

Literary Hotels  
International Symposium  
9 – 10 September 2021



Hybrid  
Venue: Impact Hub Athens (central Athens)

ABSTRACTS  
(following the schedule)

Thursday, September 9

10:00 – 11:30 Hotels in Times of War and Crisis

**Robbie Moore** – *Online*, University of Tasmania  
Katherine Mansfield and May Sinclair in the Wartime Grand Hotel

Hotels were increasingly surveilled in the 1910s. When war broke out, British and Continental European hotels functioned as biopolitical thresholds for registering and monitoring the official identities of aliens and citizens alike. In the U.K., hotels were mandated by a 1915 Order in Council to ascertain guests' nationalities and to keep a register of aliens; on the Continent, already sophisticated regimes of hotel surveillance were further strengthened, to expose false identities and control anonymous circulation. Transient spaces and peripatetic figures were therefore regarded with sharpened suspicion. The wartime writing of Katherine Mansfield and May Sinclair suggests that peripatetic women travelling alone were particularly suspicious figures, especially as they approached the masculine zone behind the front lines. One of Mansfield's characters, an English governess travelling alone in Germany, finds a hotel waiter who is "all eyes and ears", watching her like a spy; Sinclair uses the language of weaponry to describe "batteries of amused and interested eyes" staring at a uniformed woman in a Belgian hotel. Their sexuality has become a matter of national security. This paper focuses on these writers' negotiations of European borders, railway hotels, and requisitioned hotel-encampments during the First World War, represented in Mansfield's short fiction and Sinclair's *The Romantic* and *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium*. Their work reveals the ambivalence of the hotel as a site of leisure and rendezvous, as well as the hotel's biopolitical role as refugee camp, prison, hospital, and headquarters.

**Fiona Tomkinson** – *Online*, Nagoya University  
The Politics and Poetics of Space in Arnold Bennett's Hotels and Boarding Houses

The article explores the way in which Bennett's fiction presents the delights and challenges of inhabited space in hotels and boarding houses. I shall focus on his two hotel novels, *The Grand Babylon Hotel* and *Imperial Palace*, both modelled on *The Savoy Hotel*, London. I shall also discuss his description of a struggling Brighton boarding house in the second volume of the *Clayhanger* trilogy, *Hilda Lessways*. In contradistinction to many authors of hotel novels, Bennett focuses on hotel life from the perspective of the people running it – both owners and staff – and gives us a meticulous phenomenology of the way in which the space of a hotel is intertwined with the human body, and with its labour, frustrations, and desires.

I shall draw upon theoretical perspectives taken from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (including the concept of the verticality of a house and the psychoanalytical importance of attics and cellars), as well as upon Michel Foucault's analyses of the relationship between space and power and Hannah Arendt's definitions of work, labour, and action in *The Human Condition*, in order to show how Bennett uses the hotel to explore and expose the dynamics of human life in ways which resonate beyond the hospitality industry of his day. I conclude that his work shows a tension between a presentation of the

dream-like poetic felicities of space in the hotel and a continual awareness of the infelicities of space and the unremitting labour endured by those dedicated to serving the hospitality machine.

**Athanasios Dimakis**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

“No Longer a Hotel”: Colonial Hotel Decadence in Lawrence Durrell’s *The Alexandria Quartet*

The underexplored, precarious fate of colonial hotels in Durrell’s *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60/1962), not only sheds light on the blatant polarities that these invoke between colonized and colonizers, but also underscores the end of the British Empire. Largely set before the outbreak of World War II, Durrell’s tetralogy lays emphasis on the ambivalent position of the Alexandria Cecil, the Cairo Shepheard’s, as well as the “headquarters” of the secret British intelligence service appositely based in an unnamed hotel nicknamed “the Mount Vulture Hotel” (519). I maintain that, having anachronistically revisited the legacy of Decadence (Hext and Murray, *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* 2019), Durrell conflates the very fate of the empire with that of colonial hotels underscoring their ideological, political, and aesthetic nexus through decadence and decay. Having resorted to a regressive sequence of disintegrative forces that echo the *fin de siècle* decadent counterculture—also seeping through the pores of his dark 1938 hotel novel *The Black Book*, a byproduct of his eclectic affinities with decadent art and the Parisian Villa Seurat network (Gifford, *Personal Modernisms* 2014)—Durrell showcases how cosmopolitan colonial hotels end up being waste spaces metonymous of the disintegration of the imperial apparatus (Durrell’s “English death”): “the Mount Vulture was no longer a hotel. It had been turned into a brothel for the troops” (825). This regression to the trope of decadence and its impact on the evolution of Modernism heralds the end of the colonial grand hotels and, by extension, the end of the empire, the end of an era. The research for this presentation is supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation and is associated with the project “Hotels and the Modern Subject: 1890-1940.”

