Manhattan’s Grand Hotels as the “Transient City”
Development of Midtown 1890’s-1960’s

E.B White’s foreword to *Here is New York*, self-reflects the struggle to accurately present New York as “the reader will certain observations no longer true of the city”, attributing them as effected by the “passage of time and the swing of the pendulum”. ¹ In an effort to mentally comprehend the city, White identifies three distinctive and simultaneously existing New York Cities, each created from the perspective and actions of different populations. The first New York belongs to its natives who find it easier to accept the city’s scope and chaos. The second New York belongs to the commuting masses that “devour it like locusts each day and are spat out each night”. The third New York belongs to its infinite settlers who preemptively declare it their “city of final destination”. These pioneers from all over the world mentally and physically engage in urban (re)-creation, transforming their restlessness into a source for own and their city’s vitality. The term transient is a combination of people behind the drives and impulses behind the second and third New York Cities. He or she is the city’s other, non-native, or native in process whose narrative is reflective of the city’s cultural and economic majesty. The term transient city is a reference to the city’s maze of burgeoning terminals, stops, transportation lines,

and underground corridors that are used daily by commuters, tourist, and natives alike, but also
to the mass of human bodies that wield their own cultural and economic viabilities.

Manhattan’s Grand Hotel: The ‘Transient City’ was inspired by the Chelsea Hotel located
on 23rd Street, a historic hotel noted for sheltering and fostering New York’s avant-garde,
radical, and countercultural figures over the decades. It probably holds the record of being one of
the most mentioned ‘places I love’ about America/New York/New York City/Manhattan in the
entire canon of published rock music. My original thesis of defining hotels establishments as
incubators of underground culture was dashed by a lack of reliable primary sources. I later found
it opened in 1884 as a co-operative apartment designed in the Victorian Gothic Queen Anne
style, explaining its characteristic wrought-iron balconies, but learning all those details made me
contemplate the reason behind my fascination.

Eventually, my research led me away from Hotel Chelsea’s bohemian commune and
uptown where I analyzed the Manhattan’s first wave of residential hotel development from late
1890’s to 1910. This initial wave starts with the completion of the Waldorf-Astoria in 1897 on
32nd St and included the Algonquin on 44th St (1902), the Ansonia on 73nd St (1904), and the
second Plaza Hotel located on 59th St (1905). Their development spurred new interests in
interior design and art, established mediums between commercial forces and architecture, and
most notably challenged normative notion of urban domesticity and public community. Although
their histories were quickly turned into popular myths, their emergence in Midtown (32nd to 45th
St) alluded to people and business within the city’s boundaries during the turn of the 20th
century. These residential grand hotels also gleaned a distinctive status from the concurrent
office skyscraper, as their respective architects, designers, and managers serviced fantastical
luxuries to residents and select guests. Together these unique residential hotels and related
apartment hotels units provided New York with a malleable “grand hotel” template, which over time became historically reimaged and socially redefined.

The second wave of grand hotel development spanned roughly from 1910 to 1930. During these years, the city’s two main railroad companies peaked in commercial and economic success. The Pennsylvania Railroad and the NY Central Railroad and Hudson River Companies influenced Manhattan’s landscape through the construction of visually compelling and elaborate terminals. Pennsylvania Station (1911) and Grand Central Terminal (1913) carried the developing capital for Manhattan’s second wave of grand hotels. [The Commodore (42nd St), the Biltmore (43rd and 44th St), the Roosevelt (45th St), and the Pennsylvania (34th St)]. These four railroad hotels housed the city’s new transient demographic of the white middle class into Manhattan’s Midtown region. Marketed and designed to house a certain transient population, this second wave of grand hotels achieved a unique level of status by coordinating their physical relationship with Manhattan’s expansive commercial landscape. Furthermore this second wave catalyzed Midtown’s diverse commercial development confirming the region with a visually distinct skyline.

From 1930 to 1945, New York underwent a period of rethought and crisis. The Great Depression economically paralyzed Manhattan’s rampant expansion with a sweeping halt on commercial construction. Additionally, the city’s active involvement in global events like the 1939 World’s Fair and later World War II resulted in circumstances that upended the grand hotel’s traditional roles. These two events are key for new interjecting transient groups from curious sightseers to throngs of uniformed Allied soldiers into the heart of New York City. In response, the city’s grand hotels consolidated with larger commercial organizations to maximize the economic potential in these new demographics. This economic cooperation proved vital for
the city’s grand hotels as their concerned developers, managers, and architects coalesced to form valid civic and political units.

In 1943, Hotelier Conrad Hilton from New Mexico purchased the Plaza Hotel and Waldorf-Astoria, marking a symbolic death for Manhattan’s grand hotel model. In 1964, the Hilton NY opened on 63rd and 6th Avenue, recognizing itself as a revisit of the pre-WWII ‘grand hotel’ model. Despite it public furor, the NY Hilton as an attempt to ‘revisit’ the grand hotel was controversial.

While Prof. Sandoval Strauz’s *Hotel: An American History* provides extensive research on early American hotels, and Prof. Paul Groth’s *Living Downtown: A History of Residential Hotels* discusses hotel life through San Francisco’s gritty SRO (Single Room Occupancy), neither touches on the hotel’s vanguard role in 20th century development of American cities. New York’s grand hotels reflected the surging tides of Manhattan’s commercial emergence from the 1890’s to the mid 1960’s. I have found Max Page’s *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan* helpful in thinking critically about how the dialectical uptown, downtown, and the framework behind the historiography of New York. The anthology of essays, *Inventing Times Square* has been essential in the development of my thesis boundaries and narrative, as clarifies the creation of enclosed urban fantasy, through the development of mass commercial culture. *The New York Times* and other New York related periodicals, journals, and, clippings have served as the main bulk of my sources. Manhattan’s Grand Hotel and The ‘Transient City’ is a cultural history of how the grand hotels from the 1890’s reflect Midtown’s progression into commercial and industrial blocs, and the hotel’s successive development in Great Depression, World War II, and the 1950’s.
New York City’s post-Civil War hotels: Manhattan’s Social and Geographic Landscape

The city’s merchants involved in maritime trade and shipbuilding sponsored Manhattan early hotels. Urban merchants that incorporated Manhattan with larger network of trade routes also fostered the urban hotel as prime models of their commercial enterprise, designed for regional boosterism and aimed to shape civic pride. Manhattan’s mid 19th century hotels coincided with the development of lower Broadway’s store known for their wealthy women customers. Owned by millionaire department store founder A.T Stewart, the Metropolitan on Broadway and Prince recast the urban hotel’s identity when in 1852 city restaurateur William Niblo constructed an adjacent opera house for three thousand, a landscaped pleasure garden, and a second floor concert-ballroom. Niblo’s Garden revolutionized the hotels amenities by providing elite leisure within a high-class establishment for travelers.

