of an unnamed hotel, in an unnamed city (although we do know it is somewhere in Europe), with a character who is unsure of the reason for his arrival in this particular hotel and what his purpose there may be. The lobby is at once spacious and claustrophobic, empty and crowded, light and dark: 'despite the sunshine outside the light was gloomy'.[294] In opposition to Brookner's dreary veal-coloured interiors, Ishiguro's space is an assault on the imagination through the extremes represented, leaving the reader no solid image of the space envisioned; we have both an oppressive and a liberating sense of the space surrounding us. We drift from one irregular event to another — from something as insignificant as a group of men convening in a roadside café to eat mashed potato, to the sinister description of a man being run over and having his damaged leg removed by a doctor who finds a saw in the boot of his car — but continues on in the narrative using an ironing board as a crutch while his leg drips blood through his ripped trouser leg. The everyday is made strange while the macabre and irregular is exaggerated to

---

[294] Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 3.

serious effect. Our expectations are shifted to increasingly higher thresholds as we encounter the progressively distracting events of the novel.

This technique filters into every aspect of the novel. There is nothing consistent or recognizable in the plot, use of time, or utilization of space: buildings become other buildings or attach themselves to other spaces, activities that last hours contract back into minutes, and the interplay between characters is random and relies on coincidence. The only consistency, however, is that we are repeatedly drawn back to the hotel, although the actual physical space of the hotel constantly changes. Ryder's schedule takes him to dinner parties and meetings in different spaces, which are often outside of the city and reached by car, only to be led back to his hotel room through secret passageways. The first instance sees Ryder summoned from his hotel room, in a dressing gown and slippers, having characteristically forgotten his appointment at a prestigious dinner, and then being driven through a limitless space to reach his destination:

> We had been speeding through the darkness for some time without encountering other headlights. Off in the distance I could see what may have been a few farmhouses, but otherwise there was little to break the empty blackness to either side.[295]

This 'empty blackness' embodies what we have seen in Kracauer's theoretical perspective on space, in which characters drip into the void due to the lack of possible connection to that space. The speed with which Ryder travels adds to the disorientation as does the apparent normalization of his outfit. Nothing in this scene fits and yet there is no comment on its irregularity. The scene is framed by the disorientation of his arrival and subsequent return to the hotel. The hotel manager's son offers to walk back with him, a proposition which he finds confusing:

---

[295] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* p. 122.

> For a moment his words continued to puzzle me.  Then, as I looked
> past the clusters of standing and seated dinner guests, past the
> waiters and the tables, to where the vast room disappeared into
> darkness, it suddenly dawned on me that we were in the atrium of
> the hotel [︿] I had no chance to dwell on this realisation, however,
> for Stephan was leading me away with surprising insistence.[296]

The darkness allows this slippage to occur as Ryder's vision is impeded, affecting his familiarization.  During the drive, the space contracts through a similar dark void to allow Ryder to enter the space; it then swallows him.  In this example he does not even have to travel back as he suddenly finds himself within the interior of the hotel itself.  Every space that he encounters morphs into another space and ultimately leads back to the hotel, creating a firm impression of the 'hotel-world' as a magnetic space which every aspect of the novel, and every scene depicted, relates back to.

Later, as the novel progresses, Ryder finds himself less surprised by this transformative quality of the space around him.  The next evening he attends an event at the Karwinsky gallery, a space that turns out to be the same space where the dinner party was held the evening before and which is therefore part of the hotel.  This time he does not need anyone to show him the way: 'recalled from the previous evening that the house adjoined the hotel'[297]  The lack of consistency in represented spaces is juxtaposed with Ryder's often 'particular memory'[298] in which he experiences moments of intense familiarity with people, places and objects, remembering them from his past life, but often this familiarity is only brief: he remembers times with his girlfriend and son, he visits apartments that turn out to be his childhood home, and finds a wreck of a car that turns out to be his father's.  He stumbles across these signifiers of a past identity that shatter the ambience through their intense clarity, but

---

[296] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* p. 147.
[297] Ibid., p. 277.
[298] Ibid., p. 358.

then ultimately he returns to the vagueness and ethereality of the experience that emanates from the hotel to permeate the rest of the 'hotel-world'. The limitless form of the hotel depicts a world of possibility. However, there is also a deep sense of fatalism. Despite the many interruptions and tangential events that impede his 'schedule', a schedule that he is aware exists but has no memory of ever seeing, the contraction of place allows him to appear in locations just in time and fulfil almost all of the impossible requirements that are forced upon him. The story leads us unevenly towards the final event, the much anticipated recital that he is due to perform for the whole city. Spatial obstructions are put in his way, streets change appearance and a brick wall materializes and barricades his entrance to the concert hall. He is also impeded by time. For example, he searches for Sophie, his partner, with the intention of returning her to her father's deathbed, becomes involved in assisting during the car accident that leads to the macabre leg amputation previously mentioned, enters a café a few minutes before the recital is due to start, and is overpowered by an intense need for sleep, actually falling asleep for a number of hours, awakening the next morning; all of which actually takes place across a very short space of time. These obstructions and impediments do nothing to stop him returning to the concert hall in time for the evening's events.

The result is an overwhelmingly fatalistic sense of life in which Ryder reaches the end and attends the event despite the continuous barrage of difficulties he experiences. The routes taken and choices made show no sense of individualization; despite their apparent randomness, he is constantly drawn back to the right place at the right time. Time and space open and contract to allow events to take place and Ryder to reach his final destination. It is odd then that the recital never actually happens: Ryder attends and the evening begins but he never appears on stage.

Despite the build-up to the evening and the continual repetition of the importance of it, the evening fades out with little attention to his involvement in it.  The most important event in the story is not so important after all, removing any preoccupation with plot and instead drawing attention to style and representation, particularly through spatial dynamics.

Much attention has been paid to the reasons for this peculiar narrative, the common assumptions being that the main character is suffering from either amnesia or schizophrenia, that the whole novel is just a dream sequence, or that he is the only character in the novel, with the other characters representing each facet of his identity.[299]  Rather than this search for an answer, what is interesting about the novel is the dramatic manipulation of space and time – Ishiguro's depiction of how an individual interacts with a world that is both sterile and enveloping, convivial and unfeeling, familiar and unknown.  Ishiguro removes all the consistent frameworks that we rely on to maintain a sense of reality in everyday life; time, space and memory shift, distort and transform throughout the narrative, but instead of alienating the reader through the repetitive disruptions, we find ourselves lulled into a dreamlike sense of monotony where anything is possible.  The impossibility of relying on anything removes the need for any such reliance.  After the initial alienating episodes we start to expect spaces to transform and even move in front of our eyes, and anticipate that time will not pass even though the sky darkens.  I would suggest that the reader is restricted when seeking a rational explanation for the events narrated, but as soon as this search is abandoned the possibilities in the hotel multiply through Ishiguro's representation.  The spatial subversions in this novel are as radical and

---

[299] Studies that consider these options include: Gary Adelman, 'Doubles on the Rocks: Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled', Critique* 42:2 (January, 2001): 166-79; Richard Robinson, 'Nowhere in Particular: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* and Central Europe' *Critical Quarterly* 48:4 (Winter, 2006): 107-130; John Rothfork, 'Confucianism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled', QLRS* 4:1 (2004) http://www.qlrs.com/essay.asp?id=394.

post-modern as those seen in Smith's *Hotel World*, and yet the examples are more varied and permeate every aspect of the work.

The beginnings of all novels examined in this chapter show a real interest in placelessness and progressive shifts in identity. All these novels begin with a disruption: a death, an illness, a fog or, as with Elizabeth Bowen's 1927 novel *The Hotel,* a quarrel. This last novel focuses almost entirely on a group of characters holidaying together and follows them on an exhilarating journey of self discovery. The novel opens and closes within the hotel; the guests have already arrived and stay until the end of the novel. The action takes place almost entirely within the surrounding area of the hotel and the only characters involved are the guests and the staff of the establishment. The narrative is microscopic – focusing, as I shall show, on small and seemingly insignificant, everyday events of a summer holiday. It opens with a chapter entitled 'The Quarrel' overtly naming the disjunction. Hostility between the characters has arisen out of feelings of unsteadiness within their new environment. The first sentences introduce this sense of instability:

> Miss Fitzgerald hurried out of the Hotel into the road. Here she stood still, looking purposelessly up and down in the blinding sunshine and picking at the fingers of her gloves.[300]

Despite the chapter title, there is no real discussion of what the quarrel was about or how Miss Fitzgerald feels about it. It is just a sense of hurried negativity that permeates the opening. She stands still at the edge of the road in a state of contemplation, but despite this moment of stasis, the overall sense is that of being involuntarily pushed forward in no real direction – merely an escape. The negativity of the hotel grounds and the lack of protection the hotel offers her in her distress is in

---

[300] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel* (1927; London: Vintage, 2003), p. 7.

exact opposition to the security of the street for Else in *Hotel World.* The generic nature of the space does not necessarily produce generic feelings but it can facilitate connectedness which leads to impassioned behaviour, or disconnection which results in introversion and stasis. The quarrel seems to have more of an effect on Miss Fitzgerald than we would normally expect; it is not, after all, something as violent as a fight or an argument. Miss Fitzgerald is plagued 'by the thought that she had for once in her life stopped thinking and might never begin again,'[301] a reaction that seems to go much deeper than the supposed 'quarrel': to stop thinking is to stop existing. She describes her walk out of the grounds as 'so violent an exit'[302] as if she has had to wrench herself out of its grasp. The removal of this character from her everyday world has had a negative effect on her: the vacuity of the hotel surroundings offers no structure in which to support her feelings of disjunction. That is, it is the hotel space which creates Miss Fitzgerald's uneasiness, and necessitates that she remove herself from it; but she finds no comfort in the road. The space to which she has removed herself offers no validation for her feelings or 'determinations'.

Whilst Miss Fitzgerald dashes away, the other affected character, Miss Pym, does the opposite action of staying inside. She moves slowly down the staircase, peering into the lounge for signs of her opponent and then makes herself stop: '[s]he was surprised to find herself cool, explanatory and reasonable. Her wait prolonged itself, the minutes seemed interminable; now and then she glanced at the lounge clock'.[303] Time stretches out here in opposition to Miss Fitzgerald's experience in which she cannot move fast enough. Miss Pym's demeanour as self-assured, 'cool' and 'reasonable' is in direct opposition to Miss Fitzgerald's scattered thoughts and erratic behaviour. Two characters have very different reactions to the same event that

---

[301] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 7.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid., p. 8.

they are mutually involved in. Although this is plausible in terms of human nature, there seems to be a different reason for the underlying sense of turmoil; there is something bigger than the quarrel between these two characters. The juxtaposition of one outside and one inside does nothing to reduce this feeling. When Miss Pym does venture outside in the next few pages she inevitably meets Miss Fitzgerald, who she describes as "void of intention [∧] she seemed hardly to see them. She might have crept out here to bleed."[304] The use of the obscure adjective "void" so characteristic of theoretical conceptions of the hotel space (and particularly Kracauer's articulations), is significant. The emptiness of the void and therefore the voiding of her intention significantly reduces her agency. She is totally without purpose. She becomes like a wounded and defenceless animal which goes out into the wild to die, or in this case "bleed". There is too much here that is unrelated to the quarrel to make it a justifiable reason for her extreme distress. The first movement in the narrative is that of a character leaving the hotel premises in a state of disarray. The need to escape is evident, and the status of the building as the primary locator of this feeling, places the hotel in a position of dominance over the flailing character.

When Miss Pym meets Mrs Kerr (another character in this temporary community) she feels the need to tell her "everything"[305] but does not yet articulate what everything is. It is an all-encompassing term that corresponds to a much more complex and fundamental cause than the quarrel. When we do hear the description of the quarrel, interestingly it is so vague that the sense of something else is compounded. The description runs as follows:

> It had been a flare "or a blotting out, how could she better describe
> it? "like the horrible blackness of spilt ink, suddenly everywhere,

---

[304] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 9.
[305] Ibid*.,* p. 10

that make 'one crinkle one's face up.' They had seen each other crudely illuminated, and they had seen each other as *vulgar*. She could not remember how it began; she could not remember anything leading up to it; just that there had been something intolerable about Emily from the moment she came to the door [∧] They had had, at that moment when everything tottered, worse than a sense of destruction: they had felt the whole force of doubt in that moment: had there never been *anything* there?[306]

We are still not really told much about the nature of the quarrel. We are a witness to Miss Pym's ruminations over it but are still unaware of what was said or done. The terms used to describe the event 'everything' and 'anything' are all-encompassing and expansive; they seem to refer to something deeper than what we have been told. There is also a level of finality in the use of the word 'destruction,' a clear distinction between the past and the present, a moment in which everything changed. The anger and sense of immediacy seems to be directly attributed to the position in space when the quarrel took place: there was something 'intolerable from the moment she came to the door.' The sense of immediacy is related to the destruction and fragility embodied by the vision of everything that 'tottered.' These characters have no agency in saving their friendship or the world from this destruction. Miss Pym's feelings towards her friend changed in an instant. The difficulty she has in describing these feelings corresponds to the intangible notion of what she is trying to explain, particularly as she does not understand it herself. Ultimately, the space has 'force' over the relations between people, as well as over individuals, a force that is not clearly articulated but nonetheless present in the dramatic change in emotion between interiors and exteriors and on the threshold of the doorway.

---

[306] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 10.

As stated, the quarrel in *The Hotel* takes place in the grounds of the hotel where all of the characters are already positioned.  We see almost nothing of the plans or journeys to the specific spaces (as we do with Green), which only helps to intensify our sense of the characters' disjunction.  There are some comments made in hindsight about how they arrived at the hotel, though Mr Milton makes the sense of displacement more vivid when it is noted: '[h]e still had a childish pleasure in arriving at places at night, as though he had been brought there blindfold.'[307]  The night-time arrival adds an element of mystery to the journey and the holiday as a whole.  No other details of their journey are added, so we feel as if the characters have been thrust into this unknown environment and are now totally immersed within it.  We are blindfolded as much as they.  The journey is of no importance to the experience of the holiday but it *is* important to our analysis of the characters and their relations with each other.  Without this level of detail we lack a connection to the characters and the space, which is somehow related to the more radical disconnection of Sara's fall to death in the opening of *Hotel World.*

In *The Hotel,* the potentialities of space and the fluctuation between inclusiveness and alienation, comfort and oppression, is emphasized in the description of the row of buildings against the open sky: '[a]gainst an opaque, bright blue sky the expressionless faces of the buildings had again their advertised and almost aching whiteness'.[308]  The buildings become 'expressionless' against the sky because the wide expanse of nothing has overpowered the built structure.  This stretch of blue against the 'aching whiteness' creates a dramatic borderline that is reminiscent of Brookner's division between grey sky and veal interior.  However, it is not the white or the blue, or the line between them which is important; rather it is the reaction to the

---

[307] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 32.
[308] Ibid., p. 65.

overall vastness of space, which is a dramatic response to the fear of the void of the interior space. Bowen's description of the expansive but oppressive nature of the wide open sky has a similar effect to the closing-in of the walls in Smith's novel and the darkening of the fog in Green's. This oppression leads to an examination of her characters within the interior space of the hotel. Ronald, for example, feels 'a sense of being caged into this crowded emptiness'[309] an oxymoron that reminds us of Kracauer's alienating sense of nothingness. Again, there are similarities to Green's novel and the fluctuations between bustling streets, the darkness of the tunnels and then the wide open space of the vaulted interior that is crowded with people. The dark and viscous nature of the fog is in opposition to the light and limitless quality of the sky in Bowen's novel, though it is similarly disorientating; the claustrophobic atmosphere that 'was like night with fog as a ceiling shutting out the sky'[310] creates a feeling of enclosure, an effect close to the claustrophobia of Whiteing's padded rooms. It is almost as if the scenery steps out of the background, as it were, and envelops the characters, but the process, as noted previously, is far from comforting. As with Bowen's opening, the focus on the pervasive nature of the fog establishes a tone for the rest of *Party Going*. Vastness and overcrowding have the same effect.

## Noise and music

Bowen's Miss Fitzgerald leaves the hotel in the opening; Green's bird 'slowly fell, dead'[311] and Smith's narrator is killed by the broken shaft of the dumb-waiter. Each death or exit, I would suggest, acts as an embodiment of the vacuousness of space. The bird 'trips' through the space, as the characters do, due to an

---

[309] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 108.
[310] Green, *Party Going,* p. 6.
[311] Ibid., p. 1.

overwhelming sense of alienation and the lack of a solid framework to support them.

Both *The Hotel* and *Party Going* consolidate their opening impressions of claustrophobia by focusing on the role of silence in space. After assessing the buildings and the sky, and the bewilderment of the characters in relation to this, *The Hotel* continues: "[s]he was frightened by an interior quietness and by the thought that she had for once in her life stopped thinking and might never begin again".[312] The significance of this example is that the silence is within the character. We have already seen how Miss Fitzgerald's departure from the hotel is triggered by her unfamiliarity with the space around her; the division in the group and "the Quarrel" is a reaction to this strange environment. Here, however, Bowen replicates the division as the interior quietness within the individual. The silence of the space has produced a similar quietness within Miss Fitzgerald, a silence that is so intense it causes her almost to stop thinking. The impact on her consciousness is palpable. The link between the silence of the space, its general expansiveness, and the identity of the character is, I would argue, a product of the relationship between what theorists of space term form and function. Again we find Kracauer to be illuminating, particularly his reasoning that the purpose of space and the purpose of the individual within that space are inextricably linked. If one purpose overpowers another, he argues, then the result will be complete disintegration; when the modern hotel space overpowers the individual, it results in extreme inaction or quietness. Kracauer returns to the oppositional relationship between hotel and church to exemplify this reaction. He shows that in the house of God "silence signifies the individual collecting himself as firmly directed self".[313] The silence has a purpose and the individual has a solid reason for being within that space. The space of the church thus

[312] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 7.
[313] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 181.

enfolds rather than rejects the individual, and the strength of the person is reinforced by the communal nature of the congregation, all meeting & all keeping silent & for the same purpose. Within the hotel, the disparate quality of the hotel structure and the purposelessness of the character's entrance into this space, are illustrated by the repeated references to silence. The link between lack of purpose and oppressed identity is best characterized by Green:

> They were like ruins in the wet, places that is where life has been,
> palaces, abbeys, cathedrals, throne rooms, pantries, cast aside and
> tumbled down with no immediate life and with what used to be in
> them lost rather than hidden now the roof has fallen in [∧] for life in
> such circumstances was only possible because it would not last, only
> endurable because it had broken down and as it lasted and became
> more desolate and wet so, as it seemed more likely to be permanent,
> at least for an evening, they grew restive.[314]

The communal nature of the group does nothing to dispel the feeling of inertia; indeed, it strengthens it, as the space has created these feelings within a group, rather than just an individual. The nostalgic mention of abbeys and cathedrals that are now in ruins recalls Kracauer's argument; the hotel space in this novel has stripped the characters of their purpose. The strength of the group is now lost; it is an immediate consequence that is produced by their lack of function in the space they inhabit, and it has a profound effect on individuals' identities.

In opposition to the function of silence within the hotel space is the impact of loud and imposing noise. The conjunction of silence and noise appears early in *Party Going* with a disorientating effect: [t]here was almost no noise and yet, if you were to make yourself heard, it was necessary to speak up, you found so many people were

---

[314] Green, *Party Going,* pp. 123-24.

talking."[315] The paradoxical slippage between "almost no noise" and "so many people were talking" parallels the alienation of the individual from the environment; it reflects the movement between reality and unreality to which the hotel character is subjected within this space.

Another interesting formulation of the theme of noise is represented in Bowen's chapter on "Music." In the opening to this chapter a group forms in expectation of a concert. The appreciation of music allows a congregation to form, collecting the inhabitants with a united purpose. It comes close to the dynamic of the church congregation, as it strengthens the identity of the individual who is supported by the crowd against the power of the space. The expectation of the group, and the relief at regaining their identity, is illustrated by their faces "that blossomed out unexpectedly."[316] The crowd wait expectantly in "gathered silence";[317] it is not the negative silence of lost identity or fear, but rather a silence of anticipation which assigns power to the musician:

> He did not cease to parade beneath the balcony while maintaining
> fountainwise the spout of song. The child with red skirts clutching
> his coat-tails echoed, with the addition here and there of skip or
> quaver, his strut and song. Her face, with a smile's general glitter
> across it, was upturned to the balcony, eyes closed as though she
> could feel the benevolence of visitors descend upon the lids like
> rain.[318]

The rapport between the man and the young girl strengthens the enjoyment and frivolity of the scene and creates a real sense of performance. It is paralleled in the benevolent attitude of the audience; this sense of connection, the communality of the

---

[315] Green, *Party Going,* p. 14.
[316] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 103.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.

scene in other words, is facilitated by the imposition of music into the space.  This

moment of unity is not to last, however, as the space regains its hold, and breaks

down the connection between individuals.  This becomes apparent just a few lines on

when Ronald predicts: 'I]t will bust in a minute or two, and serve them all right for

watching anything so beastly'[319]  His pronouncement prompts a ripple of doubt

which culminates when he tells them that 'T]he little devil's blind'[320]  The

atmosphere then turns feverish and the blind girl starts 'whirling at such velocity that

it was as though she tore the music from the mandolin to follow her'[321]  The

relationship between sound, space and character has become violent and has an

impact on all of the individuals involved:

> The little girl paused leaning against the wind of her movement and
> seemed to listen in ecstasy.  She snatched up handfuls of air and
> surrendered them laughingly, then flung herself with cries of delight
> to and fro on the gravel and, groping, gathered up her harvest.  There
> followed some heavier coins, the escape of a sigh and a faint burst of
> horrified laughter.[322]

The girl pauses, listens and then moves, as if to reassess the change in the

environment.  Her action of snatching handfuls of air shows the need to approach and

understand space as a solid entity; she tries to grasp something as a support but the

most solid thing she can touch is the air.

Bowen's account of this event mixes responses from both the girl and the

audience, showing them in relation to the space they are situated within.  It also mixes

references to different senses, in the laughter, music, rattling of coins and silence of

her momentary pause; the many eyes of the watchful crowd are set alongside the

---

[319] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 104.
[320] Ibid., p. 104.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid., pp. 104-5.

blindness of the young girl.  It is as if the space is filled with something akin to substance, but which is invisible to the naked eye; it has a dramatic effect on individuals and is evident through this mixed outpouring of the senses and wavering levels of action and pauses.  As Ronald puts it:

> All today there had been phrases, broken-off, exclamatory, rising
> stark like this out of a hush or a hum with a significance for him
> foreign to their context, with startling relevance to something in his
> mind.[323]

Here, the levels of disorientation are evident: the broken phrases 'incongruous with their context, separating individuals from their surroundings 'and the inability of Ronald to state what the 'something' is, demonstrate the haziness of the interaction between consciousness and surroundings.

## Lifelessness and artificiality

So far we have encountered the alienation of the individual within a space, the violent repercussions of spatial power on identity, and the waverings and inconsistencies in characters' beliefs and thoughts when encountering what I have termed the intangible 'force' of space.  Now it is important to look again at the extreme reaction of characters in the hotel space, those instances where space enforces such an influence over characters that they become totally lifeless.

There are references throughout each novel to characters that are 'hardly alive'[324] (in Bowen's novel), or 'emptied of self'[325] (in Smith's *Hotel World*).  This quality of lifelessness is more pronounced where characters consider their own

---

[323] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 105.
[324] Ibid., p. 93.
[325] Smith, *Hotel World*, p. 112.

subjectivity.  In a particularly striking scene in *The Hotel,* Sydney muses on the nature

of her thoughts: '[s]o objective did she feel that she imagined a delighted Commune

gazing down at the two of them'[326]  Then the mood shifts and 'she was surprised by a

feeling that some new mood, not of her own, was coming down over them like a bell-

glass'[327]  Sydney's ability to see herself from outside her own body is an interesting

characteristic of the alienated individual, but ultimately this ability does not allow her

to see herself more clearly; rather the reverse.  As this mood 'not of her own' takes

over, Milton asks: '[t]he thing is, Sydney, aren't I ever to know you?'[328]  The

realization that she is unknowable to him ‒and to herself ‒exhibits the transience of

identity in the hotel space.  Moreover, the lifelessness of the characters is further

emphasized by our observation of them under a 'bell-glass.'  Bowen invites us to look

at them as if under a microscope whilst trapped under a glass.  The sterility and

scientific nature of Bowen's narrative experiments on these individuals within this

strange environment is comparable to the nullifying effect of Brookner's

anaesthetizing hotel: both spaces reduce these characters to something not quite

human.

This quality of lifelessness is replicated in another important moment in *The*

*Hotel,* where Sydney states:

> I have often thought it would be interesting if the front of any house,
> but of an hotel especially, could be swung open on a hinge like the
> front of a doll's house.  Imagine the hundreds of rooms with their
> walls lit up and the real-looking staircase and all the people surprised
> doing appropriate things in appropriate attitudes as though they had
> been put there to represent something and had never moved in their
> lives.  Like the cook-doll that I always had propped up against the

---

[326] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 95.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Ibid.

kitchen stove and the father-doll propped against the library book-shelves and the sitting-up doll in the bath that was really a china ornament and has no other attitude, and the limp dolls that wouldn't do anything so had to be kept in the spare-room beds, which I always think was an unconscious reflection on the ideal habits for visitors.[329]

This image represents both the utter lifelessness of the characters in the hotel space, where identity is no more than that of a doll's, and the insignificance of the human in relation to the hotel space in general. Particularly, Bowen's choice to reiterate what is "appropriate" in the space reveals the underlying foundation of the space: the relationship between form and function, and the use-value that embodies the relationship between the individual and the structure. The dolls in the doll-house, and the characters in the hotel, are reduced to lifelessness because it is impossible to achieve the "appropriate" stance in such an overpowering space. The furniture is as inanimate as the dolls; the bath is really a "china ornament" and the father-doll has to be "propped against" the book-shelves. Both doll and furniture require an outside agent to position them within their environment. However, the overwhelming and inescapable feeling that space is an active force predominates, even in a scene where the interior is associated with the artificial structure of a doll's house. In fact, it is because the furniture remains inanimate and the characters are reduced to lifelessness that the elusive "subjective" quality of hotel space holds its power. The depiction of the hotel guest as lifeless uncovers the depth of this force.

