This Could Be Heaven or This Could Be Hell:

Escape and Anxiety in the Cinematic Hotel

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"On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair

Warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air

Up ahead in the distance, I saw a shimmering light

My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim

I had to stop for the night."

– THE EAGLES, "HOTEL CALIFORNIA"

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"Hotel California," the 1977 hit turned rock n' roll classic, is at once eerie and alluring, an account of "the high life in California," as the Eagles said themselves.[1] But beyond its legendary guitar solo, it's the setting – that cryptic hotel with the "mirrors on the ceiling" and the "pink champagne on ice" – that gives the track its distinctive haunting tone. An extended metaphor for the hedonistic Hollywood music industry, the hotel is both confining and captivating, an all-too tempting space of pure fantasy. As the woman in the doorway says, "We are all just prisoners here, of our own device."

The modern hotel offers the promise of bourgeois escape. Separate from the confines of the capitalist workplace and urban bustle, the hotel space provides the visitor with unlimited possibilities: for play and pleasure, for chance encounters, for meditative retreat. In the collective

[1] "500 Greatest Songs of All Time," Rolling Stone, April 07, 2011, accessed October 10, 2017, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-500-greatest-songs-of-all-time-20110407/the-eagles-hotel-california-20110525.

cultural imagination, the hotel has become a site of projected fantasies, eroticized as a space in the limbo state between public and private. While the hotel seems to provide the ideal opportunity for leisure, in literature and film, it often becomes the site of further psychological distress, bringing forth the very anxieties from which the guest sought to escape. It is the illusion of escape that, ironically, promotes this anxiety, allowing the hotel to become the ideal setting for a variety of filmic genres – namely horror/thriller and melodrama/romance (and the interesting nexus of those two). As both a public and private space, the hotel promotes a host of anxieties surrounding surveillance, eroticism, family, and class stratification. Yet the physical groundwork and aesthetics of the hotel also call into question notions of the past and the future, bringing conflict between visitors, overlapping throughout time. In the cultural canon, the hotel often serves as a symbol of displacement; being neither "here" nor ever fully "there," the hotel stands isolated in its setting, an unsettling reminder of the guest's existential alienation.

The hotel holds a special place in cinema, particularly for its auteurs, due to its function as a site of both fantasy and horror. Like cinema itself, the hotel effectively creates both a sense of escape and distress in its visitors. In *The Shining* (1980), Stanley Kubrick employs the hotel as a collective nightmare of Western history; Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) draws the parallel between the modern hotel and the psychotic mind. Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) examines societal disillusionment in the collective space and the Fascist implications of the modern aesthetic; with *Lost in Translation* (2003), Sofia Coppola looks at the hotel structure as an intersection between lost souls, its placelessness rendering it a figure of both cultural displacement and interpersonal intimacy.

Like cinema itself, the hotel provides a convenient illusion of a glamorous other world, a space of modern leisure in which cultural fantasies come to play and pervert. As per the Eagles, "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!"

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Despite its ubiquity, the hotel's history is relatively recent. Within a decade of the coinage of the word hotel, derived from the French *hôtel* (used to denote caretaking buildings rather than lodging accommodations), it appeared in the title of Thomas Vaughan's 1776 comic play "The Hotel." From its inception, the hotel provided a backdrop for stories. The precursor of the modern hotel was the inn of medieval Europe, with London's The George and The Tabard becoming hotbeds of urban culture. Starting in the mid-17th century and continuing on for about 200 years, coaching inns popped up around Europe to lodge coach travelers. But it was the 19th century, with industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of the leisure class that brought the proliferation of lodging accommodations throughout Western Europe and the United States. The rise of modern capitalism in the wake of the Industrial Revolution helped usher in new ideas about human mobility and personal liberty. While people had previously remained geographically and ideologically fixed within their communities, the increased necessity of trade and improved travel technology "gave birth to an age of unprecedented human mobility," with individuals' relationship to their homelands becoming more tentative and temporary than ever before.[2] The rise of the hotel is an essential product of this tectonic shift.

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[2] A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, *An American History* (Yale University Press, 2007), 2, accessed October 28, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm3f6.

But while the shift occurred throughout the Western World, the hotel as we know it is distinctly an American entity.[3] With the foundation of their country built on the promise of expansion, Americans soon became among the most mobile people in the world, necessitating accommodations that provided more than simply shelter. Beginning around 1880, hotels became an indispensable part of tourism-driven migration to the West, with leisure travel creating pockets of prosperity throughout the frontier.

The end of the 19th century saw a growth in the luxury sector of the hotel industry, particularly in the United States. The country's first luxury hotel, the Tremont House in Boston, drew the likes of Davy Crockett and Charles Dickens. It was the first lodging institution to feature premium amenities – now hotel staples – like indoor plumbing, running water, indoor toilets and baths, locked rooms, a reception area, bellboys, and free soap. It was also among the first establishments to feature a 'Ladies' ordinary,' a dining room exclusively for women to prevent them from dining alone in public, a social taboo at the time. The Tremont House set the precedent for urban landmark hotels in the United States at the time, with its designer Isaiah Rogers helping to establish the famed Astor House in New York City, built by John Jacob Astor. Drawing members of America's cultural and political elite, including Abraham Lincoln, Nathan Parker Willis, and Matthew Brady, the Astor House became a bourgeois status symbol in its own right. Quickly upon its introduction to American culture, the hotel became bound up with ideas of class, a site of fantasy for America's elite and ordinary citizens alike. The success of the Astor House brought fierce competition, encouraging hoteliers to open shop around the nation. Hotels soon formed a leading edge of industrialization out West. The Bella Union opened in 1849 in the newly established city of Los Angeles, serving not only as a lodging site but also as a county

[3] Ibid.

courthouse, newspaper headquarters, and a meeting place for the city's Confederate sympathizers during the Civil War.[4]

With the expansion of the Interstate highway system in the mid-20th century, high-speed travel and extended vacations became easier for Americans, particularly families. Holiday Inn, a standardized motel franchise, aimed to bring the luxury hotel experience to an expanded middle class; its growth was rapid, with 100 locations across the nation by 1960.[5] The chain played a crucial role in the "democratization of travel," initially offering rooms at $4-$6 a night.[6] Competitors like Ramada Inn, Best Western, and Hyatt (featured in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*), all cashed in on the phenomenon. Their hotels meshed with the concept of the American Dream, of upward mobility and middle class comfort.

The rise of the hotel also epitomized a growing progressive sensibility in the U.S. The structure allowed for the accommodation of strangers at a time when communities remained tight-knit and suspicion of the other was high. "Hotel construction was a material manifestation of cultural tolerance, a significant episode in the development of the modern idea of a pluralistic, cosmopolitan society," A. K. Sandoval-Strausz writes in *Hotel: An American History.*[7] The physical construction of the hotel crystallized American ideals; after all, institutional infrastructure holds more power than written statements and hollow speeches. With the embrace of strangers came opportunities for unity and conflict, eroticism and disillusionment, voyeuristic

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[4] Nathan Masters, "L.A.'s First Hotel, the Bella Union, Was a Wild West Institution," KCET, July 12, 2016, accessed October 28, 2018, https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/las-first-hotel-the-bella-union-was-a-wild-west-institution.

[5] Victor Luckerson, "How Holiday Inn Changed the Way We Travel," Time, August 01, 2012, accessed February 15, 2018, http://business.time.com/2012/08/01/how-holiday-inn-changed-the-way-we-travel/.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Sandoval-Strausz, 3.

pleasure and anxiety – all themes which cinema begun to explore in its coming of age. Cinematic narratives that centered on voyeurism and social collision, like Alfred Hitchock's *Rear Window* (1954), served as commentaries on the nature of film itself as a perverse pleasure of the modern age. The enduring allure of the hotel on film reflects the enigma of interpersonal relations in a capitalist context. "The tense and unruly environment of the hotel was a microcosm of a broader problem of social control that accompanied the advent of modernity in the Atlantic world. By the early nineteenth century, the penetration of capitalist logic into human relationships was well under way, dissolving traditional bonds between people and places. Transience became an everyday fact of life, with people coming into contact with unknown individuals as never before. This presented a problem because strangers were difficult to discipline. In the pre-modern world of small towns and villages, people's conduct was moderated not only by the presence of elders, magistrates, and religious figures but also by the knowledge that serious misbehavior would be remembered by one's neighbors and answered with shaming or ostracism. Travelers, however, existed outside the usual forms of community-based social control, and thus presented a constant threat of disobedience and disruption." [8] Nevertheless, the 20th century saw the meteoric rise of the hotel institution, shaping tourism – and cinema – in explosive ways.

Though it has expanded to include as diverse a form as Japanese capsule hotels, Korean love motels, South American eco-resorts, and Airbnbs the world over, the tensions endemic to the hotel structure remain. Through a close reading of the hotel's depiction on film in contemporary American film, I attempt to outline the ways in which the hotel serves as a paradoxical site of escape and distress in the cultural imagination.

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[8] Sandoval-Strausz, 204.

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The 19th century brought the crystallization of the hotel as emblem of modernity. It epitomized the new order of urban coexistence and shaping of identity not only through property, but also through space. The hotel serves as a psychological battleground, a space in which, apart from the confines of normative society, individuals seek to establish a sense of identity. Contemporary theory surrounding the hotel often describes it as a "nonplace," borrowing Marc Augé's terminology for a space designed for passing through.[9] Like airports and highways, hotels are sites of transit rather than entities onto themselves. The hotel can be sterile and impersonal, with strangers flowing aimlessly in and out. Typical hotel décor can be bland, with American hotel rooms often featuring few amenities other than a pay-to-access minibar, television, and Bible. The hotel is designed to provide only a transient sense of comfort, an illusion of a "home away from home." Yet the hotel is also highly charged with fantasy, aestheticized to evoke a wide range of ideals. From the faux Greco-Roman luxury hotels of Las Vegas to sleek Hong Kong high-rises to tranquil spa retreats in Joshua Tree, where we stay often says much about who we are; or rather, who we want to be and how we want to be seen.

Siegfried Kracauer wrote that the hotel lobby "can be conceived as the inverted image of the house of God […] a negative church […] 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."[10] In Kracauer's analysis,

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[9] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 2006).