Part One: Introduction, 1890-1930: Grand Hotel (Residential, Terminal City, Apartment,]

New York City’s landscape expanded both vertically and horizontally from 1890’s to 1930, to successfully incorporate the residential and transient grand hotel developments into its boundaries. During these years, Manhattan experienced a remarkable crescendo of commercial growth, a movement that precipitated by the grand hotel, whose surface analysis as exclusive playgrounds for the city’s elite collided with growing demands of the public consumer and urban community.

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[Part One: Waldorf-Astoria, Grand Hotel Premier (1893-1897)]

When native writer Henry James called the Waldorf-Astoria “as the newest thing under the sun…something that allowed a sight of perfect human felicity”, it allowed the grand hotel to inherit an immediate history of status. ⁵ Considered the city’s paramount grand hotel, the Waldorf-Astoria broke traditional definitions behind Manhattan’s social and geographic landscape. Its story begins in 1890 when Astor scion William Waldorf announced plan to tear down his parent’s brownstone mansion on Fifth Avenue and 32nd Street, in its place erect a $5,000,000 luxury hotel. He bequeathed the German name “Waldorf” in recognition of his grandfather’s ancestral hamlet, in hopes of capturing an essence of historical legitimacy. Its architect Henry Hardenberg, a leading name in luxury design, formatted the ten-story exterior in a French Renaissance style complete with intricate carvings, spires, and moldings. The $3,000,000 interior design was a composition of various European aesthetics as its prominent features “of an interior court with fountains and frescoes…an Empire dining room modeled after King Ludwig’s Munich palace…a gabled front of a three-story North German dwelling”, delivered sceneries of fantasy.⁶ Its opening night fete was modeled after a 18th century European royal coronation as manager George Boldt ushered guests through the building’s corridors, confirming the grand hotel’s role compelling visual spectacle.⁷ Not to be outdone, William

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[William Waldorf, the prominent face of the Manhattan real estate Astor family, took a step beyond the uptown migration of the city’s elites, settling as English royal subject and returning]
Waldorf’s cousin John Jacob Astor funded the construction of the larger Hotel Astoria to overshadow his cousin’s. They conjoining the hotels with a 300-foot underground corridor named the Peacock Hallway, a regular fixture for New York’s high society.  

[Residential Grand Hotel Architectural Criticism]

Although the Waldorf-Astoria was an artistic showcase reflective of “the permanent owners of New York”, and their ability to fashion standards of beauty, others, like French writer Alphonse de Calonne were not basking in metaphysical nirvana. Calonne interpreted the grand hotel’s excessive plumage and disproportionate dimensions the markings of “a monstrosity that the natural eye and mind should rightfully revolt against”. His vehemently criticized its rococo appearance based on incongruent historical art forms, “It is all in vain to claim that the satisfaction arising from the adaptation to need, from the exterior manifestation or from the expression more or less exact of the manners, the uses, the habits, even the eccentricities of an epoch or of a nation is sufficient to constitute an art and to impress upon it the character of beauty.”

The criticism of the grand hotel introduces the discourse between urban commercialism and the legitimacy of its forms, later carried by the New York City’s post-war.

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architectural critics. His final effort to uncover the Waldorf-Astoria’s new clothes was to verbally minimize it as another “high house”, a trend of skyscraper buildings developing in New York City and Chicago. His concluding quip towards the urban movement served to foreshadow and lament, “those who began piling houses one above another, Pelion upon Ossa, they should not believe in themselves to be giants.” corresponding certain American values with their buildings’ forms and contents.12

[Residential Grand Hotels, Midtown Location for elites, height and distance 1910-1920]

Grand hotel architects from the 1890’s to the 1916 employed the skyscraper’s commercial technologies of reinforced steel skeletons, elevators, and caisson foundations to reach new potentials. These first wave grand hotels like the St. Regis that opened in 1905 (5th Avenue and 55th St) and the Knickerbocker in 1907 (Broadway and 42nd St) were modeled after the Waldorf-Astoria. Both hotels funded by John Jacob Astor, expanded their elite residential apartments with individual corridors, drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, and private parlors while providing standard hotel services, superseding many of the brownstone’s functions and standings.13 Top floor apartment suites offered residents the personal ambience of the city’s traditional mid-air dining clubs as described by a male resident: “as I sat in my hospitable leather

[The Aloadae, Otus and his brother Ephiates were in Greek mythology, two beautiful and aggressive giants who grew in size exponentially. In a failed attempt to reach the heavens, the brothers stacked three mountains Pelion, Ossa, and Olympus on top of each other. They later reappear in Dante’s Inferno chained to giant pillars, along with the Titans.]
chair. I looked down over the city as a tired traveler might look down from a mountain crag".  

[Grand Hotel Rooftops & Balconies]

The architects behind the first wave of grand hotel development innovatively applied skyscraper technology, transforming the hotel rooftop into unique urban location. During the cold twilight of May 14th, 1910, the rooftops of the Gotham, Knickerbocker, and St. Regis bustled with unseasonal activity, as impatient guests and anxious schoolchildren gathered with souvenir telescopes to catch a rare glimpse of Haley’s Comet. Throughout the 1920’s, grand hotel rooftops evolved into formidable social locations, as papers annually announced during the first week of June the opening of the “hotel roof gardens season” with continued coverage of events and participants. These rooftop fantasies varied, from rambunctious children building a makeshift lake on the Waldorf’s rooftop, to the American Defense Women’s Rifle Club installing a shooting range on the Majestic Hotel’s rooftop, augmenting the hotel’s domestic identity with new social possibilities. The grand hotel’s adaptive use of space showcased how physically distinct environments established for elite leisure was later standardized in luxury apartment units. Many of Manhattan’s grand hotels operated their luxury aesthetics allowing for a visual consumption of horizontal and vertical urban spaces, establishing characteristics of city tourism.

The narratives behind Manhattan’s transients are driven by urban capitalism’s requirement for the constant expansion of market and labor. New York’s earliest establishments for transients were located in the lower Manhattan South Street Seaports, which operated as the city’s central portal for freight and passengers. The Cosmopolitan Hotel on Chambers and West Broadway and the old Eagle Hotel located on 61 Whitehall Street, housed significant maritime populations caused by expanding canal and ferry routes.¹⁹

In the 1900’s, New York’s leading railroad companies decisions’ to construct hallmark train terminals on Manhattan’s east and west banks, secured Midtown an indefinite ‘transient’ flow of suburban commuters, convention attendees, theater visitors, and later soldiers. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company owned the rail network between Philadelphia, Washington D.C, Baltimore, Jersey City, and Hoboken, opened Pennsylvania Station in 1908.²⁰ The NY Central Railroad started by Cornelius Vanderbilt in the 1830’s, owned the rail network that followed the Hudson River north alongside the Erie Canal, allowing freight and passengers cars quick access to Chicago and St. Louis.²¹ Terminal City Project was the name for the complex of commercial buildings, apartment houses, and grand hotels (the Biltmore, Commodore, and Roosevelt) connected by underground corridors, and developed on NY Central Railroad’s property in the


²¹ Ibid. 911
1920’s. The terminal served as the city’s heart with its French Beaux-arêtes façade continued throughout adjacent buildings, turning Terminal City into a unit of steady visual harmony.