Once again we can look to Kracauer; he, too, uses the idea of the doll (in place of the human) when theorizing the hotel space in the quotation already provided: "[r]emnants of individuals slip into the nirvana of relaxation, faces disappear behind newspapers, and the artificial continuous light illuminates nothing but

---

[329] Bowen, *The Hotel*, pp. 78-79.

mannequins.'[330]  The waxy quality of the human mannequin in the hotel space links to both the 'toy figure' introduced earlier in Whiteing's novel and Sydney's analogy between the hotel and the doll house.  These images are products of the hotel experience and show that the hotel space is intent on overpowering the individual, reducing his or her identity to something inanimate and incapable of full subjectivity.  The ethereality of the doll-like hotel inhabitant is vivified by Kracauer's own narrative of the hotel lobby: 'Scarcely have I entered, than I shiver [∧] this discomfort comes from my sense that all life has been drained from this place.  I turn around and see only a still life that confirms my supposition.'[331]  The intensity of the life-like space has the opposite effect on the individual, resulting in extreme lifelessness represented by the figure of the doll.  The doll is unable to access the requisite level of subjectivity, and characters within these novels are also – as I have shown – often unable to understand their own position.  These novels frequently narrate moments of inaction, where the narrative slows down and we are left listening to the wanderings of a mind trying to make sense of itself within the hotel world.

### Self-perception and identity exchange

The questioning of self and subjectivity appears vividly in the character of Sydney, who, as the main character of *The Hotel*, has the most violent reaction to the space around her.  She is introduced as a self-assured and intelligent character but is in actuality hounded by self-doubt and neurotic thoughts.  In her cousin Tessa's private apartment, whilst preparing to venture into the public space of the dining room, Sydney removes the handkerchief covering her hair and catches her reflection in the mirror.  She frowns and wonders whether this image is what people actually see

---

[330] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament,* p. 183.
[331] Katz, 'The Hotel Kracauer', p. 147.

161

when they look at her; she realizes that she looks at other people 'from a point of vantage' but forgets that 'she too had a face'.[332] This lack of confidence is intrinsic to our understanding of characters' reactions to this new and artificial space. It is visualized by the emblematic use of the mirror. Although it is a flat image that is reflected, the mirror can conversely show the true self through a process of distancing. The emblematic mirror thus comes to represent the passage between self-knowledge and the character's public appearance.[333] In the hotel environment the individual subject faces the impossibility of understanding his or her public personality. This is again made explicit by Smith's character Else, who, when ensconced in the threatening bathroom space surveying the luxury products, catches sight of a huge mirror. But 'Else didn't look'. She realizes that she does not fit in in the context of the hotel space that has been given to her free of charge on a temporary basis. She is out of place and painfully aware of this. Alternatively, however, her altered personality and vulnerability in this space may show visible traces on her face, for which reason she is scared to look. Fundamentally, her denial of her own face is similar to that of Sydney's self-consciousness. In both cases the feelings of each character within this space are a product of the hotel, particularly in the case of Else as we have her everyday context of the street to compare it to. The change in her character is dramatic. Whilst hinted at in the character of Sydney, who traverses the space as if walking through mist, in Else the change is painfully clear. She flips from intense defiance and security to intense vulnerability. In both cases the mirror helps to frame the narrative, and to articulate the vexed relationship between the individual

---

[332] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 21.
[333] This scene is reminiscent of other classic literary scenes (particularly Shakespeare's *Richard II*) in which the mirror is used to visualize the process of self-realization.

and the space, and thus the characters' frail sense of identity.[334]  Indeed, the attempt to understand personality from outside is itself a product of the hotel space, as it reduces the sense of self and leaves characters searching for who they really are.

There is a similar mirror scene in Green's *Party Going,* but in this case the boundary between the character and the space is broken down.  In the bathroom Amabel looks at herself in the steamy glass:

> The walls were made of looking-glass, and were clouded over with steam; from them her body was reflected in a faint pink mass.  She leaned over and traced her name Amabel in that steam and that pink mass loomed up to meet her in the flesh and looked through bright at her through the letters of her name.  She bent down to look at her eyes in the A her name began with, and as she gazed at them steam or her breath dulled her reflection and the blue her eyes were went out or faded.  She rubbed with the palm of her hand, and now she could see all her face.  She always thought it more beautiful than anything she had ever seen, and when she looked at herself it was as though the two of them would never meet again, it was to bid farewell; and at the last she always smiled, and she did so this time as it was clouding over, tenderly smiled as you might say good-bye, my darling darling.[335]

The ethereality of the steam interacts with the space and the character allowing her to morph into one 'pink mass'.[336]  The narrative fluctuates between the vision in the glass and the descriptions of Amabel's own subjectivity.  These two forms of the same character are linked by her name and the writing of it on the glass.  There is a

---

[334] As Bettina Matthias argues: '[i]t 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' (*The Hotel as Setting,* p. 44).  Also, as Vicki Baum aptly demonstrates in *Grand Hotel,* the mirror image in the hotel often symbolizes isolation: '[e]veryone lives behind double doors and has no confidant but his reflection in the looking-glass or his shadow on the wall' (p. 209).
[335] Green, *Party Going,* pp. 104-105.
[336] Reminiscent again of the hunched pink mass of Else in the bathroom taps.  Amabel's vision of herself in the mirror is just as elusive but much less diminished than the physical stature of Else reflected in the taps.

disruption in her name as she becomes only *a*, a disruption which links to the slippage between Else and ELSPETH in Smith's novel and our realization that these characters see themselves from different aspects when positioned in different sections of the hotel.  Only here the change is a positive one.  Amabel recognizes her own face but separates it from the knowledge of her own existence.  The crux point in her own subjectivity is her bidding farewell to her past identity.  The new identity has been formed in relation to the hotel space, and this is the one that Amabel has to continue with.  Moreover, her saying goodbye is a necessary action as the old identity is impossible to retain.  Amabel's mirror scene becomes oppositional to both Sydney's and Else's as her new personality is one fuelled by confidence and self-assertion.  A change has taken place in Amabel's character, but it is not a change to an introverted and secluded individual but an exaggerated version of her original assertive self.  Nonetheless it is still a change brought about by the identity of the hotel.

The sensational use of mirrors in these scenes shows how important an awareness of self-perception is in the hotel space.  The time spent examining their faces and questioning their subjectivity responds to the tense dynamic created by the hotel space.  As Jameson has argued:

> I am proposing the notion that we are here in the presence of
> something like a mutation in built space itself.  My implication is
> that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this space,
> have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in
> the object unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the
> subject.  We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match
> this hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits
> were formed in that older kind of space [∧] The newer architecture
> therefore [∧] stands as something like an imperative to grow new

164

organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible dimensions.[337]

As Andrew Thacker paraphrases, Jameson's central argument is that 'at present there exists a gap between the social relations of postmodernity and the spatial relations of our senses'.[338] Jameson's proposition that we do not possess the 'perceptual equipment' required for this new type of space helps to make sense of both Sydney's and Amabel's incessant searching for subjectivity. However, Jameson's description of the mutation fails to register the possibility of links, connections and continuity between modernism and post-modernism. Again, as Thacker finds through a reading of underground poems and spaces: '[r]eading Imagism through postmodernist eyes draws attention to how far we rely upon similar sorts of spatial/social relations to those represented in modernism'.[339] Despite the struggles found between the spatial and the social across periods the repetition of similar events and responses to a particular space such as the hotel draws attention to a form of continuity between humanity and the spaces they inhabit.

At one level, these characters appear to be very different; so, speaking simplistically, the use of the mirror seems to be fuelled by arrogance in Amabel's case, and neurosis in Sydney's. What unites, then, however, is that both are deeply affected by their surroundings. So, in opposition to the quiet intensity of these two mirror scenes, the hotel space also produces intense wildness in both characters. If we follow the character of Amabel in Green's novel, her wildness becomes apparent in a flirtatious scene that takes place in the hotel suite. Amabel announces to the rest of the group that she would like to take a bath and she playfully tells Alex, 'I got so dirty

---

[337] Jameson, *Postmodernism,* pp. 38-39.
[338] Thacker, 'Imagist Travels in Modernist Space' pp. 226.
[339] Ibid.

165

coming along [∧] Of course it will have to have a room with it and then you can come and talk to me through the door.'[340] The event seems strange to the other members of the group as it is the middle of the day; they are all anxious about the weather and the cancelled trip, so to relax in a bath seems unusual. Amabel, however, is totally at ease in the situation and uses the time at the hotel to manipulate the group and alter its dynamics. After her first reference to the bath it takes another ten pages of narrative before she actually enters the bathroom. This allows the other guests to contemplate her action and wonder if 'Amabel was going to let him see her in her bath.'[341] As it has been built up over a number of pages, the tension mounts and we are forced to take account of the event and the actions and reactions of each character. The other characters never actually find out if Amabel allowed Alex to see her naked as their fear of the overtly sexual behaviour stops them from uncovering the truth. We are told by the narrator: 'most elaborate precautions were taken [to preserve Amabel's modesty] and of this Angela knew nothing because she could not bring herself to go and see.'[342] The ease of Amabel's actions, and the enjoyment she takes from the anxiety of others, juxtaposes those characters that react to the space with wildness with those who respond with inaction. This point has been noted in general terms by Marc Katz:

> Popular narratives of the Twenties played off the grand hotel as a
> site for identity exchange [∧] For its part, hotel management
> contributed to the widespread perception of the lobby as a site of
> mobility and desire by actually marketing narrative possibility: the
> hotel was frequently promoted as a place where 'things happen.'[343]

---

[340] Green, *Party Going,* p. 84.
[341] Ibid., p. 93.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Katz, 'The Hotel Kracauer', p. 139.

166

The term 'identity exchange' is important here, as the hotel space allows characters to try on new identities. We might predict that this would allow greater freedom. However, only a few characters actually take up this opportunity (Amabel is the main offender) while the rest fear the impact of losing their identity. The scene in the bathroom comes before Amabel's meditation on subjectivity in the mirror; therefore, we can see in this attempt to shock the other members of the group a desire to take on a more extrovert personality, one that would only be allowed in the hotel space. The hotel is used very differently to the house in this scene. If this event took place at a dinner party at someone's home, Amabel's request to have a bath would be considered too odd to be taken seriously and her power as a character would diminish. As they are at a hotel, which is a communal space and where all amenities such as bathrooms are close at hand, the fact that Amabel wants to take a bath to relax is in reality quite normal. It is her motive for doing so, the fact that she is so secure in her identity, her position in the group and her total ease in the situation that causes most anxiety in the other members of the group.

When we actually reach the scene in the bathroom the atmosphere becomes noticeably more heightened. Amabel is giggly and flirtatious and splashes her legs sending 'fountains of water up among the wreaths of sweet steam'.[344] Alex (positioned just outside the doorway) asks questions in a nervous tone and admits: 'I was wondering what you looked like'.[345] The eroticism of the scene is explicit, and the situation could have turned sinister had not Amabel retained control by laughing at Alex and calling him 'sweet'.[346] Alex remains at the door to the bathroom and they continue a flirtatious conversation marked off by the barrier of the door. The power relations between the two characters are dramatized by Amabel's completely secure

---

[344] Green, *Party Going,* p. 94.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid.

belief that the young man will not enter or take advantage of her, despite the unlocked door and references to her own nakedness. The male character is removed from Amabel by the closed door and he in turn is separated from the rest of the group, who are waiting in another room and gossiping about the situation. Green shows his awareness of space manipulation in this delicate manoeuvring of the intricacies of interplay between characters. Green manages to portray three rooms simultaneously, showing the connections between characters as they are connected by the proximity and interconnection of the rooms. The sexuality of the scene and the power relations between these characters is made more noticeable by Green's attention to the detailing of space: Amabel remains dynamically assertive through her simple understanding of her own character and how to deal with those around her. The fact that she is in an unfamiliar environment, away from home and safety, and with no certainty of the outcome, does not intrude on her resolve to be herself. The actual bath scene in fact only lasts half a page, but it is the expectation of it (linked to the anticipation of the rest of the holiday) and the knowledge that Amabel retains control through her manipulation of the other characters that is of importance. This is one example of the extremes of behaviour and shifting identities that take place in the hotel space.

In Bowen's novel, we witness a similar scene of flirtatious behaviour in the chapter entitled 'The Kiss' where, under intense scrutiny a young couple act flirtatiously and kiss in front of the rest of the party. In similar style to Green's bathroom scene, Bowen allows two characters to express themselves out of context to what the rest of the party expects of them. It takes place during a picnic; the characters are outside the interior hotel space but still remain within the hotel grounds. On the pretence of washing dishes, Veronica 'suddenly, incredibly, outrageously [^] gripped Victor's hand, hoisted herself up by it and walked away with Victor down the

hill᷾[347]  Bowen widens the sense of space that Veronica has created through her

movement away by solidifying the silence that this space creates: [S]he left a gap

across which the others looked at one another, and which they felt unable to draw up

and fill [∧] There was an uncertain silence᷾[348]  The difference between Veronica

and the rest of the group is exemplified by the gap᷾[349] that she leaves once she has

gone.  This gap embodies the void described by Kracauer; as the scene progresses the

two characters are separated from the others through the divide of space.  The

uneasiness of the situation and disapproving tone used to portray this group of

characters is juxtaposed in the next paragraph by the childish nature of Veronica᷾ and

Victor᷾ journey down the hill.  The fluctuations between childishness and adult

maturity of the group is similar to the more individual and personal fluctuations that

Ali Smith attributes to her character Else as she combines her child-like and sensory

negotiation of the taps with the provocative display of water running down her

breasts; here, the group is represented as impervious to the errant behaviour of the

other two.  The fluctuations are magnified by the number of people watching in

relation to the two being watched:

> The descent was in places almost precipitous; they had to lower
> themselves from tuft to tuft of grass.  Once, coming to an empty
> slope, they lay and rolled down it; at another point they sat and slid.
> When trees interposed, they swung themselves joyously, like young
> apes, from trunk to trunk.  Every now and then they reappeared into
> sight of those above, who, never ceasing to be aware of them,
> watched with covert but passionate interest.[350]

---

[347] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 47.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid., p. 48.

In this juvenile and high-spirited race to the bottom, they constantly disappear from view and then reappear. The childishness of Victor and Veronica swinging through the trees is juxtaposed with the silent watchfulness of the rest of the group, who remained 'perfectly blank'.[351] The group waits with bated breath and composed stillness in relation to the jerky movements of the couple. The inaction of the voyeuristic watchers in relation to the young couple enforces the divide between wildness and lifelessness. The freedom of the outside scenery allows Veronica to lose all inhibitions, though she retains an element of indecision when she turns to give 'a long, inquiring, guarded upward glance',[352] trying to assess the group's thoughts before continuing in her exploits. This look, obviously un-rewarded as she neglects to notice the expectant party above, maintains her reputation through her awareness of society's regulations. The fact that her look is 'guarded' and that she fails to notice the group, even though she has just come from them, actually reduces her reputation in the eyes of the reader, as she performs the look as a routine, an insincere action which aims to promote her sincerity. However, Bowen then attacks this ambiguous notion of visibility, in a similar way as she did earlier with Sydney and the mirror, by stating that '[o]ne's own visibility is impossible to calculate'.[353] The disorientation created by Veronica's flight down the hill has affected her own subjective notion of visibility, allowing her to believe she is not being watched. The hesitancy of the party is formed from an uncertainty over how to react. In normal circumstances they are aware that they would be offended and could cast judgement on this frivolous couple, but in this artificial environment, and through the quest for enjoyment that comes with being on holiday, the disapproval that everyday society necessitates is reduced. The group are

---

[351] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 48.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid.

left watching with "covert but passionate interest"[354] uncertain, but interested, and largely unable to express these tumultuous feelings.

The scene culminates in the stillness of a climactic kiss:

As in a dance he whirled her round him suddenly and kissed her ear and cheek. She hesitated, balanced against him, then appearing reconciled to his change of tactics, flung her head back and allowed him to continue. He must have kissed her lips then for the first time; their stillness for some moments was profound.[355]

As soon as the kiss is over, "they *all* came alive again" (my emphasis).[356] It seems that the hotel space allows characters to try new identities and act out of character, displaying reckless and often sexually-charged behaviour. Moreover, when this happens, the other characters are stripped of any identity at all, and unable to act or move, they just watch and contemplate across the void.

We get further insight into one character's thoughts on this event if we return again to the internal musings of Sydney. Veronica's altered state of visibility is paralleled by Bowen's focus on Sydney's thoughts. Sydney's distracted state of consciousness in this scene causes her to interact then slip away with a constant wave-like motion. Unaware of the journey down the hill which precipitated the kiss, the physical event for which the chapter is headed, she looks down at the exact moment of the kiss and sees the action as separate from everything else. All sound and other senses are removed as they are "gesticulating soundlessly"[357] before her is just the visual image, the impression of the physical action. This soundlessness introduces a sense of unreality to the scene and exaggerates the separation between the couple and the group. Sydney's impression of the scene is described as a "perfect piece of

---

[354] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 48.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid., p. 49.
[357] Ibid., p. 48.

cinema-acting.'[358] To Sydney, the artificiality is due to her own personal level of distracted consciousness as much as to Veronica's lack of sincerity.

The immediate reactions to this event are equally fascinating. The group is suspended in a moment of inaction and stupefaction, held by the tone of uncertainty, and then followed by a rush of flurried activity. The group resorts to unimportant actions: the tidying away of the food and the packing of belongings, to avoid the inevitable discussion that will take place just as soon as these duties are completed. The members of the group are left to their own individual thoughts and we are left with the internal wanderings of James Milton: '[h]e had never seen a man and woman kiss before and was battering in a kind of despair against the glass wall that divided him from experience.'[359] His repetitive striking of matches and disposal of them, the burning of his fingers and exclamations, which express the violence inside, outwardly exemplify this inner turmoil. The hotel space, with its microcosmic references to the world outside, is a perfect forum to attack the false but unbending boundaries of society. As James Milton shows, the divisions are made of glass, fragile and invisible, but dangerous and deceptive.

While Amabel is in her bath, the group muse on the possible outcome of her behaviour; and while Veronica and Victor kiss, the group sits stunned and inert and are only spurred into action when the event is over. Both novels, as we have seen, examine how characters respond to the force of the hotel space which produces outrageous behaviour in some as if to test the dynamics of the space and the group held within it; both novels waver between examples of inertia and recklessness. In both cases, the space of the hotel is intrinsic to characters' realization and even production of their identity. The hotel offers a safe enough space for this kind of

---

[358] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 48.
[359] Ibid., p. 49.

behaviour to occur as the kiss and frivolous behaviour can almost be cast off because these characters are on holiday.  And yet the threat of indecision and uncertainty that crowds this narrative, embodied by the fearful watchers, the understanding that each character is tentative and unsure of what they are doing, or alternatively, acting without any consideration, reduces any sense of a central, stable identity.  The hotel and its grounds remain stable in comparison.

Despite the division between the group and the two characters in the above scene, Bowen highlights that there are intense vacillations between characters and their opinions throughout the narrative.  She depicts these vacillations as wavelike and fluid rather than abrupt.  In *The Hotel* her characters continually slip in and out of reality.  In a dreamlike existence 't]hey [draw] in each other's ideas and [give] out their own by a gentle process, like breathing'[360] yet the beautiful simplicity of this exchange is eradicated just a few lines on when Miss Pym 's 'waves came back bewildered, broken against something'[361] The lack of connection between the individual and the space is expounded by the similar lack of connection between each individual and the other members of the hotel world they are grouped with.  The attempts at connection always fail.  As the characters cannot pinpoint the breakdown in their exchanges, and only have a momentary glimpse of comprehension, the tone is of bewilderment and displacement.  The continual reminder that these characters are on holiday and removed from their normal existence is intrinsic to the make-up of these exchanges; the attempts at connection throughout these novels become more desperate as the holiday ebbs away and the reality of home life comes closer. The intense *need* to enjoy oneself on holiday is entirely removed from the everyday experience of home-life.  In this unknown and extraordinary society, the ambiguous

---

[360] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 11.
[361] Ibid.

nature of identity and the knowledge that characteristics are exaggerated 朩people can live and act almost any way that they choose 朩isolates the holiday scene as a special sort of place in which to examine modern consciousness.

In *The Hotel,* the added element of the holiday atmosphere, the strange surroundings and unfamiliar people, create a heady mixture of enjoyment, excitement and apprehension.  The characters are separated from the space they reside in by an invisible boundary, a missing link that makes it impossible to have any connection with the space, other than a temporary one.  This is suggestive of urban experience, of the confusion and disorientation created by the changing urban environment. Bowen念novel places a great deal of emphasis on the use of the grounds and the enjoyment of outside spaces, possibly to reduce the impact of this urban association. Mrs Lee-Mittison comes across a house hidden in a valley and imagines a new life for herself:

> She looked down the slope beside her into the valley below and saw
> a little house, with a blue door whose colour delighted her, beside
> the bed of a river.  Two lemon trees were beside it, and this little
> house which she seemed at once to inhabit gave her the most strange
> sensation of dignity and of peace.  She saw herself go climbing up
> the garden from terrace to terrace, calling the goat, and the goat,
> beautiful in its possessedness, come loping down to meet her, asking
> to be milked.  At this she paused in perplexity, for she had never
> milked anything and turned cold at the thought of touching the
> udders of an animal.  But in a moment this was over and she carried
> the milk frothing warm in the pottery jug inside, into the dark
> interior of the house which would not be dark from within.  Here
> something turned her back and she could not follow herself; she
> saddened, feeling excluded from some very intimate experience.[362]

---

[362] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 42.

The peace and reverie of the solitary individual on the hill is one instance of a character at ease in these surroundings.  The fact that this ease comes from an act of imagination not a 'real' event in her life is an interesting counterpoint to the search for homeliness and the need for security in the hotel.  The vision of the house in the distance is a peaceful one, but it is her imaginative and dreamlike associations that cause her to feel peace and not the house itself.  It is the intangible, abstract notion of creating 'home' that affects her experience of this space; just as Else in Smith's *Hotel World* is more comfortable on the streets, Mrs Lee-Mittison is more comfortable immersed in her imagining of welcoming spaces.  For this reason she slips in and out of her daydream and is able to laugh at her own perversity.  It is the fact that she feels at home here and actually goes further and 'seemed to inhabit' the space that makes it more approachable and understandable.  The house, as physical object, has no physical reality for her; it only exists as the product of her imagination.  She knows nothing of the actual inhabitants and does not need to.  It is the physical form of the space and the sensation this creates in this character that is of importance as the lack of detail allows her to create her own detail in her mind.  The passage finishes on a dark note, however, and the mixture of reality and imagination that has weaved its way through the vision leaves her with a disjointed feeling.  She is aware that something is lacking in the picture before her.  Although she has imagined herself belonging to the scene, reality takes over and the impossibility of 'possessedness' is the dominant issue.

This preoccupation with the home site in relation to the hotel is related specifically to the promise of the hotel, the promise of protection and security that is in essence always deficient.  Henry James discusses this disappointment in his account of the famous New York hotel:

> [t]he Waldorf-Astoria, sitting by this absent margin for life with her open lap and arms, is reduced to confessing, with a strained smile, across the traffic and the danger, how little, outside her mere swing-door, she can do for you.[363]

The protective embrace of the hotel structure is embodied by the image of the 'open lap and arms'. The hotel promises this protection but then fails to supply it. The element of danger that James refers to connects all the hotel novels examined here. The swing door can be seen as the symbol for life in the hotel: its constantly revolving movement maintains no connection and creates monotony. Once inside the swing-door, the individual remains detached from the space and the interior becomes as alienating as the exterior, despite its superficially welcoming decoration. Ruptures appear in these temporary hotel societies and communities fracture under the pressure of indecision and un-familiarity. This lack of stability increases the demands placed on the characters, necessitating violent reactions to events that may have been less volatile in more familiar environments.

I have shown that in novels like those of Bowen, Green and Smith, the relationship between space and subject is a complex and varied one, but ultimately, as Kracauer argues, it is space that produces consciousness. I have also shown that space acts either in a responsive relationship with character, by the closing-in of walls and the taking-on of the characteristics of its inhabitants; or, it is a violent force that overpowers characters, forcing them to act in curious ways. In due course, it is possible to see 'through the use of silences, ghost-like presences and characters who question their own subjectivity 'that space is often a force that can affect identity. This overpowering effect has two possible outcomes: it either promotes wildness in the character or extreme lifelessness. The only two characters that come close to

---

[363]James, *The American Scene*, p. 101.

dealing with the hotel on the "proper" or "equal" level are Amabel and Sara, and yet both ultimately fail: Sara because of her need for materiality, and Amabel because of her focus on public display.