**Juanjuan Wu** – *Online*, University of Melbourne

Eastern Hotels, Modern Mobilities and Western Women in China, 1914-1924

Studies of travel and tourism undertaken beyond the metropolitan cities have so far paid scant attention to hotels as a fraught site of confrontation and negotiation on national, racial, and affective levels. This essay shifts the critical attention to modern hotels in the Far East. The emergence of modern hotels in turn-of-the-century China was intricately entwined with western power’s imperialistic penetration into the country, complicating how Anglo-English travellers navigate their hotel experiences and, more broadly, their encounters with culture, nation, and race not entirely their own. This essay takes the hotel narratives authored by Mary Gaunt (1861-1942), Ellen Newbold La Motte (1873–1961), and Grace Seton (1872–1959) as exceptional cases. Through charting emotions surrounding such a unique space, we can see that hotels are often configured as a fraught site charged with affective ambivalence. National pride, imperialist superiority, and sentiments of racism are on full display in Gaunt’s various hotel experiences. Quite to the contrary, cosmopolitan feelings, and, on some occasions, transnational affinities, are the pulling forces at work in La Motte and Seton’s narratives. The hotel, as a transitory, unstable, and liminal space, is therefore configured as both empowering and limiting in terms of these women’s negotiation of the tensions between the public and the private, Self and Other, and the national and the cosmopolitan.

### 11:45 – 13:15 The Greek Hotel

**Mathilde Pyrli**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens / ELIA–MIET

The Athenian Hotel in Transition: from Inns to Grand Hôtels, 1840-1910

This paper will selectively draw on various texts such as travel memoirs, handbooks for travellers, newspaper articles but also photography in order to highlight the evolution of the Athenian hotel between

1840 and 1910. The transition from what the Marchioness of Londonderry described as a “cold, straggling, Greek inn” to the first-class hotels facing the Palace follows closely the ongoing transformation of Athens into a modern city and host to a steadily growing number of foreign travellers. At the same time, it reflects the centrality of the hotel space in the experience of the modern, mobile subject. Athenian hotels, with their network (or safety-net) of interpreters, traveling servants, doctors, and collaborating travel agents served as westernized havens for the travellers venturing into the streets of a city still balancing between the West and the East; their public rooms functioned as meeting points between ceaselessly moving travellers and the Athenian society. This transition equally highlights the change of the idea of travel itself and the comforts, experiences, and souvenirs – mental and material – one expects to acquire. A selection of photographs will highlight the function of the hotel as an icon of modernity as well as the ongoing dialogue between some of the constitutive parts of the travelling experience: the handbook, the hotel, and photography. The research for this presentation is supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation and is associated with the project “Representations of Modern Greece in Victorian Popular Culture.”

**Efterpi Mitsi**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
George Gissing’s Grand and Modest Hotels in Late Nineteenth-century Athens

When George Gissing visited Athens in November 1889, staying there for about a month, the city had already begun to acquire the image of a European capital. At the end of the nineteenth century, Athens combined ancient monuments and new elegant buildings that included according to *Baedeker’s Greece* “several excellent hotels of the first class” affording “all the conveniences which most travellers find necessary for comfort.” Although Gissing initially stayed at one of the city’s three fanciest hotels, the Grand Hotel situated at Constitution square, he moved three days later to the much more modest Stemma (Hôtel de la Couronne), running away from the English and German tourists frequenting the Grand.

Using Gissing’s diaries and letters from Athens as a case study, I will examine the themes of displacement, exile, and alienation associated with the modern hotel dweller in a city embodying for many of the period’s travellers the opposition between antiquity and modernity. Gissing, who kept changing lodgings both in London and in his travels abroad, contrasts the timelessness of the Athenian monuments with the temporariness of hotel living and suggests through his social hyperconsciousness the ambiguity of the hotel as both a space of freedom and a space of restriction, which isolates the writer from human society and from surroundings that he finds intriguing yet unintelligible. The juxtaposition between the luxurious hotel patronized by upper-class or philistine British tourists and the unknown and inexpensive establishment sheltering the intellectual or literary traveller also finds its way into Gissing’s *Sleeping Fires*, his 1895 novella inspired by his visit to Athens. Beginning and ending in the same hotel room with a view of the Acropolis, the novella brings together the experience of hotel living and Greece under a similar sense of exile and separation. The research for this presentation is supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation and is associated with the project “Hotels and the Modern Subject: 1890-1940.”

**Polly Hember** – *Online*, Royal Holloway, University of London  
Stirring the ‘sub-aqueous memory’ in H.D.’s Hotel Mira-Mare

H.D.’s hotel modernisms act as conduits for revelation and experimentation; from the autobiographical “writing-on-the-wall” vision in a Corfu hotel bedroom recounted in *Tribute to Freud* (1985) to the fictional experience in her short story “Mira-Mare” (1934), which stirs her protagonist Alex’s “memory-in-forgetting”. This paper examines the hotel vision in “Mira-Mare”, which results in Alex’s remark that “[i]n less than a week, their lives had shaped to two lives, their separate abstract mythopoeic life and the personal concrete hotel life”. Alex’s vision takes the shape of sonic vibrations which rise up and overwhelm the body – both the formal body of the dream-like text and Alex’s embodied one, “[s]he was beating with it, was it, wrapped in the cool sheet”. Within the transitory space of the coastal Hotel Mira-Mare, a new “sub-aqueous memory” is uncovered, where ancient mythology collides with the fleeting present.

This paper will explore Alex's revelatory hotel experience in "Mira-Mare" to show how H.D. crafts the poetic space of the hotel as a site that sees the binaries between private and public, self and other, myth and reality, human and non-human, dream and consciousness, all dissolve.