Lastly, the Terminal was connection to (Park & 54th St) with a tiered system of elevated ramps that separated pedestrians, automobiles, subway, and train traffic [Photo One] into the streets. NY Central Railroad’s sale and rent of the air space above its elevated rails which (Madison Ave and Lexington Avenue, 42d to 50th St), allowed their next investment into nearby apartments.\(^{22}\)

The Terminal City in the 190 caused the second wave of high-class development in Midtown, as downtown subway lines on 8th and 10th avenue were extended to Grand Central’s 42nd St, and later Wall Street and then followed by the construction of industrial buildings and lofts.\(^{23}\)

[Transient Grand Hotel & Architecture]

The Biltmore and Pennsylvania led the vanguard of the second wave Manhattan’s grand hotels, held the distinctions as hosts to the new traveling American middle class. This shift prompted architects and managers to rewire their grand hotel’s social, economic, and aesthetic elements for sensibilities of the commercial traveler. American interior designers approved of the Biltmore’s interior “...a cause of congratulation to those who were responsible that one can go from any part of the hotel to another without experiencing that feeling of shock which strikes the visitor in so many of New York’s hostleries”, comparing it favorably against the flamboyant European designs found in the residential grand hotel.\(^{24}\) Manhattan’s transient grand hotels from 1910-30 were enabled by the expansion of industrial technologies into domestic sphere and


\(^{23}\) The New York Times (New York City), "Urges Addition to Retail Zone Area," March 8, 1925.

popular market a notion promoted and protected by the emerging ‘hotel industry’ itself. By 1923, Bowman-Biltmore Hotels Corporation expanded to own a more than a majority stock in all the NY Central Railroad’s hotels and additionally acquired Belmont, Ansonia, and Murray Hill Hotels while its formidable competitor the Pennsylvania was managed by the Statler hotel corporation. These companies both held valuable hotel properties in other American cities, and were able to lay an early groundwork for the postwar industry by expanding the role of the professional hotel manager. Consolidated management wielded exponential economic leverage in their wholesale purchases, as the Hotel Pennsylvania’s general equipment was supplied entirely by recognizable American companies from electrical engineering contractor L. K Comstock & Co, to Western Electric Co. who supplied millions of new toggles for light switches. The Hotel Pennsylvania’s lobby’s striking feature was its layout of concealed lights that rested above a vaulted ornamental glass ceiling that produced a spectacular scintillating glow on arriving guests, a fantastical effect that followed the grand hotel’s tradition of visual prowess. American architect’s vaunted the hotel’s record 2200 rooms, 2200 baths, as well as possessing the world’s largest hotel lobby “and all the conveniences of a great city beneath its roof” as concrete evidence of the values that drove men to such an accomplishment. The Hotel Pennsylvania and the Biltmore “is a living, a machine designed to do many things, to perform a hundred different functions” to shuttle, feed, and daily accommodate thousands of temporary visitors. Targeted at a the specific middle-class population, the Hotel Pennsylvania and the three


hotels [The Biltmore, Roosevelt, and Commodore] near the Grand Central Terminal operated as “dischargers for the human flow in the very center of town”, as their congruent physical schemes reflected the form behind a modern vision of a consolidated Midtown region.  

[Terminal City, A Complex of Strangers]

Collectively, New York City’s grand hotel models are responsible for establishing Midtown with a reputation of distinguished history and heritage balanced with its spaces for mass and popular assembly. In 1924 the Times announced the Grand Central City infrastructure as “the New City built in the heart of New York”, correlating its effect on tripling nearby property values as the anchor of Manhattan’s New York. Midtown’s association with class and heritage was attained through Terminal City’s role in the narrative of the city’s elite uptown flight. Despite their flight, their representative commercial elite 5th Avenue Merchants Association laid down the laws of guardianship stunting the growth of unwanted highway, elevated rails, and preserving the respectability of “The World’s Greatest Street”. The development of Times Square into the Great White way is also intertwined in the grand hotel’s development of commercial culture. The Biltmore Hotels presented this shift by being one of the first to open their ballroom for public at 1 am with the popular swing jazz band leading during a mixed crowd of New Yorkers and visitors into the New Year of 1915.

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ballroom celebration for two thousand guests included many Canadian visitors looking to escaping the war’s doldrums. The grand hotels for commercial transients were especially popular for their business conference rooms business with their spaces for amenities and civic groups.

[The Women’s Hotel]

Often time, these politically inclined groups championed the establishing hotels for working and single women “the women who work are not strugglers but those who have arrived”, citing the expansion of basic compassion and as an worthy “opportunity for the public spirited”. In one case are these fictional traveling young women such as the keen and intrepid Beatrice Boyden and Peggy Harrison, whose personalities and narratives are arc are very similar. They flee from small town suburbs to Manhattan by train and seeking positions in the city’s expanding business district. Peggy Harrison, a remark upon arriving at Grand Central Terminal,” But no city in the world has a statelier portal for it arriving visitors”, which doubly reinforced the grand hotel’s ability role as the Manhattan’s face to the world. When analyzed from a social perspective, women’s hotel like the Martha Washington served as temporary shelters for fictional characters like Beatrice Boyden who travels to Manhattan looking for a position writing for popular women’s magazines. Boyden is described as a girl in a state of transition to womanhood as she walks onto the thrilling Midtown streetscapes out-of-fashion but poised and a confident demeanor “she looked around the Pennsylvania station as if she owned it”. Her stay

32 The New York Times (New York City), ”Welcome At the Hotel The Biggest Ever,” January 1, 1915
33 Stein, Robert. ”Women's Hotels.” Harper's Bazaar, March 7, 1891.
at the Martha Washington reflects her original enthusiasm as introspects “to have even a tiny room in this famous hotel for women gave her a sense of pride” that is quickly dashed as she returns home three days later without prospect and penniless. Further comparison can made with Beatrice Boyden as a possible foil or successor to characters like Ragged Dick, with both youths understanding New York through a lens of commercial white or pink collar success.

[Apartment Hotel: Full Circle]

While the apartment hotel is socially the most distant from socio-cultural knowledge Manhattan Grand Hotels: The ‘Transient City’ looks to obtain, its emergence during particular periods of Manhattan’s grand hotel arc is conclusive in wrapping up the 1930’s. Apartment hotel based on the French Flat (an early name for the apartment hotel and standard apartment house), predated the ‘grand hotel’ model and were first found around 18th street with sparse development uptown. Travelers to France and Europe had popularized them as the newest and most convenient standard of cosmopolitan life. In 1905, the New York Times first uses the term ‘Midtown’ to describe “the territory tributary from Broadway to 23rd St to the northerly end of Times Square”, the location of a recent splurge apartment hotel development. Midtown was defined as “a central location, conveniently accessible to the theaters, the clubs and fashionable restaurants a density of apartment building, distant from the downtown industrial businesses and

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associated with the cosmopolitan sense life.\textsuperscript{39} Later they can be found in the separate growth of the apartment hotel complex, where residents checked in long-term at inner lobby and are provided with all the standard hotel’s services. The demand for real estate in the 1920’s was also directed by changing notions of urban life, as the apartment hotel extricated the resident from scrutinizing public view, turning domestic luxury into a totally private and acceptable sphere.\textsuperscript{40} Their visibility in the city’s history peaked in the mid 1920’s, when the dialectics of uptown expansion exploded as one writer put it dramatically “the same powerful force of population which has made land so expensive, that the fabulous rich are forced to economize it”, marked the apartment hotel a promising suitable domestic replacement for the worried city elites.\textsuperscript{41} The typical apartment hotel built from 1930’s was about twenty-stories, constructed with reinforced steel beam frames, with each floor having up to four separate floor plans, apartment, and rounded by an exterior facade that followed more the dining club or private hotel line.\textsuperscript{42} Their distinguishable physical characteristic of downsized public rooms aimed to discouraging crowds and distance from major transportation hubs as well as the from the city’s main streets, were reflections of their upper class clientele and their flight uptown.\textsuperscript{43} The apartment hotels rooms


\textsuperscript{41} Duffus, R.L.. "Upper Fifth Avenue To House the "4000"." The New York Times (New York City), May 24, 1925.


[Many apartment hotels were tangled legal troubles, when city Housing Inspectors found their guests in higher floors cooking food in service pantries, small kitchens with decent cooking
layout included the residential grand hotels’ dining and drawing rooms, later iron cast stairs, and individual walk in closets, representing the commercially purpose of traditional functional domestic spaces. Observers found that the apartment hotel culturally emulated the stately ambience of the traditional brownstone, while having its domestic duties burdened onto an employed hotel staff. This was seen as a popular answer to what many family matriarchs deemed the “household problem”, a term that extended from the petty worries of choosing the right décor for the latest soiree to the very serious endeavor of cultivating relationships with their domestic servants.


The economic pressures of the American Great Depression marked a new era for the city’s hotels, as their managers began to develop new relationships with the immediate public, and greater state and federal institutions. Midtown’s commercial development from 1910-1930 catalyzed by the construction of the railroad terminals, proceeded by with later towering office buildings and banks, and even parking garages, caused the area to be colloquially renamed as uptown Wall Street. The construction and real estate industry deemed “the weathervane of our amenities used by hotel staff to facilitate dining services. The violations due to fire-safety put these upscale residences in the same category of tenement homes.]

44 “Modern Hotel Apartment that is a home, Mrs T. Draper duplex Apartment, Hampshire.” Arts & Decoration, Jun. - Jul. 1940.


46 Knorr, R.H. "A Neglected Phase of the Housing Problem." The Arena, October 1, 1903.

nation’s prosperity” found the Midtown area outstripping the nation in overall development
drawing on its impermanent nature “the unfinished city” as an unlimited source of capital.  
Perhaps one of the most indicative evidence of optimism was the hotel industry’s decision in
1929 to relocate the Waldorf-Astoria in the uptown Park Avenue near Grand Central Terminal, a
migration prompted by the growing garment industry near 32\textsuperscript{nd} Street.  

[Waldorf-Astoria, A Resurrection Unrecognized]

From 1930 to 1938, the city’s hotels experienced a wave of crises that not only threatened
their economic survival, but also influenced their actions for the postwar era. Immediately after
the Stock Market Crash of 1929, the rapid inflation followed by the successive bank failures led
the city’s hotels into a spiraling decline, as many went bankrupt, foreclosed on and auctioned off
parcels of Midtown property.  

Terminal City Hotels and Waldorf-Astoria were kept afloat
during the early wave of the Depression through generous tax cuts from the city. Other smaller
grand hotels were either demolished or economically floundered caused by the instability of
shuffling hotel management and employee.  

The new Waldorf-Astoria, designed in the latest
Art Deco style by architectural firm Schultze & Weaver, opened in 1931 with the traditional
grand hotel luxury of an over the top celebration of style, luxury, and elegance. Leonard Schultze
who had worked for firm Warren & Wetmore, carried the aesthetics of grand public buildings
and skyscraper “were to varying degrees mansions that stretched into the sky”, and infused it

\textsuperscript{48} Stark, Louis. "Building Trade Has Record Year." The New York Times (New York City),
December 27, 1925.

\textsuperscript{49} The WPA guide to New York City: the Federal Writers’ Project guide to 1930s New York.

\textsuperscript{50} The New York Times (New York City), "Foreclosure Suits Filed: Four Manhattan Parcels

\textsuperscript{51}
with the Terminal City by designing its own underground terminal connection.\textsuperscript{52} The establishment, despite its acclaimed historical legacy, its modern Art Deco exterior of 625 feet of majestic gray limestone, or its experimental display of interior design, could not generate enough fantasy to escape the Depression’s economic realities.\textsuperscript{53} Their managers and developers found themselves for the first time questioning the bonds of community they shared with the general public and to a greater extent but their ties with the national government.

[Pompous Sentiment: Grand Hotels vs. NRA]

In the mid 1930’s, the American Hotel Association (AHA) gathered together to voice their grievances against the federal government’s growing involvement in regulating market prices and expanding the strength of labor union. AHA president Thomas Green demonized the National Recovery Administration’s Code of Fair Competition for the Hotel Industry signed by President Roosevelt in 1934 as “communistic tendency”, as it forced hotels because of their dining capabilities to abide under the separate restaurant industry’s labor codes.\textsuperscript{54} This labor code extended to the all hotel employees and by 1937 all hotel related workers from bellboys to doormen and even elevator operators managed a nationwide walkout.\textsuperscript{55} The AHA, headed by a committee of leading real estate developers and hotel chains expressed their sentiments “that the


hotel is the traveler’s temporary home and also the one business necessary to the commercial life… of domestic nature that must be regulated from within…It cannot be factoryized.”  