The aim of this chapter was not to argue that space is "alive" instead I have tried to uncover the complexities of space and to demonstrate that in hotel fiction there is some level of subjectivity in space that has a powerful effect on character. This view of space is not found in the traditional realist novel. The most extreme example of the power and possibility of space can be seen in Ali Smith's post-modern *Hotel World.* Smith's character defines the process of entering space as something fluid like a person entering water: "[I]magine diving into water, water breaking round your shoulders to make room for you in it. Imagine hot or cold. Imagine cold butter disappearing into heated-up bread, gold on its surface, going"[364] In fact, the process of entering a space turns out to be much less refined than that of sliding into water or butter melting into toast. The experiments with space integration that I have described in this chapter more typically leave the subject at a loss, in an unreal and unknowable space. This dislocation in turn allows for a radical exploration of the relationship between character and setting.

To return again to Henry James and his personal experience at the Waldorf:

The amazing hotel-world quickly closes around him [∧] the air
swarms, to intensity, with the *characteristic*, the characteristic
condensed and accumulated as he rarely elsewhere has had the luck
to find it. It jumps out to meet his every glance, and this unanimity
of its spring, of all its aspects and voices, is [∧] the essence of the
loud New York story.[365]

---

[364] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 9.
[365] James, *The American Scene*, p. 102.

177

Importantly, James' use of 'characteristic' presupposes that the hotel has an essential quality, something that makes it significant. It is the generics of the luxurious hotel rather than any specific hotel that make this environment so distinctive. Hotels in themselves are unique in urban landscapes due to their function as a public space inhabited by strangers looking for some kind of simulacrum for the private comforts of a domestic space. James' story is about New York, but his discussion of a grand hotel corresponds to other hotels across the world as the hyphenated term 'hotel-world' suggests. Grand hotels are typically criticised for their universality. Yet the possibilities for human interaction between different nations, the homogeneity of culture and language in the melting pot of the urban hotel, reduce the negativity of this sterile space. We are long accustomed to the casual use of terms such as 'holiday spirit', 'holiday atmosphere' or even, as Henry James uses in the above quotation, 'hotel-world'. If you imagine the hotel world literally, it is both the hotel itself and its surrounding physical perimeters. This leaves out the subjective experience of individuals entering the space and the altered state of consciousness that the hotel space produces. We can also read from this hyphenated unity of 'hotel' and 'world' that hotel narratives can be seen as a totalized world in themselves. The narrative 'hotel-world' draws together various attempts to represent the space adequately, from Richard Whiteing's brief altercation through Bowen's and Green's more stylized depictions to Ali Smith's and Ishiguro's overt experimentation. The pervading feeling in Green is fear, in Bowen it is bewilderment and in Smith it is extreme terror. Fundamentally, and despite the different approaches that these novelists take, they are united by a belief in the possibilities of the hotel as a site, whether the result of that is negative or positive. All novelists encountered here respond to the impossibility of representing the space effectively by challenging the traditional interplay between

178

subject and environment.  There is a concentrated focus on senses in these novels; the sounds, in particular, resonate, as do the silences, somehow giving a more concrete sense of the abstraction of space.  Ultimately it is the power of the hotel space that, uniquely, remains constant throughout these narratives, alongside the wavering inconsistencies of the characters' feelings and actions.  And it is precisely this concept of the hotel as a fixed site 'or an 'intersection of flux' if we are to return to Wolfreys' statement 'that gives it the sense of dominance I have described.  Everything that happens within the hotel space is a comment on the space itself, and an affirmation of its status as a metropolitan power.  It holds characters in its grip and has a perceptible effect on their identity.  The characters in all the novels examined here try to leave behind every vestige of themselves, but ultimately, as Bowen intriguingly pinpoints in *The Hotel*, 'the Hotel would refuse to let [them] escape from all that [they were], and had pity on [their] innocent holiday taste for incognito, foredoomed from its birth on the threshold of the Hotel'[366]

---

[366] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 40.

**Chapter 4: Sociology**

**'Classes can no longer be thought of as unified and uniquely determined objects set in an abstract space-less realm'.[367]**

The previous chapter, which concentrated on what I termed the 'geography' of the hotel, examined the layout of rooms, movement between them and the function of each room; it reflected on the hotel site as a complete or self-contained 'world' one built on connections (or disconnections) between rooms and between the subject and the building as a whole. The sociological analysis that informs the following section will consider the network of community relations created within, and by, the hotel space; it will examine how the status and class of the individuals, together with the role that money has to play, inform our conceptions of the hotel-goer and hotelier, and their functions within the hotel. Rather than discussing humanity in general, this chapter will consider how humans are classified socially with a focus on the distinctions between rich/poor, aristocratic/working-class, and employer/employee. The aim will be to map these social stratifications onto the spatial relations examined in the previous chapter with a view to elaborating a more complex view of human identity.

**Guests**

In what follows, I will consider both the guests and staff, examining how each 'type' of character validates the space and functions within it. We will see a contrast between what can be termed the 'interior perspective' of the employees' narratives, a consequence of their permanent role in the space, and the transient and 'exterior perspective' of the hotel guests. If we consider what might constitute success and power in this space, then money (rather than class) is dominant, as Harvey suggests;

---

[367] Thrift and Williams, eds., *Class and Space*, p. 13.

180

any character is permitted to enter the hotel so long as they have the resources to pay for the hotel's services. At the same time, the hotel's status as a fashionable and cultured space depends on the financial resources of its guests: the space and the guests become reliant on each other, reflecting back and forwards mutual images of wealth and comfort. As we saw with Edith's experience in *Hotel du Lac,* it was assumed that they would live up to the hotel's standards, just as the hotel would live up to theirs.[368] In novels that focus intensely on the hotel space there also appears to be a more responsive situation; it is not just that the hotel's inhabitants and its surrounding space *rely* on each other, but also that they are mutually *explaining*, as Hans describes in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008): 'there was a correspondence between the looming and shadowy hotel folk and the phantasmagoric and newly indistinct world beyond the Chelsea's heavy glass doors, as if the one promised to explain the other'.[369] Entrances and assimilations into the space create disjunctions, as seen in the previous chapter. O'Neill's 'newly indistinct world' has become indefinite because of the localized effect on consciousness and identity of the 'hotel-world'. There are further considerations to be made concerning the nature of the 'correspondence' and the social relations between inside and outside – an assessment of this communal dynamic – as well as the reactions of the isolated individual. Here it is a questioning of how explanatory the space is, as well as how reliant on the outside world.

'Community', or lack of, is often discussed in relation to the disconnected city-space; in the hotel, like the city, there is a paradoxical sense of connection between individuals who are otherwise unaware that they have any bonds with each other. In other words, community can occur though it is not necessarily about

[368] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* p. 15.
[369] Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 30.

individuals activating relationships.  Lofland's description of the city experience,

which I quoted in the introduction, helps to clarify this point:

> The city [∧] is a place where people are continually brought
> together who do not, and in most cases will never, know one another
> at all.  It is a place where, on its sidewalks and its parks, on its buses
> and subways, in its restaurants and bars and libraries and elevators,
> in its depots and terminals, people are surrounded by persons whom
> they do not know and with whom their only basis for relationship is
> that they happen to occupy the same territory at the same time.[370]

The hotel is overlooked in Lofland's list of detached spaces and yet as part of the city

it functions as the ultimate point of transition; it is similar, but more condensed than

the restaurants, bars and libraries *because of* the possibilities for encountering

strangers within a more intimate space.  Within the hotel, as I have noted, there are

many opportunities for the simultaneous occupation of space by inhabitants who have

no other connection to each other.  In fact, there seem to be two sorts of extreme

reaction to such occupancy: either an intense feeling of disconnection or an over-

reliance on insignificant and tenuous connections to others.


**Hierarchical Spaces**

Bowen's *The Hotel* provides a very good example of the kinds of connections that can

be forged between what I have termed the geographical and sociological aspects of

space; of particular interest is a scene that deals with the restaurant space and the

hierarchy of the guests within it.  In an everyday scene where the inhabitants of the

hotel congregate for a routine event, intricate attention is paid to the position of

particular individuals in relation to others.  Bowen describes the seated position of

---

[370] Fischer, *The Urban Experience*, p. 95.

each character and the tables they have chosen.  Compellingly, these characters still try to behave as they would have done back home and stick possessively to hierarchical spaces within the actual dining room; they conform to the class hierarchy of the outside world and position themselves nearest to people of a similar status, taking into consideration the best position to "watch" without being "too much observed".[371]  Each individual is located and recognized in association with the rest of their group, creating resilient sub-communities formed through the minor echelons in the class system.  Now distanced from their familiar home-space they cling onto those they know, and more connectively, those they are related to.  It becomes obvious who is the most socially important family, for its members create a barrier around themselves which is commonly acknowledged: "[d]istinction drew a bright line round their woolly white heads, detaching them from the panorama of faces".[372]  Labelled a "panorama" the group's identity is based on anonymity; no one individual stands out in comparison to the distinctiveness of the family unit.  Identities merge, then, as individuals are grouped in families, and similar families are grouped as "other" in relation to the one distinct family.

Hierarchies of class, gender and age that order other modern, urban situations are automatically reinstated, though they do not necessarily govern all relationships.  Age is introduced as a pre-requisite for authority through the depiction of the "white woolly heads" a description which is also somewhat derogatory.  Here we are reminded of Bowen's picnic scene (analyzed in the previous chapter); there, it is the older ladies who are most bewildered by the kiss they witness, as it fails to conform to their expectations, removed as it is from the familiarity of their everyday environment.  In this instance the status of the older ladies remains, but the line of

---

[371] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 21.
[372] Ibid., p. 23.

distinction, although bright, is insubstantial causing us to suspect its constancy; the social boundary that separates the honourable ladies from the others in the group is as thin as a wisp of hair.

The perspective of the dining-room in Bowen's *The Hotel* is lengthened by the position of one character who looks at the other characters entering the room from the end of the hallway. The movement down the liminal space of the hall from the private spaces of the bedrooms to the public rooms is vivified by the obvious boundary between them. The visitors have blank faces when they are not able to be observed, but in a monotonous, repetitive motion they 'compose and poise themselves'[373] at the entrance, putting on a mask of simulated comfort. The doorway becomes a liminal space, a threshold where the characters take deep breaths before acting out the role of contented guest. The good food and 'cool-fingered'[374] air from the open window causes them to relax and feel at peace, but the moment is negated by the 'habit' and 'web of obligations'[375] that each character feels they must adhere to; claustrophobia sets in reminding them of the stresses of everyday life. Social obligations and rules are transmuted from their original setting into this new and unfamiliar one, but, as we have seen from the previous chapter, are distorted by the imposing space around them.

**Community Building**

Angela's individual exclusion from the group of main characters in Henry Green's *Party Going* is typical of her portrayal throughout the novel. In the period of time spent waiting on the station platform Angela and Robin are described abstractly:

---

[373] Bowen, *The Hotel,* p. 21.
[374] Ibid., p. 24.
[375] Ibid.

Like two lilies in a pond, romantically part of it but infinitely remote, surrounded, supported, floating in it if you will, but projected by being different on to another plane, though there was so much water you could not see these flowers or were liable to miss them.[376]

The ethereal element of the description unites the couple and raises them to another plane, though not necessarily a higher one. The beautiful but fragile flowers, when juxtaposed with the fierce and engulfing water, articulate the relationship between these particular individuals and the mass. The positivity of Angela's beauty is negated by her invisibility: indeed that beauty will later be eclipsed by the almost unfathomable magnificence of Amabel. The recurrent images are those of uncertainty, loneliness, and forced familiarity.

This passage is followed by the assertion that the picture is 'apparently serene'[377] revealing a gap between the surface appearance and inner reality. There are undercurrents in the narrative which hint at a sinister element in this artificial community. Angela looks to be a person of importance in the faceless crowd, self assured and dignified, and yet when assimilated to the group of knowable faces her façade crumbles. Fischer's ideas about sub-communities help make sense of Angela's status. In large communities smaller sub-groups form out of necessity as it is impossible to keep connections intact in larger groups. Rather than links forged by over-arching issues such as religion, race and class, sub-communities offer unification through reassembling fragments of identity; individuals from different neighbourhoods and social circles re-collect in groups distinct from the physical space in which they are situated. Angela, for example, is no longer a white middle-class woman, but a white middle-class woman in a different neighbourhood, where she has

---

[376] Green, *Party Going,* p. 13.
[377] Ibid.

185

no familial connection: she is separated from her normal social networks. In this respect she is a sub-community of one. Interestingly, the space of the hotel draws attention to its role in defining both the large social groups categorized by class, race and gender, whilst also drawing attention to the smaller sub-communities that are allowed to form and then shattered by the pressures of community building in a space that is difficult to decipher. The attempts at community building, both across large groups and between smaller sub-communities is a continual and often unrewarding process in hotel novels.

Angela's isolation is somewhat self-imposed through her forced familiarity with, but lack of understanding of, the social context she is trying to integrate into. The exile is also imposed by others; her outsider status is apparent from the beginning in her tenuous link to the group through the character of Max, whom we soon find out does not know her very well. Her discomfort when Julia bosses Max around and her anxiety over Robin drinking the alcohol that Max had ordered, shows her uneasiness with all members of the group, including those she presumably knows best. Angela's artificial relationship with these characters becomes particularly pitiful when she latches on to Amabel who deliberately takes her into her confidence: '[S]he began to make secrets which was her way when she did not know how things would turn out'[378] Amabel has the social understanding and experience to use every situation to its fullest advantage. She immediately picks out Angela as someone who will ease her entry into the hostile environment created by her surprise arrival. The vigour with which Angela accepts this confidence, and the readiness with which she believes that

---

[378] Green, *Party Going*, p. 83.

Amabel was just late 'and at once assumed she had always been coming'[379] shows how insecure she is in her sub-community.

Angela's immediate acceptance of Amabel is juxtaposed with Amabel's equally immediate dismissal of her. Almost as soon as Angela finishes speaking to Amabel, the next paragraph opens: 'Amabel by now had had enough of Miss Crevy'[380] The dismissal is direct and suggests the fragility of Angela's role in this social hierarchy. Angela's fervent attempts at assimilation continually go un-rewarded. However, her personal sub-community attracts the attention of Robin who tries to integrate himself with her. Robin's hatred of the others is palpable from the outset, and his belief that Amabel is just another 'member of this lot he despised and hated'[381] makes him the perfect counterpart to Angela's rejection. However, her self-imposed exile obscures their relationship; Robin's obvious feelings for her and the strength of the connection this could have produced, as the two lilies in the pond signified, is ruined by Angela's repeated teasing and rebuffing of her one potential ally.

Angela's dismissal of Robin is dramatized most distinctly in the scene where she punishes him for leaving her alone by flirting with Alex, luring him into the bedroom only to clap 'her hands twice'[382] pretending that she has had to fend off Alex's improper advances. Although this has the desired effect in punishing Robin who immediately comes to her rescue, such coquettish behaviour removes her further from that community - the group - which she repeatedly tries to gain access to. Moreover Angela's bond with Robin is only transient; the unnatural and mystifying

[379] Green, *Party Going*, p. 84.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid., p. 83.
[382] Ibid., p. 72.

incarceration they are subjected to puts stress on their ability to maintain their own sub-community as a counterpart to the solidarity of the group.

## Visibility and Familiarity

This idea of community is correlated to notions of visibility. For example, the scenes in Bowen's novels that deal with social networks through the portrayal of large groups of characters attempting community building, highlight the intensely public nature of these displays. In the first section of *The Hotel,* Bowen makes constant reference to the layout of the building and the ease with which the characters can be watched, or watch others. Miss Pym attaches herself to Mrs Kerr whose important social status (in the real world) has transferred with her to this new space (Miss Kerr has similarities in this respect to Green's Amabel). The prospect of walking to the tennis courts with Miss Kerr and 'appearing publicly'[383] with her is delightful to Miss Pym. Moreover the description of their meander down to the courts includes references to the public gaze from the 'hundred windows of the Hotel'[384] an image which emphasizes the subjective character of the hotel space, and its ability to watch its inhabitants.

In Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*, visibility is also important, despite its 'assurance of privacy'[385] In the opening thirty pages the focus is on seclusion, restoration and removal from society. Then, in starkly similar fashion to Bowen, Brookner describes a 'glamorous lady' who stands 'hesitantly in the doorway; then, having assured herself that her presence had been noted [∧] she advanced graciously to her table'[386] The restaurant scene is a replica of that in Bowen's novel: some characters are sitting

---

[383] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 9.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* p. 14.
[386] Ibid*.,* p. 33.

and watching, whilst others make sure they are being watched.  Even in this small, undistinguished community, away from the eyes of society, status is asserted through visibility and is dependant on relationships with others.  When Edith is asked to join this glamorous lady's table, a sub-community is formed, through the restaurant space, but that space visibly reinforces familiar notions of social respectability, notions so obvious that:

> Half an hour was all that was needed for the rules of the game to be
> set down, the wordless contract agreed upon by both parties.[387]

In Henry Green's *Party Going,* there is a similar preoccupation with the status of individuals outside of the hotel space, one which is apparent through an intense obsession with their categorization.  The repeated allusions to the absent 'Embassy Richard' are particularly fascinating, both in the levels of manipulation that can be achieved, and in the effect that an 'outside' influence can have on the 'hotel world'.  The absence of the subject allows a greater manipulation of narrative material, as the differing and fragmented accounts of his story have no possibility of corroboration.  Embassy Richard never becomes a fully formed character; he is known only by his nickname and the event that led to its formation: Richard earns his sobriquet through his ambiguously scandalous attempt at gaining access to a private and socially exclusive 'Embassy' party.  One of the first conversations, initiated amidst the confusion of the fog and the crowd, centres on the excited chatter about the latest developments in the story of Embassy Richard's scam: the absent Richard thereby provides a mechanism by which individuals can establish connections with each other, one ironically apt given that gossip about Richard centres on *his* attempts to

---

[387] Brookner, *Hotel du Lac,* p. 38.

gain access to exclusive social groups.  Conscious of her lack of familiarity with those

in the party, Angela is socially ill at ease.  To make conversation and better integrate

herself within the group, she picks up on the excitement of the story and tries, with a

confiding, secretive tone, to interpolate herself into the banter. Angela questions the

others:

> 'Now Robin isn't here, because you know he is a relation of
> Embassy Dick', do tell me, has anyone heard any more about it?'[388]

However, her interaction is registered as socially inept, a shallow intrusion which

reveals her to be an untrustworthy character – someone on the 'outside' who is not

really 'in the know'. Her over-familiar, name-dropping assertion that Robin is a

relation of 'Embassy Dick' – far from forging a connection between herself and the

subject of the story, merely distances her from events.  Her connection is further

reduced by her need to ask the others for the latest news.  In adopting the diminutive

'Dick' she is trying to assert a familiarity which does not exist, and in so doing simply

reaffirms her identity as 'other' to the group watching her.  Her faux pas draws the

other members of the party closer together.  The underlying sense of anxiety and

discomfort that Angela feels within a group of almost strangers only serves to make

her attempt at community building more tenuous.

## Outside status and inside contexts

Another method that Green employs to link the status configurations of the

hotel to what occurs in more 'everyday' contexts is a discussion of the homes and

surroundings that these subjects inhabit on a daily basis.   As we saw in the previous

---

[388] Green, *Party Going*, p. 37.

chapter, Amabel and Max are the most successful members of the hotel community due to their inherent social status and ability to manipulate others. Bettina Matthias has noted that adaptability is the only formula for success in the hotel: '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'.[389] Amabel's success however is due to her ability to detach herself, almost entirely, from the hotel influence, whilst Max's success is due to his physical removal from the majority of the narrative and his ability to retain his status as the absent centre. As the richest members of the group, Amabel and Max have a similar style: 'her furniture was like his, his walls like hers, their chair coverings were alike and even their ash trays were the same. There were in London at this time more than one hundred rooms identical with these'.[390] They are the social elite. The way that your house is decorated becomes a sign of social status and all elitist urban spaces enmesh in a dreary similarity. The impersonality of the decoration matches that of the hotel where all tastes are brushed over in a mono-textured, plain-coloured prison cell so their success may also be due in some part to their familiarity with transient lifestyles and impersonal spaces.

In opposition to these characters, Else in *Hotel World* is an anomaly in the hotel environment due to her homelessness and inferior status. In the previous chapter we witnessed her vivid, physical dislocation from the hotel room and the threat that the hotel imposed on her. Her position as a homeless girl, of course, has a major impact on her status within the novel. Else commands the space outside the hotel as she knows how to survive on the street. In a scene in which she is juxtaposed

---

[389] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting,* p. 55.
[390] Green, *Party Going*, p. 80.

with another homeless girl, and defends her spatial territory, her superiority is palpable:

> She will go across the road to that girl, like she's done the last twice, and pick up the money they've been dropping at her feet. That's how they've decided to play it, her and the girl, and that's how they will play it. First Else gets to her feet. Then she crosses the road. Then the girl sees her coming and runs away. Then Else picks up the money. It's fair. It's her right. Everyone knows the hotel is Else's.[391]

The short sentences that narrate this scene, almost in note form, show Else's confidence in the action she is taking. Although she states that that is how 'they've decided to play it, it is obvious that the other girl has no choice in the matter. Else dominates the street and is confident of her position in her own territory, but as we have seen when inside the hotel she becomes reclusive and insubstantial, literally becoming fluid when she morphs into a pink mass in front of the taps. What is interesting here is the focus on possession and ownership as key aspects of her identity on the street. Else asserts ownership of the space directly outside the hotel, referring to it as 'my' when inside the hotel room she tries to find other ways of possessing the space. She coughs, sickeningly, in the more private space of the locked bathroom and considers her isolation away from the more visible spaces of the hotel:

> [T]he satisfaction of coughing in a room that there's no one else in, really letting go into the silence of a place that's yours, a place where there's nobody to stare (or to not stare, which is, some days, worse).[392]

---

[391] Smith, *Hotel World,* pp. 41-42.
[392] Ibid., p. 72.

Being observed, when compounded by an *awareness* of being observed, is an element of social identity, one acknowledged by Else in her recognition that being stared at, or worse, not being stared at, acts as a foundation for her familiarity with the space.  She manages to associate herself with the space, and possess it in some degree, because of her isolation and removal from the excessive visibility of the street (or the more visible spaces of the restaurant or lobby).  However, her feeling is artificial; she forces familiarity and connection by 'really letting go' and it is only in this altered sense of reality that she is able to feel she owns the space.  Only a few lines on she coughs again and spits into the toilet, 'got as much of it up as she could into the clean mouth of the rich people's toilet'[393]  Now she is dispossessed because of the introduction of 'rich people' into her consciousness, and a recognition of their natural possession of spaces such as these due to their established right to inhabit them.  Else's identity wavers, as she tries to re-attach herself to the space through an awareness of others.  In the absence of any social interaction she becomes disorientated.  Her situation is later clarified when she becomes the antagonist once again, using the space, and the hotel's utilities, to attack those she blames: the rich people.

Else's time within the hotel transpires because of her status; it is only because she is homeless that she is invited in for a moment of release and security.  Her reaction to the space is based on her de-familiarity with it because of her obvious social disassociation.  The only space where she feels safe is on the street, but she has to use violent methods to retain her status, even here.  On the street she is prey to the prying eyes of those that control the space through patriarchal forms of socialization.  When considering the guests in isolation in these novels it appears that there is a simple hierarchy between rich and poor, one that conforms to familiar modes of

---

[393] Smith, *Hotel World,* p. 72.

socialization on the outside world.  Those that succeed in the space tend to be the rich and successful members of society.  Although all characters are impacted by the space around them, it is those who are wealthy and upper-class who recover more perceptibly than those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.  However, when considering the hotel from an interior perspective, focusing on those that have a permanent association with the space, the role of wealth is more complex.  Hotel novels that give voice to the lower classes enmeshed in the space add complex layers to this image of socialization, particularly with regard to those characters employed by the hotel: they have no established status or money, but neither are they disempowered by the space.  These characters will be the focus of the next section.

**Staff**

The hotel, in theory, is available to members of different classes as it promotes an open door policy to almost any customer who can pay.  In reality, the class structure is much more rigid than this and is reliant on appearance and the power of money.  This causes the excessive disjunction experienced by a character such as Smith❦Else, as opposed to the more subtle feelings of unease present in Brookner❦ Edith.  When considering the space from an interior perspective, the hotel has a similar hierarchical structure between servant (or employee) and master (or owner/proprietor) as the home, although this form of organization is complicated by the inclusion of multitudes of guests within the space.

The novels considered in the geographical analysis of the previous chapter focus almost entirely on middle and upper-class guests and their reaction to the hotel environment.  Ali Smith is a partial exception as she includes a cross-section of

society through her different focal characters, including the destitute homeless girl, Else; however, as only two of these characters are employees of the hotel, we need to widen the investigation to include novels that give first-person narrative to those individuals involved in the day-to-day workings of the hotel. One author who took an interest in the hotel as an organization was Arnold Bennett who wrote two hotel novels: *Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902) and *Imperial Palace* (1930). Bennett's works will be examined alongside Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*, Paul Theroux's *Hotel Honolulu* (2001), Stephen Millhauser's *Martin Dressler* (1998), Laurence Geller's *Do Not Disturb* (2006) and Sinclair Lewis's *Work of Art* (1934).

Bennett was preoccupied with hotels in his recollections as well as his literature. Throughout his journals the hotel and the issue of hotel life appear repeatedly. In Bennett's journals for the years 1896-1910 he mentions twenty-eight hotels in ten cities on his travels between England and Europe. The majority of these references are brief and give purely factual information, often focusing on the price of rooms or the amenities available: 'Thursday, 25*th*: Lunch at Ritz with Newbould, Harrises being there. New Gallery. Conder pictures. Tea at Carlton.'[394] The focus in these recollections is often on pragmatic issues. When considering setting up home temporarily in a hotel the minimalistic notes record: '[q]uite horrified by a decent one in Queen's Gate. Pail on stairs. Yet comfortable. But too horribly ugly and boarding-house-y. I had begun by putting cost at £40 a month. I then dropped it to £25, under M's influence. It must now go up to £30 or £35.'[395] The concentration on living costs and expenditure leaves no room for speculation on personal feelings towards the space, other than that it is too 'boarding-house-y.' When Bennett lengthens the accounts, the focus is still the same:

---

[394] Arnold Bennett, *The Journals of Arnold Bennett 1896-1910,* ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1932), p. 315.
[395] Ibid., p. 271.

> We reached London prompt at 4 p.m. and found the Strand Palace
> Hotel very well organized, and strangely cheap. What makes this
> hotel unique among English hotels is such things as, hot and cold
> water lavatory in every room, free baths, no tips, second serving of
> any dish without extra charge. I think there is no other hotel that
> offers these things. I would stay in it, were it only for the lavatory
> and the bath. The difference to the comfort of the client is
> tremendous.[396]

He is still entirely engrossed in the cost and convenience of the hotel to the inhabitant; we see no personal connection between him and the space around him. There is no emotive quality to the description, which is in direct opposition to James' profuse idealization of the hotel in *The American Scene.* It seems strange, then, that Bennett's novels deal so explicitly with characters' altercations within the space. The business side of the hotel is still in evidence in Bennett's novels, but there is an added quality of personality exploited by the role of servants in this unique space.

Bennett was particularly interested in the static nature of buildings and the disjunction caused by moving figures entering them. His discussions on transport and particularly the train are illuminating when considering the hotel. He found it curious that travel allows you to remain still whilst moving through spaces at great speed. Bennett became alienated by this disjunction between space, movement and time. When travelling through France he wrote:

> My thoughts were chiefly occupied with the idea of the train, that
> luxurious complete entity running through a country and ignoring
> it. I seldom had the least idea where the train was. Space, as a
> notion, had vanished for me. I might have been in the void.[397]

---

[396] Bennett, *Journals*, p. 344.
[397] Ibid.*,* p. 145.

The space of the train was, for Bennett, an isolated area in which no connection between the train and the space it was moving through could take place.  His position inside the train put him at a further remove from the outside spaces due to the speed with which he travelled through them.  Bennett's articulation of his reaction, as if in a void, is reminiscent of Siegfried Kracuaer's concerns over the loss of self in the hotel.  The hotel, as a fixed location, remains static (like the interior of the train carriage) in relation to the transient guests that move through the space; the movement of these passing guests through a motionless structure to which they have no connection may also have been problematic for Bennett, and this may explain why he focuses on the individuals who exist *permanently* within the space of the hotel – the servants who control and understand the space, while remaining connected to it, are the epitome of the synthesis that Bennett required in his fiction.  Bennett focuses on all levels of class within the hotel society, starting with the hotel and the permanent residents of the space, only including references to the guests as and when they come in contact with the employees.  Bennett in fact gives equal – if not more – narrative space to the working or servant class.  The function of the business is reliant on this body of workers and they are the most prominent characters.  The inter-play between them, and the ways in which they act in relation to the guests and the manager, creates a diverse collection of narratives that register the complexities of the environment.

Bennett describes a new form of social mixing in his hotels in which different classes can co-habit in a manner which is unique in the urban environment.  He uses *Grand Babylon Hotel* and *Imperial Palace* to uncover the mysteries of the space itself, in a method similar to that of Bowen, Green, Brookner and Smith.  Both of Bennett's hotels focus on a multitude of aspects inherent to the complexity of the hotel space, including: the class and status of both staff and guests, the focus on

197

transience and temporality, money and finance in relation to the business world of the

hotel and issues of home-making and ownership inherent to the spirit of hotel life.

Brian Hudson believes that "[h]uman life, character and relationships"[398] were

Bennett's main interests as a writer, and states that "a full understanding of the way

people live requires a sound knowledge of where they live"[399]  For the characters in

Bennett's hotel novels the space in which they live is also the space in which they

work.  Therefore, as Hudson sees it, understanding these characters requires an

understanding of how that space operates.  Bennett, as a writer, considered how

constituent parts perform in relation to the whole, and therefore, the focus is on each

cog in the hotel network and the successful function of each element.

The specific nature of each hotel and its identity is of great importance to these

novels, as both eponymous titles suggest.  In *Grand Babylon,* when characters are

required to leave, the action is noted and the characters disappear; they only return to

the narrative when they return to the hotel.  Their outside lives away from the hotel

are not important; it is only the internal events that take place within this space that

requires attention.  The space itself, on the other hand, is distinctive.  What makes the

opening particularized is the attention Bennett applies to the repetition of the hotel

name, "The Grand Babylon" four times in the first paragraph.  This manages sub-

consciously to draw our attention to the specificity of this space that is named

repeatedly, rather than just referring to it as merely "the hotel"  Similarly, Bennett

refers to the atmosphere of the space, something that, as we have seen in the first

chapter, is highly instrumental in creating and maintaining the subjectivity of spaces.

Bennett states: "[t]he atmosphere was an atmosphere of serenity and repose,

---

[398] Brian J. Hudson, "The Geographical Imagination of Arnold Bennett" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 7:3 (1982): 365.
[399] Ibid.

characteristic of the Grand Babylon."[400] The use of the adjective "characteristic"

applies individuality to the space, denoting the essential quality of that particular

space, and is reminiscent of James' concerns with the "characteristic" of the Waldorf.

The guests are representative of a particular "type" whilst the space is individual;

however, considering the individual roles of the employees of the hotel complicates

this reading.

   In the first paragraph, the social setting of the dining-room is filled with men

"of all sizes, ages, and nationalities [∧] every one alike arrayed in faultless evening

dress."[401] The description accounts for a wide array of characters; class is not

mentioned directly, but instead, referred to more subtly in the generalization that "the

men" are all wearing evening dress. Anyone is allowed to enter the hotel dining-room

as long as they conform to the rules of custom and status that the hotel sets. This

concern is made more explicit in the same paragraph, by the admission that the hotel

has an "aristocratic monotony of existence."[402] the use of "monotony" invokes

generality, but it is a very specific generalization due to it being "aristocratic." When

these guests, grouped by aristocratic monotony, come in contact with the staff, the

power balance between serving and being served is truly tested.


**The millionaire and the waiter**


   Once again it is confirmed that a large hotel is a world unto itself and
   that this world is like the rest of the large world. The guests here roam
   about in their light-hearted, careless summer existence without
   suspecting anything of the strange mysteries circulating among them.[403]

---

[400] Bennett, *Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902; London: Penguin, 1938), p. 7.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Sven Elvestad "Death enters the hotel," quoted in Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture,* p. 58.

The guest-centred focus of most hotel narratives limits the understanding of the hotel as a space in which to analyze identity.  The careless summer existence of the holiday world, symbolized by the hotel frame, excludes half of that world from the narrative; it negates an understanding of the space as a business that is controlled by a network of employees.  When writers do include references to staff they can become idealized and transparent.  Henry James, again in reference to the Waldorf Astoria, sees the hotel as a well-oiled machine, the balance between employees and guests is equal as both respond mutually to each other; despite 'the hundreds and hundreds of people in circulation'[404] the hotel manages to maintain 'the element of ingenuous joy below and of consummate management above'[405] and these elements 'melted together and left one uncertain which of them one was, at a given turn of the maze, most admiring'[406] This image of the well-oiled machine comes up repeatedly in hotel literature. Millhauser's *Martin Dressler* describes the grand hotel as a space of intrigue due to its perfect form of leadership:

> [w]hat held him there day after day [∧] was the sense of a great, elaborate structure, a system of order, a well-planned machine that drew all these people to itself and carried them up and down in iron cages and arranged them in private rooms.[407]

Millhauser substitutes 'well-oiled' with 'well-planned' but the meaning is just the same.  The military precision by which these establishments are run gives them a sinister edge that is enforced by the 'iron cages' and systematic form of the 'arranged' rooms.  The relationship between multiple inhabitants and the successful business is unstable and constructed around a divide between the consumers and the facilitators.

---

[404] Henry James, *The American Scene,* p. 105.
[405] Ibid.
[406] Ibid.
[407] Steven Millhauser, *Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 24.

The possibilities for failure are countless, a circumstance which is obscured by James's idealized construction.  In contrast to James, writers such as Stephen Millhauser and Sinclair Lewis give voice to inexperienced characters that move through the system learning its intricacies, whilst Laurence Geller and Paul Theroux highlight the impossibility of the hotel manager's position as he attempts to control and organize the space.  Bennett gives even more narrative space to the voices of multiple hotel staff.  When the underground network of the hotel comes out into the open, the circulating mysteries complete the complex vision of the social organization of the space.

In a description that draws hotel guests into a very specific 'type' Bennett focuses on their negative, avaricious qualities; the 'overfed, commonplace, pursy'[408] little men are criticized for pandering to the fashion for commercial luxury.  In narratives such as these, all guests become 'other' to the staff who are better able to negotiate the space.  Similarly, in Millhauser's *Martin Dressler* there is a problematic divide between those that work and those that lounge in the space.  When asked to fulfil a task not set in his job description, Martin is left 'resigning himself to a ruined hour' and 'he sat down in a red-plush lobby chair and watched the guests walking purposefully, striding in and out of parlors, sinking flamboyantly into armchairs and couches'[409] Paradoxically, Martin is reduced to *flâneur* as he watches the guests, whilst they are given purpose through their *flâneur*-like activities.  Both Martin and the guests he watches parallel each other through their movements, but the intent behind each action raises the guests above Martin due to the level of desolation he feels and the fact that his actions are not 'correct' for his role.  He is disorientated because of his lack of power in a space that he is not yet accustomed to; he feels the

---

[408] Bennett, *Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 172.
[409] Millhauser, *Martin Dressler,* p. 49.

same lack of purpose and direction that we have seen in the guests who first encounter the lobby. The over-riding impression of guests in Bennett's hotel novels – and here in Millhauser's – is of naiveté and ineptitude. Guests are entirely unaware of the underworld beneath the hotel exterior; instead, they delimit the existence of the employee by assuming, arrogantly, that the only role of the employee is to service them. The 'mysteries' that circulate among the hotel thrive because of the egotistical unawareness of the guests, something that creates dynamic inter-play between characters in these novels.

*Grand Babylon Hotel* begins with a chapter entitled 'The millionaire and the waiter' an apt opening for a novel that examines a space rich in class conflict. In fact, the first line of this novel, 'Yes, sir?'[410] immediately draws attention to the relationship between the serving class and those being served. The liaison between the millionaire and the waiter stands as figurehead for the power relations in the remainder of the novel. As Jules (the waiter) is the first character introduced in this chapter, and indeed in the novel as a whole, some level of importance is given him, despite his otherwise subservient opening gesture. The description of him as 'the celebrated head waiter of the Grand Babylon'[411] in the second line, confirms his status as an important and dynamic character.[412] After Jules' initial question he finds he has to repeat it, but this time 'there was a shade of august disapproval in his voice'[413] Despite the third-person narrative, the insight into this character's internal musings is at the heart of Bennett's premise for hotel narratives, and in opposition to characters

---

[410] Bennett, *Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 7.
[411] Ibid.
[412] Interestingly, a connection can be made here to Henry James' *The American* (1877; New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978). In Newman's experience of the hotel (although he does not quite realize it himself) it is almost as if the service is too good: the servants appear before the bell is even rung and loiter in his proximal space to cover every eventuality required from this guest. The balance between comfort and luxury has swung too far in the other direction as the attempt at perfect servitude only creates a feeling of claustrophobia. The reality of the hotel that offers good service when required, and comfort as it is needed, is far removed from the fake structure of the grand hotel in this novel.
[413] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 7.

in novels such as Green's *Party Going.* We are then told that 'it was not usual for him to have to address a customer twice'.[414] His confident control of the situation and arrogant disregard for the customer who is supposedly always right, subverts our expectations of how the servant class 'should' act in this role. Because of this unexpected, although implicit, display of superiority, it is possible to question the position of servants in the hotel space, if in fact 'servant' is how we should refer to them.

The altercation between Jules and the man becomes altogether more explicit as the millionaire requests a drink not to the liking of Jules or his establishment. The man (as yet unnamed, an interesting device due to the instant naming and personal superiority of Jules) tries to explain how to mix the drink he has requested after being told clearly by Jules that '[t]his isn't an American hotel, sir',[415] a delicate insult to the customer himself and the ersatz nature of American hotels in relation to British ones. Jules' words are said with 'calculated insolence' that is 'cleverly masked beneath an accent of humble submission'.[416] Jules' ability to insult the guest whilst remaining within the parameters of subservience creates an interesting and powerful impression of the complexities of class conflict in this novel and in the hotel space as a whole. Jules is aware of the power of this façade and succeeds because of his manipulation of it and his awareness of how and when to transgress the social boundaries instated between members of different classes.

Jules is distinguished from the other waiters as they are predominantly nameless and categorized as 'the waiters' who are 'commanded by Jules'.[417] Despite this group identity, these waiters maintain a hierarchy that is distinct and associated

---

[414] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 8.
[415] Ibid*.,* p. 8.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid., p. 7.

with the status of the hotel they are attached to "as with the guests they are expected to live up to the standards of the hotel. They balance their trays with "dexterity" and execute orders "with that air of profound importance of which only really first-class waiters have the secret"[418] Only a certain sort of waiter would be successful in an establishment of this kind; the use of the word "secret" proves how difficult it is to achieve respect in this environment "it is a secret of which only a few have the knowledge.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *The Unconsoled,* also shows a strict hierarchy amongst the serving classes and their function in the novel through the uncovering of a secret network. In the opening scene of *The Unconsoled*, Ryder arrives to find an un-manned and imposing central space and is finally helped by a clerk who, until he realizes Ryder's identity, "remained for a time distinctly off-hand"[419] The clerk is preoccupied and disorganized and cannot seem to make a decision, repeating phrases such as "if the manager were here…"[420] After this rather confusing opening Ryder is passed on to Gustav, the porter, who carries his bag to his room. During the journey in the lift a rather curious exchange takes place, in which Gustav describes his role with austere sincerity, detailing the importance of his position in society:

> Many people here seem to think they can simply put on a uniform
> and then that will be it, they'll be able to do the job. It's a delusion
> that's been particularly nurtured in this town. Call it a local myth, if
> you will [...] Now I'm not saying people here are in any way rude to
> us. Far from it, I've always been treated with politeness and
> consideration here. But, you see, sir, there's always this idea that
> anyone could do this job if they took it into their heads, if the fancy
> just took them.[421]

[418] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 7.
[419] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* p. 3.
[420] Ibid., p. 4.
[421] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

This monologue continues across five pages and is curious in its intensity and lack of input from Ryder, the main character. Despite the profuse detail and lengthy riposte there appears to be a great deal missing from this description, information that Gustav may be withholding. In true Ishiguro style the opening is fragmented, eccentric and surreal. Gustav's position in society is elevated, or mythologized due to the local myth he describes, a myth that, like Bennett's secret, is kept from the reader and the other characters in the novel; the role of the porter takes a central position due to this sense of power created in the opening. The fact that we later learn he is the father of Ryder's partner, and grandfather to his son, does nothing to strengthen his position in the hotel narrative; his role as porter is the preliminary and overriding factor that secures his status and is continuously reiterated throughout the novel.

One such reiteration occurs in the same lift scene, when, peculiarly again, Ryder realizes there is someone else in the lift with them. Miss Hilde had been listening to their conversation and decides to reinforce Gustav's story:

> I was listening to what Gustav was telling you, and I have to say he's
> being rather unfair on those of us in this town. I mean when he says
> we don't appreciate our hotel porters. Of course we do and we
> appreciate Gustav here most of all. Everyone loves him [∧] he's
> one of the very best. We all love him. He's exceedingly modest and
> so he'll never tell you himself, but the other hotel porters in this town
> all look up to him. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say
> they're in awe of him.[422]

The effusiveness of Miss Hilde's declaration corresponds to the detailed but almost inane monologue from Gustav; both are over-determined and draw attention to the

---

[422] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* pp. 9-10.

peculiarity of the opening that deposits Ryder in a bewildering world where everything is opaque and simulated.  This reiteration and exaggeration continues throughout the novel and gives Gustav a slightly sinister persona.  There are a number of particularly ominous scenes, ranging from simple arguments and moments of voyeurism, to the utterly macabre scene in which Brodsky is involved in an accident and has his leg removed by a doctor with a hacksaw at the side of the road.  Gustav is never actually involved in any of the more disturbing aspects that occur in the novel; he plays the role of dutiful father, grandfather and faithful employee to the end — and yet there is an underlying tone of menace in his repeated notions about the importance of porters to the community and the community they create between themselves, one separate from the guests and the other professions that work within the hotel.  We are forced to question why other porters are in awe of him.  What secret does this profession possess in this novel?  This sinister quality is exemplified when his grandson, Boris, describes Gustav to Ryder:

> 'Grandfather's very strong.  He's one of the strongest men in the town [...] He's a good fighter. He was a soldier once.  He's old, but he's still a better fighter than most people.  Street thugs don't realise that sometimes, then they get a nasty surprise.'[423]

Boris does not go into any more detail than this but we are left with an image of Gustav — fairly near the opening of the narrative — that does not align itself with the subservient image of porters he details to Ryder.  Gustav almost has the status of a Mafioso who controls the other porters through their innate sense of reverence towards him.  He draws attention to this distinguished community when he describes the regular meetings they have, inviting Ryder to join them:

---

[423] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* p. 36.

[O]ur group at the Hungarian café, we know we've made a
difference, even if it's a small one. You'd be very welcome to join
us, sir. I would happily introduce you to the group. We're not
nearly as formal as we once were and it's been understood for some
time that in special circumstances, guests can be introduced to our
table.[424]

Even though he informs us that it is the rules and proper conduct of portering that

Gustav's community meets to discuss, there is, nevertheless, an underlying threat of

darker activity. As with Gustav's vocalizations in the lift, there is a disparity between

form and content. The information we are given through Gustav's musings does not

correspond to the sheer amount of narrative space utilized to relay that information.

His obsession with the reputation of his fellow porters, and the portering profession as

a whole, is made bizarre through such an intense focus upon it. To highlight this

further, Ishiguro spends very little time on a more conventional dilemma: his painful

estrangement from his daughter. Gustav asks Ryder about his daughter at only one

point in the story; her corresponding role is to carry round a winter coat (for the

entirety of the novel), bought for him in case he got cold. This prop is only given its

proper significance when Gustav lies dying and Sophie finally unites him with his

present; he responds: '[T]his coat will keep me warm now [⌃] It's what I've been

needing'[425] The mundanity of these actions (the carrying of the coat) and

fleetingness of these thoughts (Gustav's mentions of Sophie) again do not correspond

to how we would conventionally expect that relationship to be portrayed. Ishiguro

heightens the importance of Gustav's social and professional role whilst reducing and

rescaling the impact of his personal problems. The effect is to turn the narrative on its

[424] Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled,* p. 7.
[425] Ibid., p. 474.

head; just as the spatial dynamics have been altered, so too has our perception of reality and identity.  Gustav's role in the novel is in essence the same as that of Jules in Bennett's hotel novel; despite the differing narrative styles of these novels, they have in common the predominance of both characters in the opening (juxtaposed with the entrance of the main character and the lessening of his power) with their intense focus on subservience and dedication to their profession, together with their association with the more malevolent aspects of each work.  Jules becomes more centralized in the novel as Bennett makes his criminal role more explicit, whilst Gustav generally circulates around the periphery; both characters, however, act as devices to move away from the conventional focus on guests in hotel narratives and to instate another viewpoint on the space.  This in turn allows us to view the space from an internal perspective of those characters that are more rooted in it and have the power to control others that pass through it.

Harvey recognizes the prestige that attaches to employees in large organizations:

> Symbols of status, prestige, rank, and importance (even self-respect)
> may also be acquired by procuring command over particular
> resources in prestigious locations. [426]

Although servants of the home may seek the highest possible position, the resources and 'symbols' available to them are not as diverse as those in the hotel.  Personal prestige is a more important concern when making a livelihood in the hotel.  The grand hotel is unrivalled as a location in which servants are on display and they promote their own power in whichever form they can.  The hotel in Bennett's novel is

---

[426] Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience,* p. 58.

a "perfectly-managed establishment."[427] This perfection is not however an idealized vision, as we saw with Henry James's description, but is a portent that draws attention to the possibility of failure associated with those "circulating mysteries." The adverbial "perfectly-managed," allows room to question the serenity of the space. It is through an examination of the class concerns inherent to this space that these tensions can begin to be understood.

To return to Bennett's novel, the dispute between Jules and Theodore Racksole (named towards the end of the scene) resumes at the end of the first chapter, framing the opening with an important account of class tensions in the novel. Racksole's daughter Nella has now joined him and she demands filleted steak and bass for her birthday meal which elicits an outraged response from her father: "Steak and beer at Félix's! It's impossible!"[428] Jules stands over them menacingly and with "pure spirit of adventure"[429] as he senses the disturbance that lies ahead. The narrative now states that it is an unusual occurrence for Jules to actually wait on tables, he usually "hovered observant, like a captain on the bridge during the mate's watch."[430] Normally, it is an honour to be waited on by Jules, as the service of a first-class waiter attaches prestige to a first-class guest. However, the ominous atmosphere in this chapter shows that it is the sense of adventure and the possibility of embarrassing an American visitor that causes Jules to grace them with his presence. Racksole realizes the impudence of ordering steak and bass (something he fails to acknowledge when ordering an American drink). He thus hesitates for a second, but then proceeds due to the demands of his daughter. Jules, unperturbed, immediately

---

[427] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 7.
[428] Ibid*.,* p. 14.
[429] Ibid., p. 15.
[430] Ibid.

replies: "It's not in the menu, sir."[431] He is told to find it anyway but returns immediately from the kitchen (too quickly for any searching to take place) announcing: "Mr. Rocco's compliments, sir, and he regrets to be unable to serve steak and Bass to-night, sir."[432] Jules' quiet determination and authority in a situation where he knows he does not need Rocco's acquiescence is what leads to a stand-off between a waiter and a millionaire:

> The two men looked at each other. It seemed incredible that
> Theodore Racksole, the ineffable Racksole, who owned a thousand
> miles of railway, several towns, and sixty votes in Congress, should
> be defied by a waiter, or even by a whole hotel. Yet so it was.
> When Europe's effete back is against the wall not a regiment of
> millionaires can turn its flank. Jules had the calm expression of a
> strong man sure of victory.[433]

What is important here is the juxtaposition of the millionaire and what he represents (power, authority and a particular kind of American wealth) with a waiter who easily retains authority throughout the scene — despite standing for very little — using only the dominance of the hotel space as a background, and his familiarity with it to empower him. The waiter is aligned with the hotel giving him immense superiority, which overpowers even the railway, towns and votes that Racksole owns. Jules is almost the embodiment of the space itself, a space that retains immense power and a sense of stability. Bennett uses these oppositional characters to question the changing status of the working class in emergent spaces like the hotel. Jules is not necessarily unique in this ability to control; he is representative of the service class in the hotel industry as a whole. The altercation between Jules and Racksole is fleeting, and its fugitive nature is only emphasized by the space Bennett gives to the working-class

---

[431] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 15.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.

character's consciousness and our insight into Jules' inner musings.  The event is never narrated from Racksole's point-of-view and we can glean from this that to him the event is insignificant.  It is only our understanding of Jules' perturbation at the few comments Racksole makes that forces us to see the importance of this event.

Interestingly, Jules' position and superiority does not remain completely unwavering; as the dispute continues the stakes are raised.  The first chapter closes with Racksole storming out, supposedly to complain to a higher power, leaving Jules standing self-satisfied and confident in the resolution:

> He had fired; it was the antagonist's turn.  A long and varied
> experience had taught Jules that a guest who embarks on the
> subjugation of a waiter is almost always lost; the waiter has so many
> advantages in such a contest.[434]

Jules is constantly aware of his position and is confident in his ability to control the situation.  However, the use of 'almost' again hints at impending disaster, quickly followed by a change in this character's position.  The opening of the second chapter causes the hotel dynamic to take a dramatic turn; the reason for this shift is money.  Racksole does indeed seek out Felix Babylon, the hotel manager, but not just with a complaint about food.  Instead he realizes that the only way to receive the dinner he has ordered is to buy the hotel outright.  The deal is struck almost immediately: 'I buy,' said Theodore Racksole, smiling contentedly; 'and we will, if you please, exchange contract-letters on the spot.'[435]  With the 'usual millionaire's luck'[436] and a meal that ends up costing him £400,000, Racksole solves the problem and downgrades Jules to his original waiter status.  This status is reduced even further by

---

[434] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 16.
[435] Ibid., p. 19.
[436] Ibid., p. 18.

the knowledge that he is now in Racksole's employment.  Racksole retains the upper

hand by asking Rocco, 'will you oblige me very much by ordering a plain beefsteak

and a bottle of Bass to be served by Jules?  I particularly desire Jules at table No. 17

in the dining-room, in ten minutes from now?'[437]  When Racksole returns to his table

we wait expectantly for Jules' reaction and we watch Jules approach.  With anti-

climactic disappointment we see Racksole attempt to catch his eye but fail to do so

and with that 'the dinner proceeded.'[438]

It appears that a dramatic shift has taken place in the dynamic between the two

characters and we expect the hotel to now conform to the appropriate and expected

hierarchies that dominate in the outside world: the rich succeed while the poor fail.

Apparently Jules was allowed a moment of superiority but it was just a fleeting

glimpse that cannot remain due to the rigidity of class boundaries.  Racksole

overpowers, not just by money, but by eliminating his status as a transient guest and

becoming a permanent element of the organization.  As a contemporary review stated,

Racksole starts his hotel life with a 'temporary contract of that shifting cosmopolitan

society which frequents the modern fashionable monster hotel'[439] but becomes

enveloped by the machine in the first few pages and gains some degree of

permanency.  Interestingly, it is permanency again that becomes the most consistent

means for power in the hotel.  The monstrous quality denoted by this reviewer

acknowledges the sinister power and agency of the space, and its ability to subvert

plot and characterization.  The space leaves no relationship or class boundary totally

secure.  The tension that characterizes the opening battle between Jules and Racksole

remains throughout this scene.  Jules' quiet acknowledgement and refusal to catch

Racksole's eye appears to demonstrate submission but as the second chapter closes

[437] Bennett, *Grand Babylon*, p. 21.
[438] Ibid., p. 24.
[439] Unsigned review, *Spectator,* (25 January, 1902), p. 146.

Racksole watches Jules give a slow, significant, ominous wink to Mr. Dimmock (a friend of Nella who has now joined them for dinner).[440] This alters the balance of power once again as we realize there is something deeper occurring in the fabric of the hotel, proving that the hierarchy of the hotel world is shifting and unreliable. The only possibility for control, and the central argument of this chapter, is that knowledge of the space is the ultimate means to power, and as servants retain supremacy in this area they move to the top of the hotel hierarchy. Our witnessing of a secret between Jules and Mr Dimmock serves to correspond with this ominous warning. The tension underlying both scenes, Jules' unwavering ability to silently command even at moments of possible annihilation, and the constant reminder of the powerful presence of the hotel space as a mediator in class conflict, give the impression of a tumultuous and heady experience in which nothing is certain and iconic emblems of status, such as money, cannot quite live up to their reputation.

As we have seen, the power lies with Jules throughout the opening pages. He does display subservience but with an air of remoteness and revulsion for the people he has to serve. The false air of humble servitude which he maintains is dramatically counter-posed by the sinister quality of the unusual tension elicited by his parting shot that 'any person who treated him with disrespect did so at his own peril.'[441] Jules leaves to investigate who the man is and after learning that he is Mr Theodore Racksole from New York, he responds, sinisterly again, 'I'll see he doesn't stop here too long'[442] Jules' power and confidence in his own position in the hotel causes us to question how the service class function in the metropolitan hotel of the early twentieth century. The rootedness of Jules is diametrically opposed to the wealthy New Yorker who will not stay long. Organizing and managing the greatest hotel is a much more

---

[440] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 25.
[441] Ibid., p. 9.
[442] Ibid., p. 10.

demanding task than Racksole presumes in his impulsive purchase, and his perceived

permanency through ownership cannot empower him in relation to Jules' possession

of the space through familiarity.  The characters that dominate are those that feel

comfortable in their surroundings, know the space well and benefit from the

knowledge and understanding of experience.  It appears that those who enter the hotel

with money and prestige can alter, briefly, the dynamic of the hotel, but ultimately,

the equilibrium is reinstated and those with knowledge reclaim their power.


**The Hierarchy of Employees**

      However, there is also a definite class structure between the employees as

well as between employee and guest.  This hierarchy is clearly stated in *Grand*

*Babylon Hotel*:

> In the world of hotels it was currently stated that, next to the
> proprietor, there were three gods at the Grand Babylon – Jules, the
> head waiter, Miss Spencer, and most powerful of all, Rocco, the
> renowned chef, who earned two thousand a year and had a chalet on
> the lake of Lucerne [∧] Rocco was well aware that even he could
> rise no higher than the maître d'hôtel of the Grand Babylon, which,
> though it never advertised itself, and didn't belong to a limited
> company, stood an easy first among the hotels of Europe – first in
> expensiveness, first in exclusiveness, first in that mysterious quality
> known as 'style'[443]

The family tree of employees in the hotel world filters down from the proprietor to the

next level of 'gods' where status and wealth is clearly an issue, as we discover that

Rocco is a wealthy 'servant' Clearly, the employees of hotels such as the Grand

Babylon are a class all to themselves.  They benefit not only from knowledge and

---

[443] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* pp. 10-11.

ownership of the space, but also from a sense of community with the other workers, and they ultimately make a decent living.  For these reasons the collective body of servants have the lowest risk of alienation from the space.  The prestige of this sort of hotel environment creates and defines a new strand of workers that can no longer be considered alongside the traditional working class.  The exclusiveness of the Grand Babylon requires exclusivity among its employees and the display of wealth among its supposed servants reinforces its dominance as a first class hotel.  All factors contribute to the "mysterious quality" and intangible effect of "style."

What seems strange, then, is the understated appearance of such a grand hotel.  After dealing with the enigmatic and diffuse characterization of Jules and the millionaire, the hotel is uncharacteristically described as "somewhat dwarfed by several colossal neighbours."[444]  We also know, as stated previously, that the reiteration of the name of the hotel in the opening gives it a certain presence, but the physical impression of the space does not maintain that image.  Here the understated description somehow hides an inner elegance.  What makes this hotel the best in the world is reputation and attention to detail, including the fact that the Grand Babylon was "the only hotel in London with a genuine separate entrance for Royal visitors constantly in use."[445]  The understatement of this overstated detail creates a picture of luxury entirely more vivid than if it had been the largest hotel in the area, or even the world.  The hotel is described as a "palace incognito [∧] You walked down a small side street off the Strand, you saw a plain brown building in front of you, with two mahogany swing doors, and an official behind each; the doors opened noiselessly; you entered; you were in Félix."[446]  Again it is the understated style of the exterior that promotes its status as superior.  There is a similarity here to the earlier discussion

[444] Bennett, *Grand Babylon* p. 11.
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.

about the geographical detail of the hotel and the fact that, often, the powerful

impression of a space comes through the lack of topographical detail.  Here, the

impression of grandeur comes through the very lack of detail and the focus on

mediocrity.  Because of this technique we are forced to question *why* and *how* it

functions as the epitome of luxury in such a competitive and visual world.  The

colloquial association of the hotel as 'Felix's' also creates a cosy feeling of familiarity

and links the building to the proprietor, attaching importance to Felix as the owner of

the establishment (an ironic detail due to the impromptu change of hands in the

opening chapter).  The hotel building itself responds to the enigmatic aloofness that is

characteristic of its employees: '[n]o one had originally asked you to come; no one

expressed the hope that you would come again'.[447]  The arrogance of Jules is mirrored

in the very make-up of the building that 'defied competition by ignoring it';[448]

paradoxically, the more aloof the staff and the more uninviting the space the busier

and more prestigious it becomes.

    The possibilities for failure in such a large business are immense.  The

manager retains some power in his ability to smooth disharmony between

departments but the job is too large for one person so inevitably the discord continues.

If we return to the vision of the hotel as a 'perfectly-managed establishment'[449] we

see this immediately threatened through the changing of hands in the opening and the

general ominous feelings of the owner towards the crowd of employees:

> Do you not perceive that the roof which habitually shelters all the
> force, all the authority of the world, must necessarily also shelter
> nameless and numberless plotters, schemers, evil-doers, and workers
> of mischief? The thing is clear as day and as dark as night [...] I

[447] Bennett, *Grand Babylon*, p. 12.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Ibid., p. 7.

never know by whom I am surrounded. I never know what is going forward. Only sometimes I get hints, glimpses of strange acts and strange secrets. [450]

Again attention is drawn to the 'circulating mysteries' a trope that occurs in all the hotel stories discussed in this section. As the schemers are nameless and numberless the depiction is sinister, and suggests that it is the community that solidifies this power in relation to the individual manager who tries to retain control. This assertion comes early in the narrative, showing how insecure the hotel owner is with his position in the hotel network and how mistrustful of those around him. Felix Babylon is all too aware that the majority of what goes on in the hotel occurs without his knowledge; he is resigned to the fact and does not feel that it is in his power to change matters. This leads him to renounce his position in the opening section. The new manager, a millionaire who is the guest of the hotel, complicates the hierarchical management structure of the hotel, and plays an important role in the rest of the narrative; a role that is reliant on his transience as a guest, who buys the space for personal reasons but really has no way of knowing how to control it. This denotes an element of instability between staff, guests and owners, an instability that causes the dynamic of the space to change dramatically, necessitating a similar change in the balance between employees.

**The family business**

An interesting hierarchy often emerges in hotel novels that deal with family run establishments because of their focus on an intimate, close-knit community. Sinclair

---

[450] Bennett, *Grand Babylon*, p. 23.

Lewis' *Work of Art* and Laurence Geller's *Do Not Disturb* take lead characters that learn the business from childhood.  As these characters grow up ensconced in the hotel environment with Lewis' main character continuing in the profession of his father, they have the experience and knowledge needed to make such a business venture a success.  Despite the separation in time between Lewis' 1934 and Geller's 2006 novels, and despite the difference in context between Lewis' small-town spaces of Black Thread, Connecticut and Geller's multitude of cosmopolitan sites in Europe and America, both protagonists intend to create a successful space through the maintenance of the family-run environment.  Myron, in Lewis' novel, is immediately compared to his more artistic but younger brother who criticizes him for acting like a servant and helping guests with bags: "Myron was the perfect dog, and no greyhound or Scottie, but a farm dog — clumsy, contemptibly good-natured, loyal to any insignificant master."[451]  Despite Myron's lowly stature in the opening we are drawn to the description of the "insignificant master."  His brother believes Myron is destined to a life of servitude, but the fact that any of his future masters are insignificant makes it clear that it is Myron's loyal personality that is the key to this narrative and to the hotel business.  Despite Ora's criticisms of his brother, we soon see that Ora possesses little to be relied upon in the family business.  With Myron, the strong, loyal son who carries out many basic duties, the mother, Edna, as cook and housekeeper, and the father as barman and general manager, little is left to Ora other than the "narration of anecdotes" to guests.[452]  A further element that gives Myron substance in this environment is the experience he has gained in spending time with the people that his business serves: "at the age of eleven he was, after four years of being right-hand man

---

[451] Sinclair Lewis, *Work of Art* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), p. 11.
[452] Ibid*.,* p. 18.

in a boarding-house, uncannily acquainted with human beings and their loves.[453]

This personal element to his business experience gives Myron something unique in hotel management.  He lives, breathes and loves every aspect of the space, and carries his knowledge into every aspect of the business; as a rich passing guest acknowledges: 'you belong to the hotel; you've got the start.  Nobody, hardly ever, learned hotel-keeping right down to the ground unless he was born under the kitchen sink and did his teething on a file of overdue bills!'[454]  His humble beginnings appear to have given him a solid foundation in which to prosper.

However, the narrative soon moves on to detailing a desire for greater things. Myron dreams of owning and running a larger establishment and when the prospect becomes a real possibility he considers how every aspect of his life would be different:

> The long spaces of the lobby, where forty people could sit, in contrast to the chubby little parlour of their boarding-house; the gilded radiators [∧] the enormous dining-room, with real printed menus, at least for Sunday dinner; the unending rows of bedrooms, with no less than four bath-rooms; and the building itself, three towering stories of brick, and an entrance that had always fascinated him [∧] and the people! He was used to the boarding-house residents; most of them elderly local couples who had given up the woes of housekeeping.[455]

The interior and exterior of the building is magnified in relation to the humble space he has grown up in, and the idealized space transforms in terms of size, appearance and clientele.  As soon as his dream does become a reality, however, he finds himself

[453] Lewis, *Work of Art*, p. 33.
[454] Ibid., p. 70.
[455] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

in a room "rather like a prison cell, but probably not so interesting"[456] and his happy

upbringing is reduced to a nostalgic naiveté: "It was the toughness, the boisterousness,

the shadiness of the guests at the Fandango that most worried the innocence of

Myron, fresh from his mother's housewifely inn-keeping"[457] This realization leads

him to change tactics and he immerses himself into researching the history of hotel

management: "[h]e saw and seized the world not only of Waldorfs and Tremonts and

St. Charleses, but of hotels in London and Paris and Berlin as well. He was as

fascinated by it as any newly rich guest first staying in a Grand International Royal

Hotel."[458] He also makes a solid commitment to knowing the space of the hotel and

the people within it: "Myron slowly built up his plan of preparing himself for

managership. He would try out every job in the establishment, and be intimate with

every member of the staff. It was not too easy."[459] The reason he finds it difficult is

the criticism of others and the rigid caste system he encounters in his profession.

When asking to do overtime in another department he is told with disdain: "a cook is

a cook and a waiter is a waiter, and there ain't no two ways about it!"[460] Despite this

constant obstruction his application is unwavering and he fulfils his task of

experiencing and understanding all aspects of the hotel network—that is, until he

becomes manager of a large hotel. During an early dispute with his new employees

his confidence falters and he admits that "he was part of a machine, as helpless as

they"[461] Paradoxically, the increased power in his new role has diminished his

connection to the space. This is the pivotal moment in the novel, as the tone changes

and turns back on itself; the narrative leads from a progressive quest for bigger and

---

[456] Lewis, *Work of Art*, p. 81.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid., p. 92.
[459] Ibid., p. 101.
[460] Ibid., p. 104.
[461] Ibid., p. 163.

better hotels and greater responsibility, to a return to the small-scale: 'in particular he wanted an inn that he should really own by himself, and manage by himself, so that if it should fail, he would be honestly responsible, and not the victim of collaborators with too lush a style'.[462] Management, in this case, and in hotel narratives in general, adds a certain risk factor that is hard to dissipate. The isolation of the manager in relation to the band of employees adds an element of insecurity and separates him from the space; the hotel is paradoxically harder to control from a more authoritative position.

Geller's narrative line is distinctly different to that of Lewis, in that the opening of his novel, *Do Not Disturb,* is distanced from any form of American dream or rags to riches scenario.[463] The tone is retrospective, pessimistic and critical as witnessed in the first line of the story:

> It was the same bench. The same damned bench in front of the same damned hotel where twenty-eight years before he'd sat up all night plotting to build the best hotel chain ever at any cost.[464]

The distinction between the character as he was, and the character as he is now, is palpable; interestingly, it is the invariable nature of the space that highlights this opposition. Rolfe Ritter has come full circle and changed fundamentally whilst the space that he uses to signify that realization is just the 'same'. Ritter is driven by the same motivation as Myron, but has been defeated—clearly seen in the opening—by the circularity of life in the hotel that returns him to where he started, but with the new

[462] Lewis, *Work of Art*, pp. 372-73.
[463] There is a tangential line of hotel narratives occurring in American fiction such as Steven Millhauser's *Martin Dressler* (New York: Vintage books, 1998) and Sinclair Lewis' *Work of Art* (Jonathan Cape, 1934), both already discussed here, which use the hotel manager/owner as a more lowly figure starting out in a rags to riches story. As Douglas Tallack has noticed, Lewis's story is 'The Great Gatsby but set in a hotel lobby' (Douglas Tallack, 'Waiting, Waiting': The Hotel Lobby, in the Modern City in Leach (ed.) *The Hieroglyphics of Space,* p. 140). The possibilities for narratives concerning different levels of staff, the interactions between them and the progression through the space can be interpreted in a number of differing ways. Here it is the already prosperous and the battles to retain solid managerial spaces that are of interest to the hotels depicted.
[464] Lawrence Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* (Los Angeles: Volt Press, 2006), Prologue, p. vii.

knowledge that he has failed.  The whole novel is driven by a strange sense of foreboding in which the impossibility of the life he faces, and his hope for success in such extreme conditions, threatens to overpower him at any moment.  He is filled with a 'sense of defeat, faced with ruin, humiliation, prison –perhaps even death'[465]  The opening is fatalistic and extreme; superlatives characterize the excessive nature of action and emotion in the novel as a whole.  This onslaught is heightened when we witness the main character's suicide –again in the opening pages.  The surreal nature of this action –the ending occurring at the beginning –does nothing to dampen the fatality of the narrative.  Indeed it is only when we reach the end that we realize that the suicide never actually occurred, that Rolfe Ritter managed to save himself from destitution, and that the plot has completely turned on its axis.  The real end is positive as the main character manages to secure a deal to transfer ownership of his hotel chain, and therefore secure his future happiness.  The novel that apparently starts at the end, only reaches its true end after a re-run of the events leading up to this artificial end.  The suicide attempt takes place just a few pages before the new ending and characterizes a moment of intense desolation before the excessive heights of Ritter's final success; *Do Not Disturb* rests on a knife edge as the action twists between success and ruin on almost every page.  Returning to the above example, the severity of Ritter's extreme feelings actually rests on his inclusion of the word 'perhaps' to signify his possible death.  We feel throughout the novel that 'perhaps' it will go one way, or 'perhaps' the other.  It is this disruption in chronology, and the redemption of the failed man at the end, that highlights the tension that life in a hotel, and for a hotel manager, brings.

---

[465] Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* p. vii.

The narrative in *Do Not Disturb* then progresses in a more chronological fashion as it follows Rolfe's life from the beginning up until the point that opens the novel. In a similar fashion to Lewis' recounting of a character's history, we see Rolfe intensely interested in the hotel industry from an early age, desperate to learn its mechanisms from the bottom up:

> It means I should go to France to learn the kitchen, and later to
> England or maybe Switzerland for restaurant service and then the
> front desk. That's the way hotel managers have always done it. It's
> much better than learning some dumb theory at a school.[466]

The focus here is on experience of the space and the business. In opposition to Myron, Ritter encounters little resistance to his plans and falls into a solid pattern, following that of others. In one of his first forays into hotel service Rolfe uncovers an uncomfortable piece of information:

> At first I felt like an actor performing on stage. But then I realized I
> was invisible to the guests, merely part of the ambiance.[467]

The social distinction between those being served, and those whose role it is to either perform or merge into the ambience of the space, initially reduces the importance of characters like Rolfe, and yet ultimately, it gives them a freedom. The power that the invisible person in the hotel has is the defining point of his education, along with the realization of the power of knowledge and information in general. This link between invisibility and knowledge leads him into a world of espionage in which the space he inhabits, and the role he has within it, are the perfect foil for the uncovering of information. This finally leads him into a position as the right-hand man of the owner of a large hotel. His invisibility is explicitly dramatized, as he is told by his new boss:

---

[466] Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* p. 34.
[467] Ibid., p. 40.

I don't want to deal with details anymore [∧] I'm the face of this
hotel; you're the intestines.  When people think of the hotel, they think
of me.  I'll set the objectives; your job is to execute them.'[468]

Despite the submissive nature of this new position, Rolfe's invisibility gives him a

powerful central role in the workings of this business.  As the intestines rather than

the face, he is immersed in its interior and understands the space from the inside out.

Similar to Millhauser's Martin he finds:

> If, out at the desk, he had seemed to be in the lively center of things,
> it was true only in a special and limited sense, for in fact he had been
> a minor employee in the one department of a vast and complex
> organization.[469]

Much later on in the narrative Martin seems to have achieved a more solid central

position:

> And then it was as if the structure were his own body, his head
> piercing the clouds, his feet buried deep in the earth, and his blood
> the plunge and rise of elevators.[470]

His position is concretized by the materiality of the space.  Unlike Sara in *Hotel

World* who regrets the loss of her corporeal self, Martin is fully able to integrate

himself within the structure of the space and feel rooted to its internal mechanisms.

He is supported by the physicality of the building because of his immersion within it.

Ultimately this security occurs because of his subordinate position: to integrate

oneself into the centre of the business is obviously as complex a procedure as the

organization is itself complex.  For Rolfe, who is solidly at the centre, the job seems

to become easier and easier: '[i]t was simple to motivate the team.  All they want are

---

[468] Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* p. 82.
[469] Millhauser, *Martin Dressler,* p. 56.
[470] Ibid., p. 174.

clear goals and someone to lead them.[471]  Yet in reality, the higher he climbs the

harder it is to control the space, and he realizes that the problem comes down to

money and ownership:

> His mind went back to that time in 1964 when he told his family he
> was destined to be a hotel manager.  He achieved that goal with
> ease.  But now, owner?[472]

The move from the intestines to the face of the business is attractive due to the higher

level of power it promises, but the choice also comes with recognition of the loss of

power it would bring in other areas.  A recognition of the power of money, not just a

higher salary, but the status that ownership enforces, distances Rolfe from the

invisible position he remembers when a servant of the space.  As the end of the first

book draws to a close we are left with these two roles, separated by a short distance,

but dramatically different due to the status attached to them.  As the second book

opens we are confronted by the foreboding epigraph from Winston Churchill: 'we

shape our dwellings; thereafter they shape us',[473] a statement that echoes the argument

of this thesis.  The social journey Rolfe undergoes throughout the narrative ironically

moves him further from his goal: to dominate the hotel and the industry.

Rolfe's success is often measured in relation to those that work closely with

him.  In particular, two members of his team, Josh and Susan, are the guiding force

behind his whole operation, they have become the intestines of his hotel chain.   On a

number of occasions he acknowledges the importance of their advice: '[n]ot for the

first time, Rolfe understood the value of a team.  These three people trusted him and

trusted each other'.[474]  This becomes a formula for the success of a hotel owner;

---

[471] Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* p. 82.
[472] Ibid., p. 114.
[473] Ibid.*,* p. 124.
[474] Ibid., p. 195.

reliance on others creates a network in which to pool resources and information. However, this formula, as with a great deal of this narrative, is set up only in order to fail.  For example the first time Rolfe turns to Josh and Susan for guidance he fails to listen to them and makes the wrong decision.  By page 209 they are both referring to him as 'boss' no longer as friend.  The traditional reaction of employee to boss is to listen and act on instruction, rather than to discuss possible solutions equally.  The assignation of Rolfe as 'boss' – although he has technically been so throughout the novel – increases the divide between him and Josh and Susan and reduces the possibility of his successful control of the space.  It is towards the end, when we return to the suicide scene, that we see how much the space has controlled him.  He pulls off one last deal which removes him from danger as he sells his company and once again becomes the manager.  He laughs over the irony: '[c]an you believe it? I'm an employee.'[475] and we realize that in the 'hotel-world' this is the only possible means of success in the higher echelons of the hotel network.  The careers of Myron and Rolfe have highlighted different elements in the problematic nature of hotel management and ownership: knowledge of the space, restraining the urge for power, controlling the space and successfully managing those under your control.  It is the isolation of one man as a figurehead which makes success difficult in this space.  Employees, by contrast to their managers, often find the means for a more implicit but effective level of control.

**The employee and the manager**

In Bennett's *Imperial Palace*, we can see just how prominent the servant is in the narrative.  Out of thirty main characters twenty-five of them are in the

---

[475] Geller, *Do Not Disturb,* p. 415.

employment of the hotel.  The other five characters are Gracie and Henry Savott, millionaires who are resident in the hotel throughout the narrative, Gracie's maid Tessa who is brought with Gracie into the hotel but who has no first person narrative space in the novel, a private detective who plays a fairly small role and Monsieur Laugier, the owner of a hotel in Paris.  There are of course brief mentions of other guests, but by reducing the guest list to a few prominent figures Bennett gives us a novel with a startling disequilibrium.  We are also told that in total the hotel houses thirteen hundred employees 'not counting the Laundry and the works department outside.'[476]  The immensity of the machine is outlined in this statement and explains the prominence given to servants.  The twenty-five members of hotel staff that are given a voice range from the hotel owner (Evelyn Orcham) down to the lowest laundry maids.  The hotel is divided into thirty different departments, almost operating as separate businesses themselves: the laundry, the restaurant, and the hall; housekeeping and even meat-buying are specific and separate jobs that require their own separate hierarchies.  Each section has its own head and the success of the hotel as a whole depends upon both the smooth running of individual sections as well as all of them working together.  This separation of functions paradoxically manages to convey a sense of connection that is dependent on the skills of the manager:

> The head of each [department] had a fixed conviction that his department was the corner-stone of the success of the hotel.  Evelyn, Machiavellian, impartially supported every one of these convictions, just as he consistently refrained from discouraging the weed of inter-departmental jealousies inevitably sprouting from time to time in the soil of strenuous emulation which he was always fertilising.[477]

---

[476] Arnold Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* (1930; London: Cassell, 1969), p. 33.
[477] Ibid., p. 35.

In this extract we see some of the arrogance displayed by the wealthy guests in Bennett's *Grand Babylon*, as each manager believes only in the success of his separate section of the hotel.  It is Evelyn's impartial ability to rise above this self-centred approach to spatial management that allows him to side with one and all at the same time.  Many of the characters (employees) live static lives in absolute opposition to the guests that are constantly moving and changing location.  We are told that they do not reside permanently within the space, but their life outside appears elusive:

> The majority of them had homes, wives, children, in various parts of
> London; real enough, no doubt; cherished; perhaps loved.  But seen
> from within the hotel these domestic backgrounds were far-distant,
> dim, shadowy, insubstantial.  When the interests of the hotel clashed
> with the interests of the backgrounds, the backgrounds gave way,
> eagerly, zealously.[478]

This stasis is epitomized by Miss Spencer, in *Grand Babylon Hotel,* who is forever situated in her official lair; she 'never travelled' and 'never went to a theatre or a music-hall'[479] even time stands still, as 'she looked now just as she had looked an indefinite number of years ago'[480] The guests, by contrast, use the space more specifically for travel purposes.  The hotel is thus situated between the transience of travel and fast-paced lifestyles and the rootedness of a fixed location.  Importantly, juxtaposing transience with stasis highlights the interactions between different classes in the hotel.  In *Imperial Palace,* Bennett states that 'class distinctions are as sharp in a hotel-staff as they are elsewhere — sharper perhaps'[481]  There is a sense of social magnification in this space, one which illuminates intricate networks between

---

[478] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 49.
[479] Bennett, *Grand Babylon,* p. 9.
[480] Ibid.
[481] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 645.

members of different classes; class distinctions are sharper because the space becomes magnified.  However, despite this acknowledgement that class distinctions are 'sharper' in the hotel, there are also instances where class relations become more fluid.  As Derek Gregory and John Urry have observed, 'class formation is also a creative process; classes are the product of human agency'[482]  Class identities in the hotel develop from the premise of master/servant relationships, but ultimately class distinctions are constantly being manipulated.

