

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Joseph Roth's Hotels in the 1920s: The Displaced Male Subject after World War I

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Abstract:

The essay comparatively examines a small selection of Roth's hotel writings, fiction and non-fiction, that span the decade of the 1920s, arguing that they foreground the hotel space as a stage that mirrors the period's turbulent economic and political conditions: inflation, political unrest, riots, and uncertainty. The Polish Savoy featured in his *Hotel Savoy* (1924) and the other European hotels that Roth discusses in his newspaper articles 'Millionaire for an Hour' (1921), 'Arrival in the Hotel' (1929), 'Leaving the Hotel' (1929), and 'The Patron' (1929) emerge as *par excellence* sites that seem to embody the modern subject's experience of historical change. Drawing on Bettina Matthias's reading of the novel in *The Hotel as Setting in Early 20th Century German and Austrian Literature* (2006), I argue that the homonymous hotel in *Hotel Savoy*, as well as the unnamed hotels of the articles published in the *Neue Berliner Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, are temporary and contingent spaces that only seemingly relieve the perennial roaming of the novel's post-war subjects who consistently remain in limbo and in-between wanderings. In this ambiguous context of political, national, and social precariousness exemplified in the very shift of national borders and marked by the end of the Hapsburg Monarchy, Roth's hotel communities are a response both to the homelessness generated by the havoc wreaked by war and to the dissolution or transformation of former established national entities.

Keywords: Joseph Roth; Siegfried Kracauer; Hotel manager; Precarity; Economy; Cosmopolis; Hotel life; Labour.

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Drawing on Joseph Roth's writing that either pertains to the hotel as literary setting or discusses the hotel experience of the author himself as hotel guest, the essay reads a small selection of Roth's fiction and non-fiction hotel writings that span the decade of the 1920s arguing that the Polish Savoy featured in his novel *Hotel Savoy* (1924) as well as the other European hotels that he discusses in his articles 'Millionaire for an Hour' (1921), 'Arrival in the Hotel' (1929), 'Leaving the Hotel' (1929), and 'The Patron' (1929), emerge as sites that embody the modern subject's experience of historical change in the aftermath of the First World War. Post-war Poland in the *Hotel Savoy* and Weimar Germany in the articles feature as countries changed by the war and afflicted by the turbulent economic and political conditions including the ever-galloping inflation, political unrest, riots, and a deeply rooted feeling of uncertainty. Roth's generation inherits rather fluid geographical boundaries, his birthplace being a case in point. As Ilse Josepha Maria Lazaroms notes, when Roth was born in Brody—in today's western Ukraine—in 1894, the small town was still part of Galicia, 'at the easternmost edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and close to the Russian border' (n.y: 1). Brody was the outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with a thriving Jewish community and Galicia was the 'feudal poorhouse of Europe' (Isenberg 2014: 197-8). Roth's writing registers an era of shifting national borders marked by the end of the Hapsburg Monarchy, and features the hotel as threshold and enclave commenting on the shifting meanings of the home, the city, and the nation. After the war, the former soldiers flood Europe and, especially the *Heimkehrer*, the returning soldier or 'homecomer' in Jonathan Katz's translation (2013: v), is an omnipresent post-war figure whose peregrination underlines the remapping of borders.

In this context of political, national, and social precariousness, I discuss *Hotel Savoy*, the author's second novel, as either foreshadowing or resonating Roth's newspaper articles collected in *The Hotel Years* (2015), which ruminate on the phenomenon of hotels. I argue that the Savoy in *Hotel Savoy* and the unnamed hotels featured in the articles published in the *Neue Berliner Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* figure as temporary and contingent spaces of repose that seem to relieve the perennial roaming of the novel's post WWI subjects who consistently remain in limbo and in-between wanderings. Bettina Matthias has already suggested that the 'preference of Austrian fiction writers for the hotel as a setting' should be seen 'in the context of the last days of Habsburg Austria and the period between the two world wars' arguing that Jewish Austrian authors 'towards the end of the Austrian Empire and with the rise of right-wing forces in society, experienced a severe loss of stability, orientation, and, sometimes, even identity' (2006: 5). Focusing on *Hotel Savoy*, Sidney Rosenfeld insists that '[t]he motley assemblage of social outcasts who inhabit the upper floors [...], the caricature-like figures from near and far [...], the hotel's interior trappings, descriptively contrived to reflect the hierarchy of material means among the guests' reflect 'contemporary social conditions in Western Europe' (2001: 20). In fact, the representation of hotel life in Roth is the response both to the homelessness generated by the havoc wreaked by war and to the dissolution or transformation of former established national entities.

Discussing *Hotel Savoy*, Rosenfeld avers that Roth intended to 'install the hotel as a major symbolic force in the novel' (2001: 20) and, indeed, well beyond *Hotel Savoy* and across the range of Roth's writing, the hotel exemplifies diverse aspects of the modern

experience that transcend the confines of the hotel space: the juxtaposition between wealth and poverty, hope and despair, co-relation and alienation, and the wandering of the male postwar subject who seeks shelter in hotels. Bettina Mathias also reads the Hotel Savoy 'as a symbol of capitalism', central in Roth's 'narrative economy' (2006: 128). For Gabriel, the narrator and central character of *Hotel Savoy*, just as for Roth, the keen and acute observer of *The Hotel Years*, the hotel space encapsulates the experience of mobility and immobility; the flight from war and the entrapment resulting from inter-war uncertainty. The hotel acquires the function of the refuge fostering an alternative mode of living that, while empowering the impoverished guests, bespeaks their displacement. As Matthias observes, Roth 'spent long periods of [his] life in hotels and incorporated that experience into [his] literary works' (2). I would suggest that Gabriel's relation to the hotel alludes to that of Roth, an author in exile who described himself as a 'hotel citizen' and 'hotel patriot' (2015a: 158). In Sabine Hake's words, Roth's 'literary reconstruction of the modern metropolis' becomes 'a multi-layered mise-en-scène for the gains and losses incurred in the experience of historical change' (2004: 47). Indeed, in Roth, the hotel space refracts the subject's experience of historical change, the experience of class divide, post-war contingency, and transition.

The inaugurating paragraph of *Hotel Savoy* decidedly reports Gabriel Dan's intentions of perpetual mobility: 'I want to get some money together and continue my journey to the West' (2013: 3). The former soldier returns to an unnamed town in Poland to find himself 'again at the gates of Europe' and considers his travel incomplete unless he reaches Paris or any other European metropolis (2013: 3).¹ In first-person prose, Roth's narrator explains that he is 'returning after three years as a prisoner of war', having been in a 'Siberian prison camp' and wandering 'through Russian villages and towns as a worker, day-labourer, night watchman, porter, baker's assistant' (3). Gabriel's supposedly ephemeral sojourn in the Savoy and his engagement in its hotel microcosm proves anything but temporary. The Savoy brings into conflict on the one hand Gabriel's labor precarity which has accompanied him throughout his geographical trajectory, and on the other the material amenities of the sedentary lifestyle in the hotel: 'water, soap, English-style toilet, a lift, maids in white caps, chamber pots with a friendly gleam to them like priceless surprise gifts in little brown-inlaid cabinets' (3), to name but a few. Evoking Poland as a liminal space, Europe's frontier after the war,² the Savoy inhibits Gabriel's mobility and forces him to engage in the residents' life. The hardships of endless wandering are decidedly contrasted to the imagined—and not yet seen—luxuries of the hotel space, and stasis, the end of his mobility, is more that welcome in the mind of the narrator.

In the same vein, Roth's 1921 'Millionaire for an Hour' written for *Neue Berliner Zeitung* remains faithful to the spirit of its eloquent title in exemplifying the hotel experience as empowering and uplifting yet fleeting. Roth begins the text by explaining that '[e]very so often, I like to spend a little time in the lobby of the big hotel where visitors from hard-currency nations come to stay' (2015c: 9). Detailing the 'gorgeous panels' of the ceiling accommodating lamps that 'look like glass flowers, shaded by golden leaves,' Roth infers that 'everything here tends to breadth and luxury' (2015c: 9). Much like Gabriel who focuses on the material luxury of the Polish Savoy space as bearing the promise of a better

life, Roth here reports on the momentary fix, the intoxication of wealth that this unnamed Berlin hotel offers: '[a]fter just a quarter of an hour of sitting like that, and feeling flush and expansive, I start to think I am someone from a hard-currency country, and I am staying at the hotel' (9). The power of the hotel space to transform, disguise, or re-invent the self, the superficial yet novel construction of identity highlights the promise of wealth while it reveals the anxieties of economic uncertainty. The repetition of the characterisation 'hard-currency' is a pertinent reference to postwar historical conditions since in 1919-1921 the value of the mark 'dropped from the pre-war 4.2 per dollar to 75'; the spiral of inflation was impossible to contain and subsequently, '[b]y November 15, 1921 you had to pay 258 marks for one dollar' (Von Eckardt and Gilman 1993: 13). In April 1921, when Roth pens 'Millionaire for an Hour', the plummeting of the value of the German currency must have been the talk of the day, so his mention of it within the bounds of commercial hospitality highlights the hotel both as the battlefield of monetary values and as a locus of cosmopolitanism that remains dependent on affluence. Such cosmopolitanism certainly excludes observers like the author; his visit is not that of the hotel 'guest' who belongs in the cosmopolitan *milieu*.

In 'Millionaire for an Hour', Roth associates the semblance and comportment of millionaires found in the hotel lobby with a concatenation of distinct fashion accessories and garments: 'They are very well dressed. The men smell of new leather luggage and English shaving cream and coal. The women disperse gentle hints of a Russian scent across the room' (2015c: 10). The reference to luxury items persists as the author moves on to distinguish millionaires according to their age and respective differentiation of apparel: 'The younger ones wear belted lemon-lime raincoats with discreet matte buckles, their hats are for the most part dove-grey and have a hint of a dent at the top (that might almost be an accident)' (10). The older generation of millionaires is thus characterised as more passé, but market-oriented, utterly focused on their business affairs, as they 'seem generally unaware of the season. It's not the state of the mercury but the state of the market that matters' (10). Roth associates the hotel figure of the millionaire with the salient feature of his consumerist power reflected on outfits and then decisively underlines the defining factor of the omnipresent economy. This differentiation between old and new money, older and younger millionaires can be read as a comment on the fact that the criterion of money replaces all other values within the space of the hotel lobby which, being one of the most public spaces of the hotel, enables the observation and scrutiny of its denizens.

The character of Henry Bloomfield in the novel, the U.S. millionaire that arrives at the Savoy, ties in with the general characteristics of Roth's descriptions in 'Millionaire for an Hour'. Bloomfield, native to the city, emerges on the novel's stage 'like a night attack', surprising the general population of the hotel (2013: 80). His figure is reminiscent of the elderly millionaires discussed in the essay: 'His suit is not of the American cut, and his thin little frame has an old-fashioned elegance about it [...] He has no time for food, neglects his body, concentrates on weightier matters' (85). Roth again insists on external appearance as telling of the millionaire's imposing personality, but more importantly, alludes to business affairs as being more critical than his own wellbeing. The reference to the millionaire's neglect of his body once more foregrounds the dominance of economy within the context of the hotel's uneven handling of its guests. The fact that Bloomfield

temporarily employs him as an assistant lends Gabriel an elevated status in the hotel premises and leads to his enjoying 'more respect than ever before' perhaps living vicariously through his employer (92). Gabriel's advancement is entirely dependent on the length of Bloomfield's presence in the Savoy.

Gabriel's own sojourn, as presented in the novel written three years after the essay, is inextricably intertwined with wealth and poverty, and the transformative power of the setting, as the reader is repeatedly offered the contention that anyone could turn up at the Savoy 'with one shirt, and leave as the proud owner of twenty trunks' (2013: 4, 48, 92). Albeit a space which, by offering refuge, effectively suspends movement, the hotel as an enclave is here designated as the paradigmatic realm of potentiality and unlimited possibilities for financial improvement, echoing the Berlin fantasy of Roth's narrator who temporarily dons the identity of a millionaire. Gabriel's first impression of the premises is that of a 'beehive of residents all swarming in with their honeyed riches' (25) highlighting the hotel as an organic self-efficient entity pervaded by economic power. The image of the beehive is replete with the golden gleam of honey appropriately alluding to sweetness and wealth. Just as in 'Millionaire' Roth's currency comparison opposes the sterling and dollar to the weaker reichsmark, in *Hotel Savoy* Gabriel's train of thought projects a European and Western standard: 'The outstanding hotel, with a liveried doorman, golden sign, elevators and clean chambermaids in starched white caps, seems to be more European than any other Eastern Hotel' (3). Although the 'Eastern' here is also European, it seems to be foregrounded as Europe's other in a binary whereby the European amenities offered at the hotel are juxtaposed to its Eastern location which in Gabriel's mind constitutes a gate to Europe rather than Europe itself.