Manhattan’s hotel managers believed that their unique profession as hosts entailed the duties of the vigilant guardians of their communities “we cannot like the restaurant close his establishment for certain meals or days” who embodied the American values of a democratic community, a worthy mediator of cultural exchange and translator. However the nature of the relationship between New York’s hotel managers and definition of guests would change drastically, as America’s position in the global stage would soon change.

[Grand Hotels Reanalyze, Remodel, and Response]

Manhattan’s hotel underwent a major reanalysis of labor capital, as the city’s hotel managers balanced the economic decline by investing in refurbishing. The economic pressures of the Great Depression had set New York’s standards and business models to be geared toward more permanent fixtures visible in the rise of residential use apartment hotels born from the 1930’s. The Stevens Hotel in Chicago and the Hearst Hotel Corporation’s hotel and apartment hotel units (Ritz-Carlton Towers, The Devon, The Lombardy, and the Warwick) in New York invested considerable sums in achieving a standard aesthetic for the apartment suites. A large part of remodeling was based on shifting the hotel’s typical living room impression to fit the domestic nature of the bedroom, the personal study, and the kitchen, which was seen as the distinguishing factor between a lone standing domestic unit and a hotel.

suites began offering to tenants a selection of furnishings such as portraits, drapes, vanity mirrors, bookshelves, storage closets, and circular bed tables better known as “general utility spaces”, all physical objects that reflected an individual’s relationship with personal spaces.  

Additional renovations included remodeling individual room light fixtures to reflect warm color tones, gesturing to an ambience of matching spaces. Another critical reform was investing in standardized furnishings that were easily portable and were multifunctional, such as beds that doubled as living room couches.

[Housekeeping the Legion in 1938]

New York City’s transient population from 1938 to 1945 contained large armed forces, a demographic that established their place in the iconic scenes of the nation’s history. The American Legion and Legion Auxiliaries’ 110,000 strong mainly of WWI veterans and their families amassed ‘to see the city’ as a part their 19th Annual Convention, straining national transportation routes, and forcing the city’s hotel infrastructure to operate at maximum peak.

Converging into New York’s Midtown by bus, train, trailers, steamships, airplanes, and even foot the legionnaires arrived dressed in parade uniforms according to their regiments, ranks, and region. Although Mayor LaGuardia extended a warm invitation to the legion, much of the city awaited in fear as the paper exaggerated the Legion into a mob of 500,000 ‘plunderers’.

Manhattan conflagrated into hysteria as legionnaires playfully launched fire-crackers out of hotel windows, cannons erupted in the Hotel Pennsylvania’s lobby, and reports of hooliganism in

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Times Square, finally persuaded the police to shut the area off from further automobile traffic. Their eventual plunder was a record $6,500,000 and was spent in order of purchasing souvenirs and mementos, liquor and bar tab, entertainment, and transportation fees, prompting the city’s municipal government to expand their policy toward more profitable measure. The Legion’s WWI veterans “the men and women of the war” engaged in urban (re)creation, “remembering their wartime conception of 5th Avenue as the main street of their homeland”, as many continued to scorched European battlefronts to continue their odyssey of memory.

[1939’s World Fair, Springboard for the Future]

In 1935, New York City was chosen to host the international 1939 World’s Fair, an event that had tremendous impact on the mechanic of the city’s larger hospitality industries and in extension revealed the city’s desire to form its own public image through a celebration of popular culture. European visitors have especially noted New York’s grand hotel and lobbies as “the larger the number of loungers…where everybody is lounging, smoking, and chewing tobacco” representative of American capitalism and public communities. This time around, New York City was selected to be host to all people from nations as the Board of Directors declared it “everyman’s fair”, citing the technological necessity of global fraternity and human progress elevated in booths such as “Building the World of Tomorrow” and “Interdependence of


65 *The New York Times (New York City)*, "Legion Spends 6,500,000 In the City," September 25, 1937.

Man.”. They collected the public’s interest by projecting the fair as a revival in democratic values through simultaneous celebration of 150th Anniversary of the Federal Government. Manhattan’s hotel chain investor participated alongside the city’s civic leaders who comprised the Fair’s designing committee, who aimed to mold the fair as a “weapon against the dismal economic of the Depression decade”. The year holds significance in transforming the ‘transient city’ into a profitable and serious unit through a return to popular culture. In September, the boxing match between American Joe Louis and German Max Baer caused the city’s trains and airplanes to flood the city with a transient population of ‘sport fans’. The last time an event happened was fifteen years ago in 1921, when New York City’s hotels provided most of the rooms for the Jack Dempsey and George Carpentier fight in Jersey City.

[The Great Depression to World War II]

From the 1939 World’s Fair to the end of WWII, New York City’s hotels transformed into an industry that served the world’s populations. During the New Year’s weekend in 1940, Manhattan rode the exuberance of the 1939 World’s Fair, and fitting in a year of transition its grand hotels catered to the festive public with the city’s largest the St. George in Brooklyn

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hosting a party of ten thousand aided by a special permit that allowed liquor sales throughout the night.\textsuperscript{73} Both Grand Central Terminal and Pennsylvania Station connected the outer suburban region to Times Square with their respective companies supplementing their railroads with express trains and additional cars.\textsuperscript{74} New York’s hotel during the 1939-1941 reveled and benefitted in the steady chronology of national holidays with Times Square as the city’s prime thoroughfare for any major public procession. Often times, hotels located within Midtown offered temporary rates for anyone who wished to enjoy the festivities from room balconies.\textsuperscript{75}

[Resorts and Grand Hotels ‘Drafted’]

The shadow of World War II forced New York City to itself in a position of layered social dynamics, as their identity as cultural institutions became transformed through larger global politics. From 1939 to 1945, New York City transformed into a mecca for soldier from nearby military bases that invaded the city according to the clockwork of holiday.\textsuperscript{76} New York’s hotel men even lobbied against a government proposal to change Thanksgiving’s date, indicating their reliance of ordered currents.\textsuperscript{77} The presence of armed forces in New York grew apparent when the navy decided to rent the expansive Lido Club on the Long Island Shore, in preparation

\textsuperscript{73} Times World Wide. "All-Night Parties Throng the Hotels." The New York Times (New York City), January 1, 1940.
\textsuperscript{74} The New York Times (New York City), "City Prepared to Usher in 1939 With Gayest Revelry in Years," December 31, 1938.
\textsuperscript{76} The New York Times"Holiday Travel Rising to Record," August 30, 1941.
\textsuperscript{77} The New York Times (New York City), "Hotels Fight To Change Date in Thanksgiving Day," September 8, 1939.
for amphibious assault.\textsuperscript{78} When news that the Stevens Hotels had been purchased by the Army for a mere $6,000,000 reached the East Coast, New York’s hotel managers and investors feared their establishments might possibly be acquisitioned at a very low price.\textsuperscript{79} Although none of New York City’s grand hotels faced the same fate as the Stevens in Chicago, their establishments housing new populations under great economic and heightened political strain.

