

Theater of the First Amendment
George Mason University's professional Equity theater company

Presents

THREE HOTELS



by Jon Robin Baitz

directed by Rick Davis

This taut, emotionally-charged work, which *Time* magazine lauded as one of the “ten best plays of 1994,” is a series of moving monologues set in three hotels— in Morocco, the Caribbean, and Mexico. Playwright Jon Robin Baitz (1996 Pulitzer nominee) weaves a tapestry of corporate misdeeds, personal tragedy, and marital discord between Hoyle, a former idealist now selling defective baby formula in the Third World, and his wife Barbara. *Three Hotels* features Kevin Murray (whose film work includes *Runaway Bride* and *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*) and Mary Lechter (who has appeared at Studio Theatre, Center Company, Source Theatre, and in many TFA productions). Don't miss this thought-provoking work from Mason's award-winning resident professional theater.

September 15 – October 2 in the Harris Theater (GMU - Fairfax campus)

\$30 Fri. & Sat., \$25 all other performances
Tickets for students age 13 and over are half-price

“I think what I write about is betrayal . . . a rumination on betrayal of one's self, one's hopes; and finally, it is the fervent prayer that there be something in this wrecked world to salvage.”

Jon Robin Baitz

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THEMES/TOPICS/ISSUES

THREE HOTELS offers rich opportunities for thematic intersections with a range of curricula including English/language arts, visual/performing arts, business/marketing, forensics/debate, social studies, and the social sciences. It is a particularly strong choice for inclusion in International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs. The following topics, explored during the course of the play, may help you to think of the connections between *Three Hotels* and your particular program of studies:

- global economics
- racism/dehumanization of a people
- identity/self-hatred
- corporate accountability
- business ethics
- economics/capitalism/the 'American' dream
- corporate culture
- role of women in the workplace
- commercialism and the marketing machine
- being an 'American' abroad
- moral ambiguity/moral bankruptcy/moral influence/moral integrity
- power of the individual, power of influence
- evolution of an individual's character
- complexity of character v. archetypes
- evolution of relationships (professional/marriage/parent-child)
- death/loss/regret/tragic consequence
- fate/destiny v. karma v. logical consequences that follow individual choice/actions

Please familiarize yourself with the entire study guide. There are resources in each section that may prove useful, even if they require modification for your particular course of study. The guide will be available online through the Theater of the First Amendment (TFA) website early in September 2005 (www.gmu.edu/cfa/tfa).

The play is a contemporary drama, a series of three extended monologues, set in three hotel rooms around the world.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Jon Robin Baitz was born in Los Angeles in 1961. He grew up there, in Brazil, and in South Africa. His plays include *A Fair Country*, *The Substance of Fire*, *The End of the Day*, *The Film Society*, *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*, *Dutch Landscape*, *Ten Unknowns*, and a 1999 adaptation of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. He television writing credits include *The West Wing*, *Alias*, and the Showtime anthology series *Fallen Angels*.

He wrote and directed *Three Hotels* as a teleplay for PBS-TV's American Playhouse, for which he received a Humanitas Award. Mr. Baitz is a recipient of the Rockefeller and Revson fellowships, the Newsday Oppenheimer Award, and a National Endowment for the Arts playwriting fellowship.

He is a member of Naked Angels, a nonprofit New York City theater company of actors, writers, directors, designers, and producers developing and collaborating on new works for the stage.

His most recent work, *The Paris Letter*, ran off-Broadway at the Roundabout Theatre from May 13-August 7, 2005.

References: Samuel French, Inc., Theatre Communications Group, www.nakedangels.com, www.hollywood.com, www.imdb.com, *The New York Times*, www.roundabouttheatre.org

RATIONALE FOR PRODUCING *THREE HOTELS*
as part of Theater of the First Amendment's 2005-06 season

The plays we select must fit our mission. One part of our mission is to work with playwrights to develop new work. The other part is to provide audiences with thought-provoking plays. Some plays we choose fit both criteria, many fit one or the other. *Three Hotels* is a finished, published work, and is certainly thought provoking. It's also a great story.

What drew me to this play was the intensely personal side of the story. Against this vast backdrop of the international business world, you find two lonely people in deep trouble. We read this play in front of an audience as part of our *TFA at Old Town Hall* series in downtown Fairfax, and discovered myriad threads and textures -- more than we realized at first glance. Sure, it's about corporate accountability in developing countries. But it is also the story of suppression of one's own heritage in order to climb the corporate ladder, the dangers Americans face when stationed overseas, the responsibilities expected of a "corporate wife," and ultimately, how our own personal choices can come back to haunt us.

There are also two very personal reasons why I presented this play to the selection committee. I knew after the Old Town Hall event that I wanted nothing more than to perform this piece with Mary. We found it intriguing to explore the Hoyles' relationship, so strained that Baitz never even puts the characters onstage at the same time. And secondly, every time I read or describe this play, it touches a deeply emotional chord within me. I have read hundreds -- even thousands -- of plays, and to have that reaction is very rare. I hope our audiences will have the same response, and will have a lot to talk about on the ride home.

Kevin Murray
Managing Director
Theater of the First Amendment
George Mason University Center for the Arts

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY
(annotated with quotations from key passages)

The play is a series of three monologues, set in three different hotel rooms around the world. Parts One and Three are spoken by the character Kenneth Hoyle; Part Two by his wife, Barbara.

Part One: The Halt and the Lame (Tangier, Morocco)

Kenneth Hoyle reveals that he is here in this “interesting market” because his corporation loses more money here than anywhere else in the world. He has been sent to “cut away the deadwood” – and has fired five men already today.

He recalls an occasion when a young employee confronted him with the fact that what the company was doing in Africa was “morally indefensible.” Hoyle had engineered an ad campaign in which saleswomen dressed as nuns and nurses and promoted the company’s product – powdered baby formula – in hospitals. Pictures of doctors appeared on billboards proclaiming “Iris and Rose is better than breast milk,” even though the drinking water needed to mix the formula was unsafe to drink in many of the company’s “markets”. Hoyle’s response to the young man’s challenge was that he would accept it -- as his resignation. “The reasoned apologia followed by the sucker punch.” The young man did not resign; in fact, both he and Hoyle went on to receive promotions.

Hoyle admits the ad campaign was a mistake. He also recalls that, in answer to his wife Barbara’s misgivings, he replied, “Please. We are not the Agency for International Development. We are no longer in the Peace Corps. We are not administering to the masses of the bloody *halt and the lame*. For God’s sake, Barbara. It is business.”

He reveals he was in Geneva just the previous week, facing protesters at the World Health Organization (WHO) and striving to get the boycott against their product lifted in four countries. He alludes to televised exposes on PBS and *60 Minutes*.

In his speech to the WHO he had gone off-text, spontaneously taking responsibility for his company’s misdeeds and, first to stunned silence and then applause, committing them to radical change in their worldwide marketing strategies.

“No more dead African babies. No more photos of bloated stomachs thrust into my face every fifteen [expletive] minutes. *Please*. Please. Please. Please. Please. No more dead children. If you will.”

A colleague, Vilner, “a holdover from the old colonial days of this company,” accused him of bringing the company down, sneering because he regards Africans as being somewhat beneath animals. “Animals are, after all, cautious, prudent, and economical. The African is none of these things.” He voiced concern about what Head Office would have to say in response to Hoyle’s speech.

(cf. page 25 for an extended passage from this portion of Part One)

Vilner is, at this moment, on his way to meet with Hoyle -- unknowingly next on the list of men to be fired.

Kenneth recalls saying to him on a previous occasion, "We've brought them the worst we have to offer . . . Booze, God, but mostly . . . people like us. We are the worst the world has to offer."

Part Two: Be Careful (St. Thomas, Virgin Islands)

Barbara Hoyle has given a speech earlier in the day to the Wives of Executives Stationed in the Third World. She feels the speech went well, based on the responses of some of those present, but discloses ". . . to tell you the truth, I was very shaky, I was really in trouble."

"My speech was entitled BE CAREFUL. Simply BE CAREFUL."

Her speech had begun lightly enough, but she began to sense anxiety from some of her listeners as she moved into "the politics of what it means to be an American abroad."

"And sometimes we find ourselves in countries that we may disapprove of, but must do business in . . . You've got to learn to tell yourself, 'This is not my business. This has nothing to do with me' . . . You're gonna have to have dinner with some awful people, and you're gonna have to sit through some rough nights, and sometimes there will be men from the junta in your living rooms, as your children sleep in their bedrooms under ceiling fans . . ."

"All you can say to yourself is 'They do it differently in these places' . . ."

"And how do you explain these places to your kids . . . who have been brought up in a world of safety?"

The room had fallen silent at this point as her audience reflected on the "company mythology" of the murder of Kenneth and Barbara's teenaged son, Brandon; stabbed to death for his diving watch just three days before the family was due to return home to L.A.

"Hence the title of my speech . . . Be careful."

Barbara thinks back over her life as the wife of an executive: her admiration for her husband, her unrealistic expectations, her inability to return to her photography job at Paramount Studios because of their frequent overseas assignments, her affair with a subordinate of her husband's following the death of her son.

"Too much that I have is simply a response to Kenneth."

"Remember, it is not . . . your mission. Your husband's mission is not -- your mission. Be careful . . . that you keep the clarity of your own life . . . Or you will come back and you will have . . . dust. You will have nothing."

She numbers among her losses that of the man she loved. “The man I married and the man who sold baby formula to African mothers without regard to the consequences . . . are not one and the same.”

“And so, ladies . . . most importantly, be careful that the company does not turn your husband into something unrecognizable until it is too late.

She believes that her audience was grateful for her candor that morning, that she made a connection. She ends the scene by “putting on her sunglasses, picking up her suitcase, and exiting into the glaring afternoon sun.”

Part Three: The Day of the Dead (Oaxaca, Mexico)

Kenneth states that this is the hotel where he and Barbara spent their honeymoon, and that she told him if she ever disappeared, this is where he would find her.

“And what about me? Silly. To sit here waiting for her. As if...”

He reveals that he was fired a few hours after her speech in St. Thomas. “I am finding, to my surprise, that not working is . . . Not without its . . . pleasures.”

He thinks of his mother, at the Jewish Home for the Aged in Baltimore, unsure if or when he might see her again.

“. . . my plans are so . . . unformed right now.”

He recalls the day of Barbara’s speech. “It was the kind of day that you know actually exists somewhere in your life but when it descends on you to flatten you, you go, ‘Oh. I see. So this is it. It’s here. This is the worst. The very worst.’ And I’ve had *two*. Two such days. Two. Not so painful as I feared.”

“I should have known that when they wanted to get to me, they’d do it through Barbara.”

His closest colleagues – and competition – had offered him his retirement package to sign.

“I stand there. Say nothing. I stand there smiling, smiling. You know, like, if I’m reasonable, well, it’ll all be okay. Schmuck.”

The irony of being fired himself, when he was once the one charged with the bulk of this corporate task, is not lost on him.

“I used to wonder what they were thinking when I did it.”

He plays a tape recording, an excerpt of Barbara’s speech in St. Thomas, which these men had their wives make that day.

“And I knew then, that I just couldn’t fight it. It’s a meticulous kind of viciousness and it was, as you may suspect, quite successful.”

“And I’ll tell you this. The vulgar subterfuge of my dismissal will linger always. I will say this: I came of age in hotels. I drew comfort from them and when I fired people, or made some sort of bad deal, I did it in a hotel; for some reason, in a hotel, nothing sticks. It’s all transitional and you’re never stuck with the vital you. The vital self of a guy in his home. . .”

“And if I had fired myself, I would not have gone out of the way to *lure* me to the Pompano Suite on St. Thomas. I would not have gone out of my way to humiliate.

After all. When my son died, did I not continue? . . .

A watch. For a watch. And Barbara and I flying back with the body. Why did I go back to work?

I always hated our product.”

He ends musing on his certainty that Barbara will return to him, and wishing to be taken in by a mother who has become a child herself in her old age.

“Wouldn’t it be nice to take me in? Mother? Back home. That would be nice. Barbara. You. Brandon. Brandon.”

The play ends with Hoyle watching a Day of the Dead procession outside his window and humming a Yiddish lullaby.

QUESTIONS FOR PRE-READING OR PRE-VIEWING WRITING AND DISCUSSION

1. How do you know when you are right about something? How do you respond when you discover that something you always believed to be true is not true at all?
2. When engaging in debate with others:
 - a) When is it important (or possible) to hold firm to your own convictions? When is it less important or possible?
 - b) When is it important to open your mind to the truths intrinsic to the opposing point of view/worldview? When is it less important or possible?
 - c) What strategies of persuasion are most effective? What are the moral or ethical considerations attached to persuading others to modify or abandon their own beliefs/point of view/worldview?
3. How do misconceptions about other people occur? What causes them? Are we born with them or do we learn them? How do we realize when we have misconceptions about others?
4. How might we as individuals train ourselves to identify and question our assumptions (about people, ideas, beliefs, etc.) to determine whether they are true or false?
5. What are the aspects of our individual identity? Which are the most important or significant? Which are given and indelible, and which are within our power to change if we so choose? Why might a person want to blur or conceal some aspect of his/her identity?
6. How much of a difference can one person make, in the course of historic events or in the lives of others?
7. Study the image in the photograph that serves as a logo for the TFA production of *Three Hotels*, of Kenneth deep in thought with a double image of Barbara's reflection in the window next to him (*cf. the cover of this study guide, the promotional materials for this production of the play, or the TFA website at www.gmu.edu/cfa/tfa*). What can you predict about each character, based on this image? What can you predict about the relationship between these characters and other events in the play, based on this image and the play's title?

After reading and/or viewing the play, you may wish to experiment with designing a logo of your own.

QUESTIONS FOR POST-READING OR POST-VIEWING WRITING AND DISCUSSION

If the pre-reading/pre-viewing questions were used, please return to them having read or seen the play. Comment or expand on your previous responses based on your experience reading/viewing *Three Hotels*.

1. The play is a series of extended monologues. What are the challenges of this as a playwriting/performance structure? What are its advantages? As an exercise, choose any event from the narrative and script it as dialogue instead.
2. a) Kenneth is waiting for Barbara in Oaxaca in the final scene of the play. Does she return there? If not, do they ever see one another again? As an exercise, improvise or write the dialogue they might have upon meeting at some time after the action of the play OR script the monologue one of them might speak after such an encounter.

b) Why do you think the playwright chose never to have Kenneth and Barbara onstage at the same time?
3. The production team of the TFA performance of this play interpreted the choice of settings in a number of ways. One of these is as Kenneth's attempt to return home. (The Hoyles' home was in the U.S. in Los Angeles. Part One of the play is set in Morocco, Part Two is in the Virgin Islands, Part Three is in Mexico.) Offer evidence from the play to support this interpretation, or offer an alternate interpretation of your own.
4. What is the significance of the title of the play? What is the difference between a hotel and a home, as expressed by the playwright and/or the characters in the play? What might Baitz's biographical information have to do with his choices of setting?

(For biographical background on Baitz, cf. About the Playwright on page 4, the article "American Dream" on page 12, and the first paragraph of the section on Non-fiction, page 21)

5. What does the play say about the role of an American abroad, or the role the United States plays in the context of the larger world? How is this relevant to your own experience, or to world events that have occurred since the play was written?
6. Baitz wrote this play very deliberately in the present, delivering information about the past without the use of conventions such as flashback, re-enactment, etc. Why do you think he made this choice? What effect does this approach have on you as a reader/viewer?
7. Discuss the significance of Part One being set in the morning, Part Two being set in the afternoon, and Part Three being set in the evening.
8. Who do you consider to be the protagonist of this play? The antagonist? How is each of the characters responsible for what happens to the others? How is each of the characters victimized by the others? How does each one influence the people and culture around them,

for better and for worse? What is the difference in the point of view between Kenneth and Barbara in the way they recount similar events?

9. Read the supplemental articles from the *New York Times* provided in this guide: “American Dreams” by Jon Robin Baitz (*cf. page 12*) and “The Muse Who Sold Shmattes” by Jesse Green (*cf. page 14*). Discuss the intersections between the content of these articles and the world of the play.

10. Read the internet article provided in this guide (*cf. page 17*) “What Do Mexicans Celebrate on the Day of the Dead?” by Ricardo J. Salvador. Connect the information in the article to events in the play, especially those in Part Three.

11. Read the John Donne poem, “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (*cf. page 19*). Contrast the relationship described in the poem to that of Kenneth and Barbara.

12. Visit the websites www.babymilkaction.org and/or www.stopcorporateabuse.org. Connect the information you find to the world of the play. As an exercise, write a position statement as though you were a member of Kenneth’s company, Iris & Rose, justifying the marketing of baby formula to developing countries. Then write a position statement as a member of one of the protest groups that challenges Kenneth at the WHO conference in Part One.

SUPPLEMENTAL ARTICLES

AMERICAN DREAMS: Food may be pleasurable, but in its essence, it’s all political **By Jon Robin Baitz**

Reprinted with permission from *The New York Times Magazine*, 55-56 (May 29, 2005)

When I was a teenager in the 1970's, I lived with my parents in Durban, South Africa, where my father had been sent by his employer, Carnation Milk. It was here that I learned about homesickness and the odd melancholia of Sundays in foreign places. When we arrived from Los Angeles in 1972, I was a wary 10-year-old, and my impressions of the place were formed as I got off the plane and saw the "This Door for Whites Only" sign in the terminal. Over the next few years, I came to recognize the colonial old-boy British superiority for what it was: a poison toad, the last gasps of a dying empire, only surpassed in its lazy smugness by the breathtaking meanness of the Afrikaners and their ruling Nationalist Party. I was very lonely.

By the time I was 13, the stories of the American civil rights movement and the underground railroad were both my holy scripture and my Batman comics. But my patriotism, like a lot of patriotism, was actually a brand of nostalgia, which was, at its core, culinary and sensual as much as it was idealistic. What I really missed was the easy playfulness of my life in Southern California and its talismanic 70's coolness: Jackson Browne, the Eagles, 7-Elevens, corduroys from the Gap and the casual vernacular of L.A.'s food -- double cheeseburgers from Fat Burger, chili dogs from Pink's on La Brea or tacos from El Coyote (places around the corner from our old Spanish colonial house). None of it was good, but all of it was perfect. Because to me, it was the food of my lost pop life, one

that had nothing to do with complicity and apartheid, one that rejected the dull mushy-peas probity of Durban's white cuisine. No. The food I ate in Durban, prepared by servants trained by generations of Anglo-African hausfraus, was not the cuisine of democracy, so I dreamed of L.A.'s drive-throughs. Of going to the car wash with my dad and eating taquitos by the stand in the parking lot as his old Fairlane was being washed. How could a cool iceberg salad with Russian dressing served by an elderly waitress at the late, lamented Dolores's Drive In on Wilshire Boulevard seem like a perfect refutation of apartheid? Easy. Because at Dolores's, you didn't have to be white like me in order to get fries and a Coke.

At school, in my "Lord of the Flies" uniform, lunch was greasy shepherd's pies and Cornish pasties, scarfed down next to boys who would cheerfully remind me that there would soon come a day when the violence would begin in earnest. Looking out at the Indian Ocean, they would parrot the predictive mantras of their parents; of killings in the streets and oncoming armies of black servants turning on us without mercy and without relent. These whispered predictions (along with advice on the prudence of becoming proficient in the language of the pistol and the shotgun) were chapter and verse of white South African life then. But it was only on Sundays that the fear got to me. Then Durban would simply shut itself down. It was in this earsplitting silence that white Durban and its churchy rectitude became almost hallucinatory. Aside from the scurrying feet of geckos and the buzz of mosquitoes and the barking dogs, often the only noise came from radios in other houses, emanating hymns or Afrikaner folk music. On Sundays, Durban entirely rejected sensation. No movies. No television. Both were an affront to God at the time. (His will changed later.) Only silence. And on those Sundays, with aunts and uncles and cousins and old friends thousands of miles away, I realized how much I missed simply fitting in. A Sunday dinner with people you've known forever, replete with bickering, gossip and asides. Even the dull silence of a happy family. Anything but Durban's silence.

We ended up finding a decrepit country club where my dad sometimes played golf, and to my joy, movies would be shown, projected onto a sheet from a shaky 16-millimeter projector. There was no consistency: bad American movies of the 1970's; odd Ealing comedies of the 1950's; late-era John Wayne, when he tried to be a detective; spaghetti westerns; or occasional gems, like "The Last of Sheila" and "Wait Until Dark," where someone leaps out of the blackness at a blind Audrey Hepburn. Or three episodes in a row of "The Mod Squad," during which the clubhouse would go silent while the drunken Durbanites hypnotically watched the screen while black people did cool things or struck whitey.

Between reels, dinner would be served, and there I found the corollary to my missed L.A. street food in the vivid, angry, gloriously hot red curries prepared by Indian cooks, descendants of indentured Indian servants who arrived in Durban on tramp steamers in 1860 to work in the sugar plantations north of the city. The film would stop at some almost arbitrary moment in the plot, as a reel ran out, and people would wander up to a steam table and fill their plates. Steve McQueen could wait. You could never forget where you were: at a broken-down country club on a golf course at the edge of the Indian Ocean, a golf course where monkeys habitually shot out of the trees to swipe balls and run screaming back into the jungle. One night, the club screened Norman Jewison's "In the Heat of the Night," starring Sidney Poitier as a smart cop working a murder case in the deep American South,

gradually winning over the white sheriff played by Rod Steiger. Poitier shamed and made fools of the denizens of the town, who basically seemed like your average white Durbanite. At the end of the second reel, one of the locals turned to me and said, "Our kaffirs aren't smart like your American niggers." I sneered at him, and there was a moment -- and then he went off to drink some beer with several rattled friends. I stuck to myself.

Durban curry is famously spicy, and that heat was a perfect antidote to the becalmed Durban Sundays. There was sweat, and there was pain, but that was made even more exciting when it was washed down with icy local beer. The scent of lamb and potatoes simmering in a masala of cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and coriander, mingled with the sweet darkness of the chilies and the tartness of tomatoes was a tonic. This was a food of the people, something actual, real, as much as it was delicious and complicated. After the long dinner breaks, the projector would be turned on again. By then, it would be late, and most of the audience would be drunk. You could barely see the screen through the cigarette smoke, and the hecklers would have quieted. And in those moments, in the dark, watching some movie, I would be reminded that there were things to look forward to, there were chapters to come.

THE MUSE WHO SOLD SHMATTES: Ron Rifkin left acting for the garment trade. And then he met Jon Robin Baitz.

By Jesse Green

Reprinted with permission from *The New York Times*, Arts and Leisure, 7-8 (June 5, 2005)

Ron Rifkin looked unhappy, which is not exactly unusual. During a rehearsal last month for "The Paris Letter" -- now previewing at the Roundabout's Laura Pels Theater, where it will open next Sunday -- he paced and pawed and scratched at his role like a cat fighting its way out of a bag. Also in the room, scribbling on a script, was the play's author, Jon Robin Baitz. The two men (following standard rehearsal protocol) spoke to each other only through the director, Doug Hughes, but they were nevertheless fidgeting in sync.

They've had a lot of practice: "The Paris Letter" is the fourth play Mr. Baitz has written with Mr. Rifkin in mind. Even so, Mr. Baitz knew that the character he'd created represented the biggest challenge yet to the actor's skills -- and the biggest provocation to their relationship. "We'd gotten to the point where it couldn't just be more of the same," Mr. Baitz said. "It had to be private, it had to be costly, it had to hurt." And so he came up with the role of Sandy Sonnenberg, who (like Isaac Geldhart in "The Substance of Fire" and Kenneth Hoyle in "Three Hotels" and other Baitz leading men Mr. Rifkin has played) is a cultured, well-married and prosperous businessman facing a moral catastrophe. Unlike the others, though, he is a homosexual; the disaster in "The Paris Letter" is not primarily precipitated by external forces like capitalism but by the sudden explosion of Sonnenberg's interior life, when he has an affair with an intense, ambitious, younger male colleague, and loses everything in the process.

Mr. Rifkin is 66 and has been married for 38 years to the former Iva March. (Mr. Baitz is 43 and gay; from 1990 until 2002 he was the partner of Joe Mantello, who directed "Three Hotels.") But if Mr. Rifkin looked troubled as he rehearsed the scene, it was not about the personal parallels, or even about kissing a man onstage. "Do you really think that would be an issue for me?" he said later, wincing as if at a sip of sour wine. No, what bothered him

was that he wanted a joke, like the ones repeatedly being added for his scene partner, John Glover. And though Mr. Baitz promised him one, Mr. Rifkin knew better. "Never gonna happen," he said. They both understood that Mr. Rifkin, with his perpetually moist eyes and his face lined by melancholy, was for Mr. Baitz a dark, almost tragic muse.

It's not that Mr. Rifkin isn't convivial, funny, capable of enjoying and sharing, often with Mr. Baitz, the refinements and overrefinements of life. (The Parisian green-glass doorknobs throughout the Rifkins' TriBeCa loft are the least of it.) But ever since Mr. Baitz first saw Mr. Rifkin perform onstage, as a ruined Depression-era coat manufacturer in a 1988 production of Arthur Miller's "American Clock" at the Williamstown Theater Festival, he has felt compelled to write ruinous stories for him. "When he entered," Mr. Baitz said, "the temperature changed. What I saw was a man in sorrow and, under that, an incipient joy. An elegant man whose world collapses under him. And in an odd way he reminded me of my father." After the show, when Mr. Baitz eagerly told the actor he'd like to write a play for him, Mr. Rifkin reinforced that impression. "Sure, kid, whatever," he said.

Some 17 years later, the plays Mr. Rifkin inspired Mr. Baitz to write (though he did not originally appear in all of them) have won Mr. Baitz many awards, and helped establish his reputation as a Milleresque dissector of success and failure, commercial and familial. If part of his interest in those subjects is autobiographical (his father, a former executive for Carnation, is clearly the model for many of his protagonists), part is biographical, a result of his bonding with Mr. Rifkin, whose own story paralleled and would amplify his themes in uncanny ways.

As it turned out, commercial and familial failure and success was also Mr. Rifkin's story. Several years before they met at Williamstown, Mr. Rifkin had all but retired from acting, in disgust. Having worked for years on television (he was Bonnie Franklin's boyfriend on "One Day at a Time," among many similar roles), he had grown tired, as Iva Rifkin put it, of "playing the friend, then the friend of the friend, then the friend of the friend of the friend." He did stage work in Los Angeles, but no one seemed to care or notice. "I was tired of not being taken seriously," he said. "Iva was working as a casting assistant at the time, and when my name came up for a part, she heard someone say about me, 'I thought he only did sitcoms.' I was never on the A, B or C lists." ("Or even the Z lists," Ms. Rifkin added.) "And because we had no children, no responsibilities," he said, "we'd spent everything we'd made. I was worried about money."

And so he took on a new role. Around 1983, he and his wife (who had left a career as a Broadway dancer to follow her husband to Los Angeles) began to work for his father's coat business, which at the time was called RonLee Apparel. At first, the change -- the admission of defeat to a man who had always been horrified by his son's artiness -- was unbearable. "I would see him trying to get dressed for work," Ms. Rifkin recalled. "The hair on his chest would be matted from sobbing." But soon he began to enjoy the new challenge. His father's Korean manufacturers asked the couple to develop a more stylish, less expensive line; the resulting sheared-rabbit swing coats, dyed and printed in kicky patterns, were a hit and the company prospered. Mr. Rifkin had restyled himself, too, as a Japanese-suited, ponytailed garmento performing sales presentations for Saks and Bendel as if they were scenes in a Restoration comedy. And after the Koreans bought out RonLee and the younger Rifkin

stayed on, sundering the family business, there was some justice when he ended up competing with -- and beating -- his father at his father's own game.

But as in a Miller (or Baitz) play, it was a bittersweet justice at best: Mr. Rifkin had not succeeded at what mattered to him. "I still thought so little of myself," he said. "I wouldn't even go backstage after shows to see friends." That he is now a successful and well-known actor is, he said, mostly the result of meeting Mr. Baitz. But it was not an immediate reversal of fortune. After the first play Mr. Baitz wrote for him, "Dutch Landscape," was given a workshop at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 1988, the director, Gordon Davidson, decided to give it a full production only if he could recast Mr. Rifkin's part. Mr. Baitz agreed, and Mr. Rifkin, crushed, suggested that the two not talk for a while. He flew off for meetings in Korea.

"It would've taken a great kind of assurance on my part to resist the temptation and pull the plug," Mr. Baitz said. "But I should have done it. I had one of those moments where I had to say to myself afterwards, 'Why don't you even know how to fight for what you love?'"

Mr. Rifkin is more forgiving: "He was a kid, he was 27, what was he supposed to do?"

In any case, Mr. Baitz soon started turning his ruminations on loyalty and cowardice into "The Substance of Fire," a play (written largely while living at the Rifkins' Los Angeles home) about a fight over a family business. The 1991 production at Playwrights Horizons, which moved to Lincoln Center Theater in 1992, would win Mr. Rifkin his first major awards; and Frank Rich's review in *The New York Times* noted his "career-transforming performance." But for Mr. Baitz, what he called "the demon need" was not yet exorcised. When a film studio offered him a lot of money to turn the play into a movie, and bandied about names like Dustin Hoffman and Anthony Hopkins, Mr. Baitz accepted, at least until he and Ms. Rifkin had a screaming fight about betrayal in the street outside the theater where they were about to see "Lips Together, Teeth Apart." In the end, Mr. Baitz pulled out of the deal and the movie was made (independently and for much less money) with Mr. Rifkin, Tony Goldwyn, Timothy Hutton and Sarah Jessica Parker, who was also in the stage version and was shocked to learn, when she wore a RonLee coat to rehearsal one day, that her co-star had manufactured it.

Though he continued to hold some meetings with his Korean business partners in his Lincoln Center dressing room, and would call his wife during intermission to say he saw a No. 3015 in the front row in green, Mr. Rifkin gradually untangled himself from the coat business. His success in Mr. Baitz's plays (including, eventually, "Dutch Landscape," by then reworked as "A Fair Country") led to his being cast in many other productions off Broadway and on. (He won a 1998 Tony for his appearance in Sam Mendes's revival of "Cabaret.") "And none of it would have happened without Robbie offering me that part," he said. "If I'd had to audition, who would have cast me, me from the garment biz and 'One Day at a Time,' as this elegant Mitteleuropean publisher?" Typically, he starts to tear up as he plays out the theme. "He's the son I didn't have," he said. "I have to tie his bow tie for him. When he's pale, who else tells him 'I don't like the way you look?' When he had heart surgery, he recovered in our loft. I'm a father without the time put in. But no one ever believed in me as much as this boy did."

It's a two-way street, that belief. Although many actors have since played some of Mr. Rifkin's roles, it grows increasingly difficult, as those roles grow more idiosyncratic, for Mr. Baitz to imagine anyone inhabiting them as fully. In part because the characters are "set" on Mr. Rifkin, much as choreographers set their dances on a favorite dancer, his grasp of their substance is literally authoritative. "Even his ellipses," he said. "I know what those dot dot dots are. I feel I could do any part in his plays, even the women."

In its classical incarnation -- think Dante and Beatrice, or Shakespeare and his "Dark Lady"-- the muse relationship is partly romantic and wholly unilateral; Beatrice didn't advance her career by doing readings of "The Divine Comedy" for backers. In today's theater, though, especially as it becomes more beleaguered and marginalized and centered on directors, it makes sense that some playwrights try to cement the relationship with the actors who inspire them by formalizing it in a kind of family. But what happens when you've wrung every possible variation out of your archetype? (In its explosive combination of themes drawn from his own life, his father's and even Mr. Rifkin's, "The Paris Letter" seems to be the last turn of the biographical-autobiographical screw.) And what happens when the muse (shades of Pygmalion and Galatea) becomes independently successful? After all, Mr. Rifkin is now a wealthy television star, having played the evil genius Arvin Sloane on ABC's "Alias" since 2001.

Mr. Baitz and Mr. Rifkin (and Mr. Mantello and Ms. Rifkin) are trying to resist entropy. Despite the younger men's breakup, the four remain close -- "which is putting it mildly," Ms. Parker said. "They practically all live together." Indeed, they recently bought a parcel of land on Long Island, where they intend to build a compound of three houses. And Mr. Baitz, when invited to script an episode of "Alias" for broadcast last month, tried to get the producers to allow him to write Mr. Rifkin out of the show. At least temporarily. "So he would be more free to do my plays in New York," Mr. Baitz explained. The producers, men of commerce, declined.

What Do Mexicans Celebrate on the "Day of the Dead?" by Ricardo J. Salvador

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This is an ancient festivity that has been much transformed through the years, but which was intended in prehispanic Mexico to celebrate children and the dead. Hence, the best way to describe this Mexican holiday is to say that it is a time when Mexican families remember their dead, and the continuity of life.

Two important things to know about the Mexican Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) are:

1. It is a holiday with a complex history, and therefore its observance varies quite a bit by region and by degree of urbanization.
2. It is not a morbid occasion, but rather a festive time.

The original celebration can be traced to many Mesoamerican native traditions, such as the festivities held during the Aztec month of *Miccailhuitontli*, ritually presided by the "Lady of the Dead" (*Mictēcācīhuatl*), and dedicated to children and the dead. In the Aztec calendar, this ritual fell roughly at the end of the Gregorian month of July and the beginning of August, but in the postconquest era it was moved by Spanish priests so that it coincided with the Christian holiday of All Hallows Eve (in Spanish: "Día de Todos Santos.") This was a vain effort to transform the observance from a profane to a Christian celebration. The result is that Mexicans now celebrate the day of the dead during the first two days of November, rather than at the beginning of summer. But remember the dead they still do, and the modern festivity is characterized by the traditional Mexican blend of ancient aboriginal and introduced Christian features.

Generalizing broadly, the holiday's activities consist of families (1) welcoming their dead back into their homes, and (2) visiting the graves of their close kin. At the cemetery, family members engage in sprucing up the gravesite, decorating it with flowers, setting out and enjoying a picnic, and interacting socially with other family and community members who gather there. In both cases, celebrants believe that the souls of the dead return and are all around them. Families remember the departed by telling stories about them. The meals prepared for these picnics are sumptuous, usually featuring meat dishes in spicy sauces, chocolate beverages, cookies, sugary confections in a variety of animal or skull shapes, and a special egg-batter bread ("pan de muerto," or bread of the dead). Gravesites and family altars are profusely decorated with flowers (primarily large, bright flowers such as marigolds and chrysanthemums), and adorned with religious amulets and with offerings of food, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. Because of this warm social environment, the colorful setting, and the abundance of food, drink and good company, this commemoration of the dead has pleasant overtones for the observers, in spite of the open fatalism exhibited by all participants, whose festive interaction with both the living and the dead in an important social ritual is a way of recognizing the cycle of life and death that is human existence.

In homes observant families create an altar and decorate it with items that they believe are beautiful and attractive to the souls of their departed ones. Such items include offerings of flowers and food, but also things that will remind the living of the departed (such as their photographs, a diploma, or an article of clothing), and the things that the dead prized and enjoyed while they lived. This is done to entice the dead and assure that their souls actually return to take part in the remembrance. In very traditional settings, typically found only in native communities, the path from the street to the altar is actually strewn with petals to guide the returning soul to its altar and the bosom of the family. The traditional observance calls for departed children to be remembered during the first day of the festivity (the Day of the Little Angels, "Día de los Angelitos"), and for adults to be remembered on the second day. Traditionally, this is accompanied by a feast during the early morning hours of November the 2nd, the Day of the Dead proper, though modern urban Mexican families usually observe the Day of the Dead with only a special family supper featuring the bread of the dead. In southern Mexico, for example in the city of Puebla, it is good luck to be the one

who bites into the plastic toy skeleton hidden by the baker in each rounded loaf. Friends and family members give one another gifts consisting of sugar skeletons or other items with a death motif, and the gift is more prized if the skull or skeleton is embossed with one's own name. Another variation found in the state of Oaxaca is for bread to be molded into the shape of a body or burial wrap, and for a face to be embedded on one end of the loaf. During the days leading up to and following the festivity, some bakeries in heavily aboriginal communities cease producing the wide range of breads that they typically sell so that they can focus on satisfying the demand for bread of the dead.

The Day of the Dead can range from being a very important cultural event, with defined social and economic responsibilities for participants (exhibiting the socially equalizing behavior that social anthropologists would call redistributive feasting, e.g. on the island of Janitzio in Michoacan state), to being a religious observance featuring actual worship of the dead (e.g., as in Cuilapan, Oaxaca, an ancient capital of the Zapotec people, who venerated their ancestors and whose descendants do so to this day, an example of many traditional practices that Spanish priests pretend not to notice), to simply being a uniquely Mexican holiday characterized by special foods and confections (the case in all large Mexican cities).

In general, the more urban the setting within Mexico the less religious and cultural importance is retained by observants, while the more rural and Indian the locality the greater the religious and economic import of the holiday. Because of this, this observance is usually of greater social importance in southern Mexico than in the northern part of the country.

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” by John Donne (1573-1631)

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
"The breath goes now," and some say, "No:"

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin'd,
That ourselves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Due to the maturity of both the subject matter and language of the play, we recommend it for audiences in grades 11-12 and older. Copies of the full text are available directly from the publisher (<http://samuelfrench.com/store/>) for \$6.25 each plus shipping.

Language

It is worth noting (and the basis of a rich discussion) that Baitz's use of profanity is far from gratuitous, and that the most graphic language and content appears in Part One, where Kenneth describes himself in the context of corporate life as he begins his professional ascent. Profanity is often referred to as the language of the ignorant; yet in the mouths of the intelligent, capable, and powerful it represents something else. Actor Kevin Murray describes Hoyle's profanity as "the tool of the oppressor, of the intimidator, a weapon he uses." This discussion could be linked to the similar explorations of language use in works such as Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (i.e. why the novelist puts profanity but not racial epithets in the mouths of George and Lenny) or Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (i.e. the dichotomy of the use of 'the n- word' as an expression of both ignorance/as a cultural product and its use as a form of deliberate domination/oppression).

Non-fiction

Three Hotels lends itself to integration with works of non-fiction as well. Baitz writes (in the 'Notes from the Playwright' section of the Theatre Communications Group edition) that his own experiences were the "leaping off point" in the creation of the play; those of a young man growing up in the U.S. and abroad (in hotels much like those of the play's various settings) as his father climbed the corporate ladder, a father who was "asked to take early retirement" after more than a thirty-year tenure with his company. He writes that "memory is everything to me," but also that memory is "fallible and dangerous."

Many parallels exist between the content of the play and the ongoing conflicts between the Nestle corporation and various humanitarian causes (www.babymilkaction.org/pages/boycott.html – of particular note, the published account of the 11/3/04 debate between Nestle and Baby Milk Action at Edinburgh University, and the history of the conflict from 1867 to the present). Corporate Accountability International (formerly Infact) also chronicles many of the ongoing struggles between the global community and corporate powers such as Coca-Cola, Dow, Philip Morris/Altria, Exxon, ChevronTexaco, and others with regard to abuse and protection issues (www.stopcorporateabuse.org).

Paired texts, literature circles, and differentiated instruction

This text is an excellent complement to many of the titles studied during the course of the school year in English 11, English 12, AP Language and Comp, AP Literature and Comp, IB1, IB2, and TOK. Please refer to the list of Themes/Topics/Issues (*cf. page 3 of this study guide*) and the sample list of AP Literature Titles (*cf. page 23 of this study guide*) for possible use as a paired text, as an offering for choice reading/literature circles, or for use in differentiating instruction in a given course of study.

In addition to these resources, the upcoming feature film *The Constant Gardener* (based on the 2001 novel by John Le Carre) offers many parallels to *Three Hotels* and other thematically related works. The story revolves around the murder of an American woman in northern

Kenya related to corporate corruption in the pharmaceuticals industry. For more information, visit the internet movie database (www.imdb.com) or the film's website (www.theconstantgardener.com).

Applications for Advanced Programs of Study

International Baccalaureate (IB)

This text supports the IB program's overarching objectives:

- to cultivate internationalism alongside a strong cultural identity and a sense of engaged citizenship
- to offer academic experience that emphasizes critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and exposure to a variety of points of view
- to educate the whole person, emphasizing intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth

It bears potential for application across the IB curriculum, specifically in the areas of Language A1, Individuals and Societies, Arts, Extended Essay, Creativity/Action/Service (CAS), and Theory of Knowledge (TOK). It also lends it self to the awareness of moral/ethical issues and sense of social responsibility that is articulated as part of the experimental science component of the curriculum, but which is the underpinning of the overall Diploma Program.

It offers rich opportunities in alignment with the objectives of the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) curriculum in particular:

- to consider the role and nature of knowledge in one's own culture and the cultures of those in the wider world
- to prompt students' awareness of themselves as thinkers, and of the complexity of knowledge
- to recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world
- to engage in purposeful inquiry and critical reflection, focused on the guiding question "How do we know?"
- to increase awareness of the interpretive nature of knowledge including personal and ideological biases (regardless of whether these biases are retained, revised, or rejected)
- to demonstrate an awareness of the values and limitations of their individual outlooks and of the views common to the communities/cultures to which they belong
- to evaluate their own views and level of intercultural understanding

The questions offered for pre-reading and pre-viewing writing and discussion are particularly relevant to the TOK curriculum (cf. page 10 of this study guide)

Advanced Placement (AP)

Three Hotels supports the following AP curricular objectives:

English Language and Composition

- To read complex texts with understanding
- To become skilled readers of works written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts
- To write in a variety of forms (narrative, exploratory, expository, argumentative) and to move beyond programmatic responses such as the five-paragraph essay to those which emphasize content, purpose, and audience

English Literature and Composition

- To engage students in the careful reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature
- To invite and gratify re-reading
- To read works from a variety of genres and periods from the 16th through the 21st centuries of recognized literary merit
- To read for complexity, richness of meaning, and literary artistry
- To attend to textual detail and historical context as the foundation for interpretation
- To write for the understanding, explanation, interpretation, evaluation, and critical analysis of literature (including expository, analytical, and argumentative forms)
- To increase the students' ability to explain clearly, cogently, and elegantly what they understand about literary works and why they interpret them as they do

The study of *Three Hotels* can also complement and reinforce the course content of AP Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, European History, U.S. History, World History, Human Geography, and Psychology.

Sample AP literary titles (in thematic alignment with *Three Hotels*, useful as paired texts or for comparative analysis; please cf. also the Themes, Topics and Issues section of this guide)

Oedipus Rex and *Antigone*, Sophocles

Molly Sweeney, Brian Friel

All My Sons, Arthur Miller

Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Cry the Beloved Country, Alan Paton

Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad

Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

AP literary terms (that may be taught in conjunction with *Three Hotels*)

ad hominem argument	irony (verbal, situational, dramatic)
allusion	metaphor
ambiguity	metonymy
analogy	mood
archetype	narrative device/narrative
atmosphere	technique
attitude	plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution)
canon	point of view
colloquialism	protagonist/antagonist
connotation/denotation	sarcasm
denouement	style
diction	subtext
didactic	symbolism
extended monologue	syntax
figurative language	theme
generic convention	tone
genre	transition
imagery	voice
inference	
invective	

Sample open questions, AP exam (in thematic alignment with *Three Hotels*)

To write an essay in which the student discusses:

- The technical devices used to reveal the meanings of their titles (using two works)
- The use of the opening scene or chapter to introduce significant themes of a play or novel
- A character's response to the past as a source of meaning in the work
- An ostensibly evil character to whom the reader responds with some sympathy or understanding
- A character whose private passion is in conflict with his/her moral obligations
- The effect of an author's manipulation of time in a novel, epic, or play
- An author's techniques used to change a reader's attitude, especially toward social ills
- An author's making internal or psychological events exciting
- The significance of two contrasting places in a play or novel
- The function of a confidant(e) in a play or novel

Sample essay questions, AP exam (in thematic alignment with *Three Hotels*)

#1

Samuel Johnson wrote, "Our desires increase with our possessions. The knowledge that something remains yet unenjoyed impairs our enjoyment of the good before us." Write a persuasive essay that either qualifies, agrees with, or disagrees with Johnson's assertion. Use evidence from Baitz's *Three Hotels* in the development of your ideas.

#2

In her novel, *Adam Bede*, George Eliot observes

Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitute a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character.

In a well-organized essay, defend, challenge, or qualify Eliot's assertion. Use examples based on the characters Kenneth and/or Barbara from Baitz's *Three Hotels* to develop your ideas and persuade the reader.

#3

The following passage is from Part One of Jon Robin Baitz's play *Three Hotels* (1990). Read the passage carefully, and write a cohesive essay in which you address Baitz's attitudes toward and use of metaphor in this excerpt.

Afterwards, I met with Vilner. From the Nairobi office. A German holdover from the old colonial days of this company when we were like some wandering pachyderm with these ludicrous types in little offices boring everyone to death all over the place. A dreadful man. The reports one gets. Sauerbraten and beating the maid. But I had to drag him out for the press as an implementor of my new policy.

In the bar, he sneers at me. "Hoyle. You will single-handedly drag this company down. What you do not understand is that there is no way to win in Africa. In Africa," he says, "you must take whatever you can get, 'cause Africa, sooner or later, will kill you."

I nod. He's probably right. He's encouraged. "It's not that they are animals. Animals are, after all," he says, "cautious, prudent and economical. The African is none of these things."

Well. I mean. What can one possibly say to this? I say, "Maybe. But we've brought them the worst we've got to offer. The bottom of the barrel." I take a swig of whatever booze we are drinking. Barbara smiles at me. I smile back. And Vilner starts to look a little mean. "Und vott is the vorst, exactly, Herr Hoyle?" And Barbara says drunkenly, "His name, actually, is Hirshkovitz." I smile again before answering Vilner. We are playing with razors. I say, "The worst? Booze, God, but mostly, Mr. Vilner, people like us. We are the worst the world has to offer. And you, sir, are right out of the bargain basement."

And there is silence for some time. "Hirshkovitz." He tries the name out like it's a little appetizer, a little bit of herring before the schnitzel. He's thinking he's got something on me he can use with Mulcahey and Kroener. "And does Head Office know how you feel?" (What he means is, "Do they know you're a hebe?") And I say, "Yes. And they are behind me. They support me *utterly* and *without question*. *Everyone* is behind me."

But they are not.

AP ENGLISH: Major Works Data Sheet

Title _____

Author _____

Date of publication _____

Biographical information about the author:

Plot summary:

Describe the author's style:

Give an example that demonstrates the style:

Memorable Quotations

Quotation	Significance

Characters

Name	Role in story	Significance	Adjectives

Setting:

Significance of opening scene:

Significance of ending/closing scene:

Symbols:

Themes/topics of discussion:

Old AP questions (List several for which this work would be appropriate)