**Vassilis Letsios** – *Online*, Ionian University  
Ithacas: Cavafy of Travel, Ships, Hotels

C. P. Cavafy is often associated with his dimly lit room, but departure and travel are inextricably linked to his life and poetry. In this paper, I will trace aspects of the importance of Cavafy's "Ithacas," temporary or permanent travel from the time he and his family left Therapeia to the time of his stay in Athens shortly before his death. While many recent critical works will be taken into account, I will also engage with material related to hotels and hotel culture (hotel ephemera, letterheads from hotels, diaries of hotel accommodation, receipts from hotels, notes on hotel paper, etc.); these will be primarily drawn from the collection of the Cavafy Archive. The archival material presented underscores the atmosphere, aesthetics, and poetics of temporary residence and its impact on the life, work, and critical reception of the poet.

### 14:30 – 15:30 Keynote

**Andrew Thacker** – *Online*, Nottingham Trent University  
"Rest. Stay." Life in the Hotels of Katherine Mansfield

In a late short story, "Father and the Girls", Katherine Mansfield offers a picture of a family who seem to want to avoid a static home, viewing it as a place where one sits around "doing nothing"; instead, the family prefer life "on the wing" and to be "blown over the earth" through various European locations. However, the hotel to which they arrive in the story appeals to them to "Rest. Stay", as if it offers a space in which their desire to avoid the negative connotations of "Home" can be achieved.

This paper explores the multiple hotel spaces that appear in Mansfield's short fiction, from her first published volume, mainly set in a German pension, to the many glimpses of rooms, gardens, and buildings in her other stories (such as "Pension Seguin" and "Je ne parle pas français"). It draws upon ideas of space and affect outlined in my recent book, *Modernism, Space and the City*, to understand how rooms and spaces appear alive to the characters in Mansfield's fiction. It also explores the ambiguous status of hotels as places where one stays but is still mobile, drawing upon the work on Emma Short in *Mobility and the Hotel in Modern Literature*. In this sense the affective pull of the space of the hotel can be linked to Mansfield's own status as a restless traveller around Europe after she left New Zealand in 1908. Like her fellow colonial outsider, Jean Rhys, it often seems that hotel spaces are living characters in Mansfield's fiction, replete with multiple affects.

### 15:45 – 17:15 Hotel theories and designs

**John Hoffmann**, Philipps University Marburg  
"Grand Hotel Theory"

My paper will reassess the trope of the Grand Hotel Abyss as it was formulated by Georg Lukács, comparing its original statement in the *Destruction of Reason*, where the hotel is described as "modern [modernes]" rather than "Grand," with its later deployment in *The Theory of the Novel*, where it is used to deride the putative nihilism of the West German intelligentsia. Engaging with recent scholarship that challenges Lukács's reputation as a uniquely dogmatic Marxist, I will examine how the metaphor of the Grand Hotel exemplifies what he calls in his preface to *Theory* the "fusion of 'left' ethics and 'right' epistemology"—that is, the fusion of ethical radicalism with a conservatism born of material luxury and political privilege. How

do the valences of this fusion change when the referent shifts from Schopenhauer to the West German intelligentsia? Why is the modern novel as it was theorized by Lukács in 1915 a significant vehicle for this left/right fusion? By analyzing *The Destruction of Reason* and *The Theory of the Novel*, I will aim to establish the metaphor of the Grand Hotel Abyss as a topos for understanding the tension between left ethics and right epistemology in one of modernism's most trenchant critics.

**Rajesh Heynickx**, KU Leuven

The Hotel Lobby as a Vortex in Habsburg Vienna

During the interwar hotels became sites of transit and exchange. Standing at the crossroads of multiple lives, they entailed a crisscross of destinies and unexpected encounters. To a large extent, the lobby, the space where constantly new guests were checking in, became part and parcel of an endless sea of becoming. Through canalizing streams of luggage and tourists, they generated an outspoken experience of modernity. As Siegfried Kracauer wrote in his iconic essay "The Hotel Lobby", people here vanished "into an undetermined void". Lingered in a groundless distance from both the everyday and one's own past, they were immersed in a peripatetic universe.

In the recent past, the fluidity of the hotel lobby as a "home away from home", and especially its interplay of public and private worlds, has triggered numerous reflections from many theoretical perspectives. Yet, little attention has been paid to how the lobby acted as a vortex, a place of unending movement. In my contribution, I will zoom in on lobbies in Vienna from exactly that perspective, dissecting how modernity's turbulent flow was perceived and produced in "the city of paradoxes" (Janik and Toulmin).

To do so, I will follow two paths. Firstly, I will pay attention to those who linked the disruptive newness of the lobby to the dissolution of a mythical fabric, namely the Austro-Hungarian Empire, through the work of Joseph Roth and Peter Altenberg. Secondly, through the work of Robert Musil, I will unpack the idea that the revolving door - a "machine" invented for hotels at the end of the nineteenth century - influenced the thoughts and actions complicating the pursuit of wholeness.

