

Chapter 6

BEING A *MENSCH* IN THE ADMINISTERED WORLD: *THE APARTMENT* (1960)

“People will do anything for money—except some people who will do almost anything for money.”

—Billy Wilder¹

“The National Board for Economic Viability’s definition has no place for the term ‘human beings.’ Presumably it has been forgotten because it no longer plays any very important role.”

—Siegfried Kracauer²

Meet C.C. Baxter

A helicopter shot pans the Manhattan skyline from right to left, with the skyscrapers brought into relief by the afternoon sun, while a somewhat hectic voiceover informs us that on this day, November 1, 1959, the exact population of New York City is 8,042,783. We cut to an exterior shot of one of the tall buildings that presumably just passed by in the establishing shot, and the camera pans up its steel and glass façade, then dissolves into a panoramic shot of the interior of an immense office furnished with literally hundreds of desks behind which employees operate calculators and typewriters. Here the camera holds for a moment, interrupting the fluidity of the horizontal and vertical panning of the first two shots, to allow us to take in the vastness of the space. As the voiceover explains, we are at Consolidated Life, an insurance company that employs 31,259 people at its New York headquarters: “I work on the nineteenth floor – Ordinary Policy Department – Premium Accounting Division – Section W – desk number 861.” Prompted by this information, we seek to make out the narrator (Jack Lemmon) among the mass of employees but are frustrated for a few moments until the camera cuts to medium closeup of desk 861 with the name plate “C.C. Baxter” attached to it, an observation immediately

confirmed by the narrator who explains his full name to be “C. for Calvin, C. for Clifford – however, most people call me Bud.”

The four opening shots of *The Apartment* take up less than one minute of screentime and thus establish with appropriate efficiency the nature of efficiency in the American corporate world. Insurance companies, we understand, base their business on the coordination of data and facts, which are translated into numbers. The vertical and horizontal panning of the camera comes to a rest at precisely the moment at which it has located its target—desk number 861—within the system of coordinates. Combined with the information that it is November 1, 1959, we have been provided with the exact temporal and spatial information to place the subject in question. While a nineteenth-century omniscient narrator would have taken quite some time to zoom in on his or her protagonist, making sure that the reader understood the full significance of the formative power of time and place, our narrator takes care of such matters with expediency. What is more, after the opening sequence he is never heard from again, suggesting that he is no master of his tale in the realist tradition but subject to a process of storytelling in which the narrator has lost the power of organization and control.

The camera work and the voiceover leave no doubt that Baxter is entirely a product of the insurance business; he has climbed the corporate ladder by transferring from the branch office in Cincinnati (as we will learn later), but that advancement has come at a price: the “facts” he has been taught to remember—that, for example, the entire population of New York “if laid ... end to end, figuring an average height of five feet six and a half inches, ... would reach from Times Square to the outskirts of Karachi, Pakistan” or that the number of people employed by his company is higher “than the entire population of Natchez, Mississippi”—are essentially useless, a symptom of data gathering that serves no purpose. When Baxter operates his calculator, his head nods slightly to the rhythm of the machine, signaling that it is turning him into a robot. Indeed, if no nameplate were attached to his desk, it would be impossible to identify the identity of the person operating the machine. Baxter is the American everyman driven to an extreme, a cog in a gigantic mechanism. In this world, status is defined in purely symbolic terms; the higher the floor number one occupies in Consolidated Life, the more spacious the office, the more numerous the privileges, and hence the more important and powerful the person. Being located on the nineteenth floor in a building that numbers over thirty, we immediately understand that Baxter occupies a mid-level position, and as we will learn soon after, like most employees Baxter desires something higher.

The counterpart to the overcrowded, high-rising public office where Baxter works is the emptiness of his bachelor pad in a low-level brown-stone near Central Park. In fact, with very few exceptions we see Baxter only in these two opposed spaces, suggesting that his life consists of work



Figure 6.1. Trauner set design

and of moments of rest so that he can work more. The central plot element of Wilder and Diamond's carefully crafted scenario stipulates that a gain in office space is dependent upon relinquishing his private space: by allowing his superiors to use his apartment for their extramarital affairs, he wins their favor and promotion, but in the process he ironically becomes homeless. Buddy's key to success, both symbolically and literally, is his apartment key, the lending of which is rewarded with a key to the executive washroom, the sign of newly gained stature. At the beginning of the film, Baxter has to spend a cold night in the park because one of his "customers" accidentally leaves the washroom key under the doormat instead of the apartment key. By the film's end, when Baxter finally regains his moral integrity, the situation will be reversed; Baxter responds to the demand of his superior, Sheldrake (Fred MacMurray), for the apartment key with returning the washroom key, fully accepting the consequences.³

As the only visible way to move between floors is by elevator, the elevator's operator, Miss Fran Kubelick (Shirley MacLaine), is the inadvertent facilitator of upward mobility; ironically, she is also the prize for which Baxter and Sheldrake compete, and for which Baxter will ultimately forfeit his professional achievements when he realizes the extent to which Miss Kubelick suffers at the hands of Sheldrake, as well as his complicity in her exploitation. Regaining his moral standards, he abandons his professional climbing for human integrity, a decision which finally wins him the attention of Miss Kubelick in a happy ending that remains as open as that of *Some Like It Hot* and many other Wilder films.

The Apartment is one of very few Wilder films that uses a location as its title, and those that do—such as *Stalag 17* or *Sunset Boulevard*—allude to specific places that connote a certain historical and geographic meaning. In contrast, the generic nature of this title, from Wilder's first original script since *Ace in the Hole* nine years earlier, signals that the true protagonist may not be Baxter but the place he lives in, and that the basic tension explored by the film is that between being a certain *type* of human being and what actually makes that being *human*. A Buddy-Boy without real friends,

Baxter leads a solitary life of TV dinners, surrounded by run-of-the-mill furniture, minimal kitchen appliances, and posters of modern paintings, which we later understand to have been purchased while passing time in various museums because his apartment is occupied.⁴ Clearly, places like these produce and shape types like Baxter, while types like Baxter will seek out places like these to make their “home.” The notion of home needs to be rendered in quotation marks, not only because Baxter’s professional ambition literally makes him homeless, but also because even when occupied by himself, the apartment provides Baxter with only the most spurious sense of belonging. Similar in nature to how Walter Neff and Joe Gillis reside in their respective Los Angeles apartments, Baxter’s way of dwelling resembles that of a guest staying in a hotel, with departure imminent and suitcases close by. Significantly, the first time we see him in his apartment he performs what amounts to room service, namely picking up after paying guests have left. It is no coincidence that the one film we are privy to watch with self-described television fan Baxter is *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932, based on the novel and subsequent play by Wilder’s fellow émigré Vicki Baum). The film chronicles the parallel stories of rich and poor hotel guests, including an accountant like Baxter who succeeds in winning the favor of a secretary by wresting her away from a corrupt industrialist. (Indeed, it is startling to keep track of how many of the films Wilder wrote or directed use a hotel as a central setting, thereby emphasizing the transient nature of dwelling in the twentieth century, as well as his own status as exile.)⁵ That the pleasure the film affords Baxter is ruined by television ads further underscores the theme of commercialization that pervades *The Apartment*.

Baxter’s apartment slowly begins to feel more like a home after Fran’s suicide attempt, when the film settles there for a good half hour. When Dreyfuss and Baxter drag Fran around the apartment, a black puppet comes into view in the background, a satiric comment on the fate of the woman now in the hands of these two men, but also on Baxter’s own sta-



Figure 6.2. Baxter waits in vain for *Grand Hotel*

tus, because his strings are being pulled by his superiors. Ironically, it is at the moment of least anchored living—when in the final shot we watch Baxter and Fran playing cards among packed boxes—that the film conveys the strongest sense of two people not only truly belonging to each other but also to and in this place.

The apartment is the object that leads to both Baxter's promotion and demotion, as well as the location for most of the events that drive the plot, including Sheldrake's encounters with Fran, Fran's suicide attempt, and the awakening of Baxter's sense of male pride after being beaten by Fran's brother-in-law Karl; furthermore, it is the location that is under careful scrutiny by virtually all supporting characters in the film, ranging from Sheldrake through the four mid-level executives at Consolidated Life to Baxter's Jewish landlady and neighbors (about whose positive influence on Baxter I will have more to say below). The opening credits—about equal in length to the four shots described above—roll over Alexander Trauner's exterior set of the apartment, establishing from the outset the studio quality of the film; even though there will be brief location photography of the Majestic Theatre, a few shots of Central Park, and the street where the "Rickshaw Boy" restaurant is located, the film creates the sense that its story is universal and not specific to New York. Indeed, most of Wilder's New York films, including *The Major and the Minor*, *The Seven Year Itch*, and *The Apartment*, use the city as a generic backdrop, privileging extensive use of studio sets over location photography for narratives in which the city's specific history and geography seems to matter very little. This sets them apart quite distinctively from his Los Angeles films in which the city not only is portrayed far more authentically—even to the point of becoming an important participant in the narrative—but is also tied to these films' inherent self-reflexivity. *Hold Back the Dawn*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Sunset Boulevard* all revolve around the role of the film industry in the American imaginary; both *Sunset Boulevard* and *Hold Back the Dawn* not only explicitly foreground how the construction and selling of narratives to the film industry is a matter of life or death but also implicate Hollywood in the construction of images that have no reference in reality—be it a critique of a false notion of eternal youth, or that of the United States as promised land (with *Hold Back the Dawn* featuring a gate separating Mexico from its Northern neighbor that conspicuously resembles the gate of Paramount film studios in *Sunset Boulevard*). *Double Indemnity*, as I have suggested in chapter 3, uses the insurance business as an extended metaphor for the workings of the film industry and thus similarly highlights the conditions which make films like itself possible in the first place.

None of Wilder's New York films can claim such an approach. The only exception regarding the use of location among his New York films is *The Lost Weekend*, which features extensive footage of the seedier underbelly of the Upper East Side and was celebrated for that reason at the time of its release. One of the first critics not only to observe the realism of Wilder's

location photography but also relate it to the German street films of the 1920s as Siegfried Kracauer: "Third Avenue and its iron-work, its bars and its pawnshops [feature] as the region of anarchy and distress. (Significantly enough, shots of street life were also prominent in German films of the pre-Hitler Weimar Republic periods that described the tragedies of instinct-possessed beings.)"⁶ Kracauer's observation is part of a larger argument (discussed extensively in chapter 3) that connects Weimar modernity with the emergence of *noir*; indeed, much of what Kracauer says about Hollywood's "terror films" (the term *film noir* had not yet gained currency) would pertain even more to *Double Indemnity* and *Sunset Boulevard*, underscoring my argument about the very different notions of realism that divide Wilder's East Coast and West Coast settings. Furthermore, unlike his Los Angeles films, *The Lost Weekend* tells a story—the struggles of an alcoholic writer—for which the city in which it occurs serves merely as background for life in an anonymous metropolis.

The different notion of realism and use of location photography underlying Wilder's New York films is related to the origins of their respective sources as well as the conditions for filming. *The Seven Year Itch* was based on a successful Broadway play, just as *The Apartment* was originally conceived as a production for the stage, as Wilder has explained.⁷ Since it was set in the winter, outdoor shooting for *The Apartment* proved difficult and expensive, and Wilder decided to have exteriors reconstructed in the studio in Los Angeles. Yet apart from these practical concerns the point bears repetition that New York for Wilder always remained a far more generic and abstract American metropolis than Los Angeles, and thus far-better suited for a drama emphasizing the generic nature of the existence of a certain type of person. What we see in C.C. Baxter's story is the struggle of an individual with the power of corporate capitalism as well as the force of modernity in shaping the ambitions, moral values, and desires of the white-collar worker, a class that rose to prominence after World War II and began to dominate the professional landscape of America during the 1950s.⁸

The Salaried Masses

As Billy Wilder has repeatedly acknowledged, the opening sequence of *The Apartment* was inspired by the beginning of King Vidor's famous silent film, *The Crowd* (1928). In that film, it was young John Sims who at age twenty-one comes to New York in the hope of finding a better future. Following his arrival by boat, and confronting the viewer with a series of shots documenting the buzzing street life of the metropolis reminiscent of Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of a Big City* (made the year before), the camera cuts to the exterior of a large office building, travels up its façade and glides indoors, until it spots our "hero," now labeled worker #137,



Figure 6.3. King Vidor, *The Crowd*: Sims, a man in the mass

among hundreds of clerks in an office room of enormous proportions.⁹ Unlike the slightly robotic Baxter, Sims is an upbeat employee who eyes with anticipation the clock striking five to end his workday (which Baxter will ignore for different reasons); but soon enough his youthful enthusiasm will be revealed as naïveté regarding the severity of the struggle to stay ahead of the crowd, as the film follows his troubled attempts to make it in the big city.

If the relationship between the apartment and the psychological and social dimension of its inhabitant is the focus of Wilder's film, Vidor's is a chronicle of the story of an individual in the emerging mass society of the twentieth century. Sims is a face in the crowd that moves in for a closeup for the duration of the film, only to recede into a mass of people again at the film's closing. We follow this average man through his workday, honeymoon, the birth of his children, and marital crisis by focusing entirely on Sims (there is hardly a shot in the film without him in it); the plot consists of mundane events and revolves around Sims's efforts to stick out in the crowd, which are eventually tempered into his acceptance of being one them.

If *The Crowd* depicts the drama of defining one's place in modern mass society—where assembly-line production has come to encompass now also the working and living conditions of the white-collar worker—*The Apartment* focuses on the effects of corporate capitalism and mass culture more than thirty years later. The focal point of Baxter's life is no longer the struggle for survival; by the late 1950s, the white-collar workers have established themselves as major players in the American workforce and enjoy the benefits of regulated, unionized labor agreements, relative job security, and benefits. What befalls Baxter is the concomitant alienation

and loneliness that marks the modern workplace, as efficiency and anonymity have dramatically increased, indicated through a telling touch in the opening scene, namely that working hours have been staggered by floor so as to avoid elevator jams. Of Sims's youthful vitality and arrogance nothing seems to have survived in jaded and complacent C.C. Baxter. Whereas Sims is never seen alone—either he is swallowed up by a New York crowd or surrounded by friends or family—Baxter is repeatedly shown in isolation, either working late in a deserted office, waiting for a date that will never show, or sitting on a park bench while his apartment is occupied, often depicted in long-shots that powerfully illustrate his loneliness—he even goes so far as to call himself “Robinson Crusoe—shipwrecked among eight million people.” Whereas *The Crowd* presents survival in the city as cutthroat but ultimately meaningful and rewarding, *The Apartment* shows the workplace in that same city more than three decades later to be comfortable but empty.

While Wilder's films have often been filled with allusions and references to other films, star personae, and directors—most notably in those that revolve around the film industry itself—the extensive quoting of Vidor's silent classic at the opening of *The Apartment* is unparalleled in his oeuvre and begs for further examination.¹⁰ The parallel openings suggest that Sims and Baxter are universal types of different historical eras, representatives of an ever-increasing number of Americans whose moral values, tastes, desires, and dreams are shaped almost entirely by their work environment. Casting Baxter as Sims' descendant endows a man who seems to have no family or relatives (except for an ex-wife) with an ancestry, but one rooted in (film) history rather than a personal one. If we take into account that Vidor's use of the mobile camera and location photography was modeled, in his own words, on the vision of F.W. Murnau, E.A. Dupont, and Fritz Lang, as well as the “enlightening influence from European studios,” we have in *The Apartment* yet another example of a Wilder film establishing a distinct genealogy between the American and German cinema of the 1920s and the American 1950s.¹¹

This genealogy is further corroborated by the fact that Vidor's portrait of mass society, which follows a tradition from Edgar Allan Poe to Elmer Rice and Sinclair Lewis, should not only be seen influenced stylistically by German film professionals but also to be in direct dialogic relationship with Weimar Germany's sophisticated discourse on mass society and mass culture, and particularly what role America played in its emergence (as discussed in chapter 2). Of particular relevance here is Siegfried Kracauer's *Die Angestellten* (*The Salaried Masses*), first published in installments in 1929/30 in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and subsequently as a book, a study of white-collar workers in Berlin whose numbers had swelled dramatically in Germany (as in the US) in the first three decades of the twentieth century.¹² Kracauer's approach to grasping the social, economic, and psychological dimension of this new class was to write neither an empiri-

cal study nor a reportage (a form of reporting using 'snapshots of reality' first made fashionable by Wilder's mentor Egon Erwin Kisch); instead, he intended to compose a "mosaic" of observations, interviews, and data in order to capture the habits, thoughts, tastes, and patterns of speech of this emerging class.¹³ Stressing the ubiquity and yet strangeness of his object of study, Kracauer purposely assumed the position of an ethnographer: "Hundreds of thousands of salaried employees throng the streets of Berlin daily, yet their life is more unknown than that of the primitive tribes at whose habits those same employees marvel in films."¹⁴ Just as Vidor preserves a certain distance from his anti-hero Sims by treating him as an example of a new species, so Kracauer too stresses the foreignness of the all-too familiar to highlight what the subtitle of his essay labels "the newest Germany." (Baxter will usher Miss Kubelick into the office where the Christmas party is held with the words, "shall we join the natives?" thereby underscoring his own sense of foreignness.)

Like many of his contemporaries, Kracauer located the origins of the forces of modernization in the United States.¹⁵ Thus he quotes an employee who explains the desirability of putting on a smiling face when reporting to work as something to be learned from the Americans;¹⁶ and he specifically alludes to Taylorism when he writes of the "the irruption of the machine and 'assembly-line' methods into the clerical departments of big firms" as following an "American pattern"—a phenomenon with very visible traces also in both Sims's and Baxter's job duties.¹⁷ Specific for Germany, however, was that the new white-collar class was composed less of upwardly mobile blue-collar workers and more of an impoverished bourgeoisie, left without savings and property after the World War and the inflation. Thus Kracauer cites the example of girls who "when the middle classes were still in a better state ... nimbly practiced their *études* on their parents piano," but now use their dexterous fingers to punch holes in cards; ingenious managers have found out that the speed with which girls can perform this task can be increased if a certain music, such as a vivacious military march, is played in the background.¹⁸ (As if commenting on this observation, during the opening scene of *The Apartment* the nature of Baxter's assembly-line work is heightened by Adolph Deutsch's brisk marching score.)

The defining new feature of this emerging middle class is, according to Kracauer, a radically changed relation between work and leisure in which the process of identity formation, shaped in the past by origin and tradition, has been increasingly replaced by the culture industry. But since the sites and sights of distraction provided by the movie theatres, amusement parks, and establishments like Haus Vaterland, a leisure palace of enormous proportions, employ the very same means of standardization and rationalization to cater to the fantasies of the new middle class that also shapes the workplace from which they desire to escape in the first place, there is no outside of this new form of capitalist rationality, making the

salaried masses not just a new class but a representative of a new type of worker.¹⁹ Bereft of spiritual and traditional guidance, as well as any class-consciousness, this new worker operates in a vacuum: "The mass of salaried employees differ from the worker proletariat in that they are spiritually homeless."²⁰ Seeking shelter in the only "asylum" available for them, namely the culture industry, they become vulnerable, so Kracauer, to the very mechanisms of manipulation and distortion which only a few years later the National Socialists would so cleverly exploit (driving Kracauer into exile and making *The Salaried Masses* one of the first volumes to be burnt on the pyre).

It needs to be stressed that Kracauer withheld in his study any formulations that summarize his ideological leanings; instead, he described the work situation of white-collar workers in detail and complexity, allowing for multiple perspectives and drawing out contradictions and ironies, thereby letting the material itself articulate his theory. As has been pointed out, it is perhaps no coincidence that Kracauer's representational methods, which include closeups, cuts, and montage, recall those of film, thereby underscoring his faith in the medium of the optical and his fascination with surface-level phenomena.²¹ At the same time, it cannot be denied that the argument put forth by *The Salaried Masses*, as well as other essays of the period, anticipates Adorno's indictment of the culture industry, written in American exile some fifteen years later. And while *The Salaried Masses* at times reads like a theoretical compendium of the life of John Sims (notice Kracauer's and Vidor's mutual emphasis on how work and leisure activities mutually inform each other), Adorno's observations on the administered world ("verwaltete Welt") capture *in nuce* the professional and private predicament of C.C. Baxter.

If "the racket" had been the term of choice for Adorno's theory of society during the time of fascism, pointing to the similarities between criminals and the heads of state running not only Nazi Germany but also liberal democracies, the administered world describes the totalizing force of "the system" of the postwar years intent on destroying the last residues of autonomy and individuality. It is a world in which the exchange principle and the almighty reign of organizations have turned individuals into commodities, objects, or processes, forcing them into hasty conformism or face the threat of disappearance, and thereby effectively doing away with any notion of subjectivity. In the process, the private, often considered the last residue of humanity and resistance, becomes easy prey for the totalizing forces Adorno sees at work in modern society: "The subjugation of life to the process of production imposes as humiliation on everyone something of the isolation and solitude that we are tempted to regard as resulting from our own superior choice."²²

Seen in this light, the solitude of C.C. Baxter's life is not an attempt to escape the rat race of Consolidated Insurance but an inescapable consequence of being part of "the process of production." Indeed, loneliness

as a central experience of postwar modernity may explain the desire of Baxter's superiors for extra-marital affairs to be less a search for adventure and more an escape from deadening domestic routines, just as it explains the female employees' willingness to enter into affairs with married colleagues as motivated by reasons other than romance or professional advancement. In other words, by focusing on the structural dimensions of corporate capitalism, and the systemic forces that regulate subjugation, Adorno's theory shifts blame from the moral shortcomings of individuals toward the omnipotence of a system that disallows meaningful interhuman relationships. If one follows this line of reasoning, Baxter's moral failure, which after all approximates prostitution and pimping, are but the product of a system that not only does *not* reward moral integrity but is bent on annihilating the very source of human integrity, the individual.

A Man Without Qualities?

Given the fact that central common experiences have shaped the lives and careers of Theodor W. Adorno and Billy Wilder (as pointed out in chapter 2), it should come as no surprise that these two fellow Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany should share a certain view of the world, and that their attempt to explain post-World War II industrial imperialism, upward mobility, and rapid consumerism would inevitably recall their experience of the political, economic, and social failure of Weimar modernity (as evident in many of the films discussed in detail in this volume as well as *Sabrina*; *One, Two, Three*; *The Fortune Cookie*; and *Avanti!*).²³ Wilder himself has been emphatic in placing *The Apartment* in a tradition of realism that takes on the shortcomings of contemporary society (a critique that is informed by what I have earlier called the parallel modernity of Weimar Berlin): "We have a prefabricated loneliness in America—TV dinners and everything. With this loneliness goes the urge to better oneself and rise from the masses ... I portray Americans as beasts ... I never considered *The Apartment* to be a comedy."²⁴ Adorno's numerous remarks about the vacuity of (American) consumer culture and the hypocrisy and double standard of the middleclass in *Minima Moralia* find their equivalent in Wilder's biting satire of the Christmas season, as the most flamboyant example of how consumerism has not only corrupted spiritual values but turned what used to be holy days of reflection and introspection into holidays from reason and restraint. The Christmas party scene at the office, strategically located at the halfway mark of the film, is of central importance to the film.²⁵ Not only does it provide a grotesque portrait of unchecked libidos and corporate fraternization seemingly devoid of hierarchical structure (soon revealed to be of a very temporary nature) at the very location where anonymity and efficiency usually reign supreme, but it also contains two revelatory scenes—Fran learns about Sheldrake's many prior affairs with



Figure 6.4. Anything goes: The office Christmas party

girls in the office, while Baxter realizes that she is Sheldrake's mistress—that gain their full emotional power against the background of spurious laughter and obscene debauchery. The heavy-drinking Kris Kringle at the bar, Sheldrake's monetary Christmas gift to Fran (which effectively turns her into a prostitute),²⁶ the pathetic little Christmas tree in Baxter's apartment, the pricetags on Sheldrake's new dressrobe as reminders of crass commercialism—all these examples underscore the nightmarish dimensions of the season to be jolly from which Baxter only awakens when Karl Matuschka knocks him into his Christmas tree and causes the tree to tumble to the ground.

Many contemporary reviewers, especially outside the United States, lauded *The Apartment* for its realistic portrayal of the kind of personality corporate capitalism breeds, sometimes even using terms provided by Adorno and other contemporary sociologists.²⁷ Indeed, so convincing did some of them find the figure of C.C. Baxter that they lamented that his turnaround at the end of the film not only represented a box office-oriented compromise on the part of the director but remained highly implausible, given how persuasively the film had demonstrated the omnipotence of the system.²⁸ Yet it needs to be pointed out that what lends the film its vitality, and what creates any sympathy on the part of viewers for its implausible hero, is precisely the moral tension that marks Baxter's struggle to stay decent in an indecent world. Although certainly a monad in Adorno's sense,

he is not what Kracauer called a “Radfahrer” (cyclist) to describe employees “who bow down to those above them and trample those below.”²⁹ Unlike the exploits of mid-level sharks Dobish and Kirkeby, Baxter’s spinelessness harms no one except himself, and he does not use his newly found power to exert pressure on underlings. If his own story is to be trusted, he got into the habit of lending his apartment because of generosity not cunning, and probably kept it up as much due to his inability to say no as for monetary reasons.

The credit for imbuing Baxter’s moral ambiguity with credibility and dignity, and for constantly straddling the fine line between comedy and tragedy, has to go, of course, to Jack Lemmon’s outstanding performance. As Sinyard and Turner comment, “to play Baxter as a cold-hearted opportunist who knows what he is doing might have alienated our sympathies; and to play him as a nice, dumb sort of guy who did not see he was being used might have stretched our credulity. Lemmon’s performance takes a meticulously judged line between the two extremes. It is a portrayal that is at once comic and poignant.”³⁰ The role of Baxter is one of many in which Lemmon plays “the average guy,” an insecure and confused man in search of the American Dream, extending back to *Some Like It Hot* and forwards to *The Fortune Cookie* and *Buddy Buddy*, Wilder’s final film. Like the musician Jerry, Baxter is obsessed with comfort and security, and it is fitting that he should work for a corporation whose business it is to sell security to its customers. Unlike John Sims, for which Vidor purposely cast an extra without any real acting experience so as to avoid the strong viewer identification invited by a star, Lemmon’s Baxter is all too human; while he may be fussy, neurotic, and sexless, his constant sniffing and gasping, his naïveté, but also his chivalresque covering up for Fran vis-à-vis his neighbors and her brother-in-law make him a character deserving of pity and sympathy, with real desires and emotions, no matter how despicable his behavior at first may be.

In Shirley Maclaine, Lemmon has a partner who imbues Fran Kubelick with both vulnerability and sexuality: while her common sense invariably succumbs to her romantic side, and she just can’t help being one of the people who repeatedly “get took” by “takers” like Sheldrake, she eventually realizes who is truly deserving of her affection. And while she may have traits in common with Kracauer’s poor little shopgirls, whose dreams are molded by the film industry and who “in the dark movie theaters . . . grope for their date’s hand and think of the coming Sunday,” Fran is a self-determined young woman—noticeable by the fact that she cuts her hair short and that she wears a flower in the lapel of her uniform even though that is against regulations (as the script explains)—who does not blame Jeff Sheldrake but only her own naïveté for ending up with the fuzzy end of the lollipop, as it were.³¹ In that respect, the perky, uninhibited Maclaine portrays a woman who is significantly different from the dominant female images of the fifties such as “the sensuous softness of

Marilyn Monroe ... the sultry sophistication of Elizabeth Taylor [or] the cool aristocratic bearing of a Grace Kelly or an Audrey Hepburn."³² In contrast to the films of this period, which according to Molly Haskell "were all *about sex*, but *without sex*," *The Apartment* clearly implies premarital and adulterous sexual relationships, and the fact that Fran still ends up with the hero (even though a very unconventional one) rather than being punished in some way demonstrates the dramatically different way in which films began to represent the changing role of women in society in the 1960s.³³

The only one-dimensional character in the film is Sheldrake, for which Wilder yet again cast Fred MacMurray against type. As Wilder explained, "if the insurance salesman he played in *Double Indemnity* hadn't taken a wrong turn, he might have ended up running the whole company, like Sheldrake in *The Apartment*."³⁴ It might be added here that for Wilder the insurance business must have been the embodiment of what is wrong with capitalism, for it figures prominently not only in the two above-mentioned films but also in *The Fortune Cookie*, featuring the memorable observation by shyster lawyer Gingrich (Walter Matthau) that insurance companies have so much money that "they don't know what to do with it – they've run out of storage space – they have to microfilm it."³⁵

While the anonymity and loneliness of Baxter's life is powerfully conveyed in the shots discussed earlier, his lack of identity is most visible in his use of language (whereas Fran's comes across in her self depreciation). His brisk, nervous tone imitates the fact-driven but vacuous lingo of the insurance business, of which Mr. Kirkeby's habit of adding the suffix "–wise" to all kinds of adjectives, nouns, and even proper names (a habit readily imitated by Baxter but also by Sheldrake and Dobish) is the most extreme case—an example of what Adorno called speech being "sportified."³⁶ Indeed, repeating what other people say seems a staple of Baxter, pointing again to his lack of sense of who he really is (further underscored by his purchase of the bowler hat). Thus he uses Dr. Dreyfuss's admonition about an imminent death unless he changes his fast-paced lifestyle to impress barfly Margie; and he passes on Dreyfuss's advice that even though Fran's suicide attempt was averted she is "not out of the woods yet" to Sheldrake as if it were his own wisdom. Pretending to be a callous gigolo, he also repeats to Mrs. Dreyfuss the condescending comments Sheldrake made earlier about Fran—"I mean, you take a girl out a couple of times a week and right away she thinks you're serious"—to hide his true feelings about her and to shelter Sheldrake. Significantly, at the end of the film this pattern of imitation is reversed: Having rehearsed a speech for Sheldrake of how he will "take Miss Kubelick off [his] hands," he is disarmed when Sheldrake uses that same phrase on him. Having for once come up with a statement that reflects initiative and a sense of responsibility, the failure to be able to deliver it proves too much. Resigning himself to the fact that

Sheldrake has won Miss Kubelick, he decides no longer to be the facilitator of that affair and quits his job. Ironically, this leads to the one situation in which someone cites Baxter's words rather than Baxter parroting others—namely when Sheldrake explains to Fran that Baxter stipulated that he cannot bring anyone to Baxter's apartment, "especially not Miss Kubelick"—and occasioning a moment of recognition in Fran who then rushes to Baxter's apartment in a wonderful tracking shot which director Volker Schlöndorff has called one of the most liberating he has seen.³⁷

The film's emphasis on the subtlety of language is part of a narrative driven primarily by dialogue (as so many Wilder films are). Indeed, apart from the stunning opening sequence and the repeated long shots of Baxter mentioned earlier, the verbal dominates the visual throughout the film. Thus, little is made of the Panavision format, which ironically highlights verticality in a film concerned with upward mobility and thus suggests the suffocating low ceiling of corporate culture. While I would not go as far as Mark Cousins and claim that the film actually looks better on television than in a theater, I do agree that it straddles the transition between the two media much more easily than most films made in that format.³⁸ This compatibility with a television aesthetics went a long way toward establishing the film's lasting reputation, as it became a staple of American television, but it is also completely in accordance with the overall project Wilder pursues in this film. The film's black-and-white photography, much-talked about in relation to *Some Like It Hot* but hardly commented on in this case, not only serves to bring out the gray-tones in the two protagonists but to underscore yet again the film's affinity to a medium that in the decade to come would profoundly shape the production, distribution, and look of new films. In this context, finally, it is only appropriate that Trauner and Boyle's art direction and set design should be rewarded with an Oscar, while Joseph LaSelle's fine cinematography went unnoticed.³⁹

As with most films made for television, *The Apartment* relies primarily on the strength of its performers. The foregrounding of studio photography as well as the sparse use of original locations highlight, as remarked earlier, the generic nature of Baxter and his world, while making one locale central to the plot anticipates at the same time the advent of television soap operas and series, of which *Seinfeld* would become the most famous to claim Wilder's film as an ancestor.⁴⁰ Television in *The Apartment* is no longer treated as an invisible threat lingering under the surface, as it was in *Sunset Boulevard*; instead, it has become second nature. For Baxter, people like Ed Sullivan, Perry Como, or Mae West are his only companions at night, while telephone operator Sylvia schedules her rendezvous with Kirkeby around Robert Stack's television series "The Untouchables." By alluding to former film stars whose careers have been prolonged by television (in West's case through reruns, and in Stack's through a successful transi-

tion to television), Wilder's film is at the same time highly self-conscious that television may also figure prominently in its own afterlife.

Being a *Mensch*

As mentioned above, the conversion of spineless, opportunistic C.C. Baxter into a morally upright person who quits his job rather than keep supporting his superior's exploitations has been considered by numerous critics a less than believable turn of events. Enno Patalas spoke for many when he commented, "the tagged-on sentimental happy-ending hardly claims to be credible."⁴¹ While the character reversal has raised eyebrows, what has gone unnoticed is perhaps even more of an improbability in Wilder's works—Baxter's decision to become a "mensch ... a human being" is, in his own words, prompted by "following doctor's orders." What is unusual in this scenario is not only that doctors are not looked at kindly in Wilder's films—just think of the continued ridicule of shrinks alluded to in the last chapter, as well as the evil doings of Dr. Vando in *Fedora*—but, more importantly, that this doctor is one of the very few characters Wilder created who is clearly marked as Jewish. That Dr. Dreyfuss and his wife should be instrumental for "sending a clear message" in a film otherwise devoid of any positive endorsements raises larger question about the (overall lack of) representation of Jews in Wilder's films as well as his own understanding of Jewishness.

As pointed out in chapter 2, this question is indeed central to Wilder's definition as filmmaker. In interviews, Wilder has commented widely on issues including German and Austrian anti-Semitism, postwar amnesia and the Holocaust, and Hollywood's domination by Jewish moguls, usually without sentimentality or ire, and often in outrageous anecdotes that straddle the thin line between the hilarious and the insulting (one of which involves a film project on the Mayer family, called "The Foreskin Saga"). But unlike his mentor Ernst Lubitsch, whose early comedies about Jewish social climbers employ stereotypes uncomfortably close to contemporaneous anti-Semitic discourse, while his 1942 comedy *To Be or Not to Be* presented a distinct linking between the disappearance of the Eastern European Jewry and Hollywood's self-censorship, Wilder has rarely addressed Jewish identity on screen.⁴² Apart from the Dreyfuss family, the only characters clearly marked as Jewish in Wilder's films include Shapiro in *Stalag 17*, theater manager Poliakov in *Some Like It Hot*, and possibly Gingrich in *The Fortune Cookie* (by virtue of the fact that Walter Matthau is Jewish)—not many for his twenty-six films as director. It is unclear whether or not to read this as a concession to the very pressure for assimilation within the film industry which Wilder ridiculed often enough; nor do we know, for example, why the plan for making the John Pringle figure in *A Foreign Affair* Jewish was not followed through on.⁴³ (Given Wilder's personal

history, it is equally astonishing that Germans like Erich von Stroheim's Field Marshall Rommel in *Five Graves to Cairo*, Otto Preminger's camp commander von Scherbach in *Stalag 17*, and the Marlene Dietrich of *A Foreign Affair* imbue representatives of Nazi Germany with humor and complexity few contemporaneous films can claim.)⁴⁴

However, in a more general sense Wilder's films are distinctly Jewish—from their lack of sentimentality, through their emphasis on the power of gab, to their celebration of the survivor figure. In an attempt to highlight the greatness of an artist he had earlier dismissed, Andrew Sarris has claimed that the experience of exile and the Holocaust is what gave Wilder "the courage to be profoundly honest with himself," thereby allowing his films to "bridge the abyss between humor and horror."⁴⁵ Within Wilder's oeuvre, the films scripted with Diamond, a Central European Jew like Wilder, are more Yiddish and often reminiscent of boulevard sex comedies and farce (as well as the plays of Arthur Schnitzler). This is especially true for *The Apartment* where not only the dialogue but also the detailed scene directions (absent from earlier scripts) are peppered with terms like "nebbish," "schnook," "the meshugass," and "saftig dame"; indeed, the stinging satire on Christmas may be seen as a particular Jewish phobia for this specific holiday. C.C. Baxter, although decidedly a WASP-ish character, is of course one of the many schlemiel characters Lemmon would play for Wilder. As Ruth Wisse comments, "the *schlemiel* is the active disseminator of bad luck, and the *schlimazl* is its passive victim. The schlemiel's misfortune is his character. It is not accidental, but essential. Whereas comedy involving the *schlimazl* tends to be situational, the schlemiel's comedy is existential, deriving from his very nature in its confrontation with reality."⁴⁶ Indeed, in Lemmon's neurotic portrait of this figure we can glimpse a snapshot of Woody Allen's obsessions to come.

If being neurotic is often attributed to being Jewish, then the down-to-earth, common sense Dr. Dreyfuss and his wife are decidedly atypical. In a city where everyone seems to have the most spurious and superficial connection to home, job, and family, they appear also as the most grounded, radiating a sense of belonging and rootedness decidedly absent in Baxter, Fran Kubelick, or Sheldrake. Indeed, they and Mrs. Liebermann are the only true New Yorkers in a cast of bland middle Americans, providing the local color which the rest of the characters and the locations programmatically lack. In Mildred Dreyfuss, Wilder created, to my knowledge, the only character specifically drawn on his upbringing, modeling her after a woman who lived in the same building in Vienna where he grew up: "She used to visit my mother. I just had to stop a moment and close my eyes, and I could hear her voice in my head, like it was yesterday. I don't remember her name, but I remember that voice. She was a plump muse, always cooking, and she ate most of what she cooked. She spoke German in the Viennese way, and I tried to put that into English."⁴⁷ Naomi Stevens's Jewish mama certainly radiates warmth and concern, and enjoys



Figure 6.5. Echoes of Gertrude Berg: Mrs. Dreyfuss, the Jewish mama Wilder knew from Vienna

with her husband (who “tells [her] everything”) the kind of honesty and respect missing in all other couples presented in the film. As Ed Sikov has astutely remarked, in this film “home is where the Jews are.”⁴⁸

Yet it is of course puzzling that the notion of home should be associated with Jewishness. To be sure, New York has historically been a city with a large Jewish population who have felt welcome in its ethnic diversity, having for the most part experienced immigration as a process that despite many obstacles is ultimately rewarding (and the Jewish New York is also highlighted in *The Lost Weekend*). In particular Central European exiles and émigrés of Wilder’s generation found a permanent home here, including Kracauer who lived in New York until his death in 1966 (while Adorno worked there for several years).⁴⁹ Yet Kracauer and Adorno have always underscored that for Jews (as well as for exiles) any sense of home and belonging to a particular place is fraught with contradictions and a false sense of security. Even before the Third Reich made him a refugee, Kracauer thought of himself as “extra-territorial,” while Adorno underscored that Nazism only confirmed the nightmare he had been taught to expect in his youth: “The outbreak of the Third Reich did, it is true, surprise my political judgment, but not my unconscious fear ... it often seemed to my foolish terror as if the total State had been invented expressly against me, to inflict on me after all those things from which, in my childhood, its primeval form, I had been temporarily dispensed.”⁵⁰ While

in Los Angeles, Adorno augmented nonassimilation and nonbelonging into the cornerstone of his ethics of exile: “[I]t is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home.”⁵¹ As I have argued throughout this book, Wilder’s own sense of being an outsider—no matter how professionally successful he became—shares much with Adorno’s, and is reflected throughout his films, which, at a fundamental level, revolve around questions of straddling multiple identities and the hefty price of assimilation. Seen in this light, then, *The Apartment* offers a rare and conscious recasting of the experience of exile, portraying nonbelonging and alienation as a predicament for which Jews, commonly associated with diasporic or nomadic identities, can offer a remedy. That they do so by using a German and Yiddish word—*mensch*—underscores not only their appeal to a common humanity but also that the German language, considered by many Holocaust survivors *non grata*, can still provide a universally accepted terminology.

For Billy Wilder, *The Apartment* marked the climax of his professional success, capping a decade of extraordinary creative achievements by winning three Academy Awards, for producer, director, and screenplay (with Diamond).⁵² Wilder himself called it his “picture with the fewest faults.”⁵³ The film also ushered in the final decline of Hollywood’s era of self-censorship, particularly in regard to dealing with complex adult sexual relationships, supported in this quest by the release of three impressive European films on similar topics—*Hiroshima, Mon Amour*; *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*; and *Room at the Top*. Subsequent films by Wilder would feature even more outrageous portraits of extramarital affairs, prostitution, nudity, and foul language. However, *The Apartment* would prove to be Wilder’s last critical success for a while. While *Irma la Douce*, again starring Lemmon and MacLaine, would go on to become his commercially most successful film ever, critics panned it as well as *The Fortune Cookie* and *Kiss me, Stupid*, which caused a major public scandal. It would not be until *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* that a film of his would meet again with (much belated) critical success.

Notes

1. *Billy Wilder Interviews*, 106
2. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998), 43. The essay was first published in 1929 in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.
3. The key to the executive washroom, as well as a reference to the office Christmas party, also feature prominently in *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (Frank Tashlin, 1957), a spoof on a Madison Avenue-based advertising business.
4. Trauner has described the idea behind designing Baxter’s apartment as follows: “Nous avons décidé de le situer dans des quartiers très chics qu’on a laissés se dégrader comme Harlem. Des quartiers élégants à une certaine époque, mais qu’on a délaissés et où l’on trouve maintenant une population plus pauvre.” Alexandre Trauner, *Décors de cinéma* (Paris: Jade-Flammarion, 1988), 152. (“We decided to place him [Baxter] in one of those

- upscale neighborhoods that had been allowed to go to seed—one of those apartments which during a certain era were quite elegant, but which have seen better days and where you now find poorer people.”)
5. These include *Der Teufelsreporter*, *Emil und die Detektive*, *Scampolo*, *Was Frauen träumen*, *Ninotchka*, *Arise*, *My Love*, *Hold Back the Dawn*, *Five Graves to Cairo*, *Love in the Afternoon*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Irma La Douce*, *Avanti!*, *Fedora*, and *Buddy Buddy*.
 6. Siegfried Kracauer, “Hollywood’s Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?” *Commentary* 2 (1946): 132–36; here 134.
 7. As Diamond has stated, “originally Billy wanted to do *The Apartment* as a play, but since there had to be such a visual contrast between the apartment and the three-hundred desk office, it was not feasible.” Quoted in Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard*, 431.
 8. Wilder has repeatedly stated that the story could take place in any modern city in the United States or Europe.
 9. Though not identified as such in the film, Vidor later explained that the exterior shots, taken by a hidden camera during lunch hour, were of the Equitable Life Insurance Building. See King Vidor, *A Tree is a Tree* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), 151.
 10. King Vidor’s description of the use of forced perspective to create the impression of a very large office space seems to have been instrumental for Trauner’s famous set design. King Vidor even claims to have used dwarfs to create perspective, an anecdote also often told by Wilder. See King Vidor, *On Filmmaking* (New York: McKay, 1972), 70, as well as Wilder in his preface to Alexandre Trauner: *Décors de cinema* (Paris: Jade-Flammarion, 1988), 5.
 11. Vidor, *A Tree is a Tree*, 150.
 12. A long-time journalist for the culture section of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Kracauer transferred to Berlin in 1930 to head up the “Feuilleton” section of the paper. A regular reviewer of German film, he was familiar with all the films Wilder scripted. As fellow journalists it is possible that Kracauer and Wilder knew each other personally, although they worked for very different kinds of papers, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* being a high-brow liberal newspaper that many Jewish intellectuals read, while Wilder wrote mostly for sensationalist papers. The publication of *Die Angestellten* was widely discussed and reviewed in the German press at the time.
 13. In the United States, a somewhat similar approach to the topic was taken at the same time by Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929). More recently, Kracauer’s method has been compared to Clifford Geertz’ notion of “thick description.”
 14. *The Salaried Masses*, 29.
 15. It should be pointed out here that Kracauer mistakenly believed that the Tiller Girls, who are central to his essay “The Mass Ornament,” came from America while they in fact hailed from Manchester, England. Wilder, too, highlighted a connection between American capitalism and the impoverished German middleclass in a film from that period. In *Scampolo*, the jobless banker Maximilian instructs students in a language school that the most important word in the English language is “the money” (while in French it is “l’amour”), confirming widespread stereotypes of the time about American greed and consumerism.
 16. *The Salaried Masses*, 38.
 17. *The Salaried Masses*, 30
 18. *The Salaried Masses*, 29.
 19. The relationship between the working day and the weekend was also the focus of Wilder’s *Menschen am Sonntag*, shot during the summer of 1929 and released only a few weeks prior to Kracauer’s essay. While Wilder’s young Berliners prefer to spend time in nature rather than in amusement establishments to be found in the city, the fact that these workers also follow the instinct of the herd—note how the lake is as crowded on Sunday as the city is on a workday—underlines that the film is sympathetic to Kracauer’s ideas.
 20. *The Salaried Masses*, 89.

21. See Inka Mülder-Bach, "Introduction," *The Salaried Masses*, 3–22; here 14.
22. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 27. Important American studies of 1950s society that follow similar lines of inquiry include David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950) and William Hollingsworth Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).
23. For an insightful reading of *Sabrina* along these lines see Dinah M. Smith, "Global Cinderella: *Sabrina* (1954), Hollywood, and Postwar Internationalism," *Cinema Journal* 41.4 (2002): 27–51.
24. Wilder quoted in Sinyard and Turner, *Journey Down Sunset Boulevard*, 161.
25. The office Christmas party was actually shot on December 23, 1959, a poignant example of the unusual parallel between the time period during which the film was shot and the period depicted in the film. See Christopher Paul Denis, *The Films of Shirley MacLaine* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadell Press, 1980), 97.
26. Prostitution is of course an implicit motif in many Wilder films (and explicit in *Irma la Douce* and *Kiss me, Stupid*) which is often connected to betrayal, deceit, and masquerade. Typically, a man or woman prostitutes feelings, values, possessions, and the body for material success; at some point the cheater is brought to a moment of crisis, for which he or she pays dearly in Wilder's dramas, but undergoes a character reversal in his comedies (though in accordance with Wilder's penchant to blur the line between tragedy and comedy the opportunity to go on with one's life often feels like more of a condemnation than death).
27. In his review of the film, Jean Douchet describes the reality depicted in it as "un monde conditionné, fonctionnarisé, hiérarchisé [où] la réussite sociale n'est possible qu'au prix des plus basses compromissions" ("a conditioned, functionalized and hierarchic world in which social mobility is not possible without the lowest form of compromise"). See Douchet, "L'école de Vienne," *Cahiers du cinéma* 113 (1960): 58–60; here 58. Enno Patalas is even more explicit: "Time called the latest film by Billy Wilder the funniest movie ever made in Hollywood since *Some Like It Hot*. That reminds us of the sentence from Adorno's essay on the culture industry: Fun is a bath of steel. Rarely ever has a film focused as relentlessly on humiliation in the office space, and rarely has one been as cynical about it." ("*The Apartment*," *Filmkritik* August 1960, 249.)
28. The initial critical reception of the film was rather mixed. For a summary of contemporary reviews see Dick, *Billy Wilder*, 91; Sidkov, *On Sunset Boulevard* 442ff; Cousins, xiiff; Sinyard and Turner, 161ff.
29. *The Salaried Masses*, 49.
30. Sinyard and Turner, *Journey Down Sunset Boulevard*, 157.
31. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 297. First published in March 1927.
32. Patricia Erens, *The Films of Shirley MacLaine* (South Brunswick and New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1978), 13.
33. Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 235.
34. Charlotte Chandler, *Nobody's Perfect*, 228.
35. If insurance companies are the business of choice to question capitalism and corporate mentality within the United States, the role of American consumer goods abroad, including the concomitant question of cultural imperialism, is explored through the example of soft drink companies—Pepsi in *Love in the Afternoon* and Coke in *One, Two, Three*.
36. Adorno, *Mimima Moralia*, 137.
37. Volker Schlöndorff, "The Apartment," *Premiere* April 1992, 127.
38. Mark Cousins, "Introduction," *The Apartment* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1998) vii–xx; here xix.
39. Wilder was so impressed with Trauner's work that he called him "the Hungarian Michelangelo." (Wilder quoted in Rex McGee, "The Life and Hard Times of *Fedora*," *American Film*, February 1979, 17–32; here 18.)

40. The only Wilder film that can claim the dubious distinction of having become a direct blueprint for a television series is *Stalag 17*, which was turned into *Hogan's Heroes*.
41. Patalas, 249.
42. As noted earlier, Wilder seems to have been unfamiliar with the early films by Lubitsch. On Lubitsch and the Holocaust, see Gerd Gemünden, "Space Out of Joint: Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be*," *New German Critique* 89 (2003): 59–80.
43. The first time Wilder mentioned this plan was in the interview with Cameron Crowe, forty years after the film's release. (*Conversations with Wilder*, 75.) According to Wilder, the protagonist of *Arise, My Love*, played by Ray Milland, was also supposed to have been Jewish: "[W]hen Ray is taking a bath, I had one of his buddies look into the bathtub and say, 'I didn't know you were Jewish.' Of course, they made me take it out." Wilder quoted in Kevin Lally, *Wilder Times: The Life of Billy Wilder* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 95.
44. In this context it is also worth commenting that Wilder's films are virtually absent from the criticism on Jewish-American film history.
45. Andrew Sarris, "Billy Wilder and the Holocaust," *Village Voice*, 4 May 1982, 57.
46. Ruth Wisse, *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 14.
47. Chandler, *Nobody's Perfect*, 232.
48. Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard*, 435.
49. Charlotte Chandler reports that while filming *The Apartment* Wilder was approached on the set by a former schoolmate of his from Vienna, Koko Löwenstein, who had also escaped the Holocaust and lived nearby.
50. *Minima Moralia*, 192.
51. *Minima Moralia*, 39.
52. Although it is often noted that Wilder's achievement was a first, Leo McCarey had actually done so in 1944, winning three Oscars for cowriting, producing, and directing *Going My Way*. However, since Paramount claimed the best picture award, as was custom then, McCarey only took home two statues.
53. Crowe, *Conversations with Wilder*, 27.