*Imperial Palace* opens in darkness, therefore no attention is given to the façade of the building; instead, Bennett relies exclusively on the interior goings on. This disconnects the hotel from the wider city space around it, aiding the sense of confusion and disjunction as well as this concern with magnification.  The opening to *Imperial Palace* starts *in media res,* in the midst of action but also in the midst of the hotel; it begins with Evelyn, the hotel proprietor, taking a prominent and expectant position waiting in the lobby for his guests to arrive.  We have seen from the previous chapter that the hotel lobby functions as a significant space in relation to transience, movement and alienation of the individual; therefore, the position of the manager here is important to our understanding of his reactions.  The first line of the narrative, 'Evelyn came down by the lift into the great front-hall'[483] immediately situates him, as manager, in the space as well as attaching importance to his movement through it. However, Evelyn immediately becomes static; expectant and poised, the manager is in a vulnerable position, passively waiting for the intrusion of guests into his space. The narrative continues by introducing other members of staff (Reyer the night manager and Sam the head night-porter) but pays little attention to their surroundings, apart from a rather unusual interlude concerning the lighting in each of the rooms:

---

[482] Gregory and Urry, *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, p. 168.
[483] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 1.

> The foyer down the steps, back beyond the hall, had one light.  The
> restaurant down the steps beyond the foyer had one light. The
> reading-room, cut out of the hall by glass partitions, had no light.
> The grill-room, which gave onto a broad corridor opposite the
> counters, had several lights; in theory it opened for breakfasts at 6
> a.m., but in fact it was never closed, nor its kitchen closed.[484]

This passage seems inconsequential, a mere list of lighting fixtures; but Bennett's

preoccupation with such detail serves to give greater insight into the complexities of

the hotel and its inhabitants.  The attention to lighting contributes to an overall

impression of the space, and so to the workings of the hotel, its power as a business

and the characters within it.

The time is set at four o'clock in the morning, giving the opening chapter an

eerie tone and drawing attention to this hotel as a twenty-four hour business.  This

tone is continued in the description of the mysterious atmosphere that occurs later in

the chapter:

> The great hall seemed to lie under an enchantment. Its darkened
> extensions, the foyer and the immeasurable restaurant, seemed to lie
> under an enchantment. The brighter corridor and grill-room seemed
> to lie under an enchantment.  Diminished men awaited with
> exhaustless patience the birth of day, as they might have awaited the
> birth of a child. [485]

The repetition of the phrase 'lie under an enchantment' links to the formulaic

repetition of the lights, creating a monotonous and unnatural sense of ethereality in

the space.  The continual presence of light throughout the night aids the impression of

the artificiality of the space that never shuts down.  We are in Evelyn's consciousness

---

[484] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 1.
[485] Ibid., p. 3.

here as the inconsequential detail about the number of lights is of utmost concern to the person in charge of the smooth running of the space. Again, this solidifies the connection between the persona and the space, the knowledge Evelyn has of his space and his control over it.

The first three chapters are a frenzy of hurried description in which employers, employees and guests are introduced and their roles in the narrative described. The early morning opening sees guests arriving in the dark, employees finishing night shifts and other guests sleeping soundly, unaware of the workings of the machine around them. As the morning progresses the narrative wakes up, the sleepy blur of the opening turns into the clarity of day. As the chapter titles dictate, it progresses from 'a.m.' through 'The birth of day' to 'The hotel waking up' in which we see a move from obscurity to lucidity. Only one page on from the restless anticipation of the dawn Evelyn suddenly feels 'extraordinarily alive'[486] he tells a guest with pride:

> 'My hotel' waking up for the day. You're just in time to see my
> hotel waking up. It's a great moment.'He loved to watch his hotel
> waking up. Something dramatic, poignant, in the spectacle of the
> tremendous monster stirring out of its uneasy slumber.[487]

The anticipation of the hotel waking up and the drama of this expected moment, aided by the now emblematic image of the space as a metaphorical monster, concretize the physicality of the space and its inherent power. Evelyn's constant use of the personal pronoun 'my' to describe his hotel corresponds to Relph's postulations about the possession of spaces (particularly places); however repetition also paradoxically draws attention to his actual lack of influence. Evelyn's reiteration of possession is an attempt to control the monstrous space; there is also a sense of pride that he can

---

[486] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 33.
[487] Ibid.

contain and maintain this machine successfully.  Whether he is accurate in this assessment is a question the narrative repeatedly turns to.

Evelyn Orcham, in opposition to Felix Babylon, remains the manager/owner of the Imperial Palace, although once again personal circumstances have some influence on the success of his managerial role.  Evelyn is rooted in the hotel space and controls the hotel and its employees with rigidity from the opening.  He is positioned at the top of this hierarchy as general overseer of the business as a whole; he is the master of the space and has employees directly below him whose job it is to see to his everyday needs.  He commands respect and his visibility in the space, the fact that he enters the hotel lobby on the first page, reinforces his presence as controller.  However, the nature and size of this monstrous business necessitates another level of managerial hierarchy: Evelyn has to delegate and leave sections of the hotel in the hands of others.  The second tier of managers actually works more closely with the employees, comes in closer contact with the guests and moves more freely within the space.  Despite Evelyn's visibility in the opening scene Bennett tells us that Mr Cousin (one of his deputy managers) is better known: 'not a single guest recognised Evelyn; Mr Cousin would have been recognised and saluted by several of them; Evelyn's personality was more recondite.  Only the knowing ones knew that Mr Cousin, the manager, had a superior'[488]  Evelyn's lack of visibility, his 'recondite' nature, presupposes a certain detachment or aloofness from the space and the guests.  The separation of the clause 'the manager' subtly tells us that Mr Cousin is more a manager than Evelyn due to this familiarity and connection.  As 'master' of the space, Evelyn fails due to this detachment.  Mr Cousin's familiarity with the space and his visibility within it makes him a more successful manager.

---

[488] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 80.

There is a connection to be made here between Bennett's novels and Paul Theroux's *Hotel Honolulu*. The main character of this latter work is brought in to save a hotel from a poor reputation and dwindling popularity.[489] The tone of this narrative is entirely different to those analyzed throughout the rest of this chapter, but makes an interesting comparison through the focus on the business side of the space. Visually, the hotel is insignificant in relation to some of the other hotels in this thesis; our tour through the space leads us through a dark and uncomfortable architecture: '[t]he rooms were small, the elevator was narrow, the lobby was tiny, the bar was just a nook'.[490] We have already seen that Bennett's Grand Babylon is an understated presence in the street and yet the impression of both spaces is still quite different. Bennett's understated space still manages to instill a sense of elegance whereas, here, the novel as a whole sets the hotel up as a space simply for licentiousness. The image of this space corresponds to what you expect to find there. We learn this when the narrator tells us on the first page: '[n]othing to me is so erotic as a hotel room, and therefore so penetrated with life and death'.[491] We observe a further declaration of the impiety that this character believes to be the guiding force of the hotel:

> The idea of rented bedrooms attracted me. Shared by so many
> dreaming strangers, every room was vibrant with their secrets, like
> furious dust in a sunbeam, their night sweats, the stammering echoes
> of their voices and horizontal fantasies; and certain ambiguous

---

[489] This has become an interesting trope in hotel literature as novels often choose to present either a main character as the saviour of the hotel or the hotel as the saviour of the main character. Characters often focus all attention on the space as a way of providing them and their family with a new start and a dream life. Jonathan Buckley's *Invisible* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005) and John Irving's *Hotel New Hampshire* (1981; London: Black Swan, 1999) are two such novels that use the hotel as a space for reforming lives and reinvigorating dispirited families. The hotel never provides such an answer for hotel managers as we see from these examples: Irving's Win Berry ends blinded and living a disillusioned life in which he thinks he owns a prosperous hotel when in fact he lives in a shelter for rape victims, and Buckley's Malcolm Caldecott ends the novel with the final party at the hotel before it is closed forever, having had little success in re-establishing a connection with his teenage daughter. Whilst Berry is living an idealized dream and Caldecott a depressing reality both novels show the failure of the hotel to support grand dreams of success and reparation.
[490] Paul Theroux, *The Hotel Honolulu* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2001), p. 1.
[491] Ibid.

odors, the left-behind atoms and the residue of all the people who had ever stayed in it. The hotel bedroom is more than a symbol of intimacy; it is intimacy's very shrine, scattered with the essential paraphernalia and familiar fetish objects of its rituals. Assigning people to such rooms, I believe I was able to influence their lives.[492]

The narrative of *Hotel Honolulu* continues to be led by the focus on sexual freedom and impropriety, but there are nonetheless elements that link this story to other hotel narratives. Firstly, the narrator enters into a discussion about power between the social and spatial dynamics. The first half of the quotation discusses the imprint that people leave through their occupation of the space; the smells and stains are visual symbols of the identities of all who have used the space, even the atmosphere of the room is affected by the echoes and voices of these multiple inhabitants. The use and even abuse of the space in this way is reciprocated in the transient relationships that are fulfilled within it. In this way the space, the people and the actions that take place, all mirror each other through this code inscribed by the 'type' of hotel that it is. At this point the relationship between the social and the spatial seems to be reciprocal, but then the narrator moves on to describe his role in this hierarchy. The significant lexical choice in the last sentence is the narrator's 'assigning' of the people to particular rooms, as if he is creating the future for them as well as the future for the rooms, through his placement of particular people in particular spaces. We know from other hotel narratives that this attempt to control the space is more complex than at first appears; we are forced to question if the same is true of this space which is possibly less inhibited than the others. Again, the clue is in the phrase, 'I believe' this new manager, like Bennett's employees, is doomed to fail as his naïveté affects his judgement.

[492] Theroux, *The Hotel Honolulu*, p. 2.

Theroux's character feels some sense of stability through his association with the hotel: "[w]henever I felt superfluous, which was an old intimation, I reminded myself that I was running a multistory hotel."[493] The new role gives him a purpose in life. Strangely, this sense of importance or substance comes from attaching himself to a space that is largely open, vacant and limitless:

> I liked Hawaii because it was a void. There was no power here apart
> from landowning, no society worth the name, just a pecking order.
> There was a social ladder but it wasn't climbable, and the higher on
> it people stood, the sillier they looked, because everyone knew their
> secrets.[494]

Once again we come across that distinctive term "void", a description that makes the hotel imposing through its very lack of foundation. In this instance, however, it is the social rather than the spatial structure that is a void. The manager's power comes through a realization of a lack of surrounding power in the social make-up of the state. He descends into a space without any control and rises through the ranks by formulating his own sense of order. However, the power he feels – which is exaggerated in the opening – is raised here to a level that is impossible to maintain; we are advised that "[y]ou understood the Hotel Honolulu only when you got inside"[495] and it is being inside the very fabric of the space that enables you to understand it entirely.

An interesting device that Theroux uses to provide his character with an entry point into the space is his role as an out-of-work author; he sees the connection between narrative and space, particularly in the above description of the hotel as a "multistory" space. It is impossible to miss the importance of individual stories as

---

[493] Theroux, *Hotel Honolulu,* p. 7.
[494] Ibid., p. 9.
[495] Ibid., p. 28.

narrative lines, a particular form of spatial practice, that the narrator, who is also the protagonist, weaves through the space. Taking time away from his imaginary worlds and journeying into another profession, he constantly reiterates his point that the move into hotel management is an attempt to understand the real world.

For guests of other novels, the reality/imaginary illusion is something quite different. The magnetic quality draws them in and holds them within the space but with no pretence at offering a reality. For Vicki Baum's social recluse, Kringelein, the depressing eventuality that he is letting real life pass him by becomes a realism throughout *Grand Hotel*. He openly acknowledges that: 'a]ll the time, I have a suspicion that real, genuine actual life is going on somewhere else and is something quite different.'[496] Using 'real', 'genuine' and 'actual' as synonyms reiterate the point he is making about how far from reality hotel life is. Although, when it comes to describing where real life does lie, he becomes vague and situates it just 'somewhere else'. The knowledge that he is unable to reach it confines him to the hotel. For managers of the hotel the opposite is true, as their search for reality often leads them to the hotel; for Theroux's manager the freshness of the experience amplifies the feeling of confidence. Unfortunately, his confidence at the beginning of the novel owes much to his belief that the hotel world is one he can control: 'b]eing the manager here was like existing within an unpredictable jumble of episodes and characters to which I alone know the narrative line'.[497] He sees his life in the hotel as a disorganized plot that he has the ability to decipher and reorganize. This does show some awareness of the unpredictability of hotel life and of the lack of cohesion that dominates lives in this space, but is too simplistic a theory to maintain this character

---

[496] Baum, *Grand Hotel*, p. 42.
[497] Theroux, *Hotel Honolulu,* p. 28.

throughout the story.  Writing, and the creation of stories, is something that he constantly refers to, believing that his status as a novelist gives him great power:

> my typing was poor, so I wrote with a pencil, but in this scribble I
> had put up buildings, designed cities, fixed cars, robbed banks,
> settled arguments, wooed beautiful women, given eloquent speeches,
> managed businesses, committed perfect crimes.  And I always had
> the last word.[498]

It is in the construction of imaginary worlds that he has power and has the last word.  It is only when he applies this attitude to real buildings and real people in the hotel that his theory unravels.  By page fifty-three the story has changed:

> I had never had any employees, not even a secretary.  I could not
> imagine being able to deal with workers moods and temperaments.
> So, as a hotel manager in Hawaii the job was a gift I was grateful
> to my employees for their work.  They ran the hotel and they knew
> it, they knew they were in charge of the place, and of me.[499]

The hotel has taken the place of the novel in his life but the inclusion of employees between him and the space obstructs the relationship.  His association with the novels he creates is founded on the knowledge that it is only he that comes into contact with the narrative space and only he that can affect the outcome.  As with Evelyn Orcham and Felix Babylon, there is an overwhelming feeling that the masses of employees are swarming and uncontrollable.  Here the hierarchy between reality and illusion, success and failure, has been inverted as has the social hierarchy where as already noted there is no ladder up which to climb.  This inversion, we come to realize, is a recurring facet of hotel life.  The narrator belief that his power lies in assigning spaces to particular people is inverted when he admits:

---

[498] Theroux, *Hotel Honolulu,* p. 53.
[499] Ibid.

I was struck by how they made me feel powerful, and the less I

confided in them, the more power I had [︿] I needed only for them

to do their jobs, because I was so helpless myself, in fact not

powerful at all, no more so than a superior-looking puppet.[500]

Clearly his power comes from his employees; they assign power to him and allow

him to succeed.  In this respect his metaphorical stance as a puppet is entirely correct.

We are reminded of the lifelessness of the guests (evidenced in the previous chapter)

who are described as mannequins; the image of the puppet is similar and yet requires

more active influence.  The employees as puppeteers have complete control of the

nominal leader of the space.  And yet no real action comes from these characters in

Theroux's novel.  They are given the formula to proceed: knowledge and familiarity

rule the space.  The narrator here even goes so far as to admit: the lower a person

was on the payroll, the closer they were to the ground, and the more they heard.  At

the lowest level [︿] such people had access to the most detailed information.[501]

They have the secret for success in the space due to the information available to them.

However, although this power is acknowledged, it is not acted upon, and this

differentiates *Hotel Honolulu* from Bennett's novels and from Ishiguro's *The*

*Unconsoled.*

Evelyn in *Imperial Palace* undergoes similar transitions to Theroux's

character and there are also fluctuations in Evelyn's status throughout the novel.  The

lobby is the perfect co-ordinating point of reference for the analysis of power in this

space. Evelyn is aware that a very important guest is soon to arrive and waits

expectantly for him in the hotel lobby.  This awareness of the guest's prestige before

---

[500] Theroux, *Hotel Honolulu*, p. 236.
[501] Ibid., p. 104.

he enters and gives his name, immediately instates him as a powerful figure. As Douglas Tallack discusses, the lobby is a

> semi-public gateway to private places. There is a gatekeeper in the reception clerk; a route typically, entry through a revolving door to the lobby; and, as often as not in a conspicuous crossing of the lobby to a reception desk and from there to the elevator.[502]

Tallack describes this crossing as a ritual, with the giving of a name as the formal process for gaining access to the real interior of the space. As this guest is *waited for* rather than required to wait, he immediately determines his own sense of power. It is the hotel manager that traverses the space, coming down in the lift and moving across the lobby, in expectation of the character's arrival. His power is restricted due to this calculated act of displacement. We have seen the importance of this space and the ability it has to transform inhabitants who enter, but it is equally important for the socialization of those who already inhabit the space. Evelyn waits for a guest whose status is notorious before he even enters; Evelyn lowers his status by waiting for him, an endeavour that positions the manager in the role of receptionist. The problematic part for a guest in Tallack's analysis is moving across the space; Evelyn's position as loiterer removes this difficulty for a guest who is already conspicuously inaugurated into the formidable hotel network. A usual requirement of the guest, when they enter, is to pass on personal information and register themselves with this space. Evelyn makes this requirement unnecessary and hands over the space to this guest with little negotiation.   When Evelyn welcomes Henry and Gracie Savott in these two prominent guests in there is another clear shift in his balance of power. It is as if the space has to readjust to the entrance of these powerful figures. The effusive display of wealth that these millionaire guests bring with them shows how dominant the

---

[502] Tallack, 'Waiting, Waiting: The Hotel Lobby' p. 142.

power of money is to the running of the hotel as a business. The unusual fact that the owner of the hotel is waiting for his guests to arrive at four a.m. is clearly marked by Henry Savott. He is originally welcomed by Reyer, the night-manager, but when he notices Evelyn he rejects the help of this lowlier assistant and heads straight for the owner:

> Staring curiously about as he talked to Reyer, Sir Henry descried
> Evelyn, and, unceremoniously leaving Reyer, stepped spryly towards
> the Director, who advanced to meet him in the middle of the hall.[503]

Although Evelyn relinquishes control to Mr Cousin at another point of the narrative, Evelyn's superiority is now visible in relation to Reyer's. The thoughts of this wealthy guest are obvious, despite the third-person omniscient narration. His boredom as he stares curiously about, his immediate rejection of Reyer and the way he singles out the Director as the person of importance in this space, all contribute to an obvious, if over-simplified vision of the hotel hierarchy. Interestingly, they meet in the middle of the hall, the guest and the owner are at a position of equal power as the battle between wealth and ownership has not yet been fought, despite Evelyn's passive submission through waiting. There is a sense of polite familiarity in this scene as both characters attempt to understand the other. They meet, shake hands with "mutual smiles"[504] again a reference to the equality between them, but the balance clearly shifts as soon as these characters speak:

> "Hope you haven't got up specially to meet us," said Sir Henry.
> "Too bad!"
> "No," said Evelyn quietly and carelessly.[505]

---

[503] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 4.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.

Internally, Evelyn is angered by the patronizing tone of the millionaire but outwardly he maintains his composure, something that could supposedly retain his status as controller; here there is an inter-play similar to that seen between Jules and the millionaire in *Grand Babylon Hotel*, although, curiously, Evelyn is more despondent in his feelings towards the millionaire. The obvious overshadowing of one man over the other in their first meeting posits the guest above the manager from the outset. This power structure is difficult to overcome and is hindered by Evelyn's burgeoning relationship with Henry's daughter Gracie, a relationship that negatively affects his relationships with his other guests and with his employees, reducing his status further.

The changing position of the hotel owner in this novel is examined from a number of angles. We have already seen how the third-person narration portrays Evelyn's exchange with a wealthy guest. This altercation is also watched by his employee Jack, the meat-manager, who is more of an outsider than the other employees, as his business customarily takes him outside the hotel. This detail suggests a lack of familiarity with the hotel space which reduces his status and power. He watches Evelyn nervously and blames his failure in resolve on the entrance of Gracie to the hotel and to Evelyn's life:

> A little self-conscious, the governor was, in his walk. Seldom before had Jack seen the governor self-conscious. His confidence in the governor was a great solid rock. He felt a momentary tremor in the rock. It ceased; it was not a tremor; it was imperceptible: he had been mistaken. Yet⌄[506]

His lack of confidence in his own thoughts can be related to his physical removal from the hotel space and lack of functioning knowledge of it. It seems impossible for him to overpower the manager and validate his position in the hierarchy; and yet, the

---

[506] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 13.

hotel proprietor is influenced by outside forces very early in the narrative. This has

the effect of disturbing the equilibrium of the space. The "momentary tremor" that

Jack feels quickly grows into a solid reality:

> He [Jack] could hardly have been more perturbed if the entire hotel
> had fallen about his ears. The entire hotel had indeed fallen about
> his ears [∧] The rock was wobbling from side to side, ready to
> crash, ready to crush him.[507]

It appears that Jack is being a little histrionic; we have witnessed Evelyn talking to

this girl and sense his awe and fascination with her beauty, but for now she has done

nothing to affect his business sense or his ability to manage. Jack's statement

actually comes as a warning. We watch Evelyn attach himself to Gracie for the rest

of the novel and move himself further from the hotel. His attachment to the hotel is

the prominent relationship in the opening section of the novel. He shows off the

space to his guests and is obviously proud of his achievement in managing it

successfully; when he meets Gracie we are told: "he was the creative artist surveying

and displaying his creation – the hotel".[508] His personal attachment to the space is

evident, and it is with dismay that we watch him pay less attention to the hotel, as it

becomes less important in his life.

Evelyn is obviously intensely connected to his hotel and the majority of the

narration takes place in this space. Often, when the characters leave, the narrative

leaves them behind also and follows a different character rather than moving outside

of the hotel. It is almost as if a character no longer exists once outside the hotel

space. This is confirmed by the attention to the hotel as a microcosmic space; the

separation of the hotel from the area around it gives a sense of disconnection in which

nothing else is important. When Evelyn does leave, the hotel becomes un-

[507] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 15.
[508] Ibid., p. 33.

maintained, under-surveilled and unmanaged – a formula that allows spatial

subjectivity to exert itself in a more obvious manner.

One scene which traces a different pattern follows Gracie and Evelyn on a

holiday to Paris. Evelyn's removal from the hotel is a unique event in the narrative

and does not occur until page four hundred and three; for more than half of the novel

Evelyn has been present in the hotel. This one event has interesting repercussions on

his relationship with Gracie and his feelings towards his hotel. He fluctuates between

missing his hotel and regretting his decision and enjoying the new lifestyle away from

the stresses of the business world. He knows he is comfortable with the hotel

lifestyle but enjoys the originality of travel away from the stagnation of his fixed

location:

> He wanted not to enjoy the familiar sensation of dealing with the
> problems and difficulties of the hotel organism; but he enjoyed it,
> and he could not deny this to himself.[509]

He is torn between two locations and two lifestyles during the middle section of the

novel. Evelyn is described in relation to the hotel; as we have seen, he is the 'creator'

of the hotel space. On page ninety five he is the 'monarch of the supreme luxury

hotel of the world'[510] but by page one hundred and nine he refers to himself as 'a

mere hotel-keeper'[511] a reduction in status that occurs progressively through the

narrative.

---

[509] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 467.
[510] Ibid*.,* p. 95.
[511] Ibid., p. 109. The labels given to characters in this position vary dramatically across both Bennett novels. Just a selection of these include: manager, owner, hotel-keeper, proprietor, director, monarch and panjandrum. All labels invoke differing connotations and are involved in a complex hierarchy of their own; as they all mean slightly different things the role of the 'manager' is more complicated than the master of the home who only has one label to describe his function. This demonstrates how varied and shifting the roles are in the hotel space.
The implications of the word 'keeper' in relation to 'owner' or even 'manager' are interesting to the discussion on power and issues of ownership. A hotel keeper is someone who merely watches over the space and takes a secondary position in relation to it. There is no level of superiority in this term, reminding us of how he appeared on the opening page: passively watching and waiting.

Whilst away from the hotel both Evelyn and Gracie experience a strange event in which they are reduced to unknown characters in an unfamiliar environment. While in Paris they visit a restaurant but are served in a manner unaccustomed to a millionaire's daughter and a luxury hotel proprietor: the waitress then ignored them; she attended to customers in what she deemed to be the right order of precedence.[512] This order is reminiscent of the strict hierarchy of seated guests in Bowen's restaurant in *The Hotel* and yet it is the waitress who is enforcing this hierarchy rather than the guests. This statement is pre-empted by Gracie's suggestion that they go to the first rotten little place[513] they see, an ironic turn due to their position outside of this society. Gracie picks a particularly derelict looking place that is hidden from view on the main street:

> The dirty bare staircase, which in its middle part was dangerously
> dark, ended in a restaurant of the same dimensions as the bar-room.
> A buffet. A number of extremely small tables, covered with coarse
> grey-white linen. Clumsy black-handled knives and black-handled
> three-pronged forks. Salt in lumps. Bread in yards. Glass cruets,
> twin receptacles containing vinegar and oil. Odours. Warmth. No
> air.[514]

There is a sensitive and fascinating interplay here between the expectations of the wealthy and powerful characters, their feelings and reactions to the space when positioned inside it, and the power that the waitress has over these guests. Both Evelyn and Gracie are distinguished from the other customers: constraint and self-consciousness separated them. And they were marked customers. Everybody in the room knew, and showed by curious glances, that they were different from the

---

[512] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 439.
[513] Ibid., p. 438.
[514] Ibid., pp. 438-439.

ordinary clientele.'[515]  Yet this does not allow them the privileged service they implicitly expect.  The restaurant mimics the hotel, in that familiarity rules the space; those familiar and comfortable with the area are designated controllers of the space.  Those of a higher class or those with more money are instantly alienated in relation to the group with similar backgrounds.  The waitress deals with customers in order of precedence but that precedence relies on familiarity rather than rank.

In opposition to this is Evelyn's feeling when situated within their hotel in Paris: 'he would not admit, even to himself, that it was like a home.  But he felt that it was, and that he was the master in it.  He was ingeniously happy and tyrannic in it.'[516]  When characters in particular locations become isolated or reduced in number, feelings and events are easier to control.  Here, despite the fact that they are in a hotel, the association of the space with home is much easier to achieve than in the Imperial Palace.  Evelyn feels at home because he can be master in the traditional sense: master of a smaller space and master of only one woman.  However, we are reminded of the naïve arrogance and self-assured confidence of guests in hotel spaces that leads them to forget the inner mysteries of the space.  Evelyn has become one of these innocent but misapplied guests despite the experience of his own hotel.  His removal and separation from his own space has diminished his control over any hotel space.  The attention that Bennett gives to the many employees in the hotel in relation to the constant flow of unknown guests represents the difficulty of maintaining control or managing the space as a traditional master would.  While separated from his hotel and feeling more secure in his new life with Gracie, his recollections and thoughts on the distant Imperial Palace fluctuate.  He thinks of it with pride and regret but also a new sense of disassociation which is epitomized by his feelings when he returns: 'the

[515] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 439.
[516] Ibid., p. 492.

entire organism seemed phantasmal to him, bizarre, unnatural, negligible, even

indefensible'.[517] Evelyn has been removed from the hotel for a significant section of

the narrative, and although not absent from the narrative itself, the effect on his

connection to the hotel is immense.

Throughout the novel we are constantly reminded that Evelyn is in charge and

is able to control the hotel and the people within it, a technique used to give

foundation to a vision of him that is not necessarily realized. Gracie tells him:

'you're the director of the finest hotel in the world, it runs perfectly so long as you're

in charge'.[518] Henry Savott is resilient in his opinion that 'the Imperial Palace would

be no earthly use [∧] without Mr Evelyn Orcham [∧] he *is* the Imperial Palace'.[519]

The strong connection between Evelyn and the hotel in these two instances promotes

a sense of reliability, but this reliability is not maintained throughout the narrative, as

we have seen through the analysis of some key events. Despite these repeated

pronouncements concerning Evelyn's ability to manage the hotel, we are left with a

feeling of negativity due to the vastness of the space, the multitude of people

contained within it and Evelyn's absence from it during the central events of the

narrative. Ultimately, Evelyn does run the hotel well, and on the whole is a respected

employer, but the reconfiguration of the master in this extensive space means that

there is always scope for disruption to the network of employees.

While Evelyn and Gracie are absent from the hotel some of the managerial

responsibility falls to his trusted housekeeper, Violet, who tries to control the

explosion of animosity that erupts. Violet is a strange choice in this matter as she had

only recently joined the employment of the Imperial Palace, and it seems that she

would have little inside knowledge or experience. However, Violet's steadfast

[517] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 529.
[518] Ibid*.,* p. 494.
[519] Ibid*.,* p. 168.

determination to know the space in the shortest possible time makes her succeed. She

comes to the Imperial Palace with glowing references and also has a personal

connection to Henry Savott as her sister used to be his housekeeper. Violet,

therefore, is connected to both the manager and the guests and becomes more familiar

with both throughout the narrative. As Henry tells her: 'you've got nothing to learn,

really, except 'what shall I say?' the geography of the hotel'[520] and this she does

with consummate ease. Throughout her time at the Imperial Palace 'she had

developed a passion for the welfare and the efficiency of the Palace. She had studied

its organisation day and evening'[521] The dedication that Violet shows to

understanding her role in this space and how the space works itself is what causes her

to be successful. We see her change from an automaton in the space, when she is

unfamiliar with it, to a powerful and successful controller of it. At the beginning of

her service in this hotel she responds mindlessly to what is asked of her. When Violet

is ordered to work on another floor we are told that one was 'ordered, and you

obeyed, blindly. You weren't a human being. You were a robot. You had to

exercise judgement, tact, take responsibilities, be smart, powder your face. But you

were a robot'[522] The 'judgement' requires a lack of individuation, due to Violet's

unfamiliarity with the space and those around her. However, by the end of the novel

she functions as an indispensable cog in the hotel network.

Evelyn asks Violet's advice on hotel business and despite the

acknowledgement of how unusual this is ('conceive the Director deigning to ask a

housekeeper whether or not he was right on a fundamental question of managerial

policy!'[523]) we sense her comfort in this position of responsibility. The balance of

---

[520] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 239.
[521] Ibid., p. 616.
[522] Ibid., p. 251.
[523] Ibid., p. 522.

power between Evelyn and Violet is interesting; as Violet rises up the social scale and asserts her individuality, Evelyn's power declines and his distinctive edge as a character is lost in his relationship with Gracie and his removal from the hotel vicinity. Bennett rectifies this at the denouement with his decision to marry off Violet and Evelyn. Despite the sentimental nature of this ending, it resolves a number of the novel's concerns: importantly it partially relieves the narrative of its preoccupation with money and status through the relinquishing of Gracie and the return to the hotel's employees, and a familiar debate over the realignment of master and servant in the cross-class marriage of a middle-class man and his housekeeper. This is shown in Violet's concerns over conduct and reputation: 'but he was the panjandrum, the head and the heart of the great Merger, the monarch of the hotel world. And she was a daughter of Renshaw street.'[524] Class distinctions from outside now infiltrate the narrative as Bennett uses location to vivify Violet's origins. Her status is further reduced as she is associated with her father; her home and family in Renshaw street are all unequal to a man that rules the 'hotel-world.' However, the alliance between these two characters creates a strong network in the hotel. The realization that Evelyn's power had diminished due to his absence from the space, and his inability to oversee all areas of the hotel, is eradicated by the joining of these two successful managers, a familiar trope in Victorian novels (for example in *Jane Eyre* the power of another patriarch 'Rochester' is diminished to allow equality in a relationship). Their mutual loyalty to the space, and to each other, creates a network of knowledge and experience of the space they are trying to control. Nonetheless an element of ambiguity infiltrates the narrative as Evelyn questions: 'was Violet, or the perfecting of luxury hotels throughout Europe, his lifework? If both, which was the

---

[524] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 648.

more important? Were luxury hotels sociologically justifiable? He didn't know. He couldn't decide.'[525] As these questions form the last few lines of the novel, there is no sense of resolution; and yet, the removal of Grace from the narrative and the joining of forces between Evelyn and Violet, leads us to believe that this is the best possible outcome for a successful organization. Evelyn distinguishes between Violet and the hotel, and yet it is the combination of all three – the space, the employer and the employee (now husband and wife) – that will create a successful network in hotel life.

## **Closing remarks**

There has been a 'mutation' in our understanding of class as well as our understanding of built space. Studies of class consider individuals in relation to each other and often presuppose a system of class relations that is deficient in spatial contextualization. The aim of this study has been to isolate the hotel as a unique space for class analysis, attaching the status of the individual to the space they inhabit – a mutually exclusive relationship between subject and space. Class, as a dominant form of social categorization, has been re-evaluated in relation to the hotel, which, as a slightly altered reality, fails to conform to the social categories of the outside world.

The focus has been on the service industry, the relationship between members of this class of workers and those they come in contact with due to the space of the hotel. The three levels of character (owner, employees and guests) inhabiting the hotel space, contribute to a complex vision of society. Central to the debate over class organization in the hotel is the issue of ownership, whether that is financial ownership or ownership due to knowledge and experience. This idea is explicit in all of the novels studied. To the servants the Imperial Palace was their home, their

---

[525] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 670.

landscape, their climate, their atmosphere, their habit. They knew the Palace through and through.[526] while the guests pressed magic buttons, and their caprices were instantly gratified.[527] Despite their prestige, the guests often lack power due to their impoverished knowledge of spaces; this insufficiency reduces them to homeless occupiers, whilst the managers and financial owners of the space often find it hard to maintain control, due to their distance from the employees. Traditional relationships between financial status and social power are inverted, as the lower classes take the primary role in running the hotel and validating the space as something necessary in maintaining control of it. The conflicting position of servants to guests is explicitly investigated by Arnold Bennett, Paul Theroux, Kazuo Ishiguro, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Millhauser, Vicki Baum and Laurence Geller as writers of novels which give a view of hotel life opposed to those considered in the first chapter.

Essentially, the master of the home has complete control over those who enter his space and, to a certain extent, how they conduct themselves while in it. The master stays at the top of the hierarchy for the duration of the time within that location. In the hotel, status and power fluctuate. A confident leader is set against a browbeaten, failed one, to reposition the status of the proprietor in the hotel hierarchy. Those who perform menial tasks and apparently occupy subservient roles are actually superior when seen in relation to the space as a whole. Power is determined by visibility in the space and knowledge of it, and in this last requirement, the servant always retains the upper hand.

---

[526] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 314.
[527] Ibid., p. 113.

# Conclusion

**If spaces 'take place in narratives', 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 pre-existing story that will acquire his or her own personal note but will continue long after the guest has left the hotel.[528]**

Analyzing the relationship between character and environment naturally leads to a discussion concerning how settings shape, inform or contextualize the depiction of individuals. But to what extent do spaces produce or alter events and identities? As a symbolic homeland, and an alternate reality that carries with it notions of movement and stasis, progression and limitation, the hotel is a space that has a profound effect on the inhabitant. It complicates our view of identity because of its ability to affect individuals: characters are led in new directions because of their interaction with the space, a space that contains them.

Interestingly, the hotel is utilized as a setting by writers from disparate periods and social contexts. The 'big house' concerns of Elizabeth Bowen, and the social problem novels of Whiteing, have similarities with post-modern depictions of individuals in a divided world. This diversity is possible because of the malleability of the space: the hotel is an appropriate space for the representation of confusion and vulnerability in a political context such as O'Neill's 9/11 environment, it successfully manages the post-modern disillusionment of Ishiguro's journey, and it is also capable of embodying social concerns and class re-alignment in Bennett's inter-war novels. Each work is very different in terms of politics and characterization, and yet these writers all find the hotel a useful mechanism for exploring their particular concerns. Matthias terms hotels 'social laboratories' writers use 'the spatial limits of their

---

[528] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 53.

setting to zoom in on a potential struggle that would be harder to detect or isolate in a less focused setting.[529] The condensed nature of the space makes it possible to examine characters' thoughts and emotions in microscopic detail.

The spatial power of the hotel creates a 'hotel-world' that has a totalizing effect; the hotel becomes dynamic through its enforcement of power, abstractly defined by its atmosphere. At the same time this level of abstraction has limits because of the need to relate it to real, everyday contexts:

> It is hard to untangle the grubby day-to-day practices and discourses that affect urban living from the grandiose metaphorical meanings that so freely intermingle with emotions and beliefs about the good life and urban form. It is interesting to note how it is often at the geographical scale of small-scale city life that the ideals of utopian social orderings are so frequently cast.[530]

Despite the possible confusion resulting from the relationship between the abstract and the everyday, or the focus on the 'small-scale' of city life, the hotel as a localized site offers a means for applying wider social concerns to a specific context. The hotel is organised geographically and sociologically which offers two perspectives for analyzing and understanding the space. These two perspectives come to fruition during the period in history when hotel life became a fundamental part of cosmopolitanism: 'more specifically, hotels mirror the degree to which geographic and social mobility became possible around the turn of the century'.[531] The function, value and success of each room, and the building as a whole, are as important as the experience of the individual. The hotel is unique in its re-negotiation of social hierarchies, its positioning of inhabitants and the possibility it creates for employees to rise through the ranks due to knowledge and experience of the space.

---

[529] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting,* p. 5.
[530] David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 157.
[531] Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting*, p. 3.

As Andrew Thacker finds, there are three main problems that arise when considering space.  The first is the metaphorical nature of the space being discussed, and the use of spatial metaphors to describe 'real' spaces.  The second problem is the representation of space in cultural texts, and the third is the implications of these representations and realities for the formal properties of modernism: '[w]e need to reconnect the representational spaces in modernist texts not only to the material spaces of the city, but also to reverse the focus, and try to understand how social spaces dialogically help fashion the literary *forms* of the modernist text'[532]  There is a three-way process required in the consideration of space and there is continuity between these three elements: the real, the formal representation and the interpretation of that represented space returns us back to our own subjective interpretation of what we consider reality to be.

Literary representations of the hotel rely on the power of this space to recall personal memories of time spent in hotels which in turn allows an empathetic reading.  Unfamiliarity becomes the norm in urban life, therefore, paradoxically, this process of familiarization – the process that allows an empathetic reading is successful due to the unfamiliarity and universality of the space, a space that everyone knows.  Characteristically, metropolitan hotels are monotonous and repetitive spaces, neutrally coloured and classically decorated.  Often, the only differences we see are in levels of luxury.   The only individual hotels that stand out in literary and cultural studies are the Bonaventure hotel, Los Angeles, and the Waldorf Astoria, New York.  Other hotels merge into a general classification; when we read of a particular hotel we are therefore responding with our own preconception of what a hotel experience means to us.

---

[532] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 4.

The hotel is a translatable or repeatable space that is recognizable across contexts, cities and nations. It offers comfort as the first port of call in unknown neighbourhoods, cities or countries. It becomes a symbol of safety for the travelling tourist. And yet, this familiarity also has an imposing effect. Its power is magnified because of the responsibility it has in protecting the inhabitant and the comfort it offers in moments of anxiety. This is explicit in various novels analyzed here, particularly Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and Henry Green's *Party Going,* where the hotel is a solid foundation that offers safety from the threat of the outside street, but at the same time harbours its own terrors inside.

Identity and ownership are complexly intertwined in novels that deal with the hotel. On one side of the argument is the suggestion that the destitute figure is the idealized version of the tourist as he or she is unencumbered by property. On the other, is the belief that ownership can be reconfigured, on grounds other than simply financial possession. The home is the ideal object of ownership, the image of security, but ownership is confused when transferred to the hotel, a space in which people rent spaces from the owner but demand different services than they do from the master in his home. The tourist has a lack of knowledge and experience of space in relation to those that reside there permanently; the tourist requires guidance. Tourists arrogantly claim superiority but fail to substantiate it in relation to the body of hotel employees.

The responses of visitors and transient inhabitants are diverse, but they centre on a disconnection between the individual and the space. Tuan's response to the visitor/native dichotomy is illuminating in this context. Positively, Tuan notes that it is only the visitor that can have a viewpoint on spaces as the native has a complex

254

attitude derived from his immersion in the totality of his environment.'[533]  There is, of course, a distinction between the response made by a native and that made by a visitor.  In the same way as viewing architecture from the inside out, or the outside in, an interior or 'immersed' perspective will vary dramatically from a detached, exterior perspective.  However, the dismissal of the native's viewpoint leaves the visitor's perspective drifting, with no referent to compare it with.  To help understand the extreme and complex reaction of the transient, an appreciation of the rooted individual's reaction is vital.  The limitation of Tuan's argument derives from the use of the term 'complex'.  To state that the native's response is complex whilst the visitor's is simple (he openly admits that because the visitor's viewpoint is 'simple' it is 'easily stated')[534] is too simplistic a distinction, and ignores the complex variety of responses to hotel stimuli seen in the novels examined here, where both native and visitor perspectives are important.

Indeed, Tuan's native/visitor opposition seems to be reversed when we come to the hotel: those rooted in the space, the collective workers who experience it on a daily basis, see the space more clearly and perform more successfully within it.  As Relph has discovered: 'to have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular.'[535]  Those characters that maintain some level of permanence in the hotel are often those that function most successfully; it is the guests who typically react violently because of the assault on their senses and their inability to understand the reactions they have to such an indefinable space.

---

[533] Tuan, *Topophilia,* p. 63.
[534] Ibid.
[535] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, p. 38.

The hotel is indefinable in a similar way to the character of the city. The diverse mixture of influences inherent to the figure of the city causes it to have no intentional character; rather it consists of layers of intentions that resist singularity. The hotel, a more condensed space, is also plural and needs to be approached through an awareness of simultaneity not singularity. Paring a space down to binaries, or compartmentalized sections, does little to aid our understanding of it; in fact, this approach only disconnects us further. The hotel is a sum of *all* of its parts, and all parts must be considered together, in an attempt to understand the hotel matrix. Moreover, although it is impossible to see all parts of a building at once, or to watch all characters simultaneously, an *awareness* of other perspectives and parallel scenes goes some way to helping us deal with the space. Henry Green positions characters in interconnecting rooms and writes narratives with opposing viewpoints on the same scene; this is one method for representing the diversity of experience in any one space. It has some similarities to Ali Smith's use of five focal characters to create a network of responses, which, alongside her visual depiction of space on the page (in, for example, the death of the main character), helps analyze the space in its entirety. A different technique is used by Ishiguro in his focus on circularity. In this novel, the disruption in spatial reality constantly draws our attention back to the hotel, the centre of the novel. We leave the main character journeying on a bus that has no final destination; he circulates the city as he has circulated the hotel throughout the novel, catching occasional glimpses of truths that define his life and help him make conclusions about how he functions in the context that has been created for him.

There are discrete spaces in the hotel that act as containers for action: the bedroom, the bathroom, and the lobby all become localized sites for interaction between character and environment. All the novels juxtapose what the characters

256

expect of the space with its physical reality, whether the basis of their expectation is a rags-to-riches story-line, an escape from a failed life, a social experiment, or just simply a holiday. Characters are constantly questioning what is expected of them in liminal areas of the site, and change behaviour when they come into contact with a new element of the space, and therefore a new purpose or function. The hotel lobby has become the most researched area of the hotel because of its function to welcome and hold the guests in its protective grasp; it is the most open and empty space of the whole structure, whilst also embodying the heaviness of atmosphere inherent in the space. The reality of the lobby, as studied by Kracauer and then Douglas Tallack, is that it leaves individuals bereft, unsure of themselves and often 'waiting'.

The novels analyzed here are also distinct in their focus on one hotel space in its entirety for the majority of the novel. When in the 'hotel-world' the hotel becomes the whole world. This immersion is the main cause of the hotel's power; it strips its inhabitants of their identity and creates them anew. When they return to their own world they can no longer relate to their past or understand their time spent in the hotel, that is, if we ever see them return home. Ishiguro's Ryder is left on a never-ending bus journey, Bennett's employees are left setting up a new life within the hotel, Green's cast contemplate their return home, but never take a step outside and Bowen's quarrelling couple take a walk up a hill to view the hotel from a greater height. There are few stylistic connections between Whiteing and Ishiguro; what does link them however, is this focus on the intensity of the hotel space and how it functions in relation to the characters. A consideration of *why* the space is important is a unifying factor, rather than *how* each writer develops their analysis of it.

When considering her craft Elizabeth Bowen talks of a particular "terrain" or "inner climate" that each author possesses.[536] This terrain can be recognized across works and corresponds to an indicative style or tone inherent to that writer. Appropriating Bowen's term I would like to suggest that these writers are divided by "terrain," but drawn together by subject matter. Each novel's outcome is vastly different, but uniting them is the central figure of the dominating hotel. The hotel in its turn produces both positive and negative associations due to the possibilities created by the space, though extreme reactions are the only outcome. We can look pessimistically at the limitations the space imposes on characters' self-esteem; alternatively, we can look to the possibilities of the space in terms of travel and chance meetings. The space itself is defined architecturally by this dichotomy: what engenders change and progress can also impose limits through fear and lack of knowledge.

Although a synonym for civilization, the hotel is slightly removed from reality; what we expect from the city, or our civilization, is not necessarily true of the hotel. As Baudrillard discusses, architecture is now becoming an "interactive utopia" as "the rules of the game do not belong to anyone. Every model, every project must inevitably expect to be thwarted."[537] Other spaces located in the city offer localized sites for exploring identity. In particular, the department store, the high-rise apartment and the street itself are places in which we can look closely at the individual in a constructed space. As Stephen Millhauser's main character finds:

[T]he department store and the hotel were little cities within the city, but they were also experimental cities, cities in advance of the city, for they represented in different forms the thrust toward vertical community that seemed to Martin the great fact of the

---

[536] Bowen, "Preface," *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 1.
[537] Baudrillard, *Mass*, p. 76.

modern city.'[538] This idea of the 'vertical city' also put forward by Mark Katz, presupposes an artificial community where people's living spaces are layered row by row on top of each other. This is in exact opposition to the sprawling nature of the city, and yet the skyscraper has become the symbolic metropolitan edifice. The contained nature of the vertical hotel organizes the structure into a mechanistic environment that exerts its power over the individuals that inhabit it.

This mechanistic environment leads us to a discussion of the business side of the hotel space and the relationship between different members of staff. Traditionally, the servant was supposed to display specific characteristics, these are: 'humility, lowliness, meekness and gentleness, fearfulness, respectfulness, loyalty and good temper.'[539] By contrast, servants in the hotel are able to express themselves individually as well as acting as a collective body; they have agency and can even advise the person in a managerial role as to how a successful business should be run. This is seen in the relationship between Violet and Evelyn in *Imperial Palace* but also in the figures of Josh and Susan in *Do Not Disturb*. Money is also a dominant concern in the hotel, due to the function of visibility and status of its inhabitants and the constant awareness of the processes of money in the business world of the hotel. The pre-supposed formula for success in the hotel is that those with money will hold power and dominate both the social and business sides of the space. As Harvey asserts: '[t]he owners of money are free (within constraints) to choose how, when, where and with whom to use that money to satisfy their needs, wants, and fancies.'[540] This is of course true for some of the hotel inhabitants contemplated here, but the multitude of events that occur that supersede these regulations. The characters that

---

[538] Millhauser, *Martin Dressler,* p. 181.
[539] Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between – Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 27.
[540] Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience*, p. 4.

ultimately seem best able to control the space are those that can survive within it without using the power of money as a force, but instead rely on knowledge and experience to alter their role and function within the changing space and the changing community. It is those with a "working knowledge"[541] of the space, at a base level that have the means to direct, regulate and restrain the space and those within it.

To return to Lefebvre in closing, the predominant argument in *The Production of Space* is that society has an active role in the production of space, but he also acknowledges that space is not a "passive locus" for social relations.[542] Class studies of fixed locations like the hotel are few in number and yet the space is saturated with possibilities for social empowerment and inversion of traditional social hierarchies. When approaching the nature of space in novels, ultimately we are asking questions about how we internalize our "real" experience of place, how we imagine space and how we represent space through language. In this respect, the distinctive claim of this thesis, compared to previous studies of hotel fiction, is that it offers an understanding of character, not just *in*, but *through* space. It aims, that is, to show how space *constructs* character, and why, therefore, its representation, via language, is particularly complex.

---

[541] Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries*, p. 57.
[542] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 11.

## Appendix

## The history of the hotel.

### The move from inn to hotel

The image of an inn is basic in design with simple decoration, although the common belief that an inn had to be small is untrue. In the late sixteenth-century some inns grew to the size of two hundred rooms, so how do we differentiate between large inns and hotels? Categorically, an inn is a lodging space with stabling; the increase in stage coaches in the eighteenth century created a parallel need for inns along the roads as well as within towns. Often, inns had more space and accommodation for animals than people in order to support travellers' needs on long journeys. With the reduction in use of horse drawn carriages and the increased use of railways and cars, the traditional image of the inn vanished and usage of inns declined. Between the years of 1837 and 1960 villages on coach routes felt the impact as land values dropped, village shops suffered and the focus shifted to the inner-city and other methods of transport.

The use of the word 'inn' in hotel titles today does not refer to this literal meaning of accommodation with stabling, but instead conjures up the image of traditional country décor and a family-run environment. The conventional architectural pattern of an inn was a central courtyard for the horses, overlooked by upstairs apartments on all sides. The addition of public assembly rooms, instead of private apartments just for sleeping, was the first step towards hotel status. This is where the idea of the hotel as a self-contained community arose. There is also a difference in terms of patronage; legally, the inn is a resting place that requires no agreement on the length of each individual's stay, whilst the hotel sells room space for a limited and negotiated period of time. With the increase in travel, also brought about

by the road and rail networks, a more organized system of accommodation arose with the hotel.

Sociologically, the differences between an inn and a hotel are vast. As seen in the introduction to this thesis, the hotel offered greater levels of social interaction between women and men at the turn of the last century. The metropolitan hotels of this period became a nexus of social interaction:

> New ground was broken in a social world that had previously done most of its entertaining in its own mansions, but the Waldorf Astoria's combination of size and grandeur [∧] made it into the first hotel to form the focus of New York's highly organised social world.[543]

The hotel became, in opposition to the inn, a world of business and power but also a public space for entertaining and an arena for socialization:

> A modern hotel of large size is not only the home of the traveling [sic] public, but is also a centre of civic and social activity; as nearly all modern hotels combine with their equipment for the transient patron, special rooms, facilities, and services for public and private functions of diversified character.[544]

These areas were clearly demarcated in the hotel and a prevalent trend in hotel architecture was to contain the drawing rooms and parlours, typically for female interaction, on the second floor, whilst the ground floor became the male inhabited areas and were reserved for business and commercial activity.

---

[543] Elaine Denby, *Grand Hotels, Reality and Illusion – An Architectural and Social History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1998), p. 224.
[544] Boomer, *Hotel Management*, p. 150.

**<u>Earliest hotels</u>**

In the 1820s and 1830s the forerunners of large hotels were *Barnums Hotel* in Baltimore with approximately two hundred rooms and *The Tremont Hotel* in Boston with one-hundred and seventy rooms.  In the 1840s the numbers dramatically increased with the opening of *The Astor House* containing three-hundred and fifty rooms and seventeen bathrooms.  Hotel building escalated in Britain after the Great Exhibition in 1851 which saw 6,009,948 visitors travelling to London.  This period witnessed hotel building for specific tourist purposes.  Not just due to an escalation in road or rail travel, hotels such as *The Great Western Hotel* opened in 1851, specifically because of the influx of visitors to the Great Exhibition.  This phenomenon was not limited to England, as in France, *The Hotel Terminus* opened in 1889 to accommodate the visitors to the Paris International Exhibition in the same year.

In the 1880s and 1890s hotels like *The Cecil* (with its eight hundred rooms) were not common and hotels were considered large at around three hundred rooms. In the 1920s, in areas such as Florida and Los Angeles and other places outside of the larger cities of London, New York or Chicago, hotels averaged around four hundred rooms with up to two hundred extra rooms for servants and employees, although this peaked with the opening of the Los Angeles *Biltmore Hotel* in 1922 which had one-thousand-one-hundred and twelve rooms all with private baths.  In cities such as New York the average hotel space offered eight hundred rooms, seen in the *Hotel Pierre* and the *Hotel Lexington*, but peaked when the iconic *Waldorf Astoria* opened in 1931 with two thousand private rooms.

Hotels became a profitable industry in the early twentieth century and by the 1930s investment in hotel properties represented more than three billion dollars and

was ranked fourth most lucrative of all industries in America.[545]  However, this expansion was overwhelmingly rapid.  Lucius Boomer, president of the corporation involved in the relocation of the *Waldorf Astoria*, gives these startling statistics: in the US in 1923 there were 22,196 hotels of which around one hundred boasted more than four hundred and fifty rooms.  The value of hotel properties at this time was estimated at $2,100,000,000.  By the late 1920s over $700,000,000 had been invested in hotel expansion, suggesting that by the 1930s this business was worth over three billion dollars. Marianne Lamonaca distinguishes this period as an intense period of expansion following the end of World War I, and she recognizes the ingenuity of fledgling companies such as Schultze and Weaver — designers of the *Waldorf*, the *Biltmore*, and *The Park Lane Hotel* — to promote and engage with the new business world of the hotel.[546]  Schultze and Weaver's designs, based on simplicity and efficiency, were replicated across a number of hotels and consisted of basements and sub-basements for kitchens, laundries and storage; a lobby and public lounge; ballrooms and restaurants; guest rooms and residential suites and machinery space on the upper floor for ventilation and equipment.  The plans were arranged, particularly at the *Waldorf*, to increase circulation and to improve flow of both people and services, from the lobby through the lounges to the dining area, whilst also maximising ease of transport to other areas of the hotel through the careful placements of lifts that would take inhabitants to the private bedroom spaces:

> The passenger-elevator installation should be conveniently located,
> adequate to handle the maximum demands of a fully occupied
> hotel.[547]

---

[545] Boomer, *Hotel Management*, p. 2.
[546] Marianne Lamonaca, *Grand Hotels of the Jazz Age* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), pp. 9-11.
[547] Boomer, *Hotel Management*, p. 151.

**Amenities**

In the 1840s amenities and technologies were developing and the focus became more on comfort during the stay, rather than on necessity. Dormitory bedrooms were commonly in use in the early nineteenth century, which slept up to ten people, not necessarily in separate beds. In the 1840s this started to change as private single and double rooms were introduced. Privacy became more and more important and rooms were now lockable, although at this time they only had a jug, a bowl and a bar of soap as luxuries. In 1844, however, *The New Yorker Hotel* was the first to offer en-suite bathrooms in some of their rooms. Amenities continued developing and by 1924 idiosyncrasies such as private serving pantries and electric plate warmers were in use in hotels such as the *Park Lane Hotel* in New York.[548] The development of American hotels took place at a slight remove from European versions, as Americans valued innovation rather than style. Interiors thus became more lavish, exaggerated and decorative than those of the European variety.

**Changes in Architecture**

Due to the move from family-orientated, small-scale inns to large operational business spaces, the hotel architect or planner had to reconsider the layout of the space and the balance of opposing demands:

> The hotel architect needed to know, among other things, how to design
> for efficient circulation of employees between service areas and guest
> areas; how to maximize the revenue producing portion of the

---

[548] Statistics taken from: Denby, *Grand Hotels,* pp. 1-35; Lamonaca, *Grand Hotels of the Jazz Age* and Pevsner, *A History of Building Types.*

building's volume without sacrificing service and comfort [∧] and how to integrate into the various parts of the building the infrastructure for such things as ventilation and climate control, communications, elevators and plumbing.[549]

Considerations of how the hotel functioned in relation to how the hotel appeared were of prime interest to architects.

A fundamental change in the layout of the hotel was the inclusion of the lobby, a space that has become so weighted in spatial theory. The first hotel to include a lobby that was recognized in terms of its decoration and magnificence rather than its function was *The Tremont House* in Boston, opened in 1829. The stained-glass rotunda of *The Tremont* separated it from other hotels which traditionally had guests enter directly into the ballroom. The inclusion of the lobby, so recognized in today's hotels, facilitated the demarcation of space and function and visually helped to create a space for organizing and welcoming its inhabitants. The lobby became another space for the public side of hotel life, a further separation from the inn context, and as the primary space in the hotel it became the central space for advertising the identity of the hotel.

Changes in the economic distribution of cities at the turn of the century and increasing land values forced architects to plan new ways of maximizing space. The inevitable answer to the problem appeared in the form of the skyscraper. Developers were encouraged to "tear down the city of brownstones" and "replace it with a modern skyscraper metropolis."[550] In terms of specific proportions there are no real definitions of what a skyscraper actually is; defining a skyscraper is more empirically based and relies on its relation to the rest of the skyline in that particular city.

---

[549] Lamonaca, *Grand Hotels*, p. 11.
[550] Ibid., p. 25.

Between 1880 and 1900 bigger buildings kept appearing; the Home Insurance building in Chicago, built in 1884, was one of the first recognized alongside the Wainwright building in St. Louis, built in 1891, both of which, for the first time, implemented the modern steel structure in use today. In England, interestingly, the first skyscraper was the *Grand Midland Hotel* in London, built in 1873. Queen Victoria exercised restrictions over building heights, limitations which were not formally removed until the 1950s, in which there was another surge in competition for taller buildings.

## Inventions and technology

Primitive lifts have been in use since the third century, but the first acknowledged use in England of a formal machine structure to transport people or goods through large scale buildings was in 1823 and was known as an 'ascending room'. The design was still fairly primitive, consisting of ropes, runners and pulleys. It was not until 1853 that the Otis safety elevator was introduced to Britain and it was not until 1857 that it moved across to America. This elevator was still steam operated but had a safety mechanism or a safety cable to prevent the contraption falling. Steam and hydraulic elevators that were operated by pistons became more widespread in the 1870s. The first electric elevator was built in 1880 but was expensive and, therefore, not immediately introduced into all large buildings. In 1887 the electric elevator was taken to America but as the motor was the only electric part of the machine the device still needed ropes to move it; the size of the drum needed to wind the rope for a large skyscraper was too cumbersome for it to work successfully. It was only in 1889 that an electronically geared mechanism was invented and allowed these large scale

buildings to use lifts efficiently.  Therefore, it was only at the beginning of the

twentieth century that elevators were becoming a more common amenity in hotel

construction.  In 1926 we see the modern style of elevator used for the first time with

the opening of the Woolworth Building.  So by the 1930s modern lifts were becoming

an everyday feature of hotel architecture, a detail which resonates in the literature of

the period.  Bennett's second hotel novel *Imperial Palace* published in 1928 begins:

"Evelyn came down by the lift into the great front-hall."[551]

---

[551] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 1.

## Bibliography

Ackroyd, Peter. *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001).

Adams, Jad. "Gabriela Cunninghame Graham, Deception and Achievement in the 1890s," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 50:3 (Greensboro: 2007): 251-69.

Adelman, Gary. "Doubles on the Rocks: Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*" *Critique* 42:2 (January, 2001): 166-79.

Agnew, John. *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

Agnew, John and James Duncan. *The Power of Place: Bringing together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

Arnold, Dana and Andrew Ballantyne eds. *Architecture as Experience: Radical Change in Spatial Practice* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Aston, Elaine. *Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Atkinson, David. Peter Jackson, David Sibley and Neil Washbourne, eds. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space,* trans., Maria Jolas (1958; Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination,* trans., Carol Emerson (Austin: University of Texas, 1981).

Ballantyne, Andrew. *Deleuze and Guittari for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Ballard, J. G. *High-Rise* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975).

Barnett, Helena and John Phillips. *Suburban Style, The British Home 1940-1960* (London: Macdonald and Co. 1987).

Barrell, John. *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

Bate, Johnathan. "Culture and Environment: From Austen to Hardy" *New Literary History* 30:3 (1999): 541-60.

Baudrillard, Jean. *America* (London: Verso, 1988).

Baudrillard, Jean. *Mass. Identity. Architecture. The Architectural Writings of Jean Baudrillard* ed., Francesco Proto (West Sussex: John Wiley, 2006).

Baum, Vicki. *Grand Hotel* (1930; London: Pan Books Ltd., 1948).

Bauman, Zygmut. *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

Beeton, Isabella. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Bell, Millicent. もJane Eyre まThe Tale of the Governessや*The American Scholar* 65:2 (Spring: 1996): 263-269.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project,* ed., Beatrice Hanssen (London: Continuum, 2006).

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Volume 3 1935-38* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2002).

Bennett, Arnold. *Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902; London: Penguin, 1938).

Bennett, Arnold. *Imperial Palace* (1930; London: Cassell, 1969).

Bennett, Arnold. *The Journals of Arnold Bennett 1896-1910,* ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1932).

Bennett, Arnold. *Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913).

Bentley, Nick ed., *British Fictions of the 1990s* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005).

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

Boomer, Lucius. *Hotel Management: Principles and Practice* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1931).

Borden, Iain, Joe Kerr and Jane Rendell eds., *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001).

Bowen, Elizabeth. *The Hotel* (1927; London: Vintage, 2003).

Bowen, Elizabeth, *The Mulberry Tree*, ed., Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986).

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Aurora Floyd* (1863; Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998).

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862; London: Penguin, 2004).

Briggs, Asa. *Victorian Cities: A Brilliant and Absorbing History of their Development* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990).

Brooker, Peter. *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene in Early Modernism* (London: Macmillan, 2007).

Brooker, Peter. *Modernity and Metropolis: Writing, Film and Urban Formations* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

Brookner, Anita. *Hotel du Lac* (1984; London: Vintage, 1995).

Brucken, Carolyn. "In the Public Eye: Women and the American Luxury Hotel" *Winterthur Portfolio* 31:4 (Winter, 1996): 203-220.

Bryden, Inga and Janet Floyd eds. *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Buckley, Jonathan. *Invisible* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005).

Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the US and Beyond* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001).

Burdett, Charles and Derek Duncan, eds. *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002).

Burdett, Ricky and Denjan Sudjic, eds., *The Endless City* (London: Phaidon, 2007).

Buttimer, Anne and David Seamon eds., *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

Cannadine, David. *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1994).

Caws, Mary Ann. *City Images. Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy and Film* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1991).

Clarke, Graham. *Henry James Critical Assessments,* vol. III (East Sussex: Helm Information Ltd., 1991).

Cole, G. D. H. *Studies in Class Structure* (London: Routledge, 1955).

Collins, David. *New Hotel Architecture and Design* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2001).

Collins, Jim. *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

Conway, Hazel and Rowan Roenisch. *Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Cornyn, William Stewart. "Hotel Slang" *American Speech* 14:3 (Oct, 1939): 239-240.

Coser, Lewis A. "Servants: The Obsolescence of an Occupational Role" *Social Forces* 52:1 (September, 1973): 31-40.

Coverley, Merlin. *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006).

Cox, Rosie. *The Home Life of a Global Economy* (London: I.B Tauris and Company, 2006).

Crampton, Jeremy W. and Stuart Elden eds., *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

Crang, Mike and Nigel Thrift eds., *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Davidoff, Leonore. *The Best Circles, Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973).

Davidoff, Leonore. *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

Davidoff, L and C. Hall., *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

Davis, Tracy C. *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition* (1968; London: Athlone, 1994).

Delillo, Don. *Cosmopolis* (London: Picador, 2003).

Denby, Elaine. *Grand Hotels: Reality and Illusion: An Architectural and Social History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1998).

Donat, John ed., *World Architecture 4* (London: Studio Vista, 1967).

D'Ormesson, Jean. *Grand Hotel* (New York: The Vendome Press, 1984).

Dyos, H.J. and Michael Wolff eds. *The Victorian City, Images and Realities,* vol. I (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

Edel, Leon, ed. *The American Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Ellman, Maud. *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

English, James F. *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006).

Fabijancic, Tony. "The Prison in the Arcade: A Carceral Diagram of Consumer Space." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 34:3 (Sept, 2001): 141-157.

Featherstone, Mike. "Georg Simmel: An Introduction" *Theory, Culture and Society* 8:3 (1999): 1-17.

Fischer, Claude S. *The Urban Experience* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1984).

Ford, Ford Madox. *The Soul of London* (1905; London: J. M. Dent, 2005).

Foucault, Michel and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces" *Diacritics* 16:1 (Spring, 1986): 22-27.

Foucault, Michel. *Power,* trans., Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1994).

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*, trans., Colin Gordon (Hertfordshire: The Harvester Press, 1980).

Frank, Joseph. *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (London: Indiana University Press, 1963).

Frisby, David. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985).

Frisby, David and Mike Featherstone, eds., *Simmel on Culture* (London: Sage, 1997).

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South* (1855; London: Penguin, 1994).

Geller, Laurence. *Do not Disturb* (Los Angeles: Volt Press, 2006).

Gilbert, David. "London of the Future: The Metropolis Re-imagined after the Great War." *Journal of British Studies* 43:1 (Jan, 2004): 91-119.

Gissing, George. *The Whirlpool* (1897; London: J. M. Dent, 1997).

Gold, John R. and George Revill. *Representing the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Green, Henry. *Party Going* (1939; London: Vintage, 2000).

Gregory, Derek and John Urry. *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

Hamilton, Patrick. *The Gorse Trilogy* (1951; London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1992).

Harris, Wendell V. "The Novels of Richard Whiteing" *English Literature in Transition,* 8:1 (1965): 36-43.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

Harvey, David. *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

Hayner, Norman S. "Hotel Life and Personality" *The American Journal of Sociology* 33:5 (March, 1928): 784-795.

Hesselgren, Sven. *The Language of Architecture* (London: Applied Science Publishers, 1972).

Hoffman, Linda. "Walter Benjamin's Infernal City," *Washington State University Research Studies* 52 (1983): 146-55.

Hollier, Denis. *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille* (London: MIT Press, 1993).

Holloway, Lewis and Phil Hubbard. *People and Place: The Extraordinary Geographies of Everyday Life* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2001).

Holloway, Sarah L., Stephen P. Rice and Gill Valentine eds., *Key Concepts in Geography* (London: Sage, 2003).

Horn, Pamela. *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1975).

Hubbard, Phil. *City* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006).

Hubbard, Phil, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine eds., *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (London: Sage, 2004).

Hudson, Brian J. "The Geographical Imagination of Arnold Bennett" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 7:3 (1982): 365-79.

Hutchins, William. "New York Hotels" *The Architectural Record* 12:5 (Oct, 1902): 459-71.

Irving, John. *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1981; London: Black Swan, 1999).

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Unconsoled* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

James, David. *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space: Style, Landscape, Perception* (London: Continuum, 2008).

James, Henry. *The American* (1877; New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978).

James, Henry. *The American Scene* (1907; London: Indiana University Press, 1969).

James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw* (1898; London: Penguin, 1998).

James, Henry. *Washington Square* (1881; London: Penguin, 2007).

Jameson, Fredric. *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings of the Postmodern 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998).

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Jameson, Fredric. *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002).

Jencks, Charles. *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1984).

Katz, Marc. ﬁThe Hotel Kracauer ﬂ *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11:2 (1999): 134-152.

Kearns, Gerry and Charles W.J. Withers, eds. *Urbanising Britain: Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Kirby, Kathleen M. *Indifferent Boundaries, Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1996).

Klimasmith, Betsy. *At Home in the City: Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture, 1850-1930* (New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005).

Knechtel, John. *Alphabet City 6: Open City* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998).

Koch, Gertrud. *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction* trans., Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Koestenbaum, Wayne. *Hotel Theory* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2007).

Koprince, Susan. ﬁEdith Wharton ﬂ Hotels ﬂ *Massachusetts Studies in English* 10:1 (Spring, 1985): 12-23.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament*, trans., Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Lamonaca, Marianne. *Grand Hotels of the Jazz Age* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005).

Latz, Gil. *The Power of Place: World Regional Geography* (London: John Wiley, 1996).

Leach, Neil, ed. *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Leach, Neil. *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Lechner, Frank L. "Simmel on Social Space," *Theory, Culture and Society* 8:3 (1991): 195-201.

Lee, Hermione. *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1981).

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

Lenz, Joseph. "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," *ELH*, 60: 4 (Winter, 1993): 833-855.

Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934).

Liggett, Helen and David C. Perry eds., *Spatial Practices* (London: Sage, 1995).

Lloyd, Moya and Andrew Thacker eds., *The Impact of Michel Foucault on the Social Sciences and Humanities* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

Locke, John P. and Barry Godfrey, "Ontological Boundaries and Temporal Watersheds in the Development of White Collar Crime," *British Journal of Criminology* 46 (2006): 976-992.

Lowder Newton, Judith, Mary P. Ryan and Judith R. Walkowitz eds., *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London: Routledge, 1983).

Lynch, Eve M. "The Masquerade of Servitude in Victorian Literature," *Pacific Coast Philology* 31:1 (1996): 88-106.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City* (New York: The MIT Press, 1960).

McHale, John. trans., *The Real Split in the International* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

McCuskey, Brian W. "The Kitchen police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-Class Transgression," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28 (2000): 359-375.

Madanipour, Ali. *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Malpas, Jeff. *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (London: MIT Press, 2006).

Mann, Thomas. *Magic Mountain* (1924; London: Vintage, 1999).

Mann, Thomas. *Stories and Episodes* (1912; London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955).

Manos, Nikki Lee and Meri-Jayne Rochelson, eds., *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1994).

Marcus, Laura and Lynda Nead eds., *The Actuality of Walter Benjamin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998).

Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Margetson, Stella. *Leisure and Pleasure in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cassell, 1969).

Marra, Kim. 'Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society' *Theatre Journal* 59:2 (Baltimore, MD May 2007): 320-321.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).

Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994).

Massey, Doreen, John Allen and Steve Pile eds., *City Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Massey, D. J Allen and P Sarre, eds., *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

Matthias, Bettina. *The Hotel as Setting in Early 20th Century German and Austrian Literature: Checking in to tell a Story* (Suffolk: Camden House, 2006).

Merrifield, Andy. *Henri Lefebvre*: *A Critical Introduction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

Menefee, Samuel P. 'Master and Servant: A Divinitory Class Dream' *Folklore* 99:1 (1988): 88-97.

Miles, Malcolm, Tim Hall and Iain Borden eds., *The City Cultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Miles, Steven and Malcolm Miles. *Consuming Cities* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2004).

Miller, Jane. 'Re-reading Elizabeth Bowen' *Raritan* 20:1 (Summer, 2000): 17-31.

Millgate, Michael. *American Social Fiction from James to Cozzens* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964).

Millhauser, Steven. *Martin Dressler*: *The Tale of an American Dreamer* (NewYork: Random House, 1998).

Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Mitchell, William J.  *Placing Words*: *Symbols, Space and the City* (Massachussetts: MIT Press, 2005).

Montgomery, Maureen E. *Displaying Women*: *Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Moretti, Franco.  *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998).

Murray, Alex. *Recalling London* (London: Continuum. 2007).

Nead, Lynda. *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).

Neale, R.S. *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

Needham, John. *The Departure Lounge: Travel and Literature in the Post-modern World* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1999).

O'Neill, Joseph. *Netherland* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 2008).

Ogborn, Miles and Charles. W. J. Withers, eds., *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

Osborn, Susan.  "Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen" *Modern Fiction Studies* 52:1 (Spring, 2006): 187-197.

Parsons, Deborah L. *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Peters, John G. *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Pevsner, Nikolaus. *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

Phillips, Lawrence. *The Swarming Streets*: *Twentieth-Century Representations of London* (New York: Rodopi, 2004).

Picot Derek. *Hotel Reservations* (London: Robson Books Ltd, 1993).

Poole, Adrian. *Henry James* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

Pykett, Lynn.  *Critical Issues* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Prendergast, Christopher. *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

Pritchett, V.S.  "Henry Yorke, Henry Green" *Twentieth Century Literature* 29:4 (Winter, 1983): 381-83.

Raban, Jonathan. *Soft City* (1974; London: Picador, 2008).

Radice, Anthony. 'Placing Elizabeth Bowen in the Canon.' *Contemporary Review* 287 (Aug, 2005): 115-116.

Reeh, Henrik. *Ornaments of the Metropolis*: *Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture* (London: The MIT Press, 2004).

Relph, Edward. *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Ltd., 1976).

Robertson, Ritchie, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Robinson, Jeffrey. *The Hotel*: *Upstairs, Downstairs in a Secret World.* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

Robinson, Richard. 'Nowhere in particular: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* and Central Europe' *Critical Quarterly* 48:4 (Winter, 2006): 107-130.

Rosenfeld, Sidney. *Understanding Joseph Roth* (Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

Roth, Guenter and Claus Wittich, eds., *Economy and Society* vol. III (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

Roth, Joseph. *Hotel Savoy* (1924; London: Picador, 1988).

Rothfork, John. 'Confucianism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled'*, *QLRS* 4:1 (2004) http://www.qlrs.com/essay.asp?id=394.

Rykwert, Joseph. *The Seduction of Place*: *The City in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 2000).

Schwarz, Leonard. 'English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' *The Economic History Review* 52:2 (May, 1999): 236-56.

Self, Will. *Psychogeography* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

Simmel, Georg. *Sociology,* trans., Kurt H. Wolff (1908; New York: Free Press, 1950).

Simmel, Georg. 'The Problem of Sociology' *American Journal of Sociology* 15 (1909): 289-320.

Sinclair, Iain. *London: City of Disappearances* (London: Penguin, 2007).

Sinclair, Iain. *London Orbital: A Walk Around the M25* (London: Penguin, 2003).

Smith, Ali. *Hotel World* (London: Penguin, 2002).

Specter, David Kenneth, *Urban Spaces* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1974).

Soja, Edward D. *Postmodern Geographies*: *The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

Soja, Edward D. *Thirdspace*: *Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

Sommer, Robert. *Tight Spaces*: *Hard Architecture and How to Humanize it* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall inc., 1974).

Stowe, William W. *Going Abroad European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Tallack, Douglas. *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London: Longman, 1991).

Tallack, Douglas. *City Sites: Multi-media Essays on New York and Chicago* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2000).

Tambling, Jeremy. *Lost in the American City*: *Dickens, James and Kafka* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

Taylor, Derek and David Bush. *The Golden Age of British Hotels* (London: Northwood Publications, 1974).

Thacker, Andrew and Peter Brooker eds., *Geographies of Modernism* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005).

Thacker, Andrew. Imagist Travels in Modernist Space *Textual Practice* 7:2 (Summer, 1993): 224-46.

Thacker, Andrew. *Moving Through Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Theroux, Paul. *Hotel Honolulu* (London: Penguin Books ltd., 2001).

Thrift, Nigel and Peter Williams, eds., *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society* (London: Routledge, 1987).

Tonkiss, Fran. *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

Tönnies, Ferdinand. *Community and Society* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2003).

Trigg, Dylan. Furniture Music, Hotel Lobbies and Banality 9:44 (2006): 418-428.

Tschumi, Bernard. *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996).

Tuan, Yi-fu. *Space and Place*: *The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

Tuan, Yi-fu. *Topophilia*: *A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*: *An Economic Study of Institutions* (London: George, Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1899).

Vidler, Anthony. 'Agorophobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer' *New German Critique* 54 (Autumn, 1991): 31-45.

West, William N. 'Reading Rooms: Architecture and Agency in the Houses of Michel de Montaigne and Nicholas Bacon' [Spring, 2004] <http://www.uoregon.edu/~clj/westabstract.html.

Wharton, Edith. *The Custom of the Country* (1913; Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984).

Whiteing, Richard. *No. 5 John Street* (1899; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1906).

Whyte, William H. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington: The Conservative Foundation, 1980).

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

Wolfreys, Julian. ed., *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

Wolfreys, Julian. *Writing London: The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998).

Wolfreys, Julian. *Writing London: Materiality, Memory, Spectrality* vol. II (London: Palgrave, 2004).

Wolfreys, Julian. *Writing London*: *Inventions of the City* vol. III (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Yates, Susan. *Maid and Mistress: Feminine Solidarity and Class Difference in the Private Sphere* (New York: P. Lang, 1991).

Young, G.M. *Early Victorian England 1830-1865* vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).

Unsigned review, *Spectator,* (25 January, 1902).