**Bettina Matthias**, Middlebury College

Performing Belonging in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Hotels and the Case of Rich Americans

As meeting places for an international elite, Western upscale hotels from the late nineteenth century onward became closely tied to modes of American social stratification. Not "blue blood" but financial prowess was now the access criterion for people to be part of the upper class in beautiful hotels, and consequences for the integrity of "good society" were significant. Many upscale establishments instituted rigid conduct codes in order to make sure that no unwanted intruder compromised the socio-economical profile of a hotel. Flaunting "conspicuous wealth and consumption" (Th. Veblen) was indispensable for a guest to confirm belonging. Hotel narratives from the time, ranging from Stefan Zweig's to Henry James's, reflect this social code and its importance for a hotel's and its guests' distinction. However, while mastery of such codes could confirm belonging in American hotels, some European literary hotel narratives of the time show a more complex picture. In these, hotel societies with European "aristocratic sensibilities" were often not ready to accept even the most code-abiding American "arriviste", and the idea of a transnational elite hotel culture was undermined by a form of cultural nationalism directed against a perceived takeover of European upper-class culture by American money.

**Bruce Peter** – *Online*, Glasgow School of Art

The Prototype Jet Age Hotels

This paper will focus upon new American-financed international business and tourist hotels of the latter-1940s, analyzing these as transcultural spaces of modernity on the cusp of the jet age. It will reflect upon the origins of the International Style and its dissemination through hotel architecture, interior design, and promotion to represent a new post-war vision of America as a technologically progressive and powerful

nation. It will show how in developing nations, the International Style was quickly adopted for hotel design by American-trained local architects and that in the Caribbean, new hotel resorts were planned as symbols of modernity and nationhood. It focuses on the Statler hotel in Washington D.C., designed by Richard Smith and William B. Tabler of Holabird, Root, and Burgee and completed in 1943, which was mainly aimed at accommodating governmental and business guests, on the Hotel Jaragua at Ciudad Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, completed in 1946 to a design by Guillermo González Sánchez, and the Caribe Hilton at San Juan in Puerto Rico by Osvaldo Toro and Miguel Ferrer, which opened in 1949. The latter two were tropical resort hotels for American tourists arriving by air. These three hotels, it will be shown, were important precedents for American and international post-war hotel design more generally.

### 18:00 – 19:30 Hotel Holidays

**Shawna Ross** – *Online*, Texas A&M University

A Landslide at the Pension Bertolini: Anti-Tourism and Liberal Humanism in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*

This presentation reads the Italian pension of *A Room with a View* as a transformative space whose very failure to offer authentic Italian experiences paradoxically effects transcultural awakenings. A rhetoric of anti-tourism—whereby tourists claim they are not “just” tourists—circulates in what the narrator describes as a Bloomsbury boarding house, whose grotesque displacement to Florence forces an unwonted level of national self-awareness among its British guests. The Pension Bertolini's disappointing parochialism stokes Lucy's desire for new cultural experiences into a force powerful enough to effect her maturation. Though Lucy never gains access to authentic Italian culture, it is the jarring experience of displacement itself that precipitates her transformation into a Forsterian liberal humanist. Yet, by revealing the limitations of Lucy's new anti-bourgeois orientation, Forster exposes a gap in his earlier conceptualizations of liberal humanism—a problem I explore by examining three dramatic moments of displacement during which the earth literally falls away from characters. Through these moments of chance mobility, Forster's novel supplements the insufficient self-determination of his characters with the earth's physical interventions and offers no cross-cultural engagement to counterbalance the figurative groundlessness that he idealizes. Still, the book offers one potential replacement: the artistic eye, dramatized in the novel's word-paintings, which arrange multiple spaces into foreground and background by way of textual and visual media, provides a model for overcoming the gaps in Forster's early liberal humanism.

**Allan Pero** – *Online*, University of Western Ontario

“Found his anxiety frothing”: Denton Welch's *In Youth Is Pleasure*, and the Hotel as Camp Allegory

Denton Welch's novel of a summer holiday is marked both by anxiety and liminality. The space of the hotel, itself a site of transit and transience, becomes an allegorical one, as Orvil Pym, the adolescent boy on school vacation, is engaged in a psychic battle for control over his life, his grief over the death of his mother, and his future. The anxiety, shame, and humiliation he experiences at virtually every turn are punctuated by moments of intense pleasure, pleasure produced by aesthetic experience and the vagaries of fantasy. In sum, the perspective from which Pym encounters this liminal world is a Camp one. In Welch's novel, objects and sensations assume virtually the status of characters; objects form a cosmos of ornament, in which glittering worlds can be discovered in winking surfaces, whilst dark enjoyments are promised in the ruins, grottos, and even the violent grotesquerie that surround and inform his experience of the hotel and its surroundings. His tarrying with danger is intrinsic to his Camp aesthetic, one that is melancholic, but not despairing. As the novel shows us, the liminal space of the hotel and its environs present for Pym—theatrically, sensuously—the idea that his future exists, and that it is one worth fighting for, but the future is neither a utopic nor dystopic foregone conclusion. From a Camp perspective, *In Youth Is Pleasure* shows the struggle of making one's future possible and how theatricality and excess inform the enjoyment

of that struggle. This novel, in its Camp evocation of the confusions and anxieties of youth, explores spaces that invite us to love our shame—the shame of failure, of mortality, of loss, and ruin.

**Joel Hawkes** – *Online*, University of Victoria

A Performance of the Hotel Welcome (1925-1926), and its Remains in Mary Butts’s “House Party”

The Hotel Welcome, in Villefranche on the French Riviera, is today something of a shrine to the many modernists who gathered there in the 1920s to write, paint, dance, and party – a site of many performances. My paper takes The Hotel Welcome beyond a site of performance and proposes a re-reading of the Hotel as performance art – a multimedia and interdisciplinary performance that takes place (is at its peak) between 1925 and 1926. Figures like Jean Cocteau not only participate, but guide and record the performance, which manifests through various art forms on the site, with these synthesized through a language of movement in Cocteau’s and other authors’ work.

Mary Butts’s short story, “The House Party,” is part of the multimedia performance of the Hotel, and town. I use this story to help track the performance of the Hotel, but I also explore the story as an attempt to record the performance of 1925-26. The story can be read as the *remains* of a performance, but also as a text that aspires to be performance, breaking free from its “unmoving” condition of text and as the remains of a fleeting piece of performance art. Butts’s short story is informed by occult, ritual, and queer performatives, takes inspiration from Nijinska’s ballet, *The House Party* (title for its London debut, 1925) and responds to William Blake’s poem, “The Crystal Cabinet” with its dancing youth. The story, like a ballet composed of different art forms, captures something of the embodied performance of the Hotel Welcome, highlighting the multiplicity of this performance of place and the resulting spectrality: a modern (art) form that resists easy definition.

**Amy Foley** – *Online*, Providence College

The Monotonous New in Kafka’s Hotel *Diaries*

In *Amerika*, Franz Kafka depicts the Occidental Hotel as a place of frantic and idealized American hyper-mechanized bureaucracy. The politics and social dynamics of the hotel become, for Karl Rossmann, as unpredictable as they are mechanized. At first glance, Kafka’s American hotel contrasts sharply with the author’s early experiences in European hotels between 1911 and 1912 while travelling with Max Brod. While staying in hotels of Paris, Milan, Leipzig, and Jungborn among many others, Kafka notes awkward encounters with staff and other boarders, his irritation with Brod and disappointment in his attempts to meet women, as well as the monotony of travelling from one supposedly distinct place to the next. Various acts of anti-Semitism and news of rapidly spreading cholera outbreaks across Italy are met by Kafka in his travel diaries with the same dull and unaffected tone of reportage. Kafka complains about interruptions to his writing as he does throughout his diary entries while at home. His note-taking also takes on a celebratory stance on the few days he reports his concentrated writing with Brod in a hotel. Though we have many fictive European modernist representations of hotel travel, Kafka’s non-fiction *Diaries* describes hotel modernism in the context of long-term continental travel. Facing a future series of unending and monotonous hotel encounters produces a style of sporadic monotony in Kafka’s note-taking shaped by expressions of boredom, disappointment, indifference, and restlessness. Hotel hopping means constantly travelling to locations which are never quite new. Central to this project is how long-term shifting hotel experience affects Kafka’s writing and how his diaries function for the writer in that experience.

**Friday, September 10**

**10:00 – 11:30 Crime à la Moderne: Memory, Perception, and Mobility in Hotel Crime Narratives**

**Caius Dobrescu** – *Online*, University of Bucharest

The Hotel at the Edge of The Abyss: Modernities, Mobilities, and Mysteries in R. G. Waldeck's *Athene Palace* (1942)

Rosie Goldschmidt (1898-1982) was a Jewish Catholic writer with a PhD in sociology from the University of Heidelberg, whose third husband was the German count Armin von Waldeck. In the wake of the 1940s, she was the press correspondent in Bucharest for several American and Canadian journals and distilled this experience in the novel *Athene Palace: Hitler's "New Order" Comes to Rumania* (1942), published under the pen-name R. G. Waldek. The title alludes to a Bucharest hotel famous at that time all over the Balkan and Middle East area, in which she lived during her entire stay in Romania. In the novel, the hotel represents a seething hub of international espionage, and also an allegory of a Europe caught between paralysing fear and flamboyant irresponsibility before the flashing expansion of the Nazi power.

I will analyse the fictional instrumentalization of the Athene Palace settings against the complex interplay between: a) the perception of modern mobilities and habitation, a modern imaginary of cosmopolitan globalization, and an Orientalized vision of the Balkans; b) the spatial representation of the tension between totalitarianism and democracy, realism and utopianism, quintessential to modernity; and, last but not least, c) narrative techniques reminiscent of the 1940s American noir that intimately mixed detective and espionage, and fictional- and true-crime elements.

**Sudipto Sanyal** – *Online*, Techno India University

Grand Guignol Hotels and the Supermodernity of Noir

Anonymous, solitary, repetitive, amnesiac – the destiny of hotel rooms suffuses the very structures of feeling of noir, and hotels are ubiquitous in noir. The noir tendency, in fact, can often be seen to occupy the space of the hotel, from the Bates Motel in *Psycho* (1960) and the McKittrick and Empire Hotels in *Vertigo* (1958) to the titular *Hôtel du Nord* in Marcel Carné's film (1938) and the succession of motor lodges and boarding houses (to say nothing of the Prairie Plaza Motel) in Nicholas Ray's *They Live By Night* (1948).

More than just a literary or film form, noir, in Paula Rabinowitz's words, is "an avenue of social and political expression"; it is "America's pulp modernism" itself. Is the hotel the quintessential noir space, a place that embodies everything we associate with the noir sensibility? Is it a "place" at all? In Marc Augé's formulation, the hotel is a "non-place," a location "where people are always, and never, at home" – the protagonist's room in Vienna's famed Hotel Sacher is invisible in Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949) and barely visible at the Great Western Hotel in Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929). "The non-place," writes Augé, "is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society."

This paper will examine the noir hotel – or hotel noir, as the case may be – as a non-place, imbued with an excess of the modern, that creates an anachronistic supermodernity (Augé's term for our contemporary historical conjuncture) within modernism. Is it a coincidence that the true flowering of the non-places of seedy hotels, motels, motor lodges, tourist homes and boarding houses, linked by the non-place of the highway, occurs at the peak of America's modernist moment? This paper will therefore theorise the noir hotel – in literature and film, but also in Depression-era photography and celebrity culture – not simply as an *heterotopia* (that Foucauldian *other* space) but, more significantly, as an *heterochronia*, a trope and a location wherein postmodernity glimmers into modernist paradigms to establish profound links with our present supermodernity.

**Somnath Basu** – *Online*, Ramananda College

Inconveniences: Hotels and Crime in the Works of Agatha Christie

"In most hotels on the Continent, he had always found, everyone spoke English, so why worry?"

(Christie, "The Stymphalean Birds"). Agatha Christie's novels and short stories feature hotels of all kinds—from the inns of the English countryside to luxurious resorts scattered across the Mediterranean. This paper will attempt to examine the way in which criminal activity is depicted in these hotels, with



especial emphasis on how the geographical location of the hotel is integrated into the acts of felony and detection. On the one hand, the suspiciously timeless Bertram's Hotel in London acts as a cover for a series of nefarious but daring crimes plotted by a shrewd Englishwoman; on the other hand, the various Continental resorts, such as the nameless hotel on Lake Stempa in "The Stymphalean Birds", the mountain-top resort in Rochers Neiges ("The Erymanthean Boar"), and the Ritz Savoy in Ramat (*Cat Among the Pigeons*) appear to be settings for crimes of deceit more strongly associated with non-British criminals (though that often does not turn out to be the case).

Through an analysis of the chronotope of the hotel as found in a selection of these stories, this paper will attempt to demonstrate how these stories attempt to construct their own historical modernity in a world where the British Empire is still stable and where a victorious Britain (after the First World War) can afford to be complacent about imperial, and by extension moral, superiority.

**Nikos Filippaios** – *Online*, University of Ioannina

"The Most Original Hotel of the World": Memory, Crime and Tourism in Giannis Maris' *The Hands of Aphrodite* (1963)

The subject of my presentation is the crime novel *The Hands of Aphrodite*, written by Giannis Maris (1916-1979) and published in 1963, as a "roman feuilleton" in the Athenian newspaper *Evening Post*. The novel was republished in its entirety in 1972 and in 2013. *The Hands of Aphrodite* is influenced by the trial and the execution of Adolf Eichmann, one of the leaders of the Nazi's Holocaust, by the state of Israel in 1961. The novel's plot is set in the early 1960s, when imaginary members of the international underworld seek the gold that the German Nazis stole from the Greek Jews during the German Occupation (1941-1944) and then hid in a secret location. The protagonist of Maris's crime novels, inspector Giogros Mpekias closely follows their steps, in cooperation with an officer from the Israeli intelligence service. All the persons involved in the plot travel around Greece during spring and summer and stay in hotels and motels, usually choosing touristic places.

Drawing on cultural geography, memory studies, and semiotics of crime fiction, I will study the novel's hotels, as "complex, culturally contested and ideologically laden liminal spaces", where "dominant discourses of space and wider hegemonic socio-cultural relations are resisted, contested or affirmed" (Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan 2006). In particular, I will focus on the hotels as spaces in which the traumatic memory of the 1940s (the German Occupation and the Holocaust in Greece) is deeply intertwined with location. However, this memory was in constant interaction with politics, mentality, and ideology, while the aforementioned locations experienced a wave of intense touristification during the 1950s-1960s. To sum up, I am interested in the novel's hotel spaces as representations of the historical, cultural, and ideological dimensions of memory during the early 1960s in Greece.

### 11:45 – 13:00 Hotel Rooms and Forms

**Josie Cray** – *Online*, Cardiff University

"This room growing around me like a poisoned web": Submerged in the hotel bedrooms of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* and Anaïs Nin's *House of Incest*

Emma Short notes how the hotel bedroom is situated between the "public space of the city street and the private space of the home [...] [and] is uniquely placed to offer sanctuary from both" (2019). This paper troubles the idea of the hotel room as a place of "sanctuary", examining Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) and Anaïs Nin's *House of Incest* (1936), two experimental texts that depict the hotel bedroom as a location which threatens the boundaries of the self by reconfiguring the relationship between body and space through violence, excess, and transformation.

Sara Ahmed writes that "bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit" (2006). Taking Ahmed's notion of "submergence" as a starting point for rethinking the relationship between

the hotel bedroom and gendered subjectivity, and foregrounding surrealist images and motifs, I argue that the hotel bedrooms of the two texts submerge their protagonists' bodies in the excessive features of the space. Firstly, I focus on *Nightwood*, examining Barnes's lingering gaze on Robin's body, drawing attention to the excess of visual information and revealing the porous boundary between space and self. I then examine *House of Incest*, arguing that the narrator's reaction to the violent threat of her bedroom is to cross into "the interiority of psychic space" (Thacker 2019). I propose that in reading these texts together, far from a space of "sanctuary", the hotel room becomes a space of excessive movement, where bodies are in a state of flux and transformation.

**Christina Mirza** – *Online*, St. Xavier's College

A Room with a View: Vision and Experiment in the Poetry of Charlotte Mew and Hope Mirrlees

Developing the premise that a distinctively modernist vision was facilitated by the tourist gaze of the alienated poetic sensibility, this paper examines the construction of the modernist gaze of two British women poets, Charlotte Mew (1869-1928) and Hope Mirrlees (1887-1978), whose experimental poetry was grounded in the hotel as a site of experience and production. The aesthetics of a modernist room with a view encompasses the philosophical gaze and framed reverie of the traveller-poet as hidden contemplator. During the poets' experimental travels in France, the hotel room became a space of refuge and dream, discovery, transformation, and loss. Representing a topography of intimate being, this felicitous space of memory and creative solitude is a metaphor for the artistic mind. An examination of the hotel locations and window views behind Mew's France poems, particularly "The Fête" (1914), and Mirrlees's avant-garde "Paris: A Poem" (1919) reveals how the hotel room with a view formed the poets' modernist eye by shaping their perceptions of the city and their constructions of reality. The vision and visuality of the window, vantage point and *parergon* characteristic of the poet as painter, fostered an artistic technology of seeing comparable with the visual practices and techniques of Impressionist and Modernist painters, and both Mew and Mirrlees transformed the motifs and stories of their views into experimental techniques of framed representation and narration.

**Sonakshi Srivastava** – *Online*, Indraprastha University

A Room for (N)one: An Enquiry into the Aesthetics of Hotel in *Chowringhee*

"He that goes soonest has the least to pay" (A.C Maffen). The fictional works of Bengali writer Sankar are symptomatic of the Indian modernist condition, characterized by bouts of fragmentation and alienation. In his popular novel *Chowringhee* (translated into English by Arunava Sinha), a great deal of action takes place within a limited spatio-temporal co-ordinate, mapped within a hotel. The hotel serves as the springboard of my enquiry into the aesthetics of Indian modernity and hotel in the novel.

A hotel can be understood as a liminal space – neither home, nor totally alien. It serves as a sight and a site that disrupts the notions of the idea of home. With a sustained emphasis on surveillance, and lack of privacy, the hotel emerges as a soft spot that seems to exemplify the condition of modern man – one who is not at home. The paper is an attempt to navigate through the various racial, caste, class, and gender tensions that come to the fore and highlight the changing face of post-Independence India: the promises of "modernity", and how these liminal tensions work out in the liminal space of the hotel.

### 14:30 – 15:45 Interwar Hotels and Urban Mobilities

**Ulrike Zitzlsperger** – *Online*, University of Exeter

Life and Work in Interwar "Cathedrals of Modernity"

Hotels and department stores in literature of the 1920s and 1930s are not just prominent settings for narratives, but reflect patterns of everyday work and leisure experiences. In both institutions, we encounter

an “invisible” workforce; both play on hierarchies and traditions within a rigidly organized system. Hotels and department stores capitalize on facets of modern consumerism, and they integrate the traditional themes of arrival and belonging, on the one hand, and departure and death, on the other. This presentation focuses on two Austrian writers whose success-story began in 1920s Berlin: Vicki Baum (1888-1960) and Joseph Roth (1894-1939). Baum’s novel of 1929, *Menschen im Hotel / Grand Hotel* established her reputation at home and abroad. In emigration, she published *The Big Sell-Off / Der große Ausverkauf* (1937) which is based on the workings of an American department store. Hotels also feature in numerous Roth novels, but here the focus is on a sequence of seven *feuilletons* he published in 1929, titled *Hotelwelt / Hotel World*. In the same year he published “Das ganz große Warenhaus”/ “The really large Department Store”. Baum and Roth pay attention to “ordinary people” and their daily lives in the metropolitan “Cathedrals of Modernity”: employees make hotels and department stores work, even though the authors grant them differing levels of influence. With a focus on employees, this article explores how the strong symbolic value of hotels and department stores serves to make the implications of an otherwise elusive “modernity” more tangible.

**Chryssa Marinou**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
Joseph Roth’s Hotels in the 1920s: The Displaced Male Subject after WWI

The paper comparatively examines a 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*, constitute temporary and contingent spaces that only seemingly relieve the perennial roaming of the novel’s post-war subjects who consistently remain in a state of 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. The research for this presentation is supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation and is associated with the project “Hotels and the Modern Subject: 1890-1940.”

**Anne Reynes-Delobel**, Aix-Marseille University  
Heterogeneous Spaces in Provisional Relations: Hotel Life and Transnational Magazines in the 1920s

This paper aims at examining the role of the hotel phenomenon in expatriate modernism in the 1920s, and particularly in the creation of the little magazines. As evidenced in the correspondence, biographies, stories, and books by the editors of and contributors to the magazines which overlapped through the decade (including *Broom*, *Secession*, *This Quarter*, *Tambour*, and *transition*), the hotel was a breeding ground for the type of multi-author, cultural production these magazines aimed to achieve across national borders and over vast distances. By adopting a transnational approach and by drawing from works of fiction, biographies, and archival material, this paper will focus on the way the hotel both facilitated and complicated tangled networks of personal cooperation and collective intellectual exchanges. In particular, it will analyze how the reinvention of an American literary idiom fostered a complex form of “hospitality” to the “foreign” which was grounded in the highly unstable and yet rigid social order of hotel life. It will further dwell on the quest of a sort of collective impersonality based on a phenomenon of transpersonalization and engagement with spectrality which help deepen our understanding of hotel modernism.

## 16:15 – 17:30 Ephemeral Hotels

**Emma Short** – *Online*, Durham University

“[T]he hotel story he made up”: Hotel Life, Death, and Work in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

James Joyce once famously remarked that one of his main aims in *Ulysses* (1922) was “to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (Budgen, 1934). Following this declaration of topographical intent, critics have since embarked upon the considerable and ongoing project that is mapping the routes and locations of *Ulysses*. Though there are at least ten named hotels in the novel, this key space of modernity has been strikingly absent from this work, and the novel has also thus far been largely overlooked in emerging criticism on the hotel in modernism. This is despite the centrality of the hotel within *Ulysses*: the bar of the Ormond Hotel stands at the novel’s literal centre in “Sirens”. In this paper, I consider the ways in which, in this novel that celebrates the quotidian, and which strives to reveal “the marvellous latent in ordinary living” (Kiberd, 2009), the hotel functions as an exemplary space of the everyday. Far from the illusory grandeur of the grand hotels of modernity, the hotel in *Ulysses* is firmly situated in normality. It is wholly representative of the lower-middle class inhabitants of the novel, and offers them stable employment. Reading it as a space of work, of birth, and of death, this paper repositions the hotel in *Ulysses* as a vital part of the intricate fabric of everyday existence woven by Joyce.

**Iro Filippaki**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Hotel Time and Impatience in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*

Hotel spaces are constantly in-between movement and stasis, progress and tradition, exclusion and inclusion, and residence and homelessness; this in-betweenness is punctuated by feelings of anticipation, waiting, and sometimes even feelings of “paralysis and hopelessness” (Short, 2019), experienced by its temporary inhabitants (Tallack, 1998). In many cases, literary representations of waiting in hotel rooms or lobbies became *waiting out* a social or personal crisis, thus infusing the space with feelings of impatience for an uncertain future. The familiarity of the hotel became a steady landmark that authors employed to provide their characters with temporary relief from everyday personal and social crises, marking the hotel not only as a non-place (Augé, 1992), but as a different temporality altogether. This paper explores impatience and modernist time in hotel scenes of Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* (1912). I argue that the performative impatience of Aschenbach is the central element of the narrative workings of what is called here ‘hotel time,’ bearing affinities with “trauma time” (Edkins 2003) and “queer time” (Halberstam 2005). Ultimately, the case is made for impatience as an operative affect of modernist time.

**Tyler T. Schmidt** – *Online*, Lehman College, City University New York

White Women & Cheap Hotels

Elizabeth Bishop’s lesser-known hotel poems and Ann Petry’s novel *The Narrows* provide a meeting place to critique the Harlem Hotel as a microcosm of both white privilege and commodified blackness. Both writers, shaped by segregated America, stress the material conditions of the hotel: “cheap,” in the neglected parts of the city, and in need of comfort or care. My paper explores the ethics of interracial intimacies and the articulations of white womanhood contained in these two texts. While not exactly a Marxist reading of Petry’s and Bishop’s hotel vignettes, my discussion of race and erotics in the modernist hotel is not negligent of the questions of economy and racialized labor raised by these post-WWII writers. The presentation takes residence in these “cheap hotels” in order to engage the racial politics of this affective

and manual labor but also to critique many modernist fantasies about the hotel as utopia, as escape, as liminal possibility.

**17:45 – 18:45 Keynote**

**Vassiliki Kolocotroni**, University of Glasgow  
Hotel Trouble

This paper will revisit the hotel as a site of trouble. My approach will entail going beyond the matter of plot contingency, that is, of the statistical fact that with a hotel's (transient) residents may come (transient) troubles; or indeed that hotel visitors may be actively looking for trouble in residing there. Though central to the hotel experience in modernity, the narrative of crisis and social mobility and transformation, achieved or thwarted, does not exhaust or fully account for the kinds of methodological trouble I have in mind. Beyond the subjective features of the "hotel consciousness" (Paul Fussell) or the national and cultural imaginary of the "hotel spirit" (Henry James) and the social anthropology of hotel types (Norman S. Hayner, Joseph Roth), lies a repertoire of tropes that make of the hotel a site of cognitive, personal or political trouble. These range from the dialectical image of ruined Paris hotels, construed by Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*, to the game of lost and recovered love crystallised in the view of the windows of Marcel Proust's Grand Hotels, the vertiginous, uncanny pursuit of the ghosts of history in hotels fashioned by W. G. Sebald, Ann Quin and D. M. Thomas, and the dangerous affect of willful acts of self-effacement in the hotel work of Jean Rhys, Sylvia Plath, and Sophie Calle. This presentation is associated with the Research Project "Hotels and the Modern Subject, 1890-1940", funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation.