Astrid Köhler &
Henrike Schmidt

THE HEALTH RESORT IN MODERN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

Transnational Trajectories

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NOTE ON TEXTS AND SOURCES

A salient feature of this book is that, while it is written in English, it refers to texts written in a wide range of languages. Wherever possible, we have made a point of quoting from the original language, but we have made every effort to ensure that all the quotations can also be understood by people who are not fluent in these languages. This means that almost all foreign language citations appear in two forms. With titles, the original is always given first; with other quotations, we have first given the English, and then the original. With secondary literature, we have put the original quotations in the endnotes. Where official translations were available, we have used these, not least in order to enable readers who wish to read beyond our quotations to do so. On occasion, we have had to correct errors. Where no official translations exist (or were not available to us, or had some material flaw), we have used our own translations. We have registered the difference with a simple typographical convention: a published translation will appear in italics if it is an independent book, and in single inverted commas if it is a shorter text appearing within a larger one. Where we have translated titles ourselves, neither convention applies. Similarly, published translations appear in the bibliography and are registered in the usual way; where the translations are our own, only the page numbers of the original are given.

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Introduction: Writing (in) the Resort

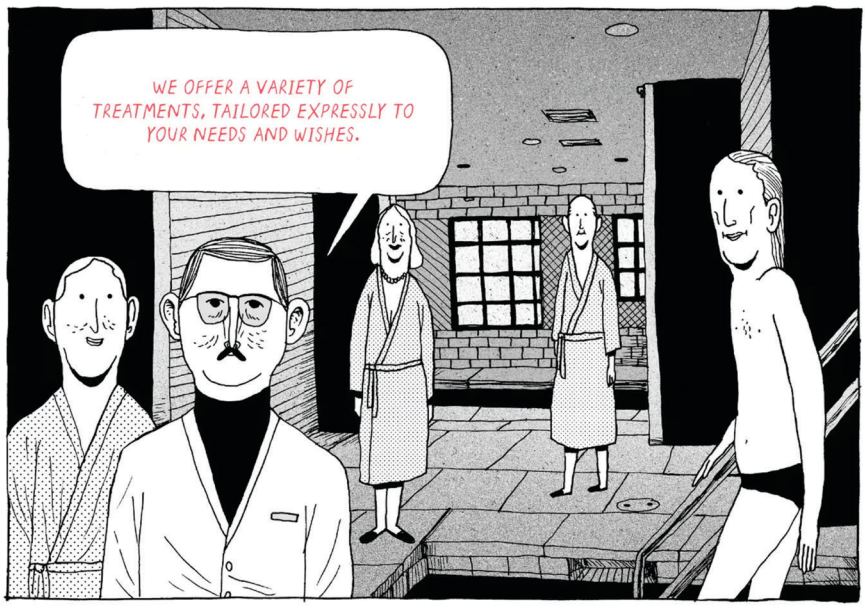


Figure 0.1 Panel from the English translation of Erik Svetoft's *Spa*, p. 8.

This panel from the 2021 Swedish graphic novel *Spa* by Erik Svetoft is as plain as it is intriguing (Figure 0.1). At its centre is a window that, especially given the bare brick of the wall around it, is reminiscent more of a prison than a place of wellness. Right at the foreground is a man whose expression belies the friendliness of his words, and whose dress code attests to his authority: he seems to be a doctor or a manager. He is also the only person in the picture who is fully dressed and thus immediately free to enter the outside world. The people behind him are not only wearing clothes unsuitable for the world beyond these walls, with their bathrobes showing identical patterns and tied in exactly the same way, but they also assume their roles as patients, forming a group of (virtual) equals in a kind of second line.

With one woman at the centre of the group and four men framing her, the scene is indicatively masculine. We might wonder about the role played by the person on the right, who is as close to naked as decency allows, and who seems to be younger than the others. His body suggests good health, and his trunks point to exercise rather than the shuffling characteristic of people in the bathrobes. His separate position and slightly sideways gaze make him an observer and a member of the scene at the same time. Like everyone else, he is bound into the black-and-white colour scheme of the picture. The two pools in the room are curiously black, and as it turns out the entire complex will soon be overrun by a mysterious black liquid. One might wonder whether this has something to do with the establishment's history.

A year before Svetoft's book appeared, the English mixed-media artist and writer Abi Palmer published a book of experimental autobiographical prose called *Sanatorium* (2020). While staying in a spa hotel on Margaret Island in Budapest for the purpose of treating her long-term chronic illness with the local thermal waters, the protagonist repeatedly encounters the hotel's past: 'Sometimes, when my eyes were tired, I thought I could see the ghost of the hotel's early guests: pale women in opulent gowns with their hair piled high and pinned with flowers; mustachioed men sipping tea in their elegant tailored hats' (Palmer 2020: 17). At other times, she sees the hotel's history displayed on posters lining a corridor in its basement (see Palmer 2020: 104). In a similar setting, she catches a glimpse of what might be a ghost: 'At the end of the corridor, I saw a white thing move. It could have been a stray holidaymaker in their regimental bathrobe. But I'm not so sure' (Palmer 2020: 27). In the narrative economy of the book, these episodes are set against the daily routine of Abi's treatments and social life in the here and now of the spa.

The Croatian author Dubravka Ugrešić's post-modern novel *Baba Jaga je snijela jaje* (2007, *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*) consists of three parts: a piece of autobiographically inspired travel writing (featuring the Bulgarian seaside resort of Varna), a fictional story set in a traditional Czech spa cum contemporary wellness temple and a piece of literary criticism which analyses and comments on the fictional story. In this last part, the 'novel-in-the-novel' (Schmidt 2020: 70), Ugrešić plays a witty intertextual game not only with Slavic folklore (most prominently the Baba Yaga figure), but with the tradition of the spa novel, in particular by 'classic' Slavic authors such as Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Igrok* (1866, *The Gambler*), Ivan Turgenev's *Dym* (1867, *Smoke*), but also Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Bania* (1925, *The Bathhouse*) or Milan Kundera's *Valčík na rozloučenou* (1972, *Farewell Waltz*). And of course, as all the authors just mentioned were men, and as is perhaps discernible from the title of her novel, Ugrešić offers a 'feminist inversion of the traditional male kurort narrative' (Schmidt 2020: 88).

A similar approach is adopted by the Polish Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk in her novel *Empuzjon: Horror przyrodoleczniczy* (2022, *The Empusium: A Health Resort Horror Story*), which is based on Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*), itself an iconic representative of the sanatorium novel within the broader current of spa literature. Tokarczuk relocates the plot from the Swiss high mountains to the formerly Prussian, now Polish, low mountains and

to what was in fact the first European climatic health resort Görbersdorf (today Sokołowsko). In doing so, she not only assumes a different gender perspective, but also thematizes imperial and (post)colonial dynamics within the European health landscape, both in history and by implication in the world today.

Spa, *Sanatorium*, *Baba Yaga* and *Empuzjon* are just some examples of recent literary works which bear out the first thesis we wish to put forward in this volume: that the topos of the health resort in European literature is confined neither to the past nor to the handful of authors usually associated with it. However, they also illustrate the historical complexity of the phenomenon and the resulting terminological overlaps (or should we say confusions). Svetoft's graphic novel bears in its title the traditional term *spa* as a designation of a thermal bath, but its imagery and story bring it closer to contemporary wellness resorts. Palmer's *Sanatorium*, on the other hand, is, despite its title, set in a traditional Budapest spa hotel (with a treatment complex attached) and evokes iconic scenes of nineteenth-century bathing culture. Ugrešić's novel is located in a Bulgarian seaside resort *and* a Czech thermal spa town. And Tokarczuk's 'horror health resort' refers to Dr Brehmer's historic lung sanatorium, which was the first of its kind to establish the emblematic therapy known as the rest-cure and initiated the Europe-wide sanatorium movement. (Incidentally, the original Polish subtitle does not refer specifically to the health resort, pointing instead to naturopathy and the associated life reform movement, but more on this in Chapters 3 and 4.)

Spa is of course the name of a town in Belgium, known for its healing waters since at least the Middle Ages. The word was adopted by the English language to denote all such places that owe much of their history and reputation to the existence of a mineral well with acknowledged healing powers. Later on, this notion was extended to other healing agents such as sea water or air, used in seaside and climatic resorts, such as Brighton and the famous Davos. But importantly, until very recently, the designation 'spa' did not refer to a small, confined treatment place (i.e. *the hotel has a spa*), but to fully fledged towns whose infrastructure was designed entirely around the needs and desires of the visiting patients. To the trained eye, they are easily recognizable by their layout and architecture, with their bizarre mix of grand metropolitan building styles and an eminently rural, picturesque environment and their overall design as 'service towns' (Blackbourn 2001: 446).

Health resort, by contrast, is a generic term that encompasses the 'original' thermal (or mineral) spa as well as its aforementioned spin-offs, the seaside resort and the climatic spa, alongside the specific institution of the sanatorium and the hybrid phenomenon of wellness temples that is characteristic of our present day (to say nothing of other, less popular forms and places of healing and relaxation such as radiation or mud cures). Our contention in this book is that all these resort types, despite their historical, architectural, medical and social differences, form a common imaginary space. Whilst the various resorts differ in terms of their natural resources, temporal and spatial orders and therapeutic regimes, they are all experienced as 'other places'– as 'heterotopias' in the sense of Michel Foucault – a notion that is cohesive enough to warrant a comparative analysis. By carrying out

such analysis, we are taking a decisive step beyond existing research, which in both historical and literary studies still insists on examining these places separately (see e.g. Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023: 651). However, even a brief look into the past shows that they have always been perceived as essentially connected.

Indeed, the very authors deemed to have penned the 'classic' spa novels cared little about historical typology in their visits to, and representations of, health resorts. Jane Austen is famous for her society novels *Northanger Abbey* ([1798] 1817) and *Persuasion* ([1817] 1818) set partly in the thermal spa town of Bath; yet, the only novel of hers that is set exclusively in a resort town is the fragment *Sanditon* ([1817] 1925), in which she describes the creation of a seaside resort. Anton Chekhov's *Dama s sobachkoi* (1899, *Lady with the Dog*) puts the seaside resort of Yalta on the European map of the early twentieth century; but he also contributes to the myth of the European thermal spas with his numerous stays there, and not least with his fabled death in Badenweiler in 1904. And Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* popularized the sanatorium motif in European and world literature, but he had already portrayed the seaside resort of Travemünde in his first major novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Finally, the travel itineraries of the authors themselves show that they happily savoured a sip of mineral water at a well, only to enjoy the healing effects of the sea, or the mountain air, afterwards. This is exemplified by the itinerary of the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig as sketched (incompletely) below. In addition to offering his correspondents and readers insights into his cure successes (such as his weight loss in Mariánské Lázně), he becomes a chronicler of the political upheavals starting with the First World War (at the start of which he was in Baden bei Wien, from where he moved on to Ostend). During the inter-war period, he spent time inter alia in Boulogne-sur-Mer, the Swiss climatic resort of Zuoz, and Wiesbaden, while the advent and start of the Second World War saw him again in Ostend and in Bath. Repeatedly, he uses these various health resorts as places in which to take equivalent soundings at crucial moments in European history: life there reflects in its own specific way what is going on in the wider world (Figure 0.2; see Zweig [1942]; Zweig and Zweig 2006).

In order to capture this shared imaginative space, which is largely constituted intertextually, we speak in our book of a *transnational European resort text* or *resort narrative*. (Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova (2023) and Schmidt (2020: 68) speak in this context of a 'spa narrative'.) For reasons of brevity and readability, we sometimes use 'health resort' and 'spa' as synonymous generic terms where we make general statements about the phenomenon. When naming specific health resorts, we endeavour to use the precise historical denominations. More recently, the term *resort* has begun to lose specificity in a way that parallels what had previously happened to the term *spa*: its character as a place of medical therapy and social encounter is shifting in the direction of simple tourism or wellness institutions. As such, it marks the blurred boundary of our health resort narrative, which some authors use to negotiate the relationship between private prophylaxis and public health in late capitalism.

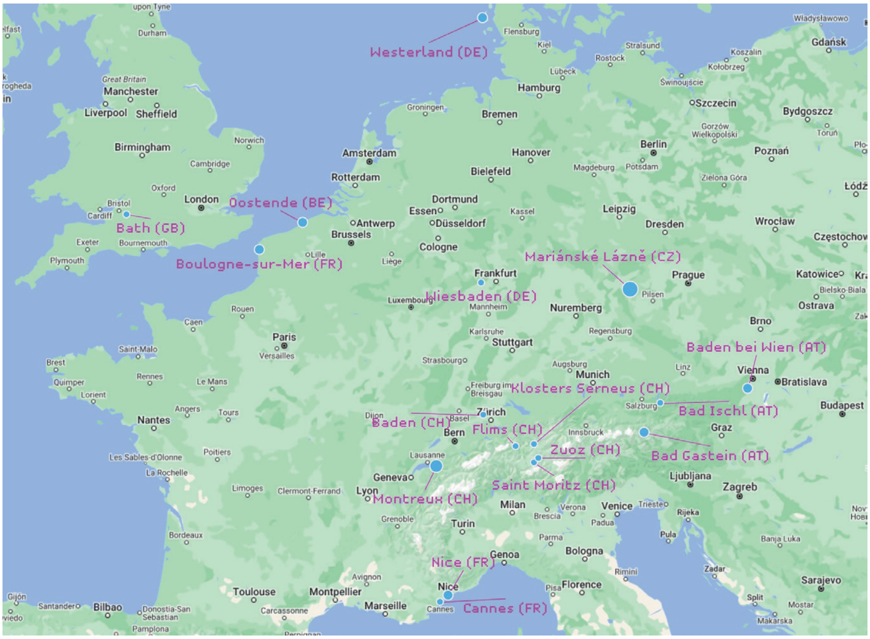


Figure 0.2 Map of Stefan Zweig's spa stays including thermal, seaside and climatic resorts, based on his autobiography *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (*The World of Yesterday: Memories of a European*, 1942), generated with the Nodegoat database software.

We map this European resort narrative across and between several periods, locations and cultures, tracing the changing settings, themes and motifs, as well as preferred genres, concentrating on the period stretching roughly from 1800 to the early 2020s. In doing so, we are offering a contribution to the transnational turn both in historical spa research (see, for instance, Borsay et al. 2000; Matheus 2001; Borsay and Furnée 2016) and in comparative literary studies (see Jay 2014; Wiegandt 2020). This involves examining the relationship between eminently canonical texts, mostly in English, French, German or Russian, and previously little-analysed works, both from within these languages and from the supposedly 'minor languages' located at the fringes of Europe. In this volume, we pursue the thesis that all these publications and their intertextual entanglements played a crucial role in the formation not only of a transnational resort narrative, but also of a European cultural memory and public sphere, even where the intercultural encounters presented were conflictual rather than promoting international understanding. (The ghosts that the British artist Abi Palmer meets in Budapest, formerly the second city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, are a case in point.) We also situate our book in the field of medical humanities (see Whitehead and Woods 2016; Canalis et al. 2022), by showing how medical and literary discourses are intertwined and mutually dependent.

0.1 The health resort as a social microcosm and as a metaphor

The towns we consider as 'classic' mineral or thermal spas today developed in their typical form and shape from the Enlightenment period onwards (see Anderson and Tabb 2002; Lotz-Heumann 2021). They brought together visitors with different religions from different social strata, cultures and countries. The specific mix of visitors varied from one place to another, but there was always a considerable degree of diversity. Likewise, the time spent in a spa was special not only because it was limited, but also because it had a different quality from everyday time. As the use of the respective waters was meant to be spread over a period of time, and since it had been established that leisure and relaxation must be integral parts of a health regimen, the communities of spa guests engaged in a number of sociable activities ranging from physical exercise to various amusements and practices of intellectual exchange. Life in the spa town had its own rhythm and rules, and spa guests were able to disregard some of what was daily convention at home, and even to experiment with their lifestyles, political opinions, gender roles, sexual encounters, artistic tastes and so on. After one or two months, however, they disappeared from the spa and were free to drop all the acquaintances, opinions or customs they might have adopted during their temporary sojourn. As Sir Walter Scott asserts in the 'Introduction' that prefaces his novel *St. Ronan's Well* (1824) in the collected edition of his works (1832: X): 'No intimacy can be supposed more close for the time, and more transitory in its endurance, than that which is attached to a watering-place acquaintance.' Or, to put it slightly differently, the spa is a specific 'microcosm', whose 'temporary character … encouraged … social experimentation and a more relaxed attitude towards barriers of culture, social class or gender' (Köhler 2019: 236).

By the time the two new types of health resort – the seaside resort and the climatic resort – began to emerge, the essential features of 'classical' spa stays had become so well established that they were taken over and adapted to the new environments: as the belief in the healing properties of bathing in seawater took root in the late eighteenth century, a considerable number of seaside resorts were created around the turn of the nineteenth century. With the Netherlands and England as forerunners, seaside resorts could soon be found on all suitable European coasts (see e.g. Walton 1983). These resorts were designed using the infrastructure of the mineral spa town as a default by keeping its main elements such as *kurhaus*, park and promenade and adapting them to the different natural environment. A similar pattern can be observed for the creation of climatic resorts in the late nineteenth century (see Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume). Whilst it would be beyond the remit of this book to give an account of the history of all the various treatments that developed in the different resort types, we can say with confidence that throughout the process of the proliferation, differentiation and specialization of health resorts, their main social characteristics remain in place – that is, their capacity to host large numbers of visitors from different

walks of life, the literally extraordinary nature of the time spent there and the paradoxical combination of patients' heightened awareness of life and their closeness to disease. They form a specific kind of microcosm with a specific relationship to society at large.

Health resorts were, in their self-presentation and many of our popular imaginings, places of health and pleasure. From the late eighteenth century onwards, spa doctors and the guides they produced made a point of stressing the pleasurable side of spa activities and spa life and the fact that the enjoyments offered were an integral part of the healing process (see e.g. Marcard 1784/5 and Hufeland 1815). Even though the daily routine in all resort types was relatively fixed and seen as important for the patients' recovery and recreation, the concepts of leisure, sociability and entertainment increased in importance over time. Nineteenth-century resort narratives, disseminated in the form of novels, journal articles, travel accounts and guides, had their share in de-medicalizing the popular image of the mineral spa as well as the seaside resort and imbuing it with notions of social and sexual freedom, as well as gambling. However, underneath this image, as it were – and usually in non-fictional literature – we can find, even in the first half of the nineteenth century, early observations of resort life that stress its repetitive, stifling, if not disciplining character. Yet, it was with the experience of diseases such as tuberculosis and the social and political catastrophes of the twentieth century that the themes of discipline and surveillance made their way into fictional resort literature. This shift, too, is part of the evolving transnational resort narrative. Over time it has been characterized by a set of topical motifs (the treatments, the forms of sociability, the multiplicity of languages spoken, the allegorical meaning of landscapes), discursive elements (the juxtaposition of eros and thanatos, discipline and leisure; individual and collective body) and narrative modes (chronotopoi of the open and the closed, multi-layered time). As a result, the resort often gets condensed into a social metaphor for Europe as a whole, positively as an ideal society of healthy and free living, or negatively as a space of inescapable control and power mechanisms.

Our use of the term 'metaphor' here might invoke Susan Sontag's classic essay *Illness as Metaphor* (1978). Sontag is not concerned with illness per se, but with its symbolic representations and ultimately its use as a political metaphor: 'Illness as a metaphor for political disorder is one of the oldest notions of political philosophy. If it is plausible to compare the *polis* to an organism, then it is plausible to compare civil disorder to an illness' (Sontag 1978a). In a similar way, we analyse the images attributed to the health resort or its constituents – natural healing resources, disease patterns, spatial structures, social characteristics – for their meaning as symbols for the state of affairs in European society.

We should like to stress that our emphasis on Europe and European literature does not have a normative, exclusive meaning, but emphasizes the fact that questions of not only national but also pan-European politics, society and even identity were negotiated here. Given the inherently cosmopolitan nature of health resorts, non-European guests and authors, who represented the necessary 'other' in these often conflict-laden encounters, played and continue to play a central

role in these discourses. The American writer-cum-curist Mark Twain (*A Tramp Abroad*, 1880) comes to mind, who in his satirical feuilletons held up a critical mirror to European spa societies.

0.2 Health resorts as heterotopias, and as places of care or control

It has by now become a commonplace to apply Michel Foucault's concept of the 'heterotopia' (Foucault 1986; hétérotopie, Foucault 1967) to the health resort (see Noack 2011, Lotz-Heumann 2021), as most of the criteria Foucault established for his 'other spaces' ('espaces autres') – as diverse as graveyards, prisons, brothels, fairgrounds, or bath houses and tourist villages (closest to our health resorts) – do indeed apply to them in all their incarnations. They are spaces outside all other sites of society, yet related to them, 'something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which … all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (Foucault 1986: 24; 'sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles … tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés', Foucault [1967] 1994: 755). They have a clear function within society, yet can change this function as society changes; they 'juxtapos[e] in a single real place … several sites that are in themselves incompatible' (Foucault 1986: 25; 'juxtapose[nt] en un seul lieu réel … plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles', Foucault [1967] 1994: 758); for their visitors they mark a break with traditional time (heterochrony, Foucault 1986: 26; 'hétérochronie' Foucault [1967] 1994: 759); and they relate to the outside world through specific mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time, unlike most of the heterotopias Foucault listed in his lecture, health resorts bear all the hallmarks of public spaces as well, in that they are intensely interwoven with, and provide the loci for, public life. Focusing on this aspect, Rob Shields (1991) invokes Bakhtin's notion of carnival to characterize life in the English seaside resort of Brighton. One of Shields's exemplary 'marginal places and spaces' (Shields 1991: 261), Brighton was removed from the centre of power, accommodated temporarily limited visits, offered '[f]reedom from the constraints of social position (both high and low)' and provided a specific 'permissive atmosphere' (Shields 1991: 73). In this way, it has attained significance for the British cultural imagination that has persisted from its beginnings as a resort to the present day.

In this volume, as well as in the research project from which it has arisen,[1] we combine the concepts of heterotopia – 'the other space' – and of public space. For Jürgen Habermas, public space is any site, situation or event that encourages open communication between strangers, and the health resort is particularly suited to this concept as a temporary meeting place for different nationalities, cultures and classes. As such, it is to be distinguished from the 'public sphere' as a dislocated discourse on the public good, the taking place of which, however, depends on the existence of public places (Habermas [1962] 1990: 76, 246, 1991: 26–7,

158). Benjamin Morgan (2014: 13) thus rightly asserts that 'watering places accommodated many of the key convivial and spectacular loci of the modern public sphere: the café, the boulevard, the hotel, the casino, the theatre.'

However, as mentioned before (and as our examples of literary texts from the start of this introduction have shown), health resorts, particular in more recent historical periods, were not always sites of the transgression of norms, the free interaction with new (foreign) acquaintances or the positive transformation of the self. Their character as an 'other place' makes them susceptible not only to utopian, but also to dystopian usages. In particular, their incarnation as sanatorium turns the once celebrated 'freedom of the spa' into what is effectively its opposite: a place of discipline and surveillance. These terms, too, are Foucauldian and point to his concept of 'biopolitics' (or 'biopower') as developed in the eponymous *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1975; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1977) and a number of other seminal works written from 1961 onwards.[2]

'Biopower' here is understood as that which 'endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply [life], subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (Foucault 1978: 137; 'qui entreprend de gérer [la vie], de la majorer, de la multiplier, d'exercer sur elle des contrôles précis et des régulations d'ensemble', Foucault 1976: 180; see Adams 2017). This reads like a to-do list for the contemporary health resort, which has been geared towards prophylaxis and rehabilitation and serves to protect the healthy social body and regenerate the capitalist labour force. As in the 'disciplinary society' (Foucault 1977: 239; 'société disciplinaire', Foucault 1975: 219), there is no longer a dominant sovereign power to implement its agenda, the latter is enacted by the seemingly softer skills of biopolitics that seek to exert 'a positive influence on life' (Oksala 2013: 321). This nevertheless includes 'various ways of distributing individuals in space (enclosure, partitioning, assignment to dedicated spaces or individual cells, etc.); managing individuals' activities (the extension of the timetable, regimenting gestures, routinizing performance of tasks, etc.)' (Schrift 2013: 144). It is no longer externally enforced laws but internalized norms that produce the 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977: 136; 'les corps dociles', Foucault 1975: 137) of modern society. The central technique for implementing these norms is continuous control, whether in the form of visual observation or written documentation, for example, in medical records. Health resorts as places of healing *and* pleasure, and their evolution from Enlightenment ideals, make them a predestined field for the investigation of the intricate interplay of care and control that lies at the core of Foucault's thinking (although, unlike the clinic, the psychiatric institution or the prison, they are not a distinct topic in his writings).

Where Foucault considered such social phenomena as a philosopher and intellectual historian, Roland Barthes, his colleague at the Collège de France, approached them from the point of view of the semiotician and sociologist, with a hint of the autobiographer, as he himself suffered from tuberculosis. Barthes deals with the subject explicitly in two texts written some thirty years apart. His 'Esquisse d' une société sanatoriale' (Barthes [1947] 2015; 'Sketch of a Sanatorium Society', Barthes 2018) was written in 1947, not long after Barthes was discharged

following several years of sanatorium treatment. In 1976–7, he returned to the subject in his first lecture at the Collège de France with the telling title *Comment vivre ensemble: Simulations romanesques de quelques espaces quotidiens* (2002; *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces,* 2013), comparing it with other prototypical social constellations such as monasteries or housing estates. Describing specifically the sanatorium society, Barthes provides insights which are valuable for research beyond the sanatorium. Thus, he has very acute things to say about the special forms of living together that pertain in health establishments and considers sanatorium society as an interim form of community between the fully differentiated society of the outside world and the micro-forms of social togetherness such as family or friendship. And he pays particular attention to the rhythm of life in the sanatorium, using it to construct a utopian myth of the social per se. Since Barthes, unlike Foucault, is explicitly concerned with the health resort (and the sanatorium in particular), and since his approach has so far received little attention in the respective research, we will discuss it in more detail in Chapter 3.

It was not only the French intellectual scene that in the post-war decades was intensely preoccupied with body politics and their interplay with broader social systems and changes. In the early 1960s, the American sociologist Erving Goffman focused his attention on exclusionary social milieus, not least in the area of public health. In his collection of essays entitled *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), he coined the term 'total institution', which has some degree of overlap with the concepts formulated by Foucault and Barthes and is occasionally applied to the sanatorium, less often to other health resorts (Goffman 1961: lxiii; Schmuhl 2022: 2). The historical forms of the total institution (as an ideal type) include institutions to protect the weak (old people's homes, children's homes), to shield society from social deviations (prisons, psychiatric wards) and from health threats (tuberculosis sanatoria; Goffman 1961: 4). But they also include institutions of voluntary isolation from society, such as the monastery (as do the French counterparts). Total institutions according to Goffman are characterized by the dissolution of modern societies' differentiation between work, life and leisure, which he calls 'batch living' (Goffman 1961: 11). Further aspects are a life strictly in the collective, an obligatory time regime and a rational planning that underpins all the activities within the institution (Goffman 1961: 6). The central method of social control in the total institution is the 'mortification of the self', which is achieved through the subjugation of the (sick/to-be-cured) body to norms of dress, behaviour and diet. (It is no coincidence that the 'regimental bathrobe' features twice in our introductory examples, both by Svetoft (2021: 8 passim) and by Palmer (2020: 27).) Goffman's perspective complements Foucault's historical-philosophical and Barthes's semiotic approaches from the point of view of anthropological participatory observation, highlighting in particular the bureaucratic aspect of surveillance in the name of care (Goffman 1961: 46–7).

Finally, in the 1990s, Gilles Deleuze in his 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle' (1990; 'Postscript on Control Societies', 1995) adapted the concept of

the 'disciplinary society' to the changed political and media conditions of the late twentieth century. According to him, the (comparatively) fixed boundaries of the closed milieus that, despite their differences, feature in the thinking of Foucault, Barthes and Goffman, are dissolving. The former gated factory is being replaced with the vigilance of the computer, the defining mould by shifting modulations (Deleuze 1990: 242, 246; Deleuze 1995: 178, 182). These forms of control can no longer be neatly contained within regimes of time and place: they are universally personal. Deleuze's approach is crucial in order to analyse the changes brought about by the concept of wellness in neoliberal health economies, as it changes the core concept of health and healing itself. Treatments are now (at least notionally) individualized, or, as we read in Svetoft's panel, 'tailored expressly to your needs and wishes' (see above). The significance of biopolitics in its connection to the health resort therefore goes well beyond Foucault's writings. We will alternate or combine these different approaches depending on the specificity of the materials discussed and on our research focus.

A disclaimer is nevertheless necessary here: current research, partly relying on empirical studies, draws attention to the fact that the disciplinary character of the institution of the sanatorium may indeed have been over-emphasized in the course of the biopolitical turn of the 1960s and 1970s (see e.g. Meloni 2001). Flurin Condrau (2010: 74) argues that 'historiography has treated Goffman's total institution as the replacement myth for the *Magic Mountain*', which for decades functioned as a romantic projection surface not only for writers, but for theorists also. He thus draws our attention to the degree to which the perceptions of the 'real-world sanatorium' and the 'fictional sanatorium' – and by association all other types of health resorts – overlap (Condrau 2010: 74).

0.3 The transnational health resort narrative

The health resort as a literary topos, in the double sense of plot location and motif, has also become a subject of research in its own right. In fact, most of the works focus on the classic spa town (with the occasional inclusion of the seaside resort; see Borowka-Clausberg 2009; Vasset 2013; Soroka 2019; Chiari and Cuisinier-Delorme 2021), alongside separate treatises on the climatic health resort and the sanatorium (Pohland 1984; Augereau 2020). For a long time, however, this research was largely pursued along national lines, with a national focus, and only occasional comparative digressions. And where a transnational perspective has started to emerge in the past two decades, the studies concerned have been largely limited to the golden age of the spa town and its cultural representations from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Benjamin Morgan, for instance, in his dissertation on 'The Continental Spa in Post-1840 British, Russian and American Writing' postulates the existence of 'the nineteenth century's watering-place text' (Morgan 2014: 21). In doing so, he draws on Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982; *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, 1997) and its central metaphor of the palimpsest, that is, the overwriting text

through which previous texts and motifs are still visible. He also refers to the cultural semiotics of the Moscow-Tartu school, namely Yuri Lotman and Vladimir Toporov, who likewise develop the idea of an overarching text into which other texts are subsumed. Thus, Lotman speaks of 'a single text, introducing a second order abstract model of the [textual] invariant[s]' (Lotman 1977: 20; 'единый текст, введя абстрактную модель инварианта второй ступени', Lotman 1971: 30), which we would probably call a 'narrative' today. Toporov looks at works of Russian literature dedicated to the topos of Saint Petersburg ([1971] 2003) and argues that the works in his corpus are not only closely interwoven through intertextual references but form a semiotic and ideological text on a higher level – what Lotman would call a 'second order' and Genette a 'second degree'. The term we prefer for this kind of second-order 'text' is 'narrative'. So, where Toporov identifies what he calls an 'antithetical tension' ('антитетическая напряженность', Toporov 2003: 7) in the 'Petersburg text', we will demonstrate that the resort narrative of European culture exhibits a comparable set of dichotomies – between urban and rural environments, therapy and entertainment, eros and thanatos, immunization and infection, but also economic and social transformation, peripheral and imperial dynamics (see Schmidt 2014: 163–4). Morgan condenses the findings from his corpus into a socio-historical diagnosis of the epoch and reads the spa town of the nineteenth century as a prism through which the modernization effects brought about by the advent of the capitalist-industrial era are refracted. Thus, the spa town embodies both the dynamics (the rise of the new mobile elites, for instance) and the fears of the epoch he studies (Morgan 2014: 30). While focusing mainly on the second half of the nineteenth century, Morgan argues that 'like any potent cluster of signs, the nineteenth century's watering-place text stubbornly refuses confinement to the age that produced it' (Morgan 2014: 32). Among the 'temporally outlying' (Morgan 2014: 32) texts he uses to demonstrate this is W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz* (2001), which has central scenes set in a Bohemian spa town of the socialist era (see Morgan 2014: 208–15). We will be using other examples to bring the resort narrative up to date.

Olga Kulishkina and Larisa Poluboyarinova take a comparable approach in their article 'The Spa Narrative of Long 19th Century Europe as Map and Network' (2023). Inspired by social network analysis (SNA) and Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (1998), they set out to retrace a network of nineteenth-century resort narratives. To this end, they combine Moretti's practice of distant reading (Moretti 2000) with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of genre memory. The latter is intended to make plausible the notion that these networks are populated (and can thus be mapped) with both traceable and untraceable connections. With Bakhtin, they presuppose 'that one and the same content and formal structure can appear in different national literatures in the course of decades and centuries and be reflected in concrete works, i.e. genre variants' (Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023: 648; see Bakhtin [1929] 2002: 120, 1984: 106). As a first outcome of their research, they suggest two main 'transmission lines' (Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023: 652–3) within what they call a literary spa network, which start with Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771)

and Walter Scott's *St Ronan's Well* (1824), respectively. (With their approach they also demonstrate the potential that lies in computer-aided digital humanities for research on transnational networks.)

Yana Lyapova adopts the concept of 'primal scenes' as developed by Ned Lukacher, who repurposes Sigmund Freud's term to denote key literary scenes that are connected in ways that go beyond chronological and historical verifiability. The main benefit of this term is its ability to bridge the legitimacy gap in literary criticism between verified knowledge about the textual origin of a scene and a mere hunch about its proximity to a different body of work that can nonetheless influence the act of interpretation. By locating the 'primal scene' independently of a strictly textual framework, both chronologically earlier and later texts can equally be treated as variants of an archetype, without having to put these in any historically determined order that implies a hierarchy in their originality value (Lyapova forthcoming).

This brief sketch of current research on what we call the transnational resort narrative is by no means exhaustive. What unites the approaches outlined above is the attempt to combine tangible intertextual lines of transmission with less tangible cultural or discursive transfer mechanisms. A strict separation of the two may be heuristically, historically or biographically desirable, but it is rendered impossible by the nature of the works themselves, which are rarely explicit about the kinds of influence that have been exerted on them. Only by abandoning such separation can the broad field of interwoven European resort texts be methodically grasped and conceptually described as an interdependent body of narratives that both conceptualize essential themes such as illness and death and discuss varying contemporary questions of culture and society.

In this volume, we thus also follow the path of a combined intertextual and cultural semiotic approach and trace exemplary trajectories on the basis of our readings. In doing so, we intervene in existing research in various ways: first, and contrary to most historical and literary research to date, we study the different types of resorts (see above) together. Secondly, we agree with Morgan, Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova that what Morgan calls the 'watering-place text' has by no means ceased to exist with the end of the nineteenth century and add that it has seen a discernible renaissance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This renaissance, we argue, tells us something about the state of European societies today, facing the multiple crises of an ageing society, a pandemic, climate change, the spread of nationalism and war. The health resort (and, in particular, the classic spa town) may no longer be the place of longing it once was in popular imagination, but it remains a powerful topos in European literature and culture and a prism through which society at large can be examined. Because so much attention has been paid to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' spa towns and seaside resorts, and so little to their successors from around 1900, it is precisely on this latter period that we will focus. But we don't just extend the textual corpus in terms of publication dates: like Morgan, who points to the intense intertextual connections between novels and spa guides of the period he researches (see Morgan 2014: 172), we insist that any attempt at separating fictional from non-fictional material for

the purpose would be futile. We thus include in our corpus spa and travel guides (as Morgan does), autobiographical forms (memoirs, diaries, letters), as well as newspaper and journal articles or advertisements. And within the fictional realm, we transcend the framework of prose genres on which research has concentrated until now. In addition to short stories and novels, we look at drama and poetry, as well as at performative extensions of texts in installations, games and internet projects or branding strategies. Thus, we do not limit ourselves to canonical texts in the sense of, say, Scott, Turgenev, Austen, Mann or Sebald. On the contrary, we have deliberately restricted our work on these and sought out texts that are peripheral in the sense of canon, genre, language and geography. For it is precisely this variety of cultural productions that demonstrates the particular appeal of the resort narrative and its transformations across the epochs. We do not dedicate a separate chapter to female perspectives because we believe that women's writing should no longer be marginalized by being regarded as something separate, but we have endeavoured to ensure a strong presence of female authors and perspectives in our corpus. Likewise, we include other, previously marginalized perspectives such as those of the people working in the resorts (rather than visiting them), and queer experiences. At points we also bring in works from other fields of culture in our consideration, such as cinematic, pictorial and musical works, TV shows, cartoons or online activities that engage with our topic. We do so only in cursory fashion due to the limited scope of this study and because our main expertise as literary scholars lies in the reading of texts.

0.4 The structure of the book: Scope and limitations

We start with three chapters of an introductory nature, sketching out the historical interaction between the literary discourse and the social practice of health tourism, the literary engagement with the mushrooming of spa towns and seaside resorts across Europe in the long nineteenth century, and the paradigm shift in European literature from the mineral spa and seaside resort to the sanatorium setting around the turn of the twentieth century. Following on from this, we flesh out the central thesis of our book, investigating the intense intertextual relationships that revolve around some key narratives and – spanning countries and epochs – create what we call with Lotman a 'second order' semiotic text (see above). We then return to the more diachronic mode of investigation, sketching out the literary engagement across Europe with the hitherto repressed history of health resorts as places of disciplining and surveillance, as well as of violence and destruction. And we assess in how far resorts (or resort settings) can also serve as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), aiding the process of understanding and coming to terms with the past, and as prisms through which to examine the state of contemporary European society. For our final two chapters, we broaden the corpus again in order to encompass not only popular fiction but also other cultural products such as graphic novels, games, installations and social media applications. These chapters examine two crucial aspects of the role of the resort

in contemporary culture – in forms of consumer entertainment on the one hand and debates about the wellness industry as the neoliberal competitor, if not successor to classic spa culture, on the other.

From this overview, it will be evident that among our thematic chapters we do not have any that specifically address the subjects most often associated with the spa town in literature: gambling and (extramarital) love. This is not to say that these are not present in our analyses, but they figure symptomatically in a number of trajectories we follow in this book, as and when they help to illuminate the role of the 'other place' in society and its discourses. Instead, we give space to the aspects of the health resort that have long been rather suppressed despite their relevance. After all, health resorts in Europe, once designed as places of health and pleasure, continue to be used as places of confinement or refugee camps or military hospitals to this day, in situations of war and displacement. Literary works, such as Dubravka Ugrešić's essay 'Tu nema ničega!' (2019, 'There's Nothing Here!', 2020), draw our attention to this.

Thus, our concern here is not a nostalgic one, as appears to be the case in some recent historiographical writing on spa towns such as Joseph Wechsberg's *The Lost World of the Great Spas* (1979), David Clay Large's *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History of Intrigue, Politics, Art and Healing* (2015) or Marina Soroka's *The Summer Capitals of Europe* (2017). The inscription of eleven European spa towns from seven countries as a transnational World Heritage Site in 2021 under the title *The Great Spa Towns of Europe* illustrates both their comeback in popular cultural memory and the partly nostalgic focus on past glamour. We are not in the business of looking back to a bygone era that was allegedly more glamorous than ours, and we do not focus on the grand, the great and the lost. Instead, we want to examine continuities and ruptures in what we call the transnational resort narrative, showing how this place has been imagined and conceptualized in European literature, right up to the present day. In addition to nostalgia, modernization narratives play a central role here, as do critical inquiries into the present.

We can confidently say that the corpus we have assembled for this volume is far more extensive than any other corpus we have seen in the relevant research literature so far, but we make absolutely no claim to completeness. This is also due to the fact that the body of related literature is still growing (and by the time this book comes out, more titles will have appeared), and of course to gaps in our cultural and linguistic proficiency: whilst we tried to spread our wings as wide as possible across the whole of Europe, there are a number of blind spots. Czech spa literature, for example, is underrepresented, but has already been analysed in more locally concentrated research (see Lyapova forthcoming; Schieb 2016). But we have focused on Bulgarian, Croatian, Polish and Ukrainian literature on the subject, which has so far received little or no attention elsewhere. Thus, within the framework of entanglement studies, we remain committed to an approach that identifies the historical traces of imperial power imbalances and problematizes their contemporary aftermath.[3] We begin, however, with the nineteenth century and thus in a period when imperial power was at its height.[4]

Notes

1 The research for this volume was undertaken as part of the project *The European Spa as a Transnational Public Space and Social Metaphor* (https://www.theeuropeanspa.eu/), which ran from 2019 to 2022 and was financed by the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) funding initiative of the European Union, devoted to the topic *Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe*.

2 The works in question are *Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, 1965), *Naissance de la Clinique: Une archéologie du regard médical* (1963, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, 1973), *La volonté de savoir: Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 1 (1976, *The History of Sexuality: vol. 1, Introduction* 1978) and *Naissance de la biopolitique* (1979, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 2008).

3 For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the concepts and approaches of comparative, transnational or entangled literary studies and post-colonial studies, see, for example, Wiegandt (2020).

4 The non-European colonial history of the spa town, especially in its literary component, still needs to be explored.

1

IMBRICATED (HI)STORIES: SPA GUIDES, SPA TOURISM AND LITERARY IMAGININGS

> It is the usual, and at bottom the only real issue of literary history: society, rhetoric, and their interaction.
>
> Moretti (1998: 5)

In his story *Hotel Angst* (2006) – the title refers to Adolf Angst's famous grand hotel in Bordighera – the German novelist John von Düffel highlights the impact one particular piece of literature had on Bordighera's transformation from a remote Italian fishing village to a major European seaside resort in the second half of the nineteenth century.[1] Written by the Italian author Giovanni Ruffini in English in 1855, the romantic novel *Doctor Antonio* attracted droves of British tourists to the Ligurian coast in general and to Bordighera in particular. Ruffini's descriptions of the Ligurian landscape in its unspoiled beauty must have struck a chord with his readers – the novel's English heroine is convalescing there and has ample opportunity to take in the scenery – and persuaded them that this might be as worthy a place to go to as Florence or Rome. This in turn led to the development of a tourist-friendly infrastructure with hotels, boarding houses and private villas, inviting even more people, from more countries, to come. *Doctor Antonio* was thus not read for its political agenda (Ruffini was an Italian patriot exiled in England[2]), nor as a work of art, but – as Düffel put it – as a 'travel guide to paradise'.[3] (In *Hotel Angst*, set in the early 2000s, the narrator's father plans, but never finishes, a new novel set in the same place, in the hope of working similar wonders and attracting fresh investment in the now dilapidated hotel building.)

For the Hispanic context, the *Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Galicia*, founded in 1910, teamed up with the *Booth Steamship Company* in Liverpool to invite a number of British journalists and writers on a tour of Galicia and to commission publications (journal articles, travelogues, travel guides, tales), designed to attract foreign tourism to the region. The success of the scheme was curtailed only by the beginning of the First World War (see Hooper 2012: 224). In the wake of this trip, the prolific writer George Brown

Burgin published two novels set in the Galician spa town of Mondariz: *The Belle of Santiago* and *A Lady of Spain* (both 1911). Both are constructed as love stories (this time between an English man and a Spanish lady), and both contained what Hooper calls a 'richly textured account of the *Balneario* and its surroundings that complements the one to be found in the journalistic writings he and his colleagues produced after the event' (Hooper 2012: 218). Thus, Burgin also produced 'travel guides to paradise' (albeit a different paradise) in the form of fictional narratives – this time on purpose.

In his study on *Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France*, Douglas P. Mackaman identifies several novels that were written or co-written by French spa doctors in lieu of spa guides. These novels, published in the last decades of the nineteenth century, 'represented the social world of the spas as completely and comprehensibly as their intimate knowledge would allow. Through characters, plots, and diverse social situations, [they] offered their readers a close examination of bourgeois etiquette and society on vacation' (Mackaman 1998: 124). Titles such as *Une cure au Mont-Dore, la Bourboule, Saint-Nectaire et Royat* or *Le solitaire d'Aix-les-Bains*[4] imbued the names of particular resorts with the promise of a personal story (frequently culminating in marriage). Published alongside the established spa guides, these novels fulfilled a specific function: they 'infuse[d] a thermal holiday' for the middle classes 'with both a purpose and a set of patterns that could be followed' (Mackaman 1998: 126). They thus opened these places to a new and growing segment of society.

For the Russian context, Soroka points out that 'many ordinary nineteenth-century Russian readers first viewed European spas through the eyes of their nation's contemporary, now classical authors' (Soroka 2019: 426). She identifies a different pattern of imbricated histories though: The fictional novels or travel notes published in the Russian press by such famous authors as Fyodor Dostoevsky (*Igrok*, 1866, *The Gambler*), Ivan Turgenev (*Dym*, 1867, *Smoke*) and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (*Za rubezhom*, [1880–1881] 1972, *Abroad*) paint a highly negative picture of decadent European spa towns and spa culture, while in their private letters and diary entries, the authors emphasize the benefits of their treatments and stress the beauty of the landscape as well as the practicality of the spa infrastructure. But bad news can be good news in terms of generating popularity, and this form of negative marketing proved successful among Russian health tourists (see Soroka 2019: 426).[5]

These are just some examples taken from the realm of nineteenth- and twentieth-century spa life that highlight the fact that there is no simple, one-directional relationship between life and literature, and that the latter not only reacts to, and reflects on, social practices, but can also influence and even trigger them. In what follows, we will investigate a progressively complex example of such relationships: the entanglements between social and literary practices in the context of British travel to (mainly) German spa towns. Starting with the established history of Rhine tourism, we will trace the multifaceted effects that advances in transport and the various products of a growing literary market had on each other and on the expansion of nineteenth-century spa culture.

1.1 Guided travel: British Rhine tourism

British Rhine tourism as such took off with the introduction of steamship passages across the English Channel in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Travelling to the continent instantly became easier for British tourists as a result. The first such ship was the *Caledonia*, which, from 1816 onwards, went directly from London to Frankfurt via Rotterdam, Cologne and Coblenz (see Kennedy 1903: 29–30). The year 1824 saw the introduction of regular, timetabled services, followed by the development of train lines along both sides of the river from 1844 onwards (see Etzemüller 2012: 405). Not only was there a sizeable English middle class that could afford to undertake such trips, but the Rhine area had also started to develop a strong cultural appeal. Featuring very strongly in German Romantic literature and art as well as in popular culture, it had soon made its way into the British cultural canon, too. Robert R. Taylor lists several British artists of the period who engaged with the area, the best known of whom is probably J. M. W. Turner with his series of Rhine images (Taylor 1998: 106). Within the literary realm, Taylor suggests, 'the most famous non-German description of the Rhine was probably Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*' (Taylor 1998: 106).[6] Indeed, the lines describing '[t]he castled crag of Drachenfels' and other sights along 'these banks of Rhine' (Byron [1818] 1970: 217) had a considerable influence on the popular imagination of the area, and *Childe Harold* was among the books that English travellers would carry with them on their journey (see Brunkhorst 1982; Buzard 1991). Byron's descriptions also found numerous disciples, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) or Charles Knox's *The Old River; Or, the Chronicle of the Rhine* (1842). The romantic fascination with the Rhine remained influential for decades, turning the river and its banks into an 'imaginary landscape' (Etzemüller 2012: 391) with a long-term appeal. Thus, Taylor notes that '[i]n the summers of the 1830s and later, the English were to be found everywhere on the Rhine. Between 1860 and 1890 the annual total of visitors to the Rhine was around one million, of which half were from the British Isles' (Taylor 1998: 126).

The first half of the nineteenth century was also the time when the volume of travel literature on the literary market grew exponentially, comprising travel narratives as well as guidebooks, and the growing Rhine tourism gave it a significant boost. In Britain, John Murray created his *Handbooks for Travellers* and opened the series in 1836 with the *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. (Significantly, Byron's *Childe Harold* had been published by Murray as well, and with its peculiar effect had helped inspire the idea of the travel guide series.) Karl Baedeker in Germany had started at roughly the same time – with a handbook for travelling along the Rhine – and for several years after that, the two publishers co-ordinated their ventures. While travel guides as such had been around for quite some time, the likes of Murray and Baedeker developed the right format (both physically and in terms of content and layout) to turn them into a mass commodity. Both publishers had plenty of competition and found many imitators in their respective countries and elsewhere, and the market for pocket guides for travellers boomed.[7]

Significant for our context is the inclusion of spa towns in such publications, be that in narratives or guides. In his *Handbuch für Reisende am Rhein von Schafhausen bis Holland* (*Handbook for Travellers along the Rhine from Schafhausen to Holland*), first published in 1818, Aloys Schreiber included extensive sections on the thermal springs in the area and how to use them. A considerable success, the book appeared in several new editions in German (each time slightly extended) and was quickly translated into French and English (again published by John Murray; see Taylor 1998: 127). These publications were accompanied by travel accounts penned by popular authors of the period, such as Mary Boddington's *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833* and Frances Trollope's *Slight Reminiscences of the Rhine, Switzerland and a Corner of Italy*, both of which appeared in 1834. Both had spa towns in their travel itinerary and included them in their narratives. Focusing almost entirely on spas, and combining the genres of travel account and travel guide, Edwin Lee published his *Notes on Italy and Rhenish Germany, with Professional Notices of the Climates of Nice, Pisa, Florence and Naples, and of the Mineral Springs of Baden-Baden, Wiesbaden, Schwalbach, Ems and Aix la Chapelle* in 1835 and *An Account of the Most Frequented Watering-Places on the Continent, and of the Medical Application of Their Mineral Springs* in 1836.

Whilst all these publications will have contributed to the increase in popularity of the regions and spa places covered, the most influential books in this respect were without doubt Sir Francis Bond Head's *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau: By an Old Man* (1834) and Augustus Bozzi Granville's *The Spas of Germany* (1837). We will therefore take a closer look at the composition and reception of both.

1.2 Head and Granville: Nineteenth-century influencers

Cast in the form of a travel narrative and a spa guide, respectively, both books gained such status and exerted such influence that several German spa towns experienced a considerable growth in the number of English visitors in the second half of the 1830s – among them Baden-Baden, Bad Kissingen, Bad Ems, Schlangenbad, Schwalbach, Wiesbaden and Wildbad. Of Baden-Baden, we learn in the 1839 yearbook for Germany's spa towns and seaside resorts, that the English, who in the past rarely visited the Continent for health reasons, had in recent years begun to appreciate and value the effectiveness of German spas. And according to the commentator in the *Allgemeine Zeitung München*, a significant influence on this phenomenon had to be attributed to Head's *Brunnens* and Granville's *The Spas of Germany* (*Allgemeine Zeitung München*, 9 July 1839, Beilage: 1238). This trend persisted for some decades: A publication from 1858 about Marienbad (*Mariánské Lázně*) acknowledges Granville's book as one of the main factors for the resort's popularity among English visitors (see Kratzmann 1858: 11). And the annual report from Schwalbach for 1867 states that the number of English visitors had not receded since the publication of Head's *Bubbles*, with the annual figure varying between 500 and 700 (see Gent 1868: 3). The German-Jewish writer Fanny Lewald, when recalling the development of Schlangenbad from the early 1800s to 1879, attributes a special place to the *Bubbles* in the resort's success story (see

Lewald 1883: 92–3), and even the German Wikipedia entry for Bad Schwalbach claims that this book had a decisive influence on the numbers of Britons frequenting all the spas in the Taunus area, and that due to this, Schwalbach and Schlangenbad experienced no less an increase in English visitors than the larger and hitherto better-known towns of Bad Ems and Wiesbaden (see also Linhardt 2016: 47–59). We also have evidence from the English side, in that Murray's *A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* announced in several editions that '[a]lready many thousand English have taken up their residence [in Schwalbach], each with the Bubble-blower for his guide; and Spa, Aix-la-Chapelle, and other watering-places have been comparatively deserted by them in consequence' (Murray 1845: 489–9). Consequently, most travel narratives and guides published in the wake of Head and Granville refer to them extensively.

What is it, then, that makes those two books so special? Sir Francis Bond Head's *Bubbles*, again published by John Murray, attracted attention even before it was read. At a time when publishers had only lately started to sell books in their finished binding, it is reputed to have been 'the first fully cloth-bound book … which featured pictorial covers. This was a landmark in book design and must have caused a considerable stir in the publishing world' (Quayle 1971: 108; see also Morris and Levin 2000: 13). For the book-buying public, it would thus have made an eye-catching object, visually equating the bubbles of the fountain water with the globe (Figure 1.1).

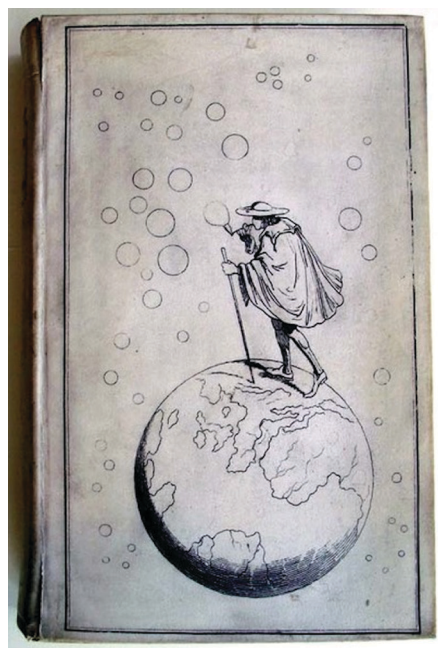


Figure 1.1 Front cover of the first edition of Head's *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau* (1834).

Between its covers, the book offered, at first sight at least, something more traditional. The preface by the author starts in a manner well established for a travel narrative and will have had a reassuring effect on the reader:

> The writer of this trifling Volume was suddenly sentenced, in the cold evening of his life, to drink the mineral waters of one of the bubbling springs, or brunnens, of Nassau. In his own opinion, his constitution was not worth so troublesome a repair; but being outvoted, he bowed and departed. … His hasty sketches of whatever chanced for the moment to please either his eyes, or his mind, were only made – *because he had nothing else in the whole world to do*; and he now offers them to that vast and highly respectable class of people who read them from exactly the self-same motive. (Head 1834: v–vi; emphasis in the original)

The modesty trope aside, not all of what is claimed there concurs with the truth: Francis Bond Head (1793–1875), a British government official of not yet forty years of age, had travelled in the summer of 1832 to the then Duchy of Nassau and stayed, not alone, but with family and servants, in the spa towns of Langen-Schwalbach and Schlangenbad (see Linhardt 2016: 53). Assuming the persona of an old, mildly ailing and solitary traveller, however, allowed for the narrative tone and intensity of observation that are characteristic of his book. It starts off with the sea voyage from London to Rotterdam, followed by the steamboat tour along the River Rhine to Coblenz. Though not citing anything directly ('[a]s everybody, now-a-days, has been up the Rhine', Head 1834: 9), our narrator is fully aware of the discourse of Rhine Romanticism and pays passing tribute to 'the old romantic castles' (Head 1834: 15) that can be seen from the vessel. What is new is that his journey takes him away from the well-known route into areas beyond the river's banks – in Coblenz, he transfers to coach and horses – and into the lesser-known world of the region's spas. By settling in a spa town, our traveller provides himself and his readers with a grounding – temporary though it may be – that allows a much fuller travel experience than any run-of-the-mill Rhine tourist could have: 'Almost everyone who has travelled on the Rhine speaks in raptures of this part of it, yet the view I enjoyed … was altogether superior to what they could have witnessed' (Head 1834: 248).

And indeed, unlike his compatriots, who are known for remaining with their own kind and hardly ever engaging with the foreign people and culture around them,[8] the 'old man' consciously enters this unknown world and tries to appreciate it on its own terms and by way of informed comparison. While still on the steamboat, he already makes a number of detailed aesthetic and social observations, and this is to become the prevailing mode of the narrative throughout the book. Apart from the descriptions of spa life, the narrator offers insights into the history of the Duchy of Nassau, the social stratification of its inhabitants, agriculture, education, religion and so forth, each gained by way of shorter and longer excursions made from Langen-Schwalbach and Schlangenbad. All of this is nicely embedded in the spa routine which our narrator adheres to, and which leaves him sufficient time for his individual rambles. His extensive descriptions of spa life come back, time and

again, to the social mix and to the conduct of the spa society he experiences. His description of the table d'hôte at Schwalbach has gained much attention:

> The company which comes to the brunnens for health, and which daily assembles for dinner, is of the most heterogeneous description, being composed of Princes, Dukes, Barons, Counts, etc., down to the petty shop-keeper, and even the Jew of Frankfort, Mainz, and other neighbouring towns; in short, all the most jarring elements of society, at the same moment, enter the same room, to partake together, the same one shilling and eight-penny dinner. (Head 1834: 74)

As with other observations (about Nassau's school system, say, or the relationship between masters and servants), he uses this to criticize the state of affairs in England as he sees it. For instance, while there is no doubt that German spa life was much more heterogeneous and less socially regulated than in, say, Cheltenham and Bath, the author is clearly idealizing what he found for the purpose of creating the highest possible contrast with the English side, and thus achieving a didactic effect:

> In England we are too apt to designate, by the general term 'society', the particular class, clan, or clique in which we ourselves may happen to move, and … people are generally quite satisfied with what they term 'the present state of society'; yet there exists a very important difference between this ideal civilization of a part or parts of a community, and the actual civilization of the community as a whole. (Head 1834: 75)

But the description is also part of a strategy to highlight small, hitherto unknown places at the expense of the more renowned ones. The overall journey is structured in such a way that our traveller comes through Bad Ems first but does not even get out of the coach there, as it appears to him just as 'a regular, fashionable watering-place' (Head 1834: 19) – a type that will be known well to the reader. (For instance, Bad Ems was one of the settings in Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Vivian Grey*, which had appeared in 1826–7.) Instead, he continues his journey to the lesser-known Langen-Schwalbach and later Schlangenbad, exploring both spas in detail and using them as a base for a number of outings to other places of interest. The last stage of his journey, when he is already on the way home, is Wiesbaden – again a better-known 'gay watering-place' (Head 1834: 351) with more than 10,000 visitors per year. Apart from describing in some detail the *Kochbrunnen* (a spring reputed to taste like 'very hot chicken broth'; Head 1834: 360), he mentions some staples of spa infrastructure (hotels, tables d'hôte, colonnade, theatre, park with open air concerts, etc.) and ends his account of Wiesbaden with a description of the 'infernal' (Head 1834: 379) gambling chambers in the *Kursaal* – something which was to become a trope in its own right in (not just) British literature about German spas. Feeling no inclination to gamble himself, he can observe the goings on there at his leisure and then leave. Finishing his tour like this, actually – and *ex negativo* – sheds

further positive light on Langen-Schwalbach and Schlangenbad, as they did not risk their visitors' mental and economic health with such institutions.

In all these descriptions, accounts of medical treatments (drinking and bathing) take up relatively little space: they are just one type of activity alongside many others and thus one of a whole palette of experiences and observations that the 'old man' has to offer. And where he does refer to them, he describes the infrastructure of the bathing facilities and his sensual perception of the waters (red and ferrous in Bad Schwalbach, soft and milky in Schlangenbad) more than their medicinal qualities. Having announced in his preface that the journey was designed for the body to be strengthened and 'the mind … to be relaxed' (Head 1834: v), his narrative puts before the reader a variety of choices for an individual travel itinerary, combining health, leisure and culture tourism. The book was an instant success, the first edition sold out immediately, and the book saw two further editions in the same year.

Three years after the *Bubbles* first appeared, the influential British weekly *The Spectator* announced the following:

> Some years since, a facetious 'old man' visited some of the leading Spas of Germany, and blew thence a series of bubbles, of such a light and spirited kind as to attract thither a number of excursionists, many of them being of the scribbling genus … till one would have thought that the subject was pretty well exhausted. Dr. GRANVILLE, however, thinks otherwise; and … he is probably right. (*The Spectator*, 15 July 1837: 16)[9]

Granville, then, was not the only author following in Head's footsteps, but he was seen – and not just by the *Spectator*'s reviewer – as the one who stood out. Having previously been one of the authors whose travel books had been overlooked – in 1828 he had published *St. Petersburgh: A Journal of Travels to and from that Capital*, which included descriptions of several German cities and spa towns – he took great care this time to ensure the success of *The Spas of Germany*. Thus, when sketching out the character of the book in his preface, he used Head's *Bubbles* as a foil and sought to show why his book was even better than its celebrated predecessor. His starting point was indeed the

> hasty and eager manner in which people set off from England for Schlangenbad and Schwalbach (places before unknown to them), the instant they had read the captivating volume, which a man of sense and keen observation, but not a medical or a scientific man, had published on those two German watering-places. (Granville 1837: vol. 1, xxiv–v)

What he was going to lay before the public, then, was (a) written by a doctor of medicine, not a layman, (b) much more comprehensive in that it introduced all the main German speaking spas from first-hand experience and compared their character and use for different ailments and (c) nevertheless aiming to meet the

standards of taste and entertainment set by Head's prose. That he was eager to create a similar effect with his book, he left in no doubt:

> Haste away, and … [d]o not waste your life and your purse in swallowing endless drugs, … pent up in a hot house in London during the summer months; or in being lifted in and out of the carriage, the prey of some chronic and insidious disorder, which baffles your vigilant physician's skill; or in being sent from Brighton to Tunbridge, and from thence to Leamington or Cheltenham, merely to return again to Brighton or London, exactly as you left it; having in the meantime tried as many doctors as places, and as many new places and new remedies as doctors, to no purpose. Fly, I say, from all these evils, proceed to some spring of health, and commit yourself for once to the hands of nature – of medicated nature – assisted by every auxiliary which an excursion to a German spa brings into play. (Granville 1837: vol. 1, xlix–l)

The book is divided into four main parts, representing four geographical groups: (a) 'Baden-Baden and the Wurtemberg Spas', (b) 'Salzburgian Spas', (c) 'Bohemian Spas' and (d) 'Bavarian Spas'; the reader is told that this structure is a compromise Granville has made as a doctor – who would normally classify spas according to water types and treatments – and in response to the demands of the genre. After all, he believed that the form of a travel narrative – as in Head's *Bubbles* – would find infinitely more readers than a 'professional treatise' (Granville 1837: vol. 1, x), and thus serve his purpose better.

What he offers in his chapters, then, tries to combine the pleasurable with the professional: impressionistic descriptions of journeys, landscapes and social life – all laced with intertextual allusions[10] – an assessment of lodgings, food, prices, and so forth, descriptions of the individual wells, underpinned by medical advice and references to exemplary cases of cured ailments and to the noteworthy doctors working in the field (including his, Granville's, acquaintance with them). The cohesion between the four parts is assured by parallel structuring and by the overarching mode of comparison: Baden-Baden is qualified as the 'gayest of the gay watering-places' and the 'queen of the spas of Germany' (Granville 1837: vol. 1, 18, 7), Wildbad is brilliant but so far underrated and thus a hidden gem, Bad Gastein stands out due to its elevated location 'nearly three thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean sea' (Granville 1837: vol. 1, 301) and the Bohemian spa towns are ranked as top of the league in that they seem to combine all the individual benefits of the other places, with the additional advantage that they do not allow gambling on their premises. Carlsbad is repeatedly compared with Baden-Baden, for example, by naming it the 'monarch' (Granville 1837: vol. 1, 7) – as opposed to Baden-Baden, which is the 'queen' – of German spas. When coming to his last geographical group, which includes the spas Sir Francis Head had described in his *Bubbles*, Granville brashly tries to score points off his 'brother tourist's' publication (Granville 1837: vol. 2, 441). Offering not so much supplements, but rather what he claims to be corrections or rectifications of what Head had done wrong, he

seeks to demonstrate the mediocrity, if not inferiority, of the two spas that feature so prominently in the *Bubbles*, and to brand Head's book 'not only as an imperfect, but as an unsafe guide' (Granville 1837: vol. 2, 468).

Granville might not have needed to try quite so hard to disparage Head's *Bubbles*: his *The Spas of Germany* was a success and sold very well, and the public perceived it not as a competition, but more as a companion piece to Head's *Bubbles*. The original publication of *The Spas* comprised two volumes of just over 400 and 500 pages, respectively, whilst the second edition in the following year was – 'in compliance with the desire expressed by many' – condensed into one volume of 500+ pages and thus 'accessible to every person likely to require it' (Granville 1838a: v). (Of course, a guide like Granville's was not meant to be read from cover to cover, but by selecting the spas and areas of interest to the reader. But even these segments were rather extensive and had the potential to be cut into a handier version.) By then, the author was able to call himself 'Knight of the Order of the Crown of Wurtemberg and of the Royal Order of St. Michael of Bavaria'.[11] Some of the book's chapters, applying to specific spa places, such as Baden-Baden and Kissingen, were reprinted in small booklets and offered for sale to the numerous English visitors on site, and Granville kept travelling to Kissingen in order to look after some of the English patients himself. Back home, he was commissioned to write something similar to cover the English spa landscape.

Not only did Head's *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau* and Granville's *The Spas of Germany* – different as they were – share the same level of success, and not only did they echo each other,[12] but together they had a tangible impact on both the practice of spa tourism as shown above and on the discourse surrounding and influencing it.

1.3 Discursive links between non-fiction and fiction

Both books became a frequent point of reference in a wide variety of publications during the ensuing decades. Lady Ann Vavasour, on her *A Visit to the Baths of Wildbad and Rippoldsau* (1842), pretty much uses Granville's book as a bible, basing her trust on the fact that he 'has induced many to come and try' these spas, and that owing to his book, '[the English] seem to be making acquaintance with every bath in every corner of Germany' (Vavasour 1842: 69). Mary Shelley, when describing her spa sojourns as part of her *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (see Chapter 5), explains: 'The Bubbles of the Brunnens brought the baths of Nassau into fashion with us. Doctor Granville's book extended our acquaintance with the spas of Germany; and, in particular, gave reputation to those situated in Bavaria' (Shelley 1844: 184). In a European spa guide published under the title *Pilgrimages to the Spas* in 1841, the London-based physician James Johnson frequently mentions Granville and Head and quotes both of them at length. So do various pocket guides, and Murray's *Handbook for Travellers* even contends itself with adding some small details:

> In order to enter into the spirit of the Brunnen of Nassau, no visitor can dispense with the 'Bubbles'; he must take the book in his hand. Supposing every one to be furnished with it, or at least to have read it, travellers are referred to it for all general descriptions; and the following short account pretends to nothing more than the filling up of one or two points of information upon which the author of the 'Bubbles' has not thought it worth while to dwell. (Murray 1845: 488)

Maria Frances Dickson, in her *Souvenirs from a Summer in Germany in 1836*, makes repeated and extensive reference to Head's *Bubbles*, claiming that '[t]he Herzog ought certainly to confer some distinction, – a title or an estate, upon the author of "the Bubbles", in gratitude for all the good service the latter has done his Kingdom of Nassau' (Dickson 1837: vol. 1, 280). She also observes that,

> If Sir Francis Head were now to visit Schwalbach, he would not have to complain of the paucity of shops, for there is an abundance of them in all directions. There are arcades near the Wein and the Stahl Brunnens, where you can buy things of all sorts and kinds. Shoe-stalls with gay-coloured slippers …. Toy-stalls, in which every article is at six kreuzers à choisir. Book-stalls, covered with, first and most prominent, 'BUBBLES FROM THE BRUNNENS OF NASSAU', – then, Panoramas of the Rhine, and Legends of the Rhine, and Bulwer's Pilgrims, and views of all the 'Bads' from Schwalbach to Baden, besides German dictionaries and grammars, and 'aids', and vocabularies, and travellers' guides, and manuals, and maps, and various and sundry other publications, all savouring more or less of travelling and strangers. Then there are china-stores where you can have cups and saucers and glasses, – pink, blue, red and yellow, for drinking the waters in. Smelling-bottles, with views of the Pauline Brunnen and the Badhaus upon them, &c., &c. (Dickson 1837: vol. 1, 251–2)

It seems that at least indirectly, Head's book had helped shape the place and turn it into a fully fledged tourist destination (with a thriving souvenir market).

Yet, it is not just in guidebooks, travel narratives or memoirs that Granville and Head reverberate; they permeate fictional literature, too. It is no exaggeration to say that there is scarcely a Victorian novel where a character who travels to the continent does *not* pay a visit to a spa town or two. William Makepeace Thackeray, for instance, sends his heroine Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1848) not only to Brighton and Cheltenham, but also to Boulogne-sur-Mer, Ostend and Kissingen. He has his *Kickleburys* (1850) go to 'Noirbourg' and 'Rougeetnoirbourg', and his 'most respectable family', in *The Newcomes* (1855), to Baden-Baden. Wilkie Collins begins his *Armadale* (1866) in Wildbad, and George Eliot sends Daniel Deronda (1876) to 'Leubronn'. But many other Victorian authors, including Mary von Bothmer, Benjamin Disraeli, Catherine Gore, Thomas Hood, Charles Lever, Margaret Oliphant, Anthony Trollope, his mother Frances Trollope, Edward Wilberforce, Edmund Yates, make more or less extensive use of European spa settings for their novels and tales, and they repeatedly do so by referring to Head, Granville & Co.

In Hood's epistolary novel *Up the Rhine* (1840), Granville is cited as a reference for English health tourists (see Hood 1840: 258),[13] and Gore's story 'The Jewess' (1842) starts as follows:

> The vogue recently assigned by literary confederacy to 'The Spas of Germany' and 'Brunnens of Nassau' has been productive of numberless unforeseen results. Tunbridge Wells and Malvern are drooping; and more than one jolly citizen, accustomed aforetime to refresh himself with an autumnal trip to Ramsgate or Hastings, has extended his travels across the main, and died of sauerkraut and the spleen. Fooling it among the rest, I arrived at Emmsbaden last year, the first week in September …. (Gore 1842: 127)

The derogatory tone employed here to taint both the books and the practice inspired by them is not uncommon in these novels. Charles Lever's wandering protagonist *Arthur O'Leary* (1844), for instance, knows that

> [t]o begin – and to understand the matter properly you must begin, by forgetting all you have been so studiously storing up as fact, from the books of Head, Granville, and others, and merely regard them as the pleasant romances of gentlemen who like to indulge their own easy humours in a vein of agreeable gossip, or the more profitable occupation of collecting grand-ducal stars, and snuff-boxes.

And he goes on:

> These delightful pictures of Brunnens, secluded in the recesses of wild mountain districts …; the lovely scenery; the charming intercourse with gifted and cultivated minds; …; the peaceful tranquillity of the spot, an oasis in the great desert of the world's troubles, where the exhausted mind and tired spirit may lie down in peace, and take its rest, lulled by the sound of falling water, or the strains of German song ; – these, I say, … make pretty books, and pleasant to read, but not less dangerous to follow. (Lever 1844: vol. 3, 69–70)

Granted, Granville and Head are not the only butts of master O'Leary's scorn. Elsewhere he exclaims in a series of rhetorical questions:

> And now, in sober seriousness, what literary fame equals John Murray's? What portmanteau, with two shirts and a night-cap, hasn't got one 'Hand-book?' What Englishman issues forth at morn, without one beneath his arm? … Does he look upon a building, a statue, a picture, an old cabinet, or a manuscript, with whose eyes does he see it? With John Murray's to be sure! Let John tell him, this town is famous for its mushrooms, why he'll eat them, till he becomes half a fungus himself. (Lever 1844: vol. 1, 86)

He continues, however, by conceding that 'John Murray is not to blame'; rather, it is the users of these guides and their unreflecting reliance on them: 'I cannot

conceive anything more frightful than the sudden appearance of a work which should contradict everything in the "Hand-book", and convince English people that John Murray was wrong' (Lever 1844: vol. 1, 87). Lever's Kenny Dodd (the father-figure in *The Dodd Family Abroad*, 1854) is less forgiving and calls Murray's handbooks 'the most pernicious reading of the day':

> That fellow – Murray, I mean – has got up a kind of Pictorial Europe of his own, with bits of antiquarianism, history, poetry, and architecture, that serves to convince our vulgar, vagabondising English that they are doing a refined thing in coming abroad. He half persuades them that it is not for cheap champagne and red partridges they're come, but to see the Cathedral of Cologne and the Dome of St. Peter's, till he breeds up a race of conceited, ill-informed, prating coxcombs, that disgrace us abroad and disgust us at home. (Lever 1854: 83)

Tellingly, though, this judgement does not extend to the whole genre. In his very next letter, Dodd appears to put every faith in a comparable publication, rejoicing that: 'I have just discovered in "Cochrane's Guide" – for I have burned my "John Murray" – the very place to suit me' (Lever 1854: 107). Thomas Hood proceeds along similar lines in *Up the Rhine* (1840), in particular with a short tale inserted into the narrative: 'The Flower and the Weed: A Legend of Schwalbach' (Hood 1840: 287–95). In it, an English bachelor in search of a wife goes to the German spa town expecting to be the cock of the roost there and have the pick of the ladies. He does so because he has read Frances Trollope's travel book *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833* and learned from it that all German men smoke, and all German ladies hate smoking. As a professed non-smoker, he would thus be in strong demand and able to take home the lady of his choice. Of course, the mission fails miserably – the lady selected has nothing against smoking men and is happily engaged to one of them – and our hero returns home, 'engage[s] a housekeeper and set[s] in for an Old Bachelor' (Hood 1840: 295).

In a way, such episodes can be understood as continuing what, according to Rebecca Butler, is a tradition in English literature: using guidebooks as 'a source of satire' and thus applying 'an anti-touristic code' (Butler 2018: 151–2). (She cites Byron's poem 'Don Juan' as a prominent example of this tradition.) However, as will also have become apparent from our examples, Head, Granville and the others who feature in these novels are not discussed in their own right (nor in their diversity), but rather serve as a thematic springboard and formal inspiration. Many of the novels in our corpus either have their characters move from one spa town to another or draw comparisons between various spas. Thus, the stories adopt the pattern of the travel narrative, putting their characters on the move in search of the sorts of benefits promised by the guides: health, entertainment, encounters with influential (and/or marriageable) persons.[14] Hood's *Up the Rhine*, for instance, combines the search for health in the main storyline with the search for a wife in the inserted tale (see above); Lever's *Dodd Family* seeks cultural refinement through encounters with a cosmopolitan cultural elite (and is disillusioned); the protagonists in Frances Trollope's *The Robertses on Their Travels*

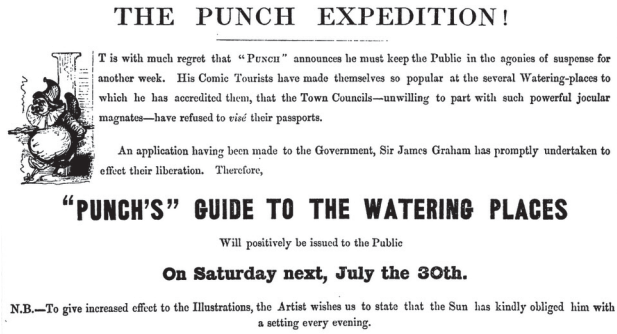
(1846) and Thackeray's *The Newcomes* see the spas as the best possible places to introduce their adult children into the higher echelons of society, and in Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864) spas allow the female characters to reflect on their marriage decisions while incidentally also consolidating their health. And while in almost all of these cases we find criticism if not mockery of our spa and travel guides, they are still being referenced and even copied, and hence enjoy continued publicity. Thus, the novels helped keep the guides – and the places they described – at the forefront of the public consciousness.

1.4 Intercultural relations and politics

As the spa towns travelled to and referenced are all situated outside Britain, these tales also follow their protagonists' attempts at dealing with the foreign environment and use all the tropes common to descriptions of foreign travel: having their characters mock the English of their foreign interlocutors or disparage the infrastructure of life abroad (accommodation, food, transport, mail, etc.). Added to this are some more spa-specific elements such as the character of the (mostly foreign) impostor, the theme of (time-limited) adultery and the setting of the casino. The figure of the impostor is made possible by – and thus symptomatic of – the protagonists' inability to properly read the national and cultural heterogeneity of spa society and to identify correctly everyone's social standing. In this context, adultery (or worse, impromptu marriage) is apt to exacerbate the fear of social instability. And the casino is worst of all because it entails the danger of losing oneself completely. It is telling then that the number of Victorian novels with continental spa settings that do *not* feature any gambling can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the novels studied for this chapter are characterized by a strikingly ambivalent presentation of the resorts in question. Hence, Benjamin Morgan calls the continental spa in these tales 'a deeply ambivalent locus of encounter – a venue that both tickles and deflates cosmopolitan dreams' (Morgan 2014: 18).

Another medium actively engaging in this discourse was of course the press. As early as 1806, we read in *The Lady's Monthly Museum* that 'Watering-places [have] now grown into so much importance, that dispatches appear in the public journals from these seats of pleasure, with far more regularity, than from the seat of war; and, doubtless, excite a much greater interest' (Henricus 1806: 6) – and this held true for decades. The *Spectator*, for instance, published reviews of some of the novels and all the spa guides mentioned in this chapter, and reprinted lengthy passages from some of them.[15] It also offered first-hand reports about life in foreign spa places, including all the large German ones, complete with detailed descriptions and the well-known tropes of bad food and lovely landscapes.

The satirical journal *Punch* was unsurprisingly less concerned than *The Spectator* with the respectability or accuracy of its announcements. In July 1842 it proclaimed its intention of 'enriching the Literature of Europe' with a new issue



THE PUNCH EXPEDITION!

IT is with much regret that "PUNCH" announces he must keep the Public in the agonies of suspense for another week. His Comic Tourists have made themselves so popular at the several Watering-places to which he has accredited them, that the Town Councils—unwilling to part with such powerful jocular magnates—have refused to *viaé* their passports.

An application having been made to the Government, Sir James Graham has promptly undertaken to effect their liberation. Therefore,

"PUNCH'S" GUIDE TO THE WATERING PLACES

Will positively be issued to the Public

On Saturday next, July the 30th.

N.B.—To give increased effect to the Illustrations, the Artist wishes us to state that the Sun has kindly obliged him with a setting every evening.

Figure 1.2 *Punch*, 1842: 40.

'unequalled even by his own previous matchless performances': a 'Guide to all the Fashionable Watering Places' (*Punch* 1842: 30).

But while the original announcement promised a European dimension, the only non-English place listed when it eventually appeared was Boulogne-sur-Mer. This was followed by a long list of places in England, made up of several seaside resorts such as Margate and Brighton and at least as many London locations such as Knightsbridge or Vauxhall – destinations not usually associated with health, but exclusively with pleasure (see *Punch* 1842: 41–56).

Most prominently, *Punch* and other journals pick up on and emphasize the casino trope we found in the novels cited above. In the season of 1849, for instance, it claimed to have received an advertisement from Bad Homburg, addressing its 'numerous friends in England and elsewhere' and announcing improved casino facilities. *Punch* comments:

> We are afraid that the Baths of Homburg near Frankfort-on-the-Maine, savour too much of the Maine and the Deep. We have no objection to aquatic exercise in safe water, but had rather not indulge in rolling a *roulette* and sportively gambolling at *trente-et-quarante*, exposed to the peril of sharks. Assuredly the Humane Society would designate the Waters of Homburg as 'Dangerous'. Give us, in preference, the straightforward bathing of the Serpentine. We suspect that people resort to Homburg, not to improve health, but to stand the hazard of the dice. It is to be wished that the advertisers would call the Baths by their real name, or at least be correct in its orthography, and when next they put their puff in the papers, change *o* into *u* in 'Homburg', and strike out the *r*. (*Punch* 1849: 89)

According to Morgan, 'the tropes and images associated with high stakes gaming begin around mid-century to significantly overshadow, from a representational point of view, resort culture's other salient parts' (Morgan 2014: 116). And he goes on to explain that 'as the prominence of the casino in descriptions of spa culture

increased from the 1840s to the 1860s, so did the tendency of writers to reach for hellfire in representing it' (Morgan 2014: 119).

An interesting case in point in this regard is Charles Dickens's story 'The Modern Robbers of the Rhine', which appeared on 19 October 1850 in his *Household Words*, a weekly paper of considerable reach among British readers. The express intention is to show the ways in which foreign (among them English) tourists are being fleeced on their ever-popular Rhine journeys. And while there are some scams to beware of whilst travelling, the most effective institution of robbery awaits them in the spa towns, and in the form of their casinos: 'housed in fine buildings raised near mineral springs, surrounded by beautiful gardens, enlivened by music and sanctioned by the open patronage of petty German princes', these are the most dangerous places 'in the valley watered by the Rhine' (Dickens [1850] 1851: 92). The hotspots are Wiesbaden, Bad Homburg and Baden-Baden, which are accordingly called 'gambling towns':

> Go into one of the rooms in any of these places, and whom do you see? The off-scourings of European cities – professional gamblers, ex-officers of all sorts of armies; portionless younger brothers; … a multitude of silly gulls, attracted by the waters, or the music, or the fascination of play; and a sprinkling of passing tourists, who come – 'just to look in on their way', generally to be disappointed – often to be fleeced. (Dickens [1850] 1851: 93)

Thus, concludes Dickens, the 'veritable grand modern robbers of the Rhine' are not the small crooks you might encounter on the way there, but 'the reigning Dukes of Nassau, Homburg, and Baden' who own the casinos (Dickens [1850] 1851: 93). In Lever's *O'Leary* novel a similar warning is issued in a more sardonic way. There, O'Leary attributes the whole existence of such places not to the presence of the healing waters and the search for health, but to said dukes' thirst for money. Arthur O'Leary exemplifies his charge with the 'little realm of Hesse Humbug' (Lever 1844: vol. 3, 74), a fictitious spa town which plays the same name game with Bad Homburg as we have seen in *Punch*.

A narrative element almost never missing in these stories is the actual description of the casino scene, the gathering of the gamblers around the roulette, or *trente-et-quarante*, or *rouge-et-noir*, or whatever, table. In Dickens's 'The Modern Robbers of the Rhine', we read:

> [R]ound the table, we find ill-dressed and well-dressed Germans, French, Russian, English, Yankees, Irish, mixed up together in one eager crowd; thirsting to gain gold without giving value in return; risking what they have in an insane contest which they know has destroyed thousands before them; losing their money, and winning disgust, despondency, and often despair and premature death. (Dickens [1850] 1851: 93)

Here as elsewhere, we find the claim confirmed that, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, the storylines for describing continental spa life,

tend to 'link the charge of deceit to the cosmopolitanism, transient sociability and demographic variety they associate with resort culture' (Morgan 2014: 85–6).

1.5 The power of discourse

Alternating between seemingly faithful description, playfulness and complete mockery, these texts, however, did by no means discourage spa tourism: for even in their most caustic outpourings, they kept the likes of Wiesbaden, Homburg and Baden-Baden in their readers' minds. Besides, the 'metanarrative of spa duality' (Morgan 2014: 81) – *harbours of health* versus *dens of vice* – was well suited to retain the lure of said spa towns for the British visitor. Willingly or unwillingly then, the printing press, too, was part of an exponential spiral, feeding from, and in turn promoting, British spa tourism on the continent.

According to Anne Digby,

> only one in a thousand patients at British spas was a European compared to one in every thirty at European watering places who was British. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most fashionable continental resorts (Wiesbaden or Baden-Baden) attracted from four to six times as many visitors as the then most popular English resort – Harrogate. (Digby 1994: 222)[16]

As shown above, the strongest impetus for the discourse *and* the practice of patronizing those continental resorts came from one specific travel narrative (Head's *Bubbles from the Brunnens*) and one specific spa guide (Granville's *The Spas of Germany*), but we can also see that a whole range of guides, travelogues and prose fiction closely intertwined with them, and with each other. Not only did they reference and quote from each other, and not only did the magazines publish novels in instalments, but we also find the generic lines between them blurred: novels often used the narrative pattern of the travelogue, travelogues told tales and included poems and songs, journals comprised the full mix of fictional and non-fictional prose.

While the choice of material presented here may make this seem like an exclusively Anglo-German affair, the intricate interconnection between spa life and spa literature was in fact a European, if not an international phenomenon, as we noted at the start of this chapter. Equally European, of course, is the slight note of chauvinism, or even jingoism, in the ostensibly moral disparagement of 'foreign' places and people.[17] Moreover, given that we are talking about a time in which spa culture became a mass phenomenon, it makes no sense to consult only canonical works of high literature in regard to it. To take an example in which the ambivalence noted by Morgan is particularly clear, it is no accident that the spa casinos should feature not only in Head's *Bubbles*, but also, following that, in a British weekly magazine, Dickens's *Household Words*; in a celebrated canonical novel in Russian, Dostoevsky's *Gambler*; a widely popular novel in French, Edmond About's *Trente et quarante* (1858) and a pair of autobiographical novels

by the Austrian peace activist Bertha von Suttner, *An der Riviera* (1892) and (the similarlity in title to About's is itself significant) *Trente-et-quarante* (1893).[18] As Morgan puts it: 'In any event, two allied conceptions – that gambling was a morally invidious practice, and that going to the baths meant gambling – significantly informed how the continental spa was written about in New York, St. Petersburg and points in between' (Morgan 2014: 119).[19]

Moreover, by creating, varying, imitating the literary pattern of the continental spa, these texts 'played a major part in producing the modern water resort as a cultural and spatial form' (Morgan 2014: 30–1). Thus, they were instrumental not just in enticing increasing numbers of visitors from across Europe (and America) to the German and other continental spa towns, but in influencing the very fabric of these resorts and in developing them from traditional places of health (and pleasure) into modern tourist destinations.

Notes

1 See also De Amicis (1906).
2 For Ruffini's life and work, and an aesthetic appreciation of the novel, see Pagano (2013).
3 The original quotation reads: 'Seine begeisterte Leserschaft … sah in diesem Buch kein Kunstwerk, sondern einen Reiseführer ins Paradies' (Düffel 2006: 100).
4 Mackaman cites the following novels: Hyacinthe Audiffred: *Quinze jours au Mont-Dore* (1850), Pierre de Mirlori (Louis Berthet): *Le solitaire d'Aix-les-Bains* (1861), Louis Laussedat: *Une cure au Mont-Dore, la Bourboule, Saint-Nectaire et Royat* (1868) and Ernest Ferras: *Jean Bonnet à Luchon* (1890), indicating for each the type of co-operation between author and doctor or the latter's use of a pseudonym.
5 This is in fact still the case today, for example, in the way the 'Russian heritage' is used for advertising purposes in 'tourist brochures and promotional websites, proudly listing Dostoevsky among Wiesbaden's and Bad Homburg's celebrity visitors' (Soroka 2019: 426).
6 Canto II, which is of relevance here, came out in 1816.
7 Among the better-known ones are the *Black Guides*, *Baddeley Thorough Guides*, *Fodor's Travel Guides*, *Coghlan's Guides*, *Griebens Reisebibliothek*, *Meyers Reiseführer* and *Hartlebens Illustrierte Führer*. (See e.g. Müller 2012: 41–4.)
8 Head's narrative gives examples of this (see e.g. Head 1834: 12–13, 16). These observations almost form their own trope in English travel writing, with the most impressive descriptions of such behaviour perhaps to be found in Anna Jameson's *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* (1834) where she, too, has a 'Scene in a Steam Boat' on the Rhine.
9 The two other books mentioned are Trollope (1834) and Boddington (1834), though both were at least conceived without the knowledge of Head's book.
10 Frequently to Head's *Bubbles*, but also to Byron's *Childe Harold*, to Lee's book on continental spas, to Hufelands writings, to folksong, to Goethe, to Maria Frances Dickson.
11 The German title is 'Königlich Bayerischer Verdienstorden vom Heiligen Michael' (Granville 1838a: cover page). Mary Shelley comments: 'The King [of Bavaria] has

perceived the flow of money brought into other States by the resort of strangers to the baths, and is very anxious that this should be celebrated. For this reason, he decorated Dr. Granville's button-hole with a bit of ribbon, much to the disgust of the native physicians' (Shelley 1844: 192).

12 Head referenced Granville's previous publication *St. Petersburgh*, and the latter was, as we have seen, working around the *Bubbles* all the way through his book.

13 The narrator declares a mud-bath to be 'a boggy remedy, of which you may read in Granville's account of the German spas'.

14 Whilst the big cities would offer an equally wide variety of characters, facilitating the encounters between people from very different walks of life would be – narratively speaking – much more complicated.

15 Among the texts reprinted are passages from Granville's *The Spas of Germany* on 15 July 1837, 16–17, and from Johnson's *Pilgrimages to the Spas* on 10 April 1841, 18–19.

16 Elsewhere, she gives the number of visitors to Harrogate in 1850 as 'some 12,000' (Digby 1994: 210).

17 The history of the nineteenth century in Europe, of course, is a history of competing nationalisms.

18 The novel was translated into German in the same year (*Die Spielhölle in Baden-Baden*) and into English in 1873 (*Rouge et Noir: A Tale of Baden-Baden*).

19 It is also noteworthy that spas that did not have a casino – such as the famous Carlsbad – hardly ever featured in these publications.

2

Modern founding myths: The creation of health resorts in literature

There will soon be more springs than invalids.[1]
Guy de Maupassant

Hiding behind a pseudonym, Heinrich Hoffmann, the author of the famous German children's book *Struwwelpeter*, published in 1860 a parody entitled *Der Badeort Salzloch, seine Jod-, Brom-, Eisen- und salzhaltigen Schwefelquellen und die tanninsauren animalischen Luftbäder nebst einer Apologie des Hasardspiels. Dargestellt von Dr. Polykarpus Gastfenger* [The Spa Resort Salt-Hole, Its Sulphur Springs Rich in Iodine, Bromine Iron and Salt, and Its Animalistic Air Baths Redolent of Tannic Acid, Together with a Defence of Games of Chance. Presented by Dr. Polycarpus Guest-Catcher]. In it, he plays with, and heavily mocks, the tone and language used in the spa guides of the time and describes his fictitious resort which is, naturally, 'of European, indeed of tellurian, significance' (Hoffmann 1860: 7) in the most absurd terms possible. He does so by following in detail the well-established pattern of the spa guide, starting with Salzloch's history (Roman beginnings, medieval period, re-discovery in modern times), moving on to climate and geographical situation (lovely valley, etc.), followed by descriptions of spa infrastructure, life and society, and culminating in lengthy accounts of the characteristics, use and effects of the relevant waters, with tables of analysis and some patient histories for illustration. Indeed, he claims quite rightly that what he – posing as Salzloch's spa doctor – has put before us is a model guide, a *Musterbadeschrift* (see Hoffmann 1860: 4), which can be used by colleagues to produce the equivalent publication for their respective spas. The parody works by mimicking, exaggerating and bastardizing the health credentials of any given mineral spa, thus exposing the spa guides' abuse of these credentials as mere marketing tools. What else would you expect from an author whose supposed surname translates as guest-catcher?

The publication of this book fell in the period in which tourism was developing rapidly and widely among Europe's middle classes, when new resorts were emerging, and traditional mineral spas were undergoing drastic developments

in order to secure their place in this new and evolving market. Not surprisingly, these developments triggered discussions about what a spa really was, and which establishments should (still) be allowed to use that designation[2] – though the answer to this question largely depended on the perspective of the respondent. Hoffmann, in a way, engaged in this discussion in his double capacity as a medical man and as a creative writer. As a doctor – though categorically *not* a spa doctor – he was worried by the perceived growth of charlatanism and the resultant damage done to his profession; yet, as a writer, he clearly enjoyed the literary potential entailed in this development and considered the rise of newly invented watering places ('das Emporkommen neu erfundener Badeorte', Hoffmann 1860: 27) an interesting subject. And he was not the only one.

In Charles Lever's 1844 novel *Arthur O'Leary: His Wanderings and Ponderings in Many Lands*, the eponymous protagonist has seen a number of spas and formed a pretty cynical opinion of them as simply money-making institutions (see also Chapter 1). And since this was so, and if any sovereign, say the duke of (the fictitious) 'Hesse Humbug' needed a new source of income, why not found a spa?

> Of course, a Spa! Something very nauseous and very foul smelling – as nearly as possible like a warm infusion of rotten eggs …. Germany happily abounds in these … and you have only to dig two feet in any limestone district to meet with the most sovereign thing on earth for stomachic derangements. The Spa discovered, a doctor was found to analyze it, and another to write a book upon it. Nothing more were necessary. The work, translated into three or four languages, set forth all the congenial advantages of pumps and promenades, sub-carbonates, table d'hôtes, waltzing, and mineral waters. The pursuit of health no longer presented a grim goddess masquerading in rusty black and a bald forehead, but a lovely nymph, in a Parisian toilette, conversing like a French woman, and dancing like an Austrian. (Lever 1844: vol. 3, 79–80)

What is encapsulated here in just one lengthy passage, elsewhere gave rise to entire tales and books. In early 1817, Jane Austen worked on a new novel, set in *Sanditon*, a fictitious English seaside resort in the process of being developed. In 1887, Guy de Maupassant published *Mont Oriol*, a novel describing the creation of a new thermal spa in the Auvergne region of France. And in 1915, with the First World War already in motion, and at the time of the evolving life reform movement (*Lebensreform*), the German author Paul Keller published his novel *Ferien vom Ich* (Vacationing from Oneself), describing the creation of a sanatorium complex for worn-out city-dwellers to re-connect with nature and themselves (see also Chapter 3). Each of these books was thus conceived at a time when the institutions concerned – seaside resort, thermal spa, sanatorium – were in the process of conquering the health tourism market. From a close reading of these texts, we can learn a great deal not only about the founding processes and discourses, but also about the resorts themselves and their history.

2.1 The seaside resort: Sanditon *(1817)*

> Wherever one of the queen-bees of fashion alights,
> a whole swarm follows her.
> Southey (1807: vol. 2, 41)

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of seaside resorts were developed in Britain and became so fashionable that visiting the country's mineral spas like Buxton or Cheltenham took second place to sea-bathing. Moreover, the number of sea-bathers went on increasing well into the late nineteenth century (see Walton 1983: 45–73; Hembry 1990: 305–12). Jane Austen's *Sanditon* would thus not have been the first development to turn a remote coastal village into a fashionable urban resort: places like Bournemouth or Brighton had undergone this very process just over a decade before she started writing her novel. Austen located her fictitious setting on 'that part of the Sussex Coast which lies between Hastings & E. Bourne' (Austen [1817] 1925: 1), thus referencing two seaside resorts that were just becoming fashionable at the time. The novel remained unfinished, and was published posthumously, as a fragment. Known to Austen's sister Cassandra under the title 'The Brothers' (see Shaw 2004: 243), it bears all the hallmarks of the Austen romance with its witty and insightful descriptions of life in Regency England's lower gentry and upper bourgeoisie, and a plot illuminating the difficult correlation between love, money – or absence thereof – and the necessity of marrying. Yet, this time, the story was to unfold not in and between old family estates in the country, or London, or good old Bath, but in a place caught up in the process of transforming itself from a village to a seaside resort, which, when spoken aloud, sounds much like *sandy town*.

The reader first encounters its principal developer, Mr Tom Parker, through an accident: on his way home to Sanditon from business in London, he takes a detour in the hope of persuading a doctor to set up residence and practice in the newly developed resort. Far from being successful in his pursuit, he loses his way, damages his coach and sprains his ankle. Having been put up and looked after by the family living closest to the spot of the accident, he uses them as an audience to advertise his development, as he might have done a dozen times before:

> Such a place as Sanditon Sir, I may say was wanted, was called for. – Nature had marked it out …. The finest, purest Sea Breeze on the Coast – acknowledged to be so – Excellent Bathing – fine hard sand – Deep Water 10 yards from the Shore – no Mud – no Weeds – no shiney rocks – Never was there a place more palpably designed by Nature for the resort of the Invalid – the very Spot which Thousands seemed in need of. (Austen [1817] 1925: 14–15)

Roger Sales quite rightly states that Tom Parker's 'hurried speeches are stuffed with the promotional slogans of the guide book' (Sales 1996: 202), and Peter Shaw

goes so far as to declare him 'a prototype of PR in days when the commodity culture and service industry still had a long way to run' (Shaw 2004: 245). The intervention of Parker's host, Mr Heywood, that too many such resorts have recently sprung up, and that they are 'Bad things for a Country' (Austen [1817] 1925: 13) as they upset social stability, is readily dismissed:

> A common idea, but a mistaken one. It may apply to your large, overgrown Places, like Brighton, or Worthing, or East Bourne – but *not* to a small village like Sanditon, precluded by its size from experiencing any of the evils of Civilization, while the growth of the place, the Buildings, the Nursery Grounds, the demand for every thing, & the sure resort of the very best company … excite the industry of the Poor and diffuse comfort & improvement among them of every sort. (Austen [1817] 1925: 13)

However, things are not as rosy in Sanditon as he hopes. Building on sand is a proverbially tricky business, and the name Austen gave her setting is programmatic. The resort development, financed mainly by Tom Parker and Lady Denham, the 'great Lady of Sanditon' (Austen [1817] 1925: 31), turns out not to follow demand as Parker had claimed, but to be a huge speculation. And much of the rudimentary plot in this fragment of a novel revolves around his attempts to attract more visitors and thus fill the newly built houses. Once his leg and coach are repaired, Tom Parker and his wife invite their hosts to Sanditon – no doubt to return the kindness bestowed on them, but also to spread the word about the place. The couple decline but send their eldest daughter Charlotte with the Parkers. With the arrival of the coach, the reader is introduced to the topography and social composition of Sanditon. Apart from the stately 'Sanditon House' – slightly outside and inhabited by Lady Denham – Sanditon consists of an old village, some houses and a church, built on sheltered land behind the cliffs – and the new resort, built along the beach and the cliffs. Tom Parker grew up in a 'very snug-looking Place' (Austen [1817] 1925: 43) in the old village and had recently moved into the newly-built 'Trafalgar House'.

> Trafalgar House, on the most elevated spot on the Down was a light elegant Building, standing in a small Lawn with a very young plantation round it … and the nearest to [the cliff] … excepting one short row of smart looking Houses, called the Terrace, with a broad walk in front, aspiring to be the Mall of the Place. In this row were the best Milliner's shop & the Library – a little detached from it, the Hotel & Billiard Room – here began the Descent to the Beach, & to the Bathing Machines – & this was therefore the favourite spot for Beauty & Fashion. (Austen [1817] 1925: 55)

When passing all this, Tom Parker, a man 'with more Imagination than Judgement' (Austen [1817] 1925: 23) envisions buzzing resort life, but when checking the best indication of such life, namely the library's list of subscribers, he must accept that it 'was not only without Distinction, but less numerous than he had hoped'

(Austen [1817] 1925: 71). The library is more than the name suggests: apart from lending books, it sells 'all the useless things in the World that could not be done without' (Austen [1817] 1925: 72), acts as a rental agent and as a meeting place: its not being busy is indeed a bad sign.[3] This is why Tom eagerly awaits his brother Sidney Parker whom he expects to turn the tide for Sanditon: 'Such a young Man as Sidney, with his neat equipage & fashionable air, – You and I Mary, know what effect it might have: Many a respectable Family, many a careful Mother, many a pretty Daughter, might it secure us, to the prejudice of E. Bourne & Hastings' (Austen [1817] 1925: 50–1).

The various descriptions of Sidney Parker in the text are reminiscent of George Bryan (Beau) Brummell (1778–1840), the inventor of dandyism and leader of male fashion in Regency England, who was known to bring in his tow many members of London's fashionable society to Bath every year. Meanwhile, Tom's and Sidney's sister Diana – a hypochondriac character sketched out with wonderful wit – is busy trying to persuade other valetudinarians among her friends to take the cure in Sanditon. But as Susan Ford notes, such 'often frenetic activity' is little more than 'busy-ness', rather than successful commercial activity (Ford 1997: 180). It is a fine irony that, with all the four siblings gradually arriving in Sanditon to support Tom's enterprise, '[t]he Parkers outnumber the visitors' (Sales 1996: 212).

Roger Sales's claim that '[e]conomically, Sanditon is already sliding down the cliff' (Sales 1996: 207) is thus understandable; yet, there are some indications to the contrary. To start with, Sanditon is presented as a 'scene of constant social flux' (Waldron 1999: 159). On a symbolic level, this changeability is conveyed by the 'Sanditon Breeze': 'A score of references to different kinds of breeze keeps the air in perpetual motion around Sanditon, and contributes to a pervasive sense of airiness and brightness' (Shaw 2004: 250). In light of this, the conclusion of the story looks more open than Sales suggests. Scholarship seems to agree that it was this openness that caused many Austen imitators and 'completers' of her unfinished works to shy away from this one. Those who did finish the story, tended to concentrate more on the potential elopement and marriage plots rather than the fate of the seaside resort (see Marshall 2017). If we try to find more hints by the author herself, hidden in the twelve short chapters she has written, we might also want to take a look at a conversation about novels. Asked about the sort of novels he likes, Lady Denham's (admittedly supercilious) nephew replies:

> The Novels which I approve are such as display Human Nature with Grandeur … such as exhibit the progress of strong Passion from the first Germ of incipient Susceptibility to the utmost Energies of Reason half-dethroned …. They hold forth the most splendid Portraitures of high Conceptions, Unbounded Views, illimitable Ardour, indomptible Decision – and even when the Event is mainly anti-prosperous to the high-toned Machinations of the prime Character …, it leaves us full of Generous Emotions for him. (Austen [1817] 1925: 106–7)

If we are to equate the 'prime Character' of this account with Tom Parker, the use of 'when' instead of 'if' here ('even *when* the Event is anti-prosperous') might tip

the balance slightly towards failure rather than success. Yet, if we also take into account the narrator's comment on the 'perversity of Judgement' (Austen [1817] 1925: 109) that tends to guide Sir Edward's readings, we are back to square one: the ending is undecided.