[Blackouts and the ‘Transient City’]

The war had a dramatic impact on New York’s hotels as they found their services regulated and severely undercut by federal and state authorities, and physically constrained by the flood of soldiers. New York along with Delaware and New Jersey made up the Second Area Corp, a blueprint based on the British coastal defense plans enacted during the Blitz in 1941.\textsuperscript{80} Formulated by a committee of chief civic leaders and army experts, the program involved the use of existing structures for possible military purposes, the creation and training of volunteer emergency organizations, and finally the expansion of civil authorities to deal with logistics, law enforcement, and communications.\textsuperscript{81} This type of blanket enforcement impacted New York’s hotel industry as manager found their buildings indefinitely used as make-shift public shelters, war bond rallies, impromptu hospitals, and recruiting centers for the city’s air raid drill and black out drills that silenced the magnetic electric soul of Manhattan’s Midtown. During the black out drills, hotels, retails stores, theaters and hotels were prohibited using any form of gas or electric

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{78} Copeland, George. "Resorts 'Drafted'." The New York Times (New York City), May 2, 1943.
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service. Stephen Lewis, whose father managed the Taft Hotel in Times Square from the Great Depression and into the 1960’s, recounts the blackout drills enforced religiously by Mayor LaGuardia from 1941-43:

The neon-lit signs in Times Square had been extinguished for the duration…Black outs were my favorite part of the war. I was deputy air warden, assisting the air warden. The air warden was Father. We wore steel helmets and patrolled the streets in front of the hotel at night, watching for glimmers of light from behind the blackout drapes that covered each window…We patrolled Seventh Avenue and Fifty-First Street for as long as it took to eliminate every crack of light. The longer we stayed out in our matching steel helmets, the better I liked it.

Lewis’s account of a blackout drill reveals the extent to which the city’s hotels and other commercial infrastructure had become reluctantly integrated into a larger program of the national agenda. Other grand hotels worked with independent charity organizations to house European refugees. Florence Turner, a Chelsea resident imagined the situation in her memoir At the Chelsea, “David Bard joined force with the Church World Services, crowding families into spaces meant for only or two people. …Refugees from Europe had made their mark and the halls must have been dingy with latent fear, humiliation, and a sense of over-crowding”. Many of the Midtown businesses found the war’s prolonged detrimental to their commercial expansion, as stricter rationing on resources and manpower deprived hotels from providing their usual array of services.

Alice (Tibbett) Davis living in the Chelsea Hotel wrote to poet Edgar Lee Masters “It

is true that service is bad at the Chelsea – but in an apartment you wouldn’t have poor service – YOU WOULDN’T HAVE ANY! There is one thing you must come to realize about the shortage of labor (five maids short at this hotel, the tenants on my floor, even the men cheerfully take carpet sweepers and clean their own rooms – why complain of what can’t be avoided!)…brings me to another matter, the shortage of liquor! The ‘transient city’ during the war culminated in

[Housing the Untouchables, a Transient City Revisited]

During WWII, a new generation of American soldiers ‘transient city’, similarly straining the city’s hotels and transportation routes. The ‘transient city’ that these haggard soldiers framed was elementally distinguished from the American Legion’s earlier visit in 1938. These new soldiers’ relationship to the ‘Transient City’ are as the objects to be moved to reach a means to ending the war, as they occupied the terminal’s [Manhattan] time and space idly awaiting for directions. Many were arrivals from out of town that did not establish New York as “the city of final destination” and as Private Wright spoke “you can’t do much in a town you don’t know anything about. Of course, there are a lot of things to see, but we don’t know how to get to ‘em. First you start out for a place, then you get lost and then you get tired of walking – something else you get plenty of in the camp. Pretty soon there’s beer joint and you walk in. Six bucks don’t last long. So you get the train back to camp’. Private Wright’s account establishes the 1940-1945 ‘transient city’ as operating asynchronously with White’s three other New York’s. Throughout war the ‘transient city’ did not allow platform for urban (re)creation despite the

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American Theater Project’s Stage Door Canteen which provided free shows for allied soldiers. The housing situation in the metropolitan region extended beyond Manhattan’s room capacity, as New York’s City Defense Recreation found themselves housing a flowing mass of approximately six thousand soldiers in 62 makeshift centers, with one impromptu shelter on Park Avenue and Thirty Fourth Street dubbed “La Guardia Hotel” by its uniformed ‘residents’ who weaved in and out of Times Square burlesque theaters that projected inhibited sexual fantasies. In 1944 Hotel Kid, Stephen Lewis a high school student recounts the adrenaline excitement of visiting the Times Square Theater district after class. He recounts his transition into adulthood through the permeating sexual ambience of the “Great White Way”

“In the lobby I became more aware of unattached women. A drunken girl staggered through the coffee shop (located in the Taft Hotel lobby), lipstick smeared on her mouth, and above it and below it, too. My heart beat faster. I watched soldiers and sailors pick up girls in short skirts, upswept hair, and thick makeup, provocatively imitating Ida Lumpino’s imitation of a bad girl. On Broadway I was fascinated by the glossy 8x10 in front of the girlie shows. Eyebrows plucked, wet lips parted, they were an open invitation to any man who passed”

In order to prevent such the establishment of vice, Manhattan’s various religious groups gladly volunteered their facilities for stationed soldiers, as grand hotel ballrooms were even converted into makeshift shelters. By war’s final months, the situation escalated to a public relations feud when the military brass censured the hotels for “failing to live up to commitment of allotted rooms for returning soldiers and officers”, with disgruntled soldiers threatening to clear out

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rooms kept by civilians. Other hotel managers were reluctant to available accommodate to soldiers, whom they feared were more attracted to the uninhibited fantasies available in Times Square. When analyzed from an American urban perspective, New York’s hotels had failed to transfer their lauded reputation of hospitality into a tangible social reality.