[10] Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," *Postcolonial Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 290, doi:10.1080/13688799989616.

guests of the hotel become isolated anonymous atoms, floating among one another but never truly overlapping: “Remnants of individuals slip into the nirvana of relaxation, faces disappear behind newspapers, and the artificial continuous light illuminates nothing but mannequins.” In his contemporary essay, “No Sympathy for the Devil, or, Lobby Music: Spaces of Disjunction in *Barton Fink*, *The Shining*, and Muzak,” Greg Hainge argues that the hotel lobby is “not an inverted house of God but rather an intensified house of God, a sacred space without conjunctive shrouds of mystery, a space in which the disjunctive devices of ‘civilisation’ are laid bare, a space that consumes civilised man (who was never intended to seek) and that has no function other than to consume him.”[11] The religious threads of analysis continue with Hainge’s comparison of the hotel lobby to hell: “ a transparent space of transcendent absolutes, an all-consuming space composed entirely of flames which feeds on all that enters into its realm.”[12]

Hainge discusses the hotel lobby as a conjunctive synthesis, that which creates the illusory impression of a shared reality, yet only at the expense of individuals’ unique realities. In this postmodern framework, the hotel is simply the product of the various strands of experience that permeate it, rather than offering up grounds for especially meaningful experiences and interactions. Marc Augé conceived of hotel-goers as monads, particles whose individual worlds merely sit together, where “thousands of individual itineraries converge for a moment.”[13] This phenomenon is described by Yvette Blackwood as “parallel worlds,” in which strangers are

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[11] Greg Hainge, "No Sympathy for the Devil, Or, Lobby Music: Spaces of Disjunction in Barton Fink, The Shining, and Muzak," in *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Fim* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 183.

[12] Hainge, 257.

[13] Augé, 3.

forced to occupy the same space and live amongst one another in a sort of transient artificial incubation, bringing forth their psychic alienation while offering up the potential for interpersonal intimacy.[14] The hotel on film both affirms and challenges the notion of the nonplace, playing with the nature of inter-guest relations across space and time. While the hotel may be a site of nothingness, the very act of filming it, rendering it an aesthetic model and imbuing it with narrative structure, allows the hotel to take on certain meaning, even as that meaning reaffirms its illusory nature.

As a product of the rise of the leisure class, the hotel is intimately tied to the tensions inherent in a capitalist structure. Marc Katz described the hotel as a microcity, a site of exchanges both concrete - information, money, services, and goods – and interpersonal.[15] Identity is exchanged, as the hotel serves as a site of displacement, magnifying the sense of performativity that accompanies urban anonymity. The hotel lobby, therefore, is infused with a particular promiscuous energy, inviting the scrambling of identities and deterritorialization of desire that is often associated with the euphoria of capital.[16] He characterizes the nucleus of the hotel, the lobby, as a *socius*, "a quasi-cause for all those drawn into its space through a revolving door – a constantly infolding boundary between an aleatory outside, the flux of the street, and the hotel's internal void."[17] Katz combines the two major, often intertwined, interpretations of the hotel, arguing that it is both a capitalistic and a religious institution. He supports the notion of the sacredness of the space as one in which people seek to be consumed, as they project their desires

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[14] Yvette Blackwood, "Parallel Hotel Worlds," in *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Film* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).
[15] Marc Katz, "The Hotel Kracauer," *Differences* 11, no. 2 (1999): 138-139, doi:10.1215/10407391-11-2-134.

[16] Katz, 138-139.

[17] Ibid.

onto the space and impose onto it symbolic significance. In this sense, hotels serve as the focus for object cathexis, per Freud's definition: the process by individuals invest significant mental or emotional energy in an object. Katz derives his notion of the hotel's inherent eroticism from the psychoanalytic conception of the libido; the lobby is a hotbed of a host of desires, rendering it a site of libidinal energy, not limited to the confines of what is typically defined as sexual. The phantasy projections on which the financial and popular success of the hotel rests make it ripe for narrative conflict and social commentary. As an entity apart from normative society, the hotel is a springboard for characters to delve into questions of personal identity, asking the fundamental questions of modern life: Who am I? Where am I headed? Literally and figuratively, the hotel serves as a site of transit, a purgatory that allows for the psychological revelations – and anxieties – associated with solitude.[18]

The hotel may seem an ideal setting for self-discovery, as its isolation promotes introspection. However, as Jacques Lacan would argue, the hotel guest, like everyone, is limited by their association with the imaginary ego. During the mirror stage of psychic development, a child recognizes their image in a mirror and begins projecting imaginary meaning onto it.[19] The world as we know it is confined by the symbolic order; all is relative to language. The Real, as defined by Lacan – the total, unchangeable truth – lies wholly outside the limited knowledge of human experience. Attempting to confront the reality behind the illusion is a futile exercise. Rather, humans can simply recognize the illusion within reality, as the totality of the common

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[18] Katherine Lawrie Van De Ven, "'Just an Anonymous Room:' Cinematic Hotels and Motels as Mnemonic Purgatories," in *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Film* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 235.

[19] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, http://faculty.wiu.edu/D-Banash/eng299/LacanMirrorPhase.pdf.

conception of reality exists within the symbolic order. In a world dictated by language, there is no escape; we simply experience encounters with the Real through traumatic ruptures that remind us of our reliance on the symbolic order. As an art based purely on the synchronization of sound and images, cinema reminds us of this reality, allowing us not only to fall prey to its status as an imaginary signifier, but also to examine the ways in which the symbolic order operates.[20] The hotel provides the site for traumatic confrontations with cinematic renderings of the Real while serving as a space of symbolic fantasy.

For these reasons, *auteurs* of American contemporary cinema have found in the hotel a host of opportunities to both construct meaning and reflect on its lack, using the space to explore both interpersonal relations and the complex relations within the psyche itself.

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THE SHINING

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It is this fascination – with the intersection of institution, isolation, and madness – that powers Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), an exemplar of the 20th century horror film. *The Shining* takes place at the Overlook Hotel, a resort in the Rocky Mountains that is closed for the season and so nearly empty, thus offering the promise of isolation – "five months of peace" - for our struggling writer protagonist, Jack Torrence. The Overlook's manager, Stuart Ullman, explains that the hotel was built in 1907 and completed in 1909 against the wishes of the Native

[20] Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen* 16, no. 2 (1975), doi:10.1093/screen/16.2.14.

American community there. Their attacks were "repelled" by the hotel's construction, making the Overlook built on Native burial ground. The Overlook also housed the nation's "jet set," having been visited by several presidents and wealthy socialites. Decorated in floral wallpaper, bright patterned rugs, and "authentic" Native American motifs (mainly Navajo and Apache) mixed with a dose of Art Deco (especially in the Gold Ballroom), the Overlook is a stylized house of secrets; coupled with Kubrick's distinctly symmetrical framing and balanced shots, it is an idyllic picture of the modern space, a vision of order.

The Overlook not only bears the ghosts of America's past – it is an embodiment of the nation's glittery ideals and dark spoils. Pauline Kael makes much of the seemingly anti-gothic "simulated sunshine," or overexposed lighting, that floods the film's sets, claiming that Kubrick may have liked the idea of the viewer waking into a nightmare rather than falling asleep into one.[21] The hotel, covered in patterned carpets as seen both in the hallway and inside Room 237, is itself a patterned apparatus; its design reflects a near consciousness of its own construction. The repetitive symbols and images mirror the film's thematic concern with the cyclical nature of murder and violence. The sheer aesthetic value of The Overlook, and specifically the hallway carpet that is so strongly associated with it, supports the notion of circular violence and its systematic cover-up. (A patterned rug with phallic motif is also found inside Room 237.) When the camera pans as the group tours the hotel's first floor, it follows a series of black and white photographs framed on the wall as Wendy comments on the hotel's beauty, to which Ullman responds by describing the Overlook's "illustrious history - one of the stopping places for the jet

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[21] Pauline Kael, "The Shining: Devolution," review of *The Shining*, *The New Yorker*, June 9, 1980, accessed November 14, 2017, http://scrapsfromtheloft.com/2016/10/16/shining-review-pauline-kael/.

set even before anybody knew what a jet set was." The hotel's bright aesthetic is inextricably linked to its shady history.

From the beginning, it becomes clear that horror lurks in the Overlook's hallways. The film opens with shots of the hotel's surroundings rather than the institution itself. Immediately, Kubrick asserts the centrality of the Overlook's locale – out West, in the seemingly uncharted territory where the United States stole Native land. The canted zoom shot, coupled with an ominous score by Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind, establishes the film's engagement with the uncanny from the outset and delivers a darkness to the seemingly placid setting; the site of the Overlook was "chosen for its seclusion and scenic beauty," as the hotel manager Stuart Ullman says at the film's beginning. In these opening shots, Kubrick sets up the juxtaposition between appearances and reality, hinting at the core tensions that lurk in the hotel apparatus and America at large. The ensuing overhead shot and large-scale tracking shots further establish this tension. The way the camera approaches the back of the yellow car and then drifts off as the opening credits roll across the screen encourages a sense of derailment, hinting at Jack's impending descent into psychological chaos. The American frontier and the open road, long associated with freedom and opportunity, now becomes a site of anxiety – like the hotel itself. The Overlook is imbued with the promise of an escape from humanity and a return to nature, though it ironically becomes the site of confrontation with civilization's darkest veins. When the camera pans over the Overlook's lobby, it shows primarily laborers, sweeping and moving furniture, rather than guests. Though the hotel markets itself as an Edenic natural haven, it is immediately associated with capitalism and the ideals of the labor market.

At the Overlook, rather than the guests confronting the Lacanian Real, the Real confronts the guests, inevitably culminating in psychosis. As in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966),

references to the horrors of human history (in that film, the sight of the self-immolation of a Vietnamese man during the War and a photograph from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in World War II) prompt anxiety and disassociation from the symbolic order. In fact, the closing image of *The Shining* is one of the film's most haunting, its fixed photographic gaze akin to the Holocaust photo in Bergman's film. Both zoom in on a single face, a part against a whole, creating a discomfiting effect; it is as if the horrors of the Real, though fundamentally irrepresentable, stare back at the spectator, akin to the Nietzchean abyss ("And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze onto thee").[22]

Just as dreams piece together fragmentary material from conscious life to carry unconscious associations, according to Freud, so too can *The Shining* be described as Western history's collective nightmare – an amalgam of scraps of memory that linger and haunt.[23] The Overlook's name itself references this glossing over of history, as its guests overlook dark memories in favor of its promise. As Flo Leibowitz and Lynn Jeffress write, the Overlook "is a symbol of America, haunted by a murderous past that made it what it is: a showy display of affluence and excess ('You can be at this hotel for a whole year and never have to eat the same

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[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Aphorism," in *Beyond Good and Evil* (S.l.: Arcturus Publishing, 2018), 146.

Many critics note *The Shining*'s multiple visual references to the Holocaust, including: the number 42 on Danny's sweater (and in other places, like the product of the numbers of Room 237), which alludes to 1942, the year the Germans launched mass deportations of Jews to concentration camps; Jack's typewriter, made by the German company Adler – the German word for "eagle," a symbol of the Nazi party (as well as the United States); the eagle on Jack's tee shirt; the layout of the freezer resembling concentration camp barracks; the Kosher dill pickles placed in the foreground of the pantry.

[23] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

thing twice,' declares Hallorann), built at the expense of innocent victims."[24] It's telling that Dick Hallorann, the "nigger cook" as described by the waiter, is the only other character shown in the film with the telepathic ability known as "shining," which allows him to warn Danny that the hotel is haunted. As an African-American, he is the "other" to the hotel apparatus as a representation of hegemonic American authority. Hallorann's foresight is ultimately more of a curse than an asset; he is eventually murdered by Jack, lacking the power to effectively challenge him. Tony, the apparatus that supposedly enforces Danny's silence on the shining, can be imagined as the Freudian Superego, the voice of collective society that beckons those that see to sit quiet and *overlook* its wrongs.[25]

When *The Shining* premiered in Europe, its poster included the slogan: "The wave of terror that swept across America is here." That the film had only recently opened in the US suggests that perhaps the line did not refer to the terror of the film itself, but rather, as Bill Blakemore argues, to the horror induced by the genocide of Native Americans – the image of white men with axes clearing land, like Jack Torrence puncturing the walls of the Overlook.[26] Including several nods to iconic Americana, the film subverts patriotism, imposing a dark sheen upon the red, white, and blue. When Wendy Torrance and Danny are first shown, they both wear red, white, and blue clothing, a portrait of the quintessential American family. They are also shown wearing outfits of the same color scheme throughout the film, with Danny wearing a

[24] Flo Leibowitz and Lynn Jeffress, "Review: The Shining by Stanley Kubrick," *Film Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 45, accessed November 6, 2017, doi:10.2307/1212038.

[25] The centrality of Danny as the intermediary to the supernatural subverts the notion of childhood innocence, tapping into cultural anxiety surrounding coming of age; this trope of horror is also explored in Stephen King's novel *It,* as well as a series of films from the 20th century like *The Omen* (1976), *Children of the Corn* (1984), *Firestarter* (1984), and *The Sixth Sense* (1999).

[26] *Room 237*, dir. Rodney Ascher (IFC Films, 2012).

sweater that says Apollo 11 USA, an icon of American progress. The small American flag on the desk of Ullman, who displays the performative friendliness of a politician, allows him to take on the role of a government official; there's also an American flag in the Colorado Lounge and the Game Room.[27] The tension between the Overlook's Americana aesthetic and its Native American influence reflects the historical conflicts at the core of the US frontier and the artifice endemic to the U.S. democratic project. Posters of Native Americans line the walls alongside the "jet set;" Jack is seen throwing a ball against the Native-patterned wall.[28] The date of the final photograph shown in the film, July 4th, is thus, deeply ironic. After all, as Wendy tells Danny while racing, "the loser has to keep America clean" – a difficult feat given the knowledge of its history.

The flowing blood of the elevators that Danny envisions while shining essentially stands in for the blood of all those killed in the name of Western greatness and the illusion of *upward* mobility – what goes up must come back down. The image can be projected not only onto the history of Western civilization but also onto the history of the hotel itself. Though the hotel has been presented as a site of progressive intermingling between strangers, a cosmopolitan vision that departed from the clannish days of yore, it has also encapsulated the very contradictions posed by that promise. The Overlook's mix of décor, its patterns of the past, reflects the fundamental horror brought about by the mixing of people in the hotel, the inevitable crash of "parallel worlds."

Hotels accommodated leisure travelers in the West during the age of expansion, set up as markings of urbanization and capitalism. In mapping historical references and the hotel setting

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[27] Leibowitz and Jeffress, 46.
[28] *Room 237*.

onto the narrative of Jack's mounting psychosis, *The Shining* suggests a parallel between the desire to expand and conquer at the national level and the desire that fuels such murderous madness. As Freud writes in *Civilization and its Discontents*, "The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city." [29] Freud creates a comparison between psychic life and civilization, arguing for the existence of a collective societal ego, responsible for state-sanctioned aggression. Both the individual and the collective are governed by the death drive, urging them toward destructive behavior that manifests as the Superego. In Freudian discourse, obeying the Superego – the force by which one is punished – leads one to experience a sort of masochistic pleasure. The inextricable link between obedience of the Superego and violation of it creates a cycle of punishment and desire that allows one to continue to function properly in 'civil' society. Jack, with his "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" philosophy, is not only a product of America; he is America. The Overlook is not an escape from American civilization as he knows it, but an essential part of the work cycle in its status as a house of leisure. The desire for "play" – no matter how rough – is essential to the American project and to the human psyche alike. In this sense, the socio-historical horror of *The Shining* and its psychological horror are one and the same; both reveal the ultimate ineffectuality of the escape that seems promised by the hotel.

The notion of the hotel as the embodiment of psychological horror is at the core of *The*

[29] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 51.

Shining. Part of the film's appeal lies in the relation between individual and space, thus leading us to ask why Jack's descent into psychosis is brought about by the Overlook Hotel. The hotel can be considered a psyche itself, with its divided rooms embodying the psyche's various compartments. Room 237, therefore, the most haunted room of the Overlook, can be considered akin to Lacan's Das Ding, or The Thing, the unknown that lies at the core of the unconscious. To unlock Room 237 is to attempt to confront the Lacanian Real, the elemental beyond of the symbolic order that ultimately evades representation. Jack's choice to enter the bathroom in Room 237 is significant; as Slavoj Žižek says in his discussion of the shower scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the sight of the bathroom threatens our fundamentally modern notion of cleanliness and order.[30] There is always a fear that what is disposed of as waste in the bathroom can come back up – that our repudiated contents, what we normally hide and cleanse ourselves of, are never truly evacuated, but rather linger. The holes at the bottom of the sink and toilet recall the individual's castration anxiety, threatening to subsume the individual in their orifices. This is perhaps why one of the other most horrifying and iconic scenes of the film, when Jack attempts to murder Wendy by breaking down the door, occurs inside a bathroom.

The horror of Room 237 comes when Jack realizes that the naked woman he is kissing is not the sexually desirable young woman he first encounters in the bathroom, but a decaying, cancerous old woman, shown rising from the bathtub. The visual deception the camera effects in this scene draws horror from reality; the disjunction between the initial appearance of the woman and her reality exposes the human reliance on the imaginary and the symbolic – associated with images, language, and fantasy – to hide the Real, its unbearable underbelly. The woman's

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[30] *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, dir. Sophie Fiennes, perf. Slavoj Žižek (Mischief Films, 2006).

calloused appearance recalls Freud's description of his dream in "The Interpretation of Dreams," where he examines his patient Irma, "pale and puffy," and looks down her throat: "She then opened her mouth properly and on the right I found a big white patch; at another place I saw extensive whitish grey scabs upon some remarkable curly structures which were evidently modelled [sic] on the turbinal bones of the nose." [31] Like the old woman covered in scabs, Irma's mysterious, grotesque disease offers a glimpse of the horrors of the Real, or Das Ding (or rather, how its symbolic embodiment could manifest). The scabs, unappealing in their bodily excess, threaten to destabilize the framework of tidy modernity and its associated notions of self-subjectivity. Like the pit of the psyche, the elusive Room 237 lies at the core of The Overlook, epitomizing its juxtaposition between glossy appearances and hidden realities. Jack's encounter with the decaying woman can also be seen as an illustration of deep-seated gender anxieties, especially as they relate to the female form. The woman's laughter and pursuit of Jack threaten his attempts to assert male dominance, alluded to in the phallic pattern on the bedroom carpet. She is perhaps punishing Jack for his misogynistic comments about his wife and his violence toward his child, which many critics suggest may entail sexual abuse in addition to physical violence.[32]

In this vein, *The Shining* explores anxiety concerning masculinity and the perceived role of the father as the chief figure of the nuclear family unit. With Jack's mental decline proving

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[31] Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1999), 131.

[32] When Ullman and Bill Watson approach Jack in the lobby upon his arrival, he is shown reading a 1978 issue of *Playgirl* Magazine, alluding to various homoerotic undertones in the film. The cover also features the headline, "INCEST: Why Parents Sleep With Their Children." They simultaneously ask Jack if his family is looking around, to which he responds, "My son's discovered the games room." The juxtaposition of Jack's dialogue and the hidden image could suggest that Jack has sexually abused Danny.

him to be an unfit father, the film destabilizes the hegemonic relations of the father-mother-son structure. The hotel, a site of familial escape and leisure particularly in postwar America, quickly becomes grounds for anxiety. Jack claims that Wendy is trying to "interrupt" the family, with her own "very definite ideas about what should be done with Danny."[33] Thomas Allen Nelson writes, "Symbolically, the Overlook Hotel becomes Jack's other Home and other Family, a nightmare world of dismemberment and alienation (where 'sliced peaches' and 'Heinz Ketchup' recall family massacres, not family meals), in which the mother and child are victims of the father's desire to cannibalize one family to ensure the 'survival' of another, to violate one home to resuscitate the corpse of another."[34] The pseudo-familial space of the hotel leads the family to be ripped apart; the exclusive disjunctive synthesis replaces the connective syntheses of the family unit.[35]A new family order, based on dysfunction rather than unity, is established, revealing the essential disjunction of the modern family unit as well as the hotel. References to children's popular culture of the U.S. – Danny's nickname Doc, a reference to the Bugs Bunny cartoons; the image of Mickey Mouse playing football on Danny's sweater; the sticker of Dopey from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) on Danny's door that mysteriously disappears in subsequent shots; Jack's invocation of the Big Bad Wolf from the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale ("Little pigs, little pigs, let me blow your house in") – as well as to American cultural

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[33] Leibowitz and Jeffress, 48.

[34] Thomas Allen Nelson, "Remembrance of Things Forgotten," in *Kubrick, Inside a Flm Artist's Maze* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 214-215.

[35] Hainge, 268.

representations of family life (Jack's line "Wendy, I'm home," on his murderous rampage) invert the portrait of familial bliss and expectations of renewed intimacy on vacation.[36]

The labyrinthine structure of the Overlook – indicated visually by the cross shots between Wendy and Danny walking through the hedge maze and Jack inside the hotel examining the maze model - produces a sense of spatial disorientation in line with this psychic dissociation. "Kubrick plays on your acceptance of visual information, and also your ignorance of it," John Fell Ryan says in *Room 237*. "Every scene there's an impossibility." A prominent example is the "impossible window" in Ullman's office; Jack is shown entering the office from the hallway, where it is clear that the hallway extends to behind the office. The window, therefore, with its glaring, overexposed light, cannot reasonably exist in the hotel's spatial layout. In the Gold Room, when Grady spills drinks on Jack, they head into the bathroom, looping around so that they end up in what should be the same space in the Gold Room.[37] The spatial loop echoes Jack's déjà vu, as he says, "Grady, haven't I seen you somewhere before?" Jack, with his arched eyebrows, tendency toward rage, and general bull-like demeanor, can be seen as the Minotaur at the center of the Overlook's labyrinth. This image is reflected in the skiing poster in the Game Room behind the Grady twins, with its shadowy figure closely resembling the mythical creature.[38]

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[36] The disjunction of the family brought about by an unfit father is also explored in Ruben Östlund's hotel film *Force Majeure* (2014), in which a family vacationing at a ski resort in the French Alps experiences conflict after the father instinctively puts himself before the children during a brief avalanche. In the film, the resort is also aestheticized as the pinnacle of modern comfort, and Östlund films with Kubrickian symmetry, color, and balance.