Such attention to the East-West antithesis persists in Gabriel's first impressions of the hotel staff; he relishes the porter's attentions noting that, 'the porter salutes me, me the mere vagrant in a Russian smock' (2013: 4). The interaction with the hotel employees is equally prominent in 'Millionaire'; 'the messenger boy' gives Roth's 'shiny toecaps a wide berth' (2015c: 9), the hotel manager 'inclines his head when [Roth] look[s] at him' (10) and the porter is 'primed to greet' the distinguished guest, 'like a talking fork', while a chauffeur asks whether he would like a ride (11). The favourable attention of the staff towards the guests is derived from the latter's novel identity as hotel residents, and thus Roth's abrupt response to the chauffeur suspends the staff's willingness to accommodate his wishes and meet his demands: 'I would not. I am no longer a millionaire' (11). The hotel space as an enclave cut-off from the rest of the world clearly enables and, in turn, terminates Roth's assumption of the false identity of the millionaire. The moment he steps out on the street crossing the threshold of the hotel universe, the intoxication of wealth and social advancement that permeates the entirety of the hotel is brought to a close; so is the fantasy that the luxury of commercial hospitality has engendered.

Gabriel's expectations of such comfort are readily unsettled by the fact that his room is 'one of the cheapest' on the sixth floor (2013: 5), underlining the hierarchy in the hotel set-up. As Tom Avermaete explains, the cheaper rooms in the upper storeys of hotels were common until the beginning of the twentieth century, while proximity to the space of the lobby was a marker of luxury (2013: 68). While riding the elevator, Gabriel finds himself

reckoning 'how many wearying steps I'd have to clamber up, if I weren't able to sit in this splendid lift; I hurl back down all my bitterness, and my hardship, and wandering and homelessness, my beggar's life now in the past—I hurl it all deep down, from where it can never reach me again as I soar up and up on high' (2013: 5). The character's perception of the lift ride stands for an imaginary, if momentary, ascending of the social ladder. Gabriel's desire for social improvement, his divesting of his former identity by 'hurling it deep down' is juxtaposed to the material reality of the hotel which confirms class hierarchies. More than that, Gabriel's sensation of being conveyed as opposed to 'clambering up' several flights of stairs foregrounds the 'automatic' amenities of the hotel, juxtaposing them to the physical strain sustained by the hero throughout his previous trials and tribulations. Gabriel's wandering across the European space seems to symbolically be driven to a close by this upward vertical movement within the hotel space.

In *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator*, Andreas Bernard explains the 'momentous shift [...] in the material and symbolic ordering of multistory buildings' roughly between 1890 and 1930 and cites *Hotel Savoy* as an example of how, despite the existence of the elevator, 'the ingrained, traditional hierarchy of floors remained in place' (2014: 69-70). Drawing on Bernard and emphasising the class distinction seen in the vertical hierarchy of the hotel, Emma Short also suggests that 'rooms on the upper floors' were often 'reserved for the servants of wealthy guests' (2019: 138). Gabriel quickly comes to realise that '[i]t was like the world itself, this Hotel Savoy, shining out brilliantly and pouring its lustre from all seven floors, while poverty dwelt inside in its lofty heights, and that life up there on high was the life of the downcast, buried in ethereal graves' (2013: 26). The hotel here assumes the form of a miniature world, wherein class differentiations, privilege and want are faithfully reproduced, while the idea of finding refuge from social difference by assuming false identities does not hold.

The quotidian reality of hotel life is equally dramatic; the impecunious occupants of the top floors regularly have their luggage confiscated due to debt. As the narrator accounts, 'Ignatz [the lift boy] lends money to anyone who has cases. He pays the bills of those who agree to pawn their luggage with him. The suitcases remain in their owners' rooms, locked up by Ignatz and unable to be opened' (2013: 26). With this makeshift pawnshop, which strips guests of their belongings, embedded in the hotel space, the Savoy fosters both the hope for mobility and advancement and the despair and disenchantment generated by the poverty and the indefinitely postponed trajectories of its guests. Apart from Gabriel who wishes to head for some European city, Stasia, the show girl in the room above Gabriel's, who 'performs on cheap boards before "young Alexanders" of the home-grown and the Parisian mould' (16), also hopes 'to go to Paris, and do something real, not just dance' (18). Likewise, Zwonimir Pansin, the Croat who has also arrived from Russia, 'a revolutionary from birth' (55), is to leave Savoy and has his heart set on America. Yet all of these upper-floor residents remain at the hotel to the very end, unable to initiate any kind of outwards mobility, precisely because they cannot afford it. In fact, while the more affluent guests of the lower floors are eponymous, the residents of the top floors seem to lose all individuality, a condition that is mirrored in their names being replaced by their room numbers: 'There were no names at all in the upper three floors of the hotel. The people were all known by room numbers' (35). Thus, the hotel is not only established as a

replica of the outside world that preserves social inequalities unchanged, but also as a space of impersonality and identity crisis for the unprivileged, suggesting that the realities of hotel life belie Gabriel's aspirations for personal advancement.

A salient feature of hotel life in Roth's fiction and journalism is the hotel manager, presented as the invisible force that pulls the strings of the hotel universe. In the *Savoy* it is the hotel proprietor who assumes the role of the manager. He makes his first appearance *in absentia* by way of the note that Gabriel finds posted on his door cautioning him that 'quiet is kindly requested' (2013: 6). The note is signed by the never seen Kalegyropoulos, proprietor, who remains unknown to the guests of the Savoy: 'Nobody knew him. No one had seen him' (34). It is later to be revealed that Ignatz, the elderly liftboy, and Kalegyropoulos are in fact the same person doubling in the two different hotel posts that allow him to keep a close eye on the residents. Kalegyropoulos and the hotel manager of the more polemical article 'The Patron', published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (1929) and poignantly criticising the figure of the manager, share the element of their omnipresence within the boundaries of the hotel space. Kalegyropoulos seems to be shrouded in mystery, and his existence is always surrounded by a halo of rumours about his furtive appearance and inspection of the premises; Gabriel admits that '[i]t would have been worth staying on here for Kalegyropoulos alone—I have always been attracted to mysteries, and a longer stay would definitely give me the opportunity to track down the elusive Kalegyropoulos' (2013: 48). Likewise, the patron has a habit of appearing 'very quietly in unexpected places. Suddenly he appears in a remote part of a corridor. He looks as though he has been standing there for ever [...]. Another time there he is, striding through the lobby with lowered head,' while his eyes 'like a bird's or a lizard's, swiftly and reliably take in the scenes around him' (2015d: 181). As a matter of fact, both Roth's depiction of Kalegyropoulos as a character as well as his more general physiognomic study of the patron shed light on the manager as the individual who rules the hotel with a firm hand through his invisible surveillance which makes the hotel resemble a prison.

The fact that Kalegyropoulos's message to Gabriel is about refraining from making noise is significant in that it offers a glimpse into the demands made upon guests and because it implies Kalegyropoulos's ubiquitous, surveilling and controlling presence. Matthias reads Kalegyropoulos as the an example of 'capital's power to create strategic anonymity and distance, explained in detail by Georg Simmel [in his *Philosophy of Money*], which allow for an impenetrable social hierarchy in which people become suspicious and possibly afraid of each other' (2006: 130). In a similar vein, Siegfried Kracauer's essay 'The Hotel Lobby' (1922) discusses the hotel as an inverted temple where silence is necessary: 'the observance of silence, no less obligatory in the hotel lobby than in the house of God, indicates that in both places people consider themselves essentially as equals' (1995: 181). Kracauer insists that the 'contentless solemnity of this conventionally imposed silence does not arise out of mutual courtesy, [...] but rather serves to eliminate differences' (181). Silence strips people bare of verbal expression and of vocalising their opinions and, in that sense, is a process that neutralises a space that would otherwise be a locus of rhetorical conflict that engenders people's interaction and fosters differentiated subjectivities. Kracauer argues that the silence observed in the lobby 'abstracts from the differentiating word and compels one downward into the equality of the encounter with the nothing'

(181). Silence turns the hotel residents into mute puppets whose subjectivity has been suspended but, in Kalegyropoulos's case, the eliminated differences pertain only to the poor or unprivileged residents, since the Savoy seems to abide by a double standard. Thus, the congregation composed of the unprivileged residents of the hotel is based 'on a relation to the nothing' (179), precisely because differentiation is effaced.

In detailing the figure of the hotel manager, Kracauer reads the people who frequent the lobby as the gathering of a congregation:

The impersonal nothing represented by the hotel manager here occupies the position of the unknown one in whose name the church congregation gathers. And whereas the congregation invokes the name and dedicates itself to the service in order to fulfil the relation, the people dispersed in the lobby accept their host's incognito without question. Lacking any and all relation, they drip down into the vacuum with the same necessity that compels those striving in and for reality to lift themselves out of the nowhere toward their destination. (1995: 176)

The invisibility and commanding power of Kalegyropoulos/Ignatz tie in with Kracauer's description. As an inverted temple, Kracauer's hotel replaces the communal ties of the congregation with the impersonality and disjointedness of a community that comes together on the basis of randomness. Yet—as in any hotel—there is an implicit agreement to obey the rules of the establishment mirroring the social contract. Kalegyropoulos/Ignatz is certainly 'the unknown one' whose incognito is accepted by everyone on the top floors of the Savoy, since these residents are not privileged guests who would be able to glean any information by their sheer social status or economic might. The manager embodies the 'impersonal nothing', in Kracauer's words, as he may be regarded as an empty vessel devoid of personality yet replete with power. Likewise, if the Savoy is read as a miniature *polis*, Kalegyropoulos is certainly the bearer of the invisible state power.³

The Savoy's residents find themselves in Kracauer's 'vacuum'. Gabriel, Stasia, and Zwonimir, along with Santschin, the clown, and Hirsch Fisch who dreams about lottery numbers and then sells them to customers, are all impoverished and liminal figures who remain essentially unrelated or fail to relate throughout the book. Gabriel tellingly admits to his friend Zwonimir that he 'is a loner and ha[s] no sense of community', to later add that his 'community is the residents of the Hotel Savoy' (2013: 58). Indeed, all these characters have been displaced after the disintegration of their traditional communities upon which war has wreaked havoc. Gabriel's disidentification from and identification with the hotel community is a bitter reminder of the fact that the lightheartedness of any imagined sense of transitional community through the sharing of the exilic condition cannot be achieved when the material standards are lacking. The poorer residents of the hotel are deprived of the freedom that the wealthier guests enjoy. The shallow relations formed, or even the complete unrelatedness of the characters, and the opaqueness of identity in the case of the manager, or other hotel staff, are modernist tropes that persist in hotel literature.⁴

'The Patron' returns to the figure of the hotel manager illustrating him in equally—if not more—ominous colours. Roth self-admittedly tries to enrich his description with

the 'writerly objectivity' and the 'literary sympathy, that in certain circumstances can even be expended on a louse', but his 'private heart beats [...] for the lesser beings who are given orders and who obey, obey, obey, and rarely allows [him] to feel anything but objectivity for the others who order, order, order' (2015d: 181). The hierarchy of unequal, subservient relations between the hotel staff and the patron is brought forward by the ironic conflation of manager and louse and the repetition of the image of the eternal ordering and obeying transcends the realm of salaried labour and alludes to that of military life, characterised by the imperatives of the chain of command.

While in *Hotel Savoy* the reader is explicitly told that Kalegyropoulos is Greek by way of his bearing a distinctly Greek name, 'The Patron' offers a more intricate rumination on the manager's origins: according to the text, the hotel manager '[b]orn in the Levant to Greek parents, [...] has the quick-wittedness one ascribes to Greeks and Levantines' (182). Roth's preoccupation with the national origin of the manager may be read to account for more than the sense of exilic wandering that permeates the entirety of his work. The Greek nationality as attached to the greater and more inclusive Levantine origin introduces the stereotype of eastern cunning, mystery, and exoticism. Yet Roth seems less interested in the reproduction of received ideas about nationalities and more eager to highlight the abundance of origins within the hotel space. The hotel as the meeting point and merger of different nationalities comes alive in Roth in the cases of guests and hotel employees alike. 'Arrival in the Hotel' insists on a rather long and diverse enumeration of hotel professions combined with geographical origins, and religious inclinations:

The waiter is from Upper Austria. The porter is a Frenchman from Provence. The receptionist is from Normandy. The head waiter is Bavarian. The chambermaid is Swiss. The valet is Dutch. The manager is Levantine; and for years I've suspected the cook of being Czech. The guests come from all over the world. Continents and seas, islands, peninsulas and ships, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims and even atheists are all represented in this hotel. (2015a: 157)

Roth's list, in its detailed repetition of hotel occupations and nationalities, effectively builds the atmosphere of the hotel space as contemporary Babylon and trans-cultural melting pot, while the co-existence of itinerant people with very different origins seems to emphasise the instability of borders and the unspoken forced mobility in the wake of the war.

Yet the passage also acknowledges the labouring population of the hotel, which is otherwise 'meant to be seamlessly self-effacing' (Katz 1999: 141). The description comes to a close with the observation that in the hotel people are '[f]reed from the constriction of patriotism, from the blinkers of national feeling, slightly on holiday from the rigidity of love of land' (2015a: 157). This negation of nationalism is for Roth evident on all the hotel personnel: 'Such characters they are! Cosmopolites! Students of humanity! Expert readers of languages and souls! No Internationale like theirs! They are the true internationals! (Patriotism only begins with the owners of the hotel)' (159). This part of the text seems at once celebratory and ironic bringing together the labouring population of the hotel and the 'cosmopolites'. The succinct, slogan-like, exclamatory phrases underscore the identity of the international as the only real form of belonging and the authentic form of citizenship

that is achieved solely through cosmopolitanism. Yet, in Roth, the international or cosmopolite is not a citizen of the world—as most references to cosmopolitanism would dictate—but rather a citizen of the hotel which takes the form of a cosmopolis. Patriotism solely characterises the hotel owner because of ownership itself; the owner is never a mere hotel citizen but the incarnation of a commanding power, a government system that regulates hotel life. Conversely, the hotel staff comprises hotel citizens who become for Roth representatives of national openness, understanding, and empathy.

The representation of these diverse figures in the *Hotel Savoy* highlights the dialectics of homeliness and the feeling of non-belonging that the hotel space embodies in this postwar era. Early in the novel, Gabriel ponders the coziness and friendliness of his room, finding '[e]verything homely, as in a room where you've spent your childhood, everything making for calm and comfort and warmth, as it is when you have been reunited with someone you love' (2013: 6). Especially the text's reference to childhood attentively establishes the private space of the hotel room as a sheltering cocoon that offers protection and ease. The excerpt seems to prefigure 'Arrival in the Hotel': 'Other men may return to hearth and home, and wife and child; I celebrate my return to lobby and chandelier, porter and chambermaid—and between us we put on such a consummate performance that the notion of merely checking into a hotel doesn't even raise its head' (2015a: 154). Both texts attest to a celebratory sense of homecoming for the character Gabriel and the author Roth, even though the hotel is a home-away-from-home. Gabriel is characteristically reluctant to leave his room for his wealthy cousin Alexander Böhlaug, despite the fact that Alexander offers to compensate him by paying his 'fare to Vienna, Berlin, even Paris' and in the aftermath of their negotiation, returns to his room 'as if it were a home [he]d lost and found again' (2013: 46, 52). The Polish Savoy and the unnamed hotel are thus valued for reproducing the sense of domesticity which is nevertheless to be subverted in the respective texts.

Both men, for different reasons, eventually wish to take their distance from the hotel space and the confines it imposes. After Stasia has her trunks pawned, Gabriel starts to see the establishment under a new eye; 'I no longer liked the hotel: not the suffocating laundry, not the sinister benevolence of the lift-boy, not the three floors of prisoners' (2013: 26). The character realises Ignatz's financial blackmail against the residents and acknowledges the fact that, for the unprivileged, the Savoy constitutes a debtor's prison. In this context, towards the end of *Hotel Savoy*, Gabriel understands Bloomfield's feelings, commenting that '[h]e was homesick, like me and Zwonimir' (102). His impression of his hotel sojourn has now drastically changed, conveying a sense of the erratic: 'There is a restlessness all over the hotel, in the corridor, in the afternoon tea room, and the town itself is oppressed by an unrest that wafts around with the coal dust' (109). As Zwonimir observes a couple of pages later, the Savoy 'is a rich palace, and it's also a prison', while the town 'is a poor people's grave' (113). Gabriel has failed to find the homeliness he seeks for, while economic blackmail and debt produce a gradual disillusionment with the hotel space. In fact, it is the inevitable connection between the hotel in its functions as a public space and limited economic resources that, in this case, deprive it of the homeliness of a private space.

'Leaving the Hotel', published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, registers a different disillusionment that offers an intriguing twist to the supposedly sought-after domesticity:

'I might degrade the hotel to a home if I no longer left it unless I had to. I want to feel welcome here, but not at home. I want to be able to come and go' (2015b: 185). Whereas Gabriel seems to be perennially searching for a home and his discontent derives from the Savoy losing its imaginary former sense of the home-like, in 'Leaving the Hotel', Roth is eager to protect the hotel from being 'degraded' to a home. The author has already made clear his preference for 'the cheap wallpaper, the spotless ewer and basin, the gleaming hot and cold taps' over the china, silver, children and books that other people value upon returning home (2015a: 156). Roth as hotel guest explicitly prioritises the mobility, commonality, and publicness of the hotel space highlighting the incessant alternation of guests as desirable and sincere: 'When my suitcases are gone, others will take their place. When my soap is packed away, someone else's will nestle by the basin. When I am no longer standing by the window, someone else will be. This room doesn't seek to deceive itself or you or me or anyone' (2015b: 187). I would argue that, for the author as guest, the temporariness of hotel accommodation, the impermanence of hospitality and refuge is precisely what comes across as the salient sincerity of the space. If for Gabriel the hotel space is no longer home enough, then for Roth the hotel is in dire need of protection from being devalued to the banality of the home. While the impoverished returning soldier projects his yearning for settlement onto the premises of the hotel, the journalist and author who 'lived out of two or three suitcases, and had no books, least of all his own' is content to check in and out of his hotel 'fatherland' embracing this new mode of existence (Hofmann 2013: xi, xiv). The hotel thus emerges as a protean space oscillating between the dialectical poles of the intimacy that comes with permanence and the impersonality produced by temporariness.

Roth's hotels may be read as a spatial response to the precarious roaming of male subjects, such as Gabriel, Zwonimir, and Roth himself, within postwar social, political, and geographic conditions. The end of the hotel as such in the *Hotel Savoy* closely testifies to the war that has preceded by representing violence. In Matthias's words, Gabriel leaves a hotel that is 'set on fire by the town's workers, who are in revolt' (2006: 119). When the workers invade the entrance hall throwing a grenade the building quickly catches fire and the mob storms the hotel. Matthias argues that *Hotel Savoy* shows how 'for change or revolution to take place, the monuments of the old order need to be burned to the ground' (2006: 7). The hotel burns to the ground perhaps because its unequal cosmopolis is emblematic of the failed outside world: while the wives and children of the striking workers go hungry, manufacturer Neuner 'grope[s] at the breasts of naked girls' in the hotel bar, typhoid breaks out, and the soup kitchen is closed. The final blaze that consumes the premises resembles a scale drawing of the event of the war itself. As Ulrike Zitzlsperger notes, '[t]here might be limited reason to mourn the loss of the [Austro-Hungarian] Empire, but there is not much hope that "the new" will provide anything better. After all, the highly symbolic lift-boy has actually disappeared, not died—and might always come to the fore again, representing the order of yet another regime' (2019: 472). Although Roth's other—mostly German—hotels are fortunately not destroyed, they always remain immersed in their anonymity. They come into being not as eponymous, monumental buildings, shrines to the spirit of modernity, but only through Roth's elective impression of them. The reader's insight into the hotels in the articles is necessarily mediated by the

author and his power to include facts and details or thrust them into oblivion. From the note 'About the Author' in 'The Hotel Years' we learn that not long after, '[w]hen the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, Roth immediately severed all his ties with the country' (2015e: 267). Then, for Roth, the disappearance of these latter hotels from his later work and the defiance of the enclave they constituted perhaps comes with the march towards a second World War that would again disrupt the life of his hotel communities.

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Notes

¹ Gabriel's leaning towards these metropolitan hubs of western Europe, with Paris stated as the desired destination, is perhaps indicative of his pursuit for stability given the disorder that plagues eastern Europe in the aftermath of WWI.

² Gabriel seems to designate Poland as the European frontier dismissing Russia as Eastern. Interwar Poland, or the Second Polish Republic, describes the country between the two World Wars (1918-1939). Formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, and Germany, the Polish state was re-established in 1918 until 1939, when Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany marking the beginning of World War II.

³ Krakauer and Roth's convergence in the figure of the manager as a focal point in their writings can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that they both worked for the liberal bourgeois *Frankfurter Zeitung* during the 1920s. According to Frances Mossop, Krakauer started working as a journalist and cultural critic in 1921, relocated to Berlin to become its editor in 1930, and was forced to abandon the paper in 1933 when the National Socialist party rose to power (2015: 56). Roth, who described the newspaper as 'a microcosm of Germany' (Levin 1995: 4), left for Paris in 1925 as the *Zeitung's* foreign correspondent, travelled to France, Russia, Albania, Poland, and Italy, and in 1933, he permanently fled Germany for Paris (Mossop 2015: 57, 104). In their distinct ways, both authors engage with the hotel, Roth reading it as a modern phenomenon and Krakauer performing a phenomenology of the modern with the hotel as starting point. As Thomas Y. Levin suggests, in the Weimar era, the *feuilleton* part of the newspaper, in which both authors contributed, 'took on an avant-garde function as the locus of a concerted effort to articulate

the crisis of modernity' (1995: 5). Tellingly, the newspaper also employed Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin.

⁴To offer two very distinct examples, I am here especially thinking of Arnold Bennett's 1902 *The Grand Babylon* and the false identities of Rocco the chef, Jules the head-waiter, and Miss Spencer the hotel secretary, but also the ever-watching *patronne* of the Hôtel de l'Univers, Madame Hautchamp, in Jean Rhys's 1928 *Quartet*.

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