[Times Square, ‘Transient City’ Immortalized]

Time Square holds special significance in the development of mass culture especially in allowing the New York’s ‘Transient City’ into marking an era rooted in the visuals of popular culture. Times columnist Meyer Berger, started his weekly column “About New York”, in the 1940’s, which took slices of the city’s cultural life and framed them in an cool and witty vernacular way of New York life. His short pieces dealt with a variety of tropes from the country and city mouse, to extrapolating fleeting encounters between strangers in the city, and the odd tales of the hidden city underneath Rockefeller Center. His pieces dissolved the sheen of the haughty New Yorker by placing him in accessible category of the American everyman and enabled the reader to be distant voyeur. His piece Queer Fish In the Broadway Stream delves into the lives of six Times Square vagrants who have been brought there by the Great Depression. While Berger’s article provided his readers with a

Having grown up in the Taft Hotel, Stephen Lewis then twelve recounts the last day of the war “Peter and I walked through the pandemonium in Time Square. I’ve read that two million people were there. I roaming for hours, trying to fix the scene in my mind so that I would remember it always. Looking back now. I realize I can no longer distinguish between what I really saw and

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what came out the next week in *Life*.⁹⁴ The statement indicates how the non-distinguishable masses of population had transformed into an icon in American history, made possible New York’s grand hotel infrastructure. This particular city of ‘transients’ long accustomed to playing the backstage to the respected social arena in the glimpse of high homes, had finally created their independent authority. For a moment in time, the ‘transient city’ had transcended all of physical and historical New York, reveling in Times Square open squares until the next day.

[Rolling out the Red Carpet]

Despite the outcry from hotel residents and visitors, World War II brought many boons to New York’s hotels, especially as the city’s real estate industry found the postwar economic policies more than helpful. This committee doubled as the industry’s unofficial lobbying department that successfully negotiated with Mayor LaGuardia the transfer of government agencies and offices to Manhattan.⁹⁵ The relocation of national departments and political committees granted Manhattan’s grand hotel a revival of their social dominance and luxurious past. Most notably, the Waldorf=Astoria served as the de facto residence visiting foreign dignitaries and American politicians, and serving as the temporary UN headquarters before 1953.⁹⁶ While the Waldorf hosted the world’s elites, others hotel in Manhattan during the war

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⁹⁵ The New York Times (New York City), "To Discuss Promoting the City," September 13, 1941.

found themselves under great strain having to house the growing population of soldiers on leave waiting to their return home to their families.  

[Part III: Grand Hotels Disassembled, Postwar Manhattan & the Convention Hall]

Although New York’s grand hotels rode the postwar waves, their array of services had to expand in order for sustainable progress in the economic future. Grand hotel, although stolid to this day found their importance as beacons of vogue cultural practices outstripped with the growing egalitarianism of consumer’s sensibilities. In light of the boom in construction after the war’s end, New York City fiercely competed with other cities to attract the businessman, positioning city’s hotels industry to secure its future development on the providing blanket hospitality service for the nation’s traveling businessmen.

[NYC Hotel Industry & The Federal Government]

From 1941 to 1945 hotels establishment across America performed their patriotic duty, but the ones in New York City did it very publicly. The city’s hotel managers had consolidated under the larger American Hotel Association that had as early as 1943 prepared a suitable postwar economic agenda. Some of their main goals were to realign the city’s hotels with the postwar public, independently maneuver with new political institutions, and hopefully prepare for the unknown variables of the postwar economy. In 1943, the Federal Housing Authority recognizing the value of hotel management recruited Detroit’s Grand Hotel manager Clifford Taylor to oversee the domestic operations in the newly opened Willow Run Townsite’s

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dormitories for factory workers and their families. 99 Meanwhile in Manhattan, hotel
managements curbed their wholesale purchases, yielded to wartime rationing of materials, and
even accepted a freeze in room rates, all in hopes of establishing patriotic credibility and good
will with the postwar public. 100

[NY Convention & Tourist Bureau]

By 1946 the city’s hotel leaders reanimated the dormant NY Convention and Business
Bureau, an organization born from the Depression’s economic hardship. It was the city’s first
commercial sector’s first attempt at organized to a transient demographic of growing tourists.101
One critic wryly called their daunting task “of convincing provincials that New York is a
friendly city and that New Yorkers are simple, home loving folk like themselves”.102 New
 Yorkers do not live in homes they live in apartments and most of all they didn’t like or live in
Times Square. In order for the city’s boosterism to effectively persuade Middle America, they
relied on projecting New York City as a popular commercial fantasy marketable for all ages.
Through the centralization of profitable commercial and cosmopolitan life, the NY Convention
Bureau successfully turned one young girl’s impression of Midtown “Macy’s-which is my idea
of paradise”.103 In the 1950’s, Times Square, reinvigorated through hotel men’s new promotions
to attract out of town visitor, resulted in the city’s largest ‘transient city’. The region having
served as the crossroads of the city’s fur and garment industries lofts and factories, looked more

99 "Build Frontier Town To House Bomb Builders." The Hotel Monthly, May 1943.
100 The New York Times (New York City), "Meatless Tuesday Put Off For Week," October 14,
1942.
appealing with the obvious flight of industrial lofts and residents to the outer suburbs, as
developers lobbied for commercially profitably zoning laws.  

[Family Friendly New York City]

After 1945, the NY Convention and Tourist Bureau reconfigured the transient city with
events targeted toward the growing middle class families and consumers, borrowing many
stylistic templates from the 1939 World’s Fair. New York City hotels were now viewed as
transitory spaces for a terminally consuming public, playing a role in establishing a commercial
cipher for the city. One way they achieved this was by expanding the city’s tangible and
invisible boundaries through the reinterpretations and commoditization of its histories, cultures,
and traditions, all in hopes of making “visitors feel at home”. For example, NY Convention
and Travel Bureau raised visibility through promoting events such as the Golden Jubilee of 1948,
marking fifty years since the consolidation of all five boroughs under a single banner. In 1960
the convention bureau sponsored the 7th annual New York Summer Festival where the attraction
Freedomland U.S.A contained a giant panorama of American history, complete with a color-
coded legend, maximizing access to viewers.

[Calling for a Convention Hall]

105 Fortiner, Virginia. "A Key To Our City." The New York Times (New York City), August 17,
1947.
106 Fortiner, Virginia. "A Key To Our City." The New York Times (New York City), August 17,
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107 The New York Times (New York City), "Convention Hall is Urged for the City," October 29,
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108 Gilbert, Morris. "New York Has A Festival." The New York Times (New York City), June 12,
1960.
In 1947, the New York Convention and Business Bureau announced the city’s willingness to accommodate the influx of traveling businessmen, reflected in their serious proposal for a permanent convention center located in Manhattan.\textsuperscript{109} It was also the watershed year for revitalizing the city’s business traffic, as the Manhattan hotel managers eagerly dropped their informal 1943 decision to cease hosting business convention for the greater war effort.\textsuperscript{110} Now the majority of the city’s hotels including the socially exclusive Waldorf-Astoria rushed to accommodate the number of returning businessmen, a rather uniformed crowd that stood in contrast to its accustomed glittery socialite ranks.\textsuperscript{111} Throughout the 1950’s and 60’s, New York City’s hotel fell deeper under standardization of their industry, a maneuver borne from the throes of the Great Depression. The commercialization of technologies such as the jet plane caused the dissolution of the grand urban hotel, as these innovations remodeled the relationship between the individual and perceived city boundaries.\textsuperscript{112} Hotel managers aimed to control this realm were through tighter control of sale management practices, schools, and organizations, a practice originating from hotel chain magnates like E.M Statler.\textsuperscript{113} New developers such as Conrad Hilton fused their life philosophies into the into their standardizing business models, investing in the faceless middle class’s “Mr. Public” as the industries’ life and blood.\textsuperscript{114} Its priorities had