2.2 The thermal spa: Mont Oriol *(1886/7)*

> It is necessary to … understand everything, to foresee everything, to combine everything. Maupassant (1903: 53)[4]

There is no doubt that from a sober, entrepreneurial point of view, Jane Austen's Tom Parker had made a lot of mistakes in his enterprise. Not only did he imagine the need for the resort more than he had proof of it, and not only did he go it alone for too long (always hoping that Lady Denham would not withdraw her money), but he also had too limited a view of what a successful resort must entail. The thermal spa invented by Guy de Maupassant some seventy years after *Sanditon*, clearly had more circumspect developers.

Mont Oriol is said to have been inspired by Maupassant's stays in the thermal station of Châtel-Guyon in Auvergne in 1883, 1885 and 1886 (see, for instance, Lerner 1975; Ball 1988). It is the story of the creation of a health resort as a fully fledged capitalist enterprise, the success of which is based on an intimate knowledge of the ways in which spas and spa societies work, and on taking care of every material and cultural detail in that regard. This narrative is paired with the story of an unhappily married woman embarking on an extramarital affair and being crushed by the consequences, as seen in a number of European realist novels of the time.[5] In this instance, however, the affair does not come to light – the cuckolded husband simply does not notice – and Christiane remains Andermatt's wife, with the child regarded by (almost) everyone as the legitimate product of their marriage. Whilst there is broad consensus that both plots are skilfully integrated and mirror each other (see Ball 1988; Harris 1990), scholarship tends to concentrate on the love story, contrasting and comparing it, its protagonists and underlying discourses with those of other works by Maupassant. Our main focus will instead be on the spa plot.

Both plots in fact start in a place and a situation rather reminiscent of Austen's Sanditon: Enval-les-Bains, a place close to the Puy-de-Dôme mountains in the Auvergne. Enval spa has been in business for six years, experiencing consistently meagre visitor numbers and not developing in any way (see Maupassant [1887] 2002: 36). Its founder, Dr Bonnefille, had published the usual pamphlet on the local spring, that is a standard spa guide as outlined earlier in this chapter, which had been accompanied by the creation of three hotels and one spa building, comprising treatment facilities on the ground floor and entertainment services (café, billiard, casino) on the first. Adjacent to this, a smallish park and some walkways had been created (see Maupassant [1887] 2002: 35–6). Add to these descriptions those of the spa doctor and his bath attendants, the proprietor and the employees of the

casino, the small spa orchestra and the picture of the '*ennui* of the thermal station' (Maupassant 1903: 15; 'l'ennui des stations thermales', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 49) is complete.

It is to this establishment that Monsieur Andermatt and his wife Christiane, as well as his father-in-law, the Marquis de Ravenel, come from Paris in the hope of curing Christiane's apparent infertility. They are joined by Christiane's brother Gontran and his friend Paul Brétigny, who has come to recover from a failed love-relationship (see Maupassant [1887] 2002: 49) and soon starts a new one with Christiane. Very early on in their stay, a minor miracle occurs nearby: Père Oriol, the richest farmer in the area and the owner of most of the surrounding land, undertakes to blow up a large rock in one of his fields which has been bothering him for a long time. Following the explosion, a stream of water gushes out of the earth beneath and turns out to be a new, medically valid thermal spring. Andermatt quickly realizes that there is a fortune to be made out of this ('Il y aurait une fortune à faire ici', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 77).

William Andermatt is introduced to the reader as a Jewish banker who has effectively bought himself into gentility by persuading the de Ravenels, father and son, that his marrying their daughter/sister would be to their advantage. (Indeed, he keeps the son afloat.) Christiane de Ravenel did not marry him for love but was put under tacit pressure and eventually consented to the marriage for the comfortable life it would offer her. And although she finds Andermatt nice enough as a husband, she takes pleasure in making fun of him together with her brother. Trevor Harris notes that 'Andermatt is offered to the reader as a disturbing outsider figure, an insidious *foreign* influence' (Harris 1990: 587, emphasis added). Harris concurs with Michael Lerner and others in pointing out that in many respects Andermatt resembles the character of Walter in *Bel-Ami* (see Lerner 1975: 222) and sees the otherness of both figures as being inscribed in their names: Walter containing the Latin *alter*, and Andermatt the German *ander* (see Harris 1990: 587–8). There is no doubt about the anti-Semitic tone underlying many descriptions of Andermatt in the novel, and Harris rightly points to the ongoing discussion regarding Maupassant's anti-Semitism. Whilst agreeing that Maupassant was 'part of and party to an evolving [anti-Semitic] set of opinions', he also notes his 'fascination with Andermatt's great success in Mont Oriol' (Harris 1990: 588). And indeed, Andermatt is by far the most competent and circumspect among the developers of Mont Oriol, and it is not just his money, but its combination with his cleverness, thoughtfulness and experience that ensures the success of the enterprise as a whole and large profits for everyone involved. Moreover, his genteel brother-in-law Gontran mirrors, and even exceeds Andermatt's utilitarianism by marrying the elder daughter of Père Oriol solely in order to prop up his finances and secure the land she inherits for the spa project.

Returning to our comparison with *Sanditon*, we can see that Andermatt, too, thinks big and sees before him the process of turning an insignificant village into a significant spa town, which offers comfort and beauty for the rich and work opportunities for the poor. However, unlike Tom Parker, he does not have any emotional attachment to the place, nor does he entertain any non-commercial

thoughts on the project. While for Parker, Sanditon 'was his Mine, his Lottery, his Speculation & his Hobby Horse; his Occupation his Hope and his Futurity' (Austen [1817] 1925: 24), for Monsieur Andermatt there are other sources of income, too. And although his businesses all have an element of gambling, he conducts them with a cool head.[6] With the decision to 'start a spa' taken, he does indeed instigate all the necessary steps in the detached and rational manner of a 'great general': first secure the legal and the technical sides, then attract enough financial investment, then interest from intended customers and the approval of the locals. One of his most frequent sentence-openers is henceforth: 'it is necessary to …' ('il faut …'). Likewise, he makes sure that the burden of responsibility – financial and otherwise – does not lie on his shoulders alone but is shared by a group of stakeholders. He thus takes all the legal steps to create the 'Company of the Thermal Establishment of Mont Oriol at Enval', which from then on is a collective and powerful force under Andermatt's control.

When it comes to designing the new place, its individual buildings and overall infrastructure, the descriptions of the old Enval spa as previously quoted serve as a negative foil. Mont Oriol must take care to avoid anything that smacks of dullness or boredom: visitors must be entertained and delighted to such a degree that they would like to extend their stay. The buildings and the paths leading to the spa facilities must thus be marked by beauty and ease of access, and also offer the guests some light entertainment on the way, and the whole area must be turned into a pleasure ground in the fullest sense of the phrase. Moreover, the medical offerings selected are to carefully combine old and new therapeutic techniques: the drinking fountain and the thermal baths in the main part of the treatment building are nicely complemented by a number of new hydrotherapeutic techniques such as douche, gastric irrigation and water gymnastics, housed in its left wing. And the casino just happens to be located on the route between the Grand Hotel and the medical building.

Yet, even before the work on all this has started, Andermatt & Co. know (and they are more resolute in pursuing this than Tom Parker was), that the influx of patients to a resort depends to a large extent on the encouragement by doctors. They thus ensure the patronage of three influential members of the medical profession ('trois grands médecins, trois célébrités', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 200) at the new spa, by offering them attractive new villas to live in. And their presence does indeed attract large numbers of patients and visitors. Similarly, the company takes great care to launch the right advertisements through the right channels, realizing that 'advertising … is the god of contemporary commerce and industry' ('La réclame … est le dieu du commerce et de l'industrie contemporains', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 188),[7] and even go so far as to think of manipulating the meteorological bulletins in the big Parisian newspapers, which regularly give information on the temperatures in places like Vichy, Mont Dore or Châtel-Guyon.

Crucial importance is also assigned to the naming both of the new place as a whole and of its wells (two more are discovered in the course of the building work). The place name Mont Oriol serves, as it were, to catch two birds with one stone: it helps disperse the original landowner's last doubts, but also has the

reaction of a national and international clientele in mind: 'People will talk of "the Mont Oriol" as they talk of "the Mont Dore". It fixes itself on the eye and in the ear; we can see it well; we can hear it well; it abides in us – Mont Oriol! – Mont Oriol! – The baths of Mont Oriol!' (Maupassant 1903: 159–60; 'On dira 'le Mont-Oriol', comme on dit 'le Mont-Dore'. Il reste dans l'œil et dans l'oreille, on le voit bien, on l'entend bien, il demeure en nous: Mont-Oriol! – Mont-Oriol! – Les bains du Mont-Oriol', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 185). An even more delicate question of diplomacy arises with the naming of the wells. Andermatt refutes the proposal that these should be named after the three celebrity doctors as this would make the enterprise too dependent on them and prevent those who might become important doctors in the future from joining the place. His counterproposal is sufficiently uncontroversial and based on numerous precedents: give each well a female name. In this case, the names suggested are those of Andermatt's wife and of Oriol's two daughters, resulting in the Christiane Spring, the Louise Spring and the Charlotte Spring ('les sources Christiane, Louise et Charlotte', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 203).

As repeatedly hinted at, the combination of the modern and the traditional is an important principle of the whole enterprise. It is precisely because the spa project does not leave a stone untouched in the vicinity, that it needs to establish a public image which shows its deep rootedness in, and belonging to, the place: novelty dressing up as antiquity (see Hobsbawm 1983: 5). In the course of creating the spa, the company therefore instigates a series of public events and festivities, which are intended to win over the local population and designed to 'use history as a legitimator' of their actions (Hobsbawm 1983: 12). Using large social events (balls) and fireworks for the purpose affiliates Mont Oriol to a traditional spa culture of long standing, as practised for instance in nearby Vichy (see Blackbourn 2001: 441). But it all starts with a charity fête including a tombola, organized in conjunction with, and for the benefit of, the local parish church. With the support of the church thus secured, the festivities for the grand opening of the resort commence with the Abbé's blessing of the three springs, performed as a public procession with all ecclesiastical insignia. This performance as well as the following ball and fireworks attract bathers, local people and people living a little further away at the same time, thus in a way completing the insertion of the new into the old social order.

Perhaps even more ingenious is the work done to create a founding myth of the kind that is attached to many old spas: a miracle cure. The connection between spring water and miracles is of course a long one. In pre-modern times, it was legends of royal or religious healings that first made springs and then the spas based on them popular. In the founding myth for Carlsbad, for instance, King Charles IV (1316–78) is said to have suffered an injury to his leg while hunting in the Bohemian woods. His soldiers swarmed out for help and found a hot spring in which the monarch then bathed. His pain easing rapidly, he attributed this healing to the spring and decided to found a town there: Karlovy Vary – Carlsbad. Equally, since the connection was first made between its spring and the Virgin Mary, the French town of Lourdes has been a significant place of pilgrimage for sick people in search of a cure and women wishing to conceive a child. The authorities in

Mont Oriol, then, set out to engineer something comparably marvellous. For the purpose, they employ 'an old paralytic, well known in the district, where for the last ten years he had prowled about on his supports of stout oak' (Maupassant 1903: 66; 'un vieux paralytique, célèbre dans tout le pays, où il rôdait depuis dix ans d'une façon pénible et lente, sur ses jambes de chêne', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 97).[8] And although it was an open secret among locals that Père Clovis could actually walk if need be, the thespian quality of his begging lent itself to the staging of a great performance of his being cured by the Oriol waters. He was given money to publicly lie in the water for an hour every day, and so

> [e]ach day, before breakfast, Christiane, her father, her brother, and Paul went to look …. Other bathers came there also, and they formed a circular group around the hole, while chatting with the vagabond. He was not better able to walk, he declared, but he had a feeling as if his legs were covered with ants; and he told how these ants ran up and down …. All the visitors and the peasants, divided into two camps, that of the believers and that of the sceptics, were interested in this cure. (Maupassant 1903: 99)

> Chaque jour donc, avant le déjeuner, Christiane, son père, son frère et Paul allaient voir….D'autres baigneurs y venaient aussi et on faisait cercle autour du trou en causant avec le vagabond. Il ne marchait pas mieux, affirmait-il, mais il se sentait les jambes pleines de fourmis; et il racontait comment les fourmis allaient, venaient …. Tous les étrangers et les paysans, partagés en deux camps, celui des confiants et celui des incrédules, s'intéressaient à cette cure. (Maupassant [1887] 2002: 127–8)

Once the public exposure of the experiment is secured, its success almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: his walking through the park with two crutches in the morning and just one in the afternoon is publicly regarded as a miracle ('C'est un miracle, un vrai miracle!', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 174). Even Père Clovis's decision to renege on the contract a year later cannot do damage to the spa's reputation as it simply gets incorporated into the whole scheme. He now receives money every year for a performance that proves the importance of the annual top-up cure for ensuring the waters' long-lasting effect.

Both the public festivities (soon to become annual events) and the display of the waters' miraculous healing powers conform to what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger call *The Invention of Tradition*. According to Hobsbawm, such inventions happen particularly intensely when 'a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which the "old" traditions had been designed' (Hobsbawm 1983: 4) – which is exactly what happens here: an ancient, rural, relatively remote winegrowing community is being uprooted and turned into a 'service town' (Blackbourn 2001: 446) for the metropolitan bourgeoisie. (The original thermal station of Enval, in contrast, had existed alongside the old community. It, too, is eventually bought up and incorporated into the new spa.) Hobsbawm notes that, due to the dramatic social transformations going on at the

time, the period between 1870 and 1914 saw such invented traditions 'spring up with particular assiduity' (Hobsbawm 1983: 263).

Coming back to our initial comments on the novel and its two plots: structurally, Andermatt's commercