



Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator

By *Andreas Bernard*

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Before skyscrapers forever transformed the landscape of the modern metropolis, the conveyance that made them possible had to be created. Invented in New York in the 1850s, the elevator became an urban fact of life on both sides of the Atlantic by the early twentieth century. While it may at first glance seem a modest innovation, it had wide-ranging effects, from fundamentally restructuring building design to reinforcing social class hierarchies by moving luxury apartments to upper levels, previously the domain of the lower classes. The cramped elevator cabin itself served as a reflection of life in modern growing cities, as a space of simultaneous intimacy and anonymity, constantly in motion.

In this elegant and fascinating book, Andreas Bernard explores how the appearance of this new element changed notions of verticality and urban space. Transforming such landmarks as the Waldorf-Astoria and Ritz Tower in New York, he traces how the elevator quickly took hold in large American cities while gaining much slower acceptance in European cities like Paris and Berlin. Combining technological and architectural history with the literary and cinematic, Bernard opens up new ways of looking at the elevator--as a secular confessional when stalled between floors or as a recurring space in which couples fall in love. Rising upwards through modernity, *Lifted* takes the reader on a compelling ride through the history of the elevator.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A well-informed and engaging cultural history. . . . What's more, Bernard manages to dissect processes that have shaped the transition from the 19th century to the 20th, illustrating the elusive phenomenon of 'modernity. After reading this study, it becomes at least temporarily impossible to use a lift without a brief contemplation of what it may particularly signify in the here and now.'" -Ulrike Zitzlsperger, *Times Higher Education*

"Bernard's passion for research is as impressive as the ease with which he—elevator-like—moves between the disciplines of literature, art history, sociology, and psychology." -*Der Spiegel*

"The book consists of a series of interesting historical cultural speculations and observations about the elevator. Readers seeking... an intellectually entertaining series of discourses will be delighted." -*The Historian*

"He treats the elevator as an individual technological and cultural phenomenon, whereas previously the innovation has been mainly a supporting character in histories of technology and architecture." -*Choice*

"Those seeking an intellectually entertaining series of discourses will be delighted." -*Historian*

"Andreas Bernard, a German newspaper editor, has written a history of the now-ubiquitous lift. Elevators made tall buildings, and thus modern urban life, possible . . . the anecdotes and insights are captivating." -*The Economist*

"Bernard writes from a refreshingly European (and specifically German) perspective even if North America, and in particular, Manhattan, emerges as a key locus . . . amusingly obsessive, impressively erudite." -*Times Literary Supplement*

*"For most of us, the innocuous topic of the elevator is hardly the stuff of cutting-edge historical theory. But in this translation by Dollenmayer (German language & literature, Worcester Polytechnic Inst.), Bernard's groundbreaking 2011 German treatise on the revolutionary transformation of a mundane engineering marvel compels readers to reimagine what they think they know about the modern urban landscape. From Elisha Graves Otis's 1854 demonstration at the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in New York City to the modern day, Bernard (editor, Süddeutsche Zeitung) scans the literature, philosophy, and history related to the technological innovation and presents a lucid, engaging analysis of just how Otis's elevator has gone from its original 'luster of strangeness' to the 'dull and inconspicuous.' In the process, Bernard reminds us of Georges Canguilhem's dictum that the 'history of science is not a retrospective history of progress nor the depiction of outmoded stages leading to today's truth.' VERDICT Bernard's fascinating work on technological innovation, while at times a bit esoteric, will find a ready audience among readers with a passion for innovative philosophical and cultural histories. Fans of Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey* may especially find it appealing."* -*Library Journal*, Brian Odom, Birmingham, AL Library

"[M]any readers will indeed get a lift from *Lifted*. It is a very special book thoroughly researched and clearly written, and about a subject of great historical interest to a diverse group of academic scholars as well as lay readers." -*Journal of American Culture*

"Andreas Bernard ambitiously explores the relationship between an important technological innovation and its effect upon the imaginative capacities of the residents of European and American cities. . . . Bernard's most insightful chapter identifies the elevator as the important trigger for producing fears of claustrophobia and of social mixing. He shows how modern films and novels frequently employed the elevator as a critical space for organizing narratives of city life. It was the standard vehicle for conveying the discomfort associated with social mixing in so confined an urban space. . . . Readers will recognize the effectiveness of the argument by the renewed self-consciousness they experience riding elevators after reading the book."-*American Historical Review*

"In a new book, 'Lifted,' German journalist and cultural studies professor Andreas Bernard zeroes in on this experience, tracing mankind's relationship to the elevator back to its origins and finding that it has never been a totally comfortable one. 'After 150 years, we are still not used to it,' Bernard said. 'We still have not exactly learned to cope with this . . . mixture of intimacy and anonymity.' That mixture, according to Bernard, sets the elevator ride apart from just about every other situation we find ourselves in as we go about our lives."-Leon Neyfakh,*The Boston Globe*

"By rendering it as an actor rather than a mere subject in the unfolding dramas of nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernity, Bernard reveals the elevator as a central semiotic figure of urban fantasy through his cultural savvy and attention to the details of technology. Lifted will garner a great deal of attention from historians of technology, modern architecture, and urban culture."-David Serlin,*University of California, San Diego*

"The elevator did more than make New York the city of skyscrapers, it changed the way we live, as German newspaper editor Andreas Bernard explains in Lifted."-Stephen Lynch,*New York Post*

"A hugely atmospheric portrait of central European tenements and apartment buildings . . . it crackles with imaginative energy and is full of bright and memorable scenes. It is an excellent architectural history, a magical and valuable example of the work that can be produced within the discipline."-Will Wiles,*Icon Magazine*

"There's a great deal to admire in Bernard's integration of evidence of various sorts, from building regulations and operator manuals to high literature, into a shrewd and versatile account of the transformative effect of the elevator's irresistible rise on the social psychology of life in the modern metropolis from the 1870's to the 1930's. . . . For Bernard, the elevator is a Benjaminian street brought indoors and rotated on its axis: during the few seconds of ascent or descent, the perpetual 'anaesthetising of attention' allegedly required of the city-dweller becomes an acute anxiety."-*London Review of Books*

"The Elevator was a common name for evangelical magazines in the 19th century, and as Andreas Bernard shows in Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator, early elevator cabs bore a striking resemblance to Roman Catholic confessionals. . . . [I]n the automatic era, Hollywood has frequently turned stuck elevators into sites of secular confession and self-contemplation. . . . As Bernard points out, stuck elevators are not so frequent in the real world. Similarly, real elevators are less often sites of absolution than Hollywood elevators and more often places where people let slip information that probably shouldn't be openly shared."-Daniel Levinson Wilk,*Aljazeera America*

"This scholarly work celebrates the emergence of an invention we all take for granted."-*Cincinnati Magazine*

"The elevator, which today seems so boring, was once a vehicle of change of compelling power. Whoever reads this book will view the world's elevators with different eyes."-*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

"*Lifted* is a spaciouly researched and thought-out popular history. It can be read with pleasure by anyone who has wondered how residential buildings got to be so tall. Andreas Bernard doesn't provide any tips about elevator etiquette. But his imaginative book contains just about everything else most people might want to know about elevators and the ways they have shaped the contemporary city."-John Bentley Mays,*The Globe and Mail*

"We live, in short, in the world that elevators made, and *Lifted* is a sharp-eyed, readable exploration of its making."-A. Bowdoin Van Riper,*Popmatters.com*

About the Author

Andreas Bernard is editor of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany's largest daily newspaper. He received his Ph.D. in Cultural Sciences from the Bauhaus University Weimar, and teaches cultural studies in Berlin and Lucerne, Switzerland.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Justin Price:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be update about what going on or info even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era that is certainly always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe can update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what one you should start with. This *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator* is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Leonard Bartow:

Exactly why? Because this *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap it but latter it will zap you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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Diana Keller:

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