\textsuperscript{109} The New York Times (New York City), "Visitors to Spend $150,000,000 Here," June 23, 1947. http
\textsuperscript{113} Jarman, Rufus. "Headaches of a Hotelkeeper." The Saturday Evening Post, October 7, 1950
\textsuperscript{114} Willey, John. "Post War Hotel Business Discussed." The Hotel Monthly, August 1943.
shifted to “absorbing both recreational traveler and convention visitors”, dismantling their position as urban domestic spaces.  

[NY Hilton: Manhattan’s Grand Hotel Revisited]

The New York Hilton located in Rockefeller Center opened to the public on June 26th 1963, with echoes of the grand hotels bounced in the city’s popular imagination, the Hilton was largest hotel ever implanted into the Manhattan landscape. It was the second completely new hotel to be developed in Manhattan since the second Waldorf-Astoria construction in 1931. Defined by its developers and architects through a modern perspective, the Hilton did hold any air of high elite urban culture.” From an external perspective, the city’s hotel began to operate as a sub-branch of the city’s greater commercial cipher, aimed at keeping the city’s image presentable and family friendly. Hospitality marketer hoped to capitalize on the correlation between white flight and suburban expansion precipitated an increase in American nuclear families.

In terms of its size of over two acres, two-thousand one hundred sixty five rooms, the city’s largest banquet room, assembly hall, ballroom and an entirely automated infrastructure, it seemed as if the New York Hilton could single handedly reactive the city’s hotel industry.

Architectural Record announced the NY Hilton as the “Grand Hotel” New Version in its

November 1963, contemplating its effects on Manhattan’s landscape as well on the city’s growing cosmopolitan identity. It’s namesake Conrad Hilton who identified himself as the “innkeeper to the world”, merged with conglomerate office developer Uris, and Rockefeller Center to finance its construction, was embroiled in a publically feud with architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable over the validity of its artistic merits. She displayed an spirit of gusto in her famous June 30th editorial in the Times, accusing the NY Hilton Hotel of “esthetic schizophrenia”, an unabashed reflection of the American urban architecture to reflect the desires of its designed convention markets. Her main criticisms of this purported grand hotel, with its entirely glass façade, continues onto the disarrayed color choice for the room, and then at the outdated interpretation of in its French style grand ballrooms.

[Conclusion & Aftermath]

The narrative of Manhattan’s grand hotels weaves the stratified social elements of New York who find a common space in the expansion of transportation and commercial infrastructure. The ‘grand hotel’ was developed by the city’s elites as a fortress of solitudes against the urban chaos of the expanding city. Their efforts to preserve their traditional enclaves fell apart in the successive waves of commercial expansion responsible for the formation of an entirely new city region. Midtown was home to Manhattan’s grand hotels, as their appearance forcibly impacted the rise of commercial structures that provided new and accessible spaces for growing public assemblies. Terminal City’s consolidation on Manhattan’s East side merged the


city’s concurrent commercial waves into a nearby radius and henceforth blazoned Midtown, as a, non-historic and commercially discursive space.

In the 1930’s, the Terminal City did not crumble, but a new socio-economic New York and its collective ideology bored at it middle-class elemental foundations of the American Dream. Two of New York ‘transient cities’ in 1938 and later during from 1942 to 1945, were constructed with the disciplined fatigues of ailing soldiers, who envisioned and encountered the city’s cultural mechanics differently. The 1939’s World Fair, with its pioneer commercial and municipal collaboration, laid the template for projecting a New York City in the 1950’s as bulk popular product, a tunnel vision that linked Broadway’s theater houses to Waldorf-Astoria, and simultaneously terminated their individual and regional character.

The history of New York ‘Terminal’ and many ‘Transient’ City is the burgeoning and centralization of urban commerce to undermining of natural historic relevance and public consciousness. The NY Hilton’s convention motif and monopoly on urban hospitality paved the way for the next stage of the city’s hotel industry. Of the transient grand hotel, only the Roosevelt remains entirely intact, as the Biltmore’s foundation presently holds a Bank of America, and the Commodore’s identities as the Grand Hyatt New York. The Pennsylvania has been slated for demolition for some time, and its phalanx of lights removed and lobby tamed. The next pages contain relevant photographs of the grand hotel and their socially propelled development throughout the city’s different quarters. Most of them are from architectural magazine or the New York Times. A few of them belong to my personal collection of New York streetscape, a project I started with my initial interest in the city. Street and jazz photographer Nancy Miller Elliot, street and jazz photographer, who canvassed Manhattan during the 1960-80’s is responsible for the last picture. The content portrays a lone bedraggled and half-naked
man walking underneath the Plaza Hotel’s (Grand Army Plaza) entrance, but alludes to the New York successive socio-cultural identity reconfigured ‘transient cities’ in the 1970’s and 80’s.

Photographs of the Grand Hotel, ‘Terminal City’ and ‘Transient City’

Residential Apartment Hotel Evolution

Prin 121e George Apartment Hotel (1905) The Palm Room

The Sulgrave Apartment Hotel Exterior (1925) 122

121 "The Prince George Hotel, New York City." Architectural Record, Summer 1905. [The Prince George is been converted into affordable house for formerly homeless adults]

View of Pershing Square, the New Park Avenue Viaduct, Site of Grand Union Hotel, and New

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View of Grand Central Skyline: Left to Right: 10 East 40th Building, Lefcourt-Colonial Madison Ave. and 41st St, Lincoln Office Building (pres. One Grand Central Place) 60 East 42nd St, Chanin Office Building Lexington 41st and 42nd St, the Chrysler (nearing completion Lexington 42nd & 43rd St) 


Biltmore Hotel Summer Garden Courtyard that overlooks Vanderbilt Avenue and Grand Central Station\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

Society Grows Nomadic: Upper 5\textsuperscript{th} Avenue to House the “4000” New York’s Elite Families\textsuperscript{127}

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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\end{center}

Biltmore Hotel & Grand Central Terminal \textsuperscript{128}


\textsuperscript{127} Duffus, R.L.. "Upper Fifth Avenue To House the "4000"." The New York Times (New York City), May 24, 1925

128 Private Photos
129 Private Photos
130 Private Photos


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