[37] *Room 237*.

[38] Ibid.

Just as the Overlook's impossible design forces the Torrences to confront the futility of the hotel promise, Kubrick's impossibilities force the viewer to confront the façade of modernity – to acknowledge that the hotel is literally built on the denial of the past. "History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors," T.S. Eliot wrote.[39] "As residences in which the guest can never be fully at home, hotels surround their guests with a trace of the uncanny in the Freudian sense, that is, the '*Unheimliche*,' which is at the core of Georg Lukacs' sobering diagnosis of the transcendental homelessness of the modern world." [40] Kubrick creates an "emotional architecture in your mind, while at the same time showing you that it's false." [41]

To underscore this concern with patterns, Kubrick also induces horror in the hotel through deliberate temporal dissociations – reminding the viewer that, while the hotel seems to serve as the emblem of modernism, it also resists the teleological movement of time. The beginning of the film immediately confuses the viewer; the opening shots show a car presumably driving to the hotel, then Jack is shown inside the hotel before the camera cuts to Wendy and Danny in their home in Boulder, with jump cuts to the Overlook's bloody elevators and the Grady twins in its hallways (seemingly a figment of Danny's imagination). The following sequence returns to overhead nature shots as the family heads to the Overlook. *The Shining*'s quasi-media res approach is fundamentally dissociative. As Pauline Kael noted in her original review of the film, several plot details simply don't match up temporally; the Grady twins that appear before Danny are presumed to be the butchered daughters of the earlier caretaker,

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[39] T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion," Poetry Foundation, accessed January 27, 2018, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47254/gerontion.

[40] Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature Checking in to Tell a Story* (Rochester (N.Y.): Camden House, 2006), 27-28.

[41] *Room 237*.

supposedly murdered in 1970, but they are shown wearing twenties-style party dresses.[42] Jack also encounters Grady, the infamous caretaker of 1970, at the twenties party in the Gold Room. The Grady sisters are precisely horrifying due to their suspension in time, as they urge Danny, "Come and play with us, Danny, forever and ever and ever." Echoing the Grady twins, Jack says he loves the hotel and that he wishes he and the Torrences "could stay here forever, ever, and ever." He also says that upon arriving he felt as if he had been there before, "as if I knew what was going to be around every corner." Another temporal dissociation occurs when Jack says that he injured Danny three years ago, though Wendy says it happened five months ago.

The film is interspersed with titles that work to dissociate the viewer rather than to orient; they start off giving the day of the week and subsequently offer the time of day, yet the irrelevance of time in the film's narrative renders them arbitrary. John Alcott's cinematography further establishes this sense of disorientation, as the film's methodical tracking style reinforces the notion of cyclical patterning and the collapse of time. The film's final shot, of the group photo from the Overlook's July Fourth Ball in 1921 offers a "heavy hint of reincarnation and the suggestion that Jack has been there forever, ever, ever," Kael writes. The final shot of Jack, with his dead eyes turned upwards, suggests an attempt to look inside himself, as if to penetrate the inner crevices of his psyche, to search for the Real, untethered to time and place.[43]

At the Overlook, time is collapsed. The hotel's very aesthetic is a hodgepodge of eras, mixing Native American paraphernalia, 70s-style psychedelic patterns, and Art Deco elements.

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[42] Pauline Kael, "The Shining: Devolution," review of *The Shining*, *The New Yorker*, June 9, 1980, accessed November 14, 2017, http://scrapsfromtheloft.com/2016/10/16/shining-review-pauline-kael/.

[43] Yvette Margaret Shelley Blackwood, "The Hotel in Postmodern Literature and Film," *The Hotel in Postmodern Literature and Film*, 2005, https://eprints.utas.edu.au/19208/1/whole_BlackwoodYvetteMargaretShelley2005_thesis.pdf.

The hotel in this sense is not only a "nonplace," as Marc Augé described; it also floats in time, threatening the modern march of progress. With its deliberate temporal dissociation, both within the film's diegesis and through blurred historical references, *The Shining* insists on the arbitrary nature of time. It's only fitting that the narrative is grounded in the apparatus of the hotel, a fixture of modernity; as guests collapse across eras and human horrors repeat in the cyclical socio-historical order, the anxiety tied to the hotel's image of refuge and progress becomes ever more apparent. The Overlook is ultimately a time capsule, a symbol of the fundamental ineffectuality of the hotel ethos.

**

PSYCHO

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The psychological horror of the hotel space is not unique to Kubrick's films; in *Psycho*, Hitchcock explores the possibility that an off-highway sanctuary, the Bates Motel, can, like The Overlook, possess a host of dark psychic realities: "Whether possessed of the minimal amenities or fitted out in the trappings of decadence, the hotel/motel room is anonymous ground available to all at a price. A space that is capable of returning to a fresh state – tabula rasa-like – on a daily basis, it is perfect for trying to escape one's past or coming to terms with one's identity. We are both drawn to and unnerved by this deception: what secrets does the hotel keep?" [44]

In *Psycho*, Marion Crane escapes her monotonous life in Phoenix, stealing $40,000 from a client in order to finance her wedding**.** As in the beginning of *The Shining*, the image of the

[44] Van De Ven, 239.

road plays a key role in establishing the phantasmatic relations at play in the film. Leaving Phoenix, Marion possesses a new sense of liberation, marked by her departure on the open road – that American gateway toward freedom. Of course, the notion of the open road itself is rooted in the assumption of one's ownership of American land, and is thus inherently fraught. Like the Overlook, whose out-West locale situates it within the cultural context of American expansion and by extension, American Exceptionalism, the locale of the Bates Motel is significant in its proximity to the road. It caters to the Kerouac-hailing masses of travelers who hit the road for little reason other than to fulfill the fantasy of escape. Marion's expression of concern at the wheel gradually shifts to a smirk. She is plagued by the voices of her client and boss, yet also clearly enjoying the prospect of punishment that they suggest. The danger of escape is what thrills her; the drive unleashed by her id is inextricably tied to the Superego, the threatening force of law and order. From *Psycho*'s beginning, Hitchcock sets Marion up for danger, making clear that her fantasy of escape must come to a halt. This is literalized when she stops and checks into the Bates Motel.

In comparison with the Overlook, the Bates Motel is presented as a relatively obvious site of horror; its gothic aesthetic, dark and decrepit, renders it an iconic status – perhaps more of a character in the film than Marion herself. An example of the Bates Motel's lasting influence is found in British artist Cornelia Parker's tribute to the motel, a 2016 installation on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art called "Transitional Object (PsychoBarn)." The sculpture consisted of two facades, against the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline, evoking the illusory status of the

space.[45] Bates Motel's sinister look, coupled with the film's noir-esque black and white aesthetic, help establish *Psycho*'s thematic relations of refuge and horror, escape and anxiety.

Tucked off the highway in typical postwar motel fashion – "the first place that looks like it's hiding from the world" – the Bates Motel is an extension of the dream of the open road, of the promise of America: freedom, opportunity, and the pursuit of the *drive*. Yet the architecture of the Bates house, adjacent to the motel, is gothic, its association with the nonstandard complicating that vision. Unlike in *The Shining*, where the hotel's glamour effectively hides its horror, Hitchock signals distress with the first image of Bates Motel, dimly lit and ominous, signaled by the pouring rain. The shot is also a canted shot, shown from Marion's perspective; this angle makes the motel seem more suspicious and less glamorous than the effect of a straight, balanced shot, as offered in *The Shining*. The Bates house is perched on a hill, with light glowing from one window, revealing the silhouette of a woman inside. And yet, despite these different depictions, both work to establish the dual nature of the modern hotel as a source of simultaneous horror and fantasy.

Marion checks into Bates Motel under the name Marie Samuels, lying when she tells the proprietor, Norman Bates, that she is from Los Angeles. This is the point at which Marion succumbs to the escape fantasy offered by the motel, excited by the prospect of isolation. "The reception desk marked the moment where travel stopped if only for a night, where a 'space' was transformed, if ever so briefly by means of shelter and privacy, into a 'place.' The reception desk of the hotel is the space of identity, but it is also the place of a crisis over what identity might

[45] "The Roof Garden Commission: Cornelia Parker, Transitional Object (PsychoBarn)," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed March 11, 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2016/cornelia-parker.

imply in a modern society."[46] The name Marie Samuels contains that of her fiancée, Sam Loomis. Marion struggles to reestablish her sense of identity at the hotel, shifting signifiers when she identifies herself as Marion Crane to Norman later. Ultimately, however, Marion is pursued by her Superego; whether through the influence of her mother or her fiancée, Marion's desires and sense of uninhibited self are suppressed. The Bates Motel offers a glimmer of promise in Marion's quest to establish an identity apart from Phoenix, through the simple, all-American act of signing into a motel, of nourishing and resting the body and, thus, the id.

The notion of the motel space as the embodiment of freedom – and its simultaneous confinement – is underscored by the various bird imagery found throughout Bates Motel. Examples include the pictures of birds hung up on the wall in Marion's room, and, most famously, the stuffed birds that adorn Norman's office.[47] The motel's bird décor is echoed in Hitchcock's choice of setting – the opening scenes are shot in Phoenix, named for the mythological bird that cyclically rises from the ashes of its predecessor – and character names – Marion's last name is Crane, and Norman's last name, Bates, references the process of "bating," when a hawk beats its wings in an attempt to escape from the perch (something Norman struggles to do). He tells Marion, when they converse in the parlor, that she eats "like a bird," to which she responds, "you'd know, of course," referencing the menacing taxidermy; she also sits alongside songbirds, and after Norman "discovers" Marion's murder, the illustration of the small bird on the wall falls to the floor. In Norman's eyes, Marion is "harmless as one of those stuffed birds" like his mother, whose corpse he has stuffed in an effort to harness her control as the force

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[46] Jann Matlock, "Vacancies: Hotels, Reception Desks, and Identity in American Cinema, 1929-1964," in *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Film* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 74.

[47] Hitchcock's fascination with birds in the horror context is, of course, further seen in *The Birds* (1963), a film that imagines the chaotic potential of the quotidian.

of the Superego. Her association with such birds reinforces traditional gender roles in the film, where femininity is associated with docility, subject to male predatory aggression. Marion's demise at Norman's hands is foreshadowed when Marion stands up in the parlor, framed beside a crow. The crow is positioned in such a way that it seems to peck at Marion's shoulder, like crows and other birds peck at Tippi Hedren's Melanie in *The Birds* (1963). Yet Norman is not wholly a predator or even fully male in his psyche; he tows the line between sweet and psychotic, Norman and Norma, an agent of his own desire and its active suppressor.

The birds in this scene – of which there are both innocuous types (the aforementioned songbirds, a turkey) and birds of prey (owls) – serve as a representation of Norman's split personality. When Norman converses with Marion, he is shown alongside docile birds – Norman says they look well stuffed because "they're passive to begin with" – though when he flares up discussing his mother, Norman reveals his predatory id, visually represented by the exposed wings of an owl in the background. Hitchock cuts to a low angle shot, with the owl casting a shadow behind Norman, as soon as Marion mentions "she," referring to Norma and the shadow that she casts upon her son. Norman then says, "Sometimes, when she talks to me like that, I feel I'd like to go up there and curse her and leave her forever, or at least defy her. But I know I can't." The low angle, coupled with Norman's expression of the desire to challenge his mother, associates Norman's predatory streak with his longing for escape. Just as the motel presents an opportunity for Marion to unleash her id apart from the confines of society – she is shown experiencing pure, orgasmic pleasure in the shower, a pleasure that immediately leads to her death in a narrative representation of Freud's death drive – Norman takes over his mother's persona and thus Bates Motel in an attempt to fly the coop. However, like Marion, Norman can never revel in his id, as his fundamental desires are expressed through the persona of Norma, his

Superego. Though he preys on Marion as a manifestation of his desire for her, Norman – like a stuffed bird lacking the agency to fly – is always tied to the desires of Norma. In this sense, he is like Kilgore Trout's parakeet, Bill, in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*; when Trout opens Bill's cage and grants him three wishes, he flies back to his cage: "'That's the most intelligent use of three wishes I ever heard of,' he told the bird. 'You made sure you'd still have something worth wishing for – to get out of the cage.'" [48] Norman's caged bird "sings of things unknown but longed for still" – he is bound to the force of his suppression, both a predator and its prey.[49] A "Motel California," Bates Motel is Norman's fantasy and his captor - he is a prisoner of his own device.

Both Norman and Marion initially find pleasure and comfort in the motel's status as a nonplace, to use Augè's term, briefly forming a bond with one another amidst the motel's emptiness. Marion's introduction to Norman – their long-held pause in conversation, accompanied by a mutual fixed gaze – suggests potential romance with its undertones of intimacy. When Norman charmingly asks Marion to share a dinner with him, saying, "You're not really gonna go out again and drive up to the diner, are you," he implies an established sense of trust among the couple. Norman and Marion's brief encounters reveal a strange sense of instantaneous connection, ushered in by the motel's eerie vacancy. The illicit nature of the relationship – Marion is engaged and hiding stolen cash – adds fuel to the flame of their desire in the context of the narrative. Like *The Shining*, where emptiness breeds forced run-ins with guests

[48] Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions* (New York: Dial Press Trade Paperbacks, Random House, 2011), 35.

[49] Maya Angelou, "Caged Bird," Poetry Foundation, accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird.

of The Overlook's past, *Psycho* offers a space in which vacancy prompts problematic interpersonal relations – in turn vessels of intimacy and anxiety.

It is perhaps this unexpected intimacy between Marion and Norman that imbues *Psycho* with its alarming perversity. Unlike hotels, motels are typically not designed for social interaction. The motel is the epitome of the nonplace, claiming to offer only essential accommodations – a bare aesthetic that seems in line with the rugged ethos of the American road trip. In fact, the conversation between Marion and Norman occurs in Norman's office, usually uncharted territory for guests. Unlike the hotel, which straddles the dichotomy of the public and the private, the motel, with its isolated cabins, offers the illusion of total privacy. When Norman is shown spying on Marion in her room through a peephole, Hitchcock illuminates the potential for voyeurism in a seemingly private space, reflecting and heightening anxieties regarding travel and the public frontier.[50] The relationship between the shot of Norman looking through the peephole and the shot concluding Marion's murder sequence, which focuses in on Marion's eye as she lies dead on the floor, illustrates her entrapment in Norman's predatory gaze. The power dynamics at play, supported by the gendered coding of the film's bird motif, underscore the particular anxiety of the female solo traveler. For women, desire is inextricably linked to danger; freedom is fraught with fear. While both the hotel and motel can promote intimacy along with distress for guests, a crucial distinction remains between the hotel, with its distinctly modern social signifiers, and the motel as a decidedly unassuming haven of privacy. The motel, however, is still associated with the phantasmatic ideals that lend distress for its guests longing for a sense of escape.

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[50] This notion of watching and being watched lies at the core of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), where an apartment window symbolizes the cinematic camera itself.

Both Marion, with her hit-the-road mentality, and Norman, confined by his mother's control, share this desire for escape, an outgrowth of their loneliness and existential suffering. Norman says, "We're all in our private traps. Clamped in them. And none of us can ever get out. We scratch and claw, but only at the air. Only at each other. And for all of it, we never budge an inch." The trap Norman mentions can refer to his physical entrapment in the motel – he opens up the windows in Marion's room due to his impression that "it's stuffy in here" – though it more fully applies to the trappings of his psychotic relation to his mother. In this sense, Norman establishes a connection between institutions of accommodation and the space of the mind, both confined by the script of modernity. And yet, it is also the site of the motel that brings these two suffering figures together, allowing them both to confront their existential crises and escape them by virtue of their newfound and transient companionship. While the two characters seem worlds apart, both are ruled by the force of their mother, or rather, the Maternal Superego. To Norman, Marion responds, "Sometimes we deliberately step into those traps," an acknowledgement of the pleasure associated with the Superego, and the cyclic nature of punishment and desire.

When Norman says, "I was born in mine, I don't mind it anymore," he cleverly refers both to his internal psychic distress and his fraught relationship with his mother. He suggests that the relation between the individual and the mother is inherently suffocating, painting the womb as a trap. Marion instinctively understands this, saying, "Oh, but you should. You should mind it." Norman then says, "Oh, I do, but I say I don't." The line is shockingly vulnerable; the pair quickly moves from strangers to companions, before shifting to the roles of murderer and victim. Marion seeks the validation of her mother through approval of her relationship with Sam. When she suggests having dinner, she says they must do so "respectably – in my house, with my mother's picture on the mantel and my sister helping me broil a big steak for three." Sam's

response, "And after the steak, do we send sister to the movies, turn Mama's picture to the wall?" reveals the extent to which Marion's mother and her presumed set of morals dictates Marion's sexual behavior. Likewise, when Marion overhears "Norma" berating Norman, she criticizes the "cheap erotic fashion of young men with cheap, erotic minds." Echoing Sam's earlier comment, the voice of Mrs. Bates says, "And then what, after supper? Music, whispers?"

This is why the name Norma is contained within the names of both Norman and Marion; both are ruled by the influence of their mothers, seeking simultaneous escape and validation from their Superegos through the Bates Motel.[51] For Norman and Marion alike, it is both a source of comfort and distress. As evidenced by its name, the motel is inseparable from the identity of Norma Bates and the voice of the mother. It looms over him, both giving him a sense of purpose and taunting him, the manifestation of his Superego. Norman's only solution to conquering this voice is to murder his mother and take on her persona, thus literalizing the notion of the divided psyche. As Žižek argues in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006), the Bates house can be seen as an allegory for the psychic apparatus, with the top level – where Norma Bates lives and berates her son – serving as the Superego, the ground floor the ego – where Norman enters and leaves the house as a mere motel manager – and the basement – where Norman as Norma, with wig and knife, ultimately reveals herself – as the id. Like Room 237, the basement represents the innermost layer of the psyche, akin to Freud's idea of the navel of the dream or Irma's throat. When Norman brings his mother down from the third floor to the cellar, she transforms from the Superego to the id, a manifestation of his innermost desires. Perhaps this is why she is discovered here and punished, no longer maintaining the force of authority. The

[51] Lee Edelman, "Psycho" (lecture, Hitchcock: Cinema, Gender, Ideology, Somerville, Massachusetts).

cellar of the Overlook is also a site of horror and revelation in *The Shining*; not only does it resemble Holocaust barracks, but it is also where Danny discovers the truth about "the shining." In both *Psycho* and *The Shining*, the hotel must keep something hidden, something too frightening to be visibly seen. It is precisely why the hotel serves as an optimal setting for the horror film; there are always more rooms, more crevices that contain the unknown. And nothing is more frightening than the unknown.

**

THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL

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This dynamic of the hotel as a site of distress and fantasy is not limited to the horror genre. In Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), the hotel is presented as a fantastical apparatus with a subtle tinge of darkness. The nostalgia that permeates the film – from its rich color palette to its actors' mechanically precise manner of speech – endows it with both ebullience and melancholy. (The film's nostalgia is also cinematic; its title harkens back to the subgenre of ensemble cast hotel films; namely, *Grand Hotel* (1932) and *Hotel Berlin (*1945)).[52]

[52] David Bordwell, "Anderson Takes the 4:3 Challenge," in *The Wes Anderson Collection: The Grand Budapest Hotel*, comp. Matt Zoller Seitz (Harry N. Abrams, 2015).

Sandwiched between the World Wars yet set in a fictional Eastern European locale called the Republic of Zubrowka**,** the Grand Budapest Hotel is both placeless and distinctly tethered to its setting. The pastel colored facades of the village, the snow-capped mountains, and, of course, the rosy-hued hotel itself are instrumental to the film's concern with style. Its faded color editing and 4:3 aspect ratio invoke nostalgia for a supposedly simpler past, boxed as tidily as a bow-tied pink confectionary box from Mendl's Patisserie. The film's narrative parallels this self-contained structure; like a Russian *matryoshka* doll, it contains a story within a story within a story. And yet, despite its lens of nostalgia, the past's darker elements come to light.

While Anderson's precision lends his work an undeniably sugarcoated effect, his use of pre-existing locations and psychologically grounded themes and performances infuse the fairytale of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* with a hefty dose of realism.[53] This yields a compelling blend of danger and safety, anxiety and escape. As David Bordwell notes, Anderson, like the author Lewis Carroll, "cuts his whimsy with grotesquerie." [54] Anderson centers the film on a casually bisexual man – Gustave, the hotel concierge; assigns the narration to a dark-skinned lobby boy known as Zero who falls in love with a European woman with a Mexico-shaped birthmark; and depicts an alternative vision of one of the darkest periods in recent history with moments of graphic violence (fingers fall to the floor) and frank sexuality (Gustave eats grapes

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[53] Steven Boone, "A Grand Stage: the Production Design of The Grand Budapest Hotel," in *The Wes Anderson Collection: The Grand Budapest Hotel*, comp. Matt Zoller Seitz (Harry N. Abrams, 2015), 143.

[54] Bordwell, 237.

This is particularly embodied in Anderson's *Isle of Dogs* (2018), a stop-motion-animated film set in a fictional Japanese city overtaken by an authoritarian regime devoted to exiling its citizens' dogs to a garbage dump known as Trash Island.

while being fellated in one of the guestrooms).[55] World War I and II are collapsed into a fictional mid-1930s conflict that sets the backdrop for the film's political intrigue – "a kind of *Reader's Digest* version of Central Europe…its Greatest Hits," as Anderson told Matt Zoller Seitz.[56] Various clues about the rise of Fascism punctuate the film. The newspaper that informs Gustave of the death of his beloved Madame D. features the headline "Will there be war? Tanks at border" on its front page; the camera lingers there, establishing historical context, before quickly panning down to an obituary, more immediately pressing for the characters. Clear parallels exist between the Nazis and the cadres of gray-suited officers led by Henckels. The Fascist army is associated with a stylized symbol made up of the letters "ZZ," an eerie parallel to the badge of the SS, or Schutzstaffel, one of the major paramilitary organizations of Nazi Germany. The fox broaches that adorn their suits can be seen as a parallel to the Nazis' association with the Eagle. The group takes over the hotel and uses it as the site of fascist conventions, much to the horror of well-meaning Gustave. Yet while fascism seems to be a revolt against modernity, a corruption of the hotel's cosmopolitan ethos, it is in fact only a repackaging of it, appealing in its stylish homogeneity. It is this disturbing conflation that induces a loss of innocence for Zero as well as Gustave, who clings to the hotel as an icon of civility.

Gustave begins to come to terms with the notion that the hotel, and all that it represents, is slipping away from his grip when he and Zero are interrogated on the train. The Fascist

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[55] Wes Anderson's short film *Hotel Chevalier* (2007), a sort of prequel to his 2007 feature *The Darjeeling Limited*, reveals an interest in exploring the hotel room as a locus of intimate relations that predates *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Filmed in Anderson's protoypical jewel-box mode, it centers on a man who seeks refuge from his girlfriend in a posh Parisian hotel when she surprises him with a visit, forcing a reunion of sardonic dialogue, subversive sex, and room service. The hotel here is both a refuge for the recluse and a space that easily lends itself to a rekindling of brief emotional and erotic intensity.

[56] Matt Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Collection: The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Abrams, 2016), 34.

officers threaten to arrest Zero based on his immigrant status, engaging in a fistfight before Henckels ultimately pardons the pair due to Gustave's association with the Grand Budapest Hotel. Gustave says to Zero, "You see, there are still faint glimmers of civilization left in this barbaric slaughterhouse that was one known as humanity. Indeed that's what we provide in our own modest, humble, insignificant…oh, fuck it." The line encapsulates Gustave's dwindling idealism, a result of his naïve separation between the hotel – populated mainly by the "rich, old, insecure, vain, superficial, blonde, needy" – and the wave of modern Fascism sweeping Europe. His confidence in the hotel as a beacon of good erodes as he begins to recognize the darkness within the chandelier-dotted halls of the Grand Budapest Hotel, the Real that lurks within the fantasy.

With its "planemetric staging" (actors shot against a perpendicular backdrop, lined up as in a mug shot) and "compass-point editing" (parking the camera on the axis of action, employing 180 or 90-degree shot reversals), Anderson's camera itself serves as a function of modern life akin to the hotel.[57] With a Kubrickian display of immaculately balanced shots, as well as distinctly Andersonian tight close-ups and quick cuts, the cinematography of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* creates an almost disturbingly unnatural sense of order – "an absurd geometry."[58] Its tidy style is inherently connected to the rise of Fascism in the narrative, as Nazis notoriously championed aesthetic purity.[59] And yet, with this layer of self-consciousness, the film embraces

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[57] Bordwell, 239.

[58] Ibid.

[59] The Nazis were famously concerned with film as an emerging art form, commissioning filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl to produce *Triumph of the Will* (1935), which chronicled the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg. Though Riefenstahl contended that she was merely filming the event, the style in which she shot the speeches of Nazi leaders and their crowd proved film to be an effective mode of propaganda.

its escapist storybook structure. The narrative is presented as a book, with the writer shown at the beginning delivering its narration.[60] From the outset, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* does not aspire to realism. Several Brechtian alienation effects underscore the film's artificiality; most notably, several of the scenes' settings, including the Grand Budapest Hotel's façade, are actually miniature models, flat and picture-perfect. Inspired by the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, Anderson and his collaborators created paintings as backdrops for the miniatures, emphasizing the settings' quality of construction.[61]

These alienation effects that emphasize the film's artifice provide a sort of commentary on the mythic status of the hotel space, and how easily its façade can be cracked by the looming threat of the Real (represented by the growing influence of the Fascist regime). Like The Overlook Hotel, the placelessness and isolation of the Grand Budapest distance the viewer from the specific horror of Fascism while simultaneously underscoring its universality. In fact, Anderson himself called the 1930s version of the Grand Budapest "the anti-Overlook Hotel," with its pastel colors that mimic a wedding cake or an ice cream parlor. "And then, in the '60s," he said, "it's more like the Overlook Hotel, and then we make it communist." [62] The 1960s version of the hotel is sparer in its mid-century modern style, and also mostly empty in its off-

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[60] Anderson often splits his films into episodic chapters. The technique is most clearly seen in *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), which is presented in the form of a novel, but it is also employed in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009), and *Isle of Dogs* (2018).

[61] Wes Anderson, "Wes Anderson: 'We Made A Pastiche' Of Eastern Europe's Greatest Hits," interview by Terry Gross, NPR, March 12, 2014, accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=289423863.

[62] Marlow Stern, "Wes Anderson Takes Us Inside 'The Grand Budapest Hotel,' His Most Exquisite Film," The Daily Beast, March 04, 2014, accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.thedailybeast.com/wes-anderson-takes-us-inside-the-grand-budapest-hotel-his-most-exquisite-film.

season, like the Overlook. The wallpaper of the 1985 version of the Grand Budapest bears resemblance to the Overlook's orange hexagonal carpeting.[63] Likewise, the pendant globe lighting, coupled with hallway tracking shots and the previously mentioned balanced cinematography, create an active dialogue between Kubrick and Anderson.[64]

Just as The Overlook's isolation serves to bring forth the psychic alienation and madness of its protagonist, so too The Grand Budapest Hotel becomes a site of Blackwood's notion of "parallel worlds." The actors in the film, retaining a robotic quality that resists the "naturalistic," more "vulnerable" style of contemporary Hollywood acting, attain a Brechtian distance from the viewer – and from one another. They float alongside one another in the hotel, occasionally forming close relationships (Gustave and Zero; Zero and Agatha), but even so maintaining a distance that feels quintessentially modern. The death of Madame D. and the subsequent daisy chain of murders are treated with dry humor, a function of Andersonian wit rather than sentimental character development, a common value of modern filmmaking. The characters are at times despicable: Gustave momentarily mourns his former lover before launching headfirst into the quarrel over her will. While the film maintains an exuberant, almost fairytale quality in its self-reflexive aesthetic, it also possesses an underlying sense of loneliness – an extension of the hotel's fall from grace.

The narrator says, "What few guests we were had quickly come to recognize one another by sight, as the only living souls residing in the vast establishment. Although I do not believe any acquaintance among our number had proceeded beyond the polite nods we exchanged as we

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[63] Zoller Seitz, 31.

[64] *Wes Anderson's The Shining*, dir. Steve Ramsden, YouTube, May 29, 2015, accessed October 17, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsi06PG7w_0.

passed in the Palm Court and the Arabian Baths and onboard the Colonnade Funicular. We were a very reserved group, it seemed, and without exception, solitary." The camera juxtaposes this statement with an overhead shot showing each guest eating at their own table in the Grand Hall. He describes Zero as, "like the rest of us, alone, but also, I must say, he was the first that struck one as being deeply and truly lonely – a symptom of my own medical condition as well." The author's choice to describe loneliness as a "symptom" prompts one to employ a psychoanalytic framework in viewing the film. The hotel here, in its washed up state under a Communist regime, acts as a sort of mental institution, housing a disparate set of individuals plagued with neuroses – monads, as Augé writes, independently traversing the placeless world of the hotel.

As Gustave says to Zero when giving him a tour of the Grand Budapest Hotel, "A lobby boy is, above all, discreet to a fault. Our guests know their deepest secrets, some of which are frankly rather unseemly, will go with us to our graves. So keep your mouth shut, Zero." The Grand Budapest is only shades away from the Overlook, where truths are concealed in the name of civility, luxury, and grandeur. Modernity here is predicated on the systematic covering up of past sins and silencing of non-normative voices. Zero, an immigrant lobby boy, is literally silenced. His nickname emphasizes his nothingness, his identity reduced to the simple function of service. In this sense, he serves a narrative role similar to Hallorann, the Overlook's "nigger cook." The hotel is ultimately a space of classed and raced identity, producing an illusion of progress.

This notion of the Grand Budapest as a grand illusion is underscored at the film's ending. The author asks Zero why he has continued managing the hotel after Gustave, saying, "Is it simply your last connection to that banished world—his world, if you will?" Zero replies, "His world? No, I don't think so. You see, we shared a vocation; it wouldn't have been necessary. No,

the hotel I keep for Agatha. We were happy here, for a little while. To be frank, I think his world had vanished long before he ever entered it. But I will say, he certainly sustained the illusion with a marvelous grace." By saying they were happy "for a little while," Zero underscores the film's argument that happiness and all that is associated with it in the modern era – order, comfort, luxury, safety – is ultimately fleeting, especially in relation to a specific place. It may be understood that M. Gustave is a man of the old world, striving for a sense of civility that predates the modern world, penetrated by fascist forces and the ugly stain of bigotry. With its art nouveau décor and nostalgic palette of pink pastels, the Grand Budapest is "Gustave's enduring elitist toy box, done up in the colors of his youth," as Steven Boone writes.[65] "In this space, his vulgarity, refinement, cynicism, and high ideals get a grand stage." Just as *The Grand Budapest Hotel* romanticizes the past through rich imagery (albeit in a deeply ironic way), its characters maintain nostalgia for a world untainted by the dark forces of humanity.

Yet Zero suggests here that that world never truly existed, that it is only a matter of coincidence that history has interrupted Gustave's illusion. Zero simultaneously illuminates the illusory status of the hotel and celebrates it. The quotation encapsulates the brilliance of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; it delivers a dose of existentialist philosophy while embracing the power of storytelling and fantasy. As John Powers writes in *Vogue*, "Wes Anderson's work has always been a tug of war between the pleasures of childlike whimsy and an adult ruefulness about the elusiveness of love and the ravages of passing time. He's never captured this tension more completely than in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, which offers the sugar-rush joys of a confection

[65] Boone, 143.

yet…winds up filling you with a surprisingly potent sense of melancholy." [66] The hotel setting, which makes for one of Anderson's most visually striking films, perfectly captures this dichotomy. In presenting both the sweet and the sorrowful, Anderson never negates either; rather, he embraces it all.

The Grand Budapest Hotel is a film about the simultaneous joy and inevitable pain associated with fantasy and nostalgia. The word nostalgia stems from the Greek words nostos ("return home") and algos ("pain"); to indulge in memory is ultimately to experience a degree of suffering. Illusions of escape such as the modern hotel may serve as phantasmatic havens, but they are never immune from dark reality. In fact, they're targets for it.

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LOST IN TRANSLATION

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While *The Shining* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* explore the hotel on a socio-political level, Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003) delves into the personal implications of the nonplace; the film paints its principal setting, The Grand Hyatt Tokyo, as a site of loneliness and alienation for protagonists Bob and Charlotte; yet it is precisely the hotel structure that breeds intimacy between the two strangers.

Bob and Charlotte have seemingly lost themselves, ending up in Tokyo for reasons that lie beyond their control. Charlotte accompanies her husband on a work trip, while Bob, an actor

[66] John Powers, "Trust Me, Wes Anderson's The Grand Budapest Hotel Is the Year's Best Movie," Vogue, February 01, 2017, accessed January 25, 2018, https://www.vogue.com/article/the-grand-budapest-hotel-wes-anderson-best-movie.

past his prime, travels to shoot a whiskey commercial, a career move he finds humiliatingly desperate. He ignores faxes from his wife, telling her later, when she asks which color he prefers of the carpet samples she sent, "I am just completely lost." He expresses an aimless desire to be healthy, "to take better care of myself." He forgets his son's birthday, his daughter refuses to speak to him on the phone, and his wife tells him the kids are "getting used to you not being here."

While Bob's alienation stems from seasoned jadedness, Charlotte shows frustration with her lack of direction and youthful ineptitude. Charlotte cries into the phone during a conversation with her friend; when she says that she "didn't feel anything" upon witnessing monks praying at a shrine, she reveals a profound sense of stagnation. She tells her friend that John is "buying these hair products" – a seemingly trivial observation but one that expresses Charlotte's growing distance from John. Though they share a hotel room, they are shown spending little time together. Yet beyond the physical distance among the couple, there is a significant gap in their ability to acculturate to life in Tokyo. John works on his photography and socializes with friends, including Kelly, a shallow actress whose appropriative embrace of Japanese culture renders her a cliché of the self-obsessed American tourist. Charlotte, lacking direction and agency, is unimpressed by the social-climbing expats and frenetic crowds of Tokyo. Overeducated and eternally unsatisfied, Charlotte aimlessly dabbles in writing and photography. She tells Bob, "I tried being a writer, but I hate what I write. I tried taking pictures, but they were so mediocre. I guess every girl goes through a photography phase. You know, horses…taking dumb pictures of your feet." Charlotte's cultural displacement is emblematic of her overall sense of alienation, disillusionment, and stagnation. She follows John to Tokyo with the hope of escape, soon

discovering that her psychic distress is amplified in the dark lighting and impersonal interiors of the Tokyo Grand Hyatt.

The film's title itself is a reconfiguration of the psychoanalytic notion of a life in mistranslation. Lacan's commentary on language contended that, trapped in the symbolic order, individuals can never truly communicate with one another; they are bound by the nature of the shifting signifier. The cultural displacement that the characters experience in the film – the familiar 'fish out of water' narrative complex - is merely a symptom of the general miscommunication endemic to a world dominated by language. As Žižek says, "Dislocation is the primordial condition, the very horizon of our being." [67] We are all, effectively, lost in translation.

The Grand Hyatt Tokyo's defining characteristic is its lack of symbolic significance. Unlike the Overlook or the Grand Budapest Hotel, its architecture is, ironically, not grand or iconic. It is a stopping place catering mostly to business travelers: a nonplace for nonpeople, or people who make a living pretending to be other people (Bob and Kelly). As Richard Corliss writes in his review of *Somewhere* (2010), Coppola's other hotel film: "Movie people are nomads, ever on location, forming alliances and liaisons that are as intense as they are evanescent. (Who are you I love you goodbye.) For these traveling salesmen of make-believe, a hotel is home — an artificial, but for film folk natural, domestic domicile. The other members of the crew are the siblings of this post-nuclear family; the hotel-suite desk is the dining room; room service is the helpful spouse who's there only when needed." [68]

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[67] Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2009), 10.

[68] Richard Corliss, "Somewhere: Sofia Coppola's Hotel California," Time, December 20, 2010, accessed February 22, 2018, http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,2016207,00.html.

The hotel lacks cultural specificity, becoming a pancultural space where American jazz singers sing pop songs in the lounge and Germans converse in the sauna in their native tongue. In one scene, Charlotte drifts from a press conference for a Japanese action film starring Kelly to a traditional Japanese *ikebana* ceremony in the next room. This mirrors the scene where Charlotte navigates Tokyo's crowded commercial streets to arrive at a Buddhist temple with praying monks. Both exemplify the blurring border between traditional Japan and its globalized, late postmodern state. The hotel flattens this boundary; it is both quintessentially part of Tokyo and a distinct entity in itself.

The Grand Hyatt Tokyo is at once intimate and alienating. Though it can be deemed impersonal with its dim lighting and generic décor (it is part of a global chain of hotels, the Hyatt, that share a common neutral aesthetic no matter their location) its filmic treatment renders it more "intimate" than The Overlook or The Grand Budapest Hotel. Unlike Kubrick and Anderson's stationary camera, Coppola's often seems handheld as a result of its shakiness. This, coupled with the film's many close-ups, gives the film a personal, homemade feel, an aesthetic common among indie films of the early aughts. The audience is not granted an establishing shot of the hotel, instead only shown a black service car pulling up to the entrance, underscoring the effect of the hotel as assemblage.[69] The building's multiple entrances – Bob is shown being greeted both on the building's ground floor and the main hotel floor – creates "rhizomic possibilities" for the hotel's relation to the city of Tokyo; it is both removed and a part of it.[70]

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[69] Gilles Deleuze and FeÌix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

[70] Blackwood, 286.

This dynamic is characteristic of the postmodern architecture common among chain hotels. Frederic Jameson discusses the use of multiple entrances in his analysis of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, designed by the architect and developer John Portman, who also worked on various Hyatt Regencies. Jameson writes: "I believe that, with a certain number of other characteristic postmodern buildings, such as the Beaubourg in Paris or the Eaton Centre in Toronto, 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. In this sense, then, ideally the minicity of Portman's Bonaventure ought not to have entrances at all, since the entryway is always the seam that links the building to the rest of the city that surrounds it: for it does not wish to be a part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute." [71]

The distinct dichotomy between hotel and city is visually expressed in the wide windows that feature prominently in the design of the Grand Hyatt Tokyo. Many of the hotel shots, especially those that take place in the rooms, show views of the cityscape, usually out of focus. Several shots throughout the film project a reflection of the characters onto the windows, superimposed upon blurred city lights. These shots, including one that shows the reflection of Bob and Charlotte sitting on the bed in one of the film's most intimate scenes, situate the hotel as both in and out of the city, simultaneously dependent on it and radically removed. Tokyo is central to the hotel but also reduced to a decorative backdrop; the hotel towers above the city, rendering Tokyo a fictive play-land. This is why the film has been criticized for its racial politics,

[71] Bruce Janz, "Jameson, Excerpt from Postmodernism," Postmodern, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, March 2, 2018, accessed March 11, 2018, http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/hum3930b/jameson1.htm.

with Tokyo and its inhabitants largely reduced to a collective exotic "other." Yet the separation between the hotel and the city is precisely what illuminates the psychic states of the film's protagonists.

A shot of Charlotte sitting against the window, looking out at the city, serves as a visual representation of her deep-seated alienation. The silhouette shows Charlotte's distance from the city, suggesting her inability to become fully immersed in it. She looks out into the abyss in search of meaning, attempting to penetrate Tokyo's labyrinth of cultural mysteries. The shot is a visual nod to the opening sequence of *The Searchers* (1956), in which a woman stands silhouetted against the frontier landscape, with a wooden panel splitting the frame. In that film, the woman anticipates Ethan returning home, looking out onto the unknown. The split screen alludes to the notion of division between the familiar "civilized" world and the "savage" frontier, populated by Natives. *Lost in Translation* explores similar themes, as Charlotte looks onto and reflects upon the unknown. As tourists, Charlotte and Bob traverse Tokyo, seeking comfort and stability in a foreign world. In an attempt to acculturate, Charlotte tries to make a home within the hotel room, adorning it with floral arrangements. Yet she is constantly drawn back to her window, a representation of Tokyo's sheer vastness and alienating modernity.

These shots of Charlotte mirror the image of Bob against the window on the way from the airport to the hotel. His face is silhouetted in blue light against the blurring lights of Tokyo. Bob is similarly overwhelmed, especially by the sight of his whiskey advertisement – shocked by the sheer consumerism on display, by his seemingly immortal status in Japan. Bob is shown as an actor trapped in a time capsule, famous for his role in a decades-old television sitcom. The glass of the window serves as a barrier between Bob and the unfamiliar world outside. The image is further echoed in the shots of Charlotte in the car coming back from a night out in Tokyo. The

neon lights are superimposed upon the window, creating a dialogue between Charlotte and the outside environment. The shots mirror the difference in the way the two characters navigate the city and Japanese culture. Charlotte seems less befuddled than Bob, more entranced. For both, the car, like the hotel, is a nonplace – a vehicle of transience.

Despite their alienation, Bob and Charlotte form a bond that seems to transcend age and gender.[72] The narrow confines of the hotel space "throw the characters into intimacy" through chance encounters – in the elevator, at the bar, by the pool.[73] Their status as American tourists helps spark their kinship, as they are marked by their racial difference from those around them. In the elevator, for example, they exchange their first glances, acknowledging one another as the tallest and whitest in the space. Like the hotel in which it operates, the elevator can be seen as a nonplace within a nonplace, one that exists in the stratus of the in-between. It is a Bahktinian chronotope, straddling space and time – "a space about other spaces." [74] Bob and Charlotte's relationship exists within the specific vacuum of the hotel, yet also transcends boundaries, both physical and psychological. While the elevator can be seen as a site of spatial imprisonment (The Overlook's elevators gush with the blood of American psychosis), it is here a breeding ground for a budding relationship, albeit one of transience.[75]

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[72] Coppola is particularly interested in the hotel as grounds for non-sexual intimacy; in her 2010 film *Somewhere*, an actor and neglectful father retreats to Los Angeles's famed Chateau Marmont, where a surprise visit by his daughter forces the two to form a newfound bond. Coppola's fixation perhaps stems from her childhood as the daughter of renowned director Francis Ford Coppola. As Richard Corliss writes, "Coppola has been in more hotels than the Gideons."

[73] Blackwood 285.

[74] Blackwood, 288.

[75] Blackwood, "The Hotel in Postmodern Literature and Film."

As Charlotte and Bob develop their friendship, they begin to share the frustrations of life as tourists in Tokyo as well as more personal anxieties. They navigate Tokyo through maps, stumbling upon hotpot restaurants and sharing minor grievances. Bob and Charlotte "reterritorialize" the hotel and Tokyo; they build a home not through the artificial "home away from home" amenities that the hotel typically provides (lounge jazz, plush bathrobes, room service)**,** but through newfound intimacy. In this sense, Coppola inverts the structure often provided by hotel films as sites of psychic distress. *Lost in Translation* upends Augé's notion – which inherently relies on capitalist logic – that the nonplace cannot shape identity; instead, the film argues that it is not places or institutions that ever establish a sense of identity, but people themselves. The result is a testament to the redemptive power of interpersonal relationships. *Lost in Translation* presents the hotel as an allegory of alienation, yet simultaneously offers the radical possibility of the hotel as a space of hyper-intimacy.[76] It is the inherent loneliness of the nonplace that is perhaps most conducive to closeness.

What *Lost in Translation* underscores especially is the erotic potential of the hotel, a factor that makes it a prime mover for narrative. The film is fueled not by sex, but by sexual tension. The hotel, with its private rooms and public spaces, always presents the possibility for eroticism, a wink-wink coital suggestion. It is often depicted in popular culture as a convenient site of sinful seduction, ideal for a rendezvous a la Mrs. Robinson and Benjamin Braddock in *The Graduate* (1967), or Edward Lewis and his escort, Vivian, in *Pretty Woman* (1990). *Psycho* alludes to this trope when Sam says at the beginning, "I've heard of married couples who spend an occasional night in a cheap hotel." Yet ironically, it is Marion and Norman who form an intimate bond at Bates Motel, a result of their shared sense of alienation – not unlike Charlotte

[76] Blackwood, 285.

and Bob. As Michel Foucault wrote, the honeymoon hotel – traditionally, where a young woman loses her virginity – can be seen as a "heterotopia without geographical markers," a space that, in its otherness, allows for the free rein of sexual taboos.[77] Charged with fantasy, the hotel becomes an obvious libidinal playground, where capital meets Eros.

Lost in Translation plays into the conception of the eroticism of the hotel – it is, after all, set in the city of the love hotel – but subverts the notion of intercourse as end goal. The relationship between Bob and Charlotte is predicated precisely on the dance around sex, rather than sex itself. The narrative upends the expectation that the two characters – both vulnerable and dissatisfied with their marriages – will consummate their relationship, particularly in the scene where they lie on the bed in Bob's hotel room, drinking sake and watching television. They share fears, pasts, and advice, creating a home within a space designed precisely not to become a home. In Coppola's world, a touch of the foot is more intimate than intercourse. Blackwood writes regarding this exchange, "Small spaces – particularly the elevator and the bed – operate as miniature versions of the hotel, reinforcing the possibilities of intimacy."[78]

The absence endemic to the relationship between Bob and Charlotte, the lack of fulfillment of sexual desire, is precisely what fuels the film's sense of tension. As Slavoj Žižek writes, extrapolating on the work of Freud and Lacan, "desire's *raison d'être* is not to realize its

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[77] Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopios and Heterotopias* (Place of Publication Not Identified: Www.foucault.info, 2000), 5.

[78] Blackwood, 288.

The idea of the hotel as a site of intimacy is effectively skewered in Yorgos Lanthimos's *The Lobster* (2015), which explores the hotel as a site of forced coupling, a convenient locale – isolated in rural Ireland – for state-sanctioned romance. Accepting the isolation of the nonplace as a precondition for intimacy, Lanthimos's film can be seen as a dark extension of the *Lost in Translation* thesis.

goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire." [79] The relation between Bob and Charlotte is built on mutual transference; both characters aim to escape their dwindling marriages, attempting to recreate the initial image of their respective love objects. As Bob says, "We used to have a lot of fun." The attachment between Bob and Charlotte is predicated not only on their shared location, but also on their mutual recognition of their common alienation. In the quest for a sense of identity, the hotel, as an inevitable site of phantasmatic projection, provides an ideal setting for an individual to undergo this process of transference. The film depicts love with more appreciation than cynicism, yet evades the saccharine with its acknowledgment of the inevitability of transference. It is through this combination of sweetness and sorrow that *Lost in Translation* achieves its sentimental core. Whereas *The Shining* and *Psycho* illustrate the anxieties associated with the modern notion of the chance encounter, Coppola succeeds in painting the hotel as a postmodern paradise, one in which identity is formed through interpersonal relationships rather than space itself. The hotel, therefore, is distinct in its fluidity, a site of both loneliness and the redemptive power of transient love.

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Across genre, era, and nation, the hotel has served as a setting of particular fascination for filmmakers. Each of the films discussed uniquely illustrates the diverse ways the hotel can be presented narratively as a site of leisure, escape, and freedom, while simultaneously bringing forth psychic distress.

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[79] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2009), 39.

The dynamic is clear in the horror narratives of Kubrick's *The Shining* and Hitchock's *Psycho*, where both The Overlook Hotel and the Bates Motel provide the promise of freedom for its guests, only to further exacerbate their troubled psyches. As *The Shining* explores the anxieties brought about by the possibility of societal mixing, where time and space overlap through the common thread of murder, *Psycho* offers a dark glimpse into the motel's erotic potential, where one may be slaughtered at the hands of a charming stranger. Both employ the notion of the hotel/motel as a structure with immense psychological associations, taking on meaning for its characters while destabilizing their preconceived conceptions of the self and society. In the nonspatial logic of the hotel/motel, an entity neither fully of society nor apart from it, the family unit is broken down. The father (Jack) becomes violent; the mother (Norma) murderous in her overbearing presence. The filmic hotel, then, may be representative of American modernism, yet its transitory nature forces its guests to confront the futility of its very promise. It is at once an American icon and an omen, signaling the dangers of American iconography.

Likewise, Wes Anderson explores the underlying tensions at the heart of The Grand Budapest Hotel's grandeur. While the hotel becomes integral to Gustave's identity, the film, in displaying the downfall of the hotel as it undergoes various historical shifts, acknowledges the transience of that vision. For Gustave, the hotel not only provides the image of escape, as Bates Motel does for Marion Crane, but it serves as an ideal of urbane progressivism – a space in which interpersonal interactions provide infinite possibilities for play and pleasantries. As this vision erodes, the viewer may recall the bloody disintegration of The Overlook; while *The Grand Budapest Hotel* approaches the contradictions of the hotel space with more humor and whimsy, it alludes directly to the horrors of Western civilization. The visual parallels between *The Shining*

and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* further support a connection between the films in their depiction of the duality of the hotel. However, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* embraces Gustave's lens of nostalgia with its deliberately nostalgic filmmaking. Though it critiques this glamourized vision of the hotel, it simultaneously upholds it, nodding to the psychologically redemptive power of storytelling, place, and interpersonal intimacy.

Sofia Coppola maintains this more positive vision in *Lost in Translation*, although not without illustrating the inherent dichotomy of the modern hotel. The film begins by depicting the hotel as a nonplace inducing existential alienation, yet gradually reveals the extent to which it can promote chance encounters that develop into an intimate bond. Bob and Charlotte gravitate toward one another precisely due to their shared sense of loneliness and discontent, conditions that are only heightened by the hotel itself. In its postmodern design, the Tokyo Grand Hyatt is a stark contrast to the Overlook and the Grand Budapest. It evades showy décor, maintaining a cool minimalism that meshes with the postmodern vision of a placeless place. In this sense, the hotel in *Lost in Translation* avoids the assumption of identity shaping, becoming more conducive to interpersonal relationships. The scenes in which Bob and Charlotte expose their vulnerabilities to one another in a hotel room recall the moments in *Psycho* when Marion and Norman discuss their "private traps," or the intimate yet fraught conversation between the ex-lovers in Anderson's *Hotel Chevalier*. As Tokyo Grand Hyatt and Bates Motel are depicted as spaces of alienation, they in turn become spaces of hyper-intimacy, breeding a specific type of interpersonal relationship unique to the hotel/motel – powerful despite and due to its transience.

More recent films centered on the hotel have continued to explore these themes in relation to escape and anxiety. Yorgos Lanthimos's *The Lobster* (2015) explores the hotel as a site of state-enforced romance, its isolation providing the idyllic intersection between refuge and

fear. *The Florida Project* (2017), also produced by the independent studio A24, focuses on a group of children in poverty who call the cheap motels surrounding Disney World home; designed for tourists, the motels are now de facto housing settlements for itinerant families. The film underscores the notion of the hotel/motel as a nonplace, calling attention to the problematic of identity-shaping in modern life for those denied a chance at establishing a home.

The recent explosion of innovative television has also allowed for further exploration of the hotel in modern life. In the tradition of *Grand Hotel* (1932) and, more recently, Quentin Tarantino's *Four Rooms* (1995), Mark and Jay Duplass' HBO anthology series "Room 104" (2017) explores the various lives of strangers in a single hotel room; its stories span those of Mormon missionaries, babysitters, faded champions, and lovers. A similar concept is found in TBS's "The Guest Book," (2017) a comedy anthology series centered on the variety of guests that come and go at a mountain town vacation home. Both serve as a testament to the perpetual allure of the hotel as a site of interpersonal crossings, as explored in each of the films analyzed in this paper. Television shows like Amazon's "Transparent" (2014) and Comedy Central's "Broad City" (2014) have tapped the comedic potential of the contemporary Airbnb rental, though the extent to which Airbnb has globally destabilized the hotel model for the Millennial generation has yet to be seriously explored in contemporary narrative. This departure from the modern model and emergence of the "sharing economy" may allow for a surge of narrative possibility, though whether or not these narratives will remain tied to the established dichotomy of escape and anxiety, fantasy and distress, has yet to be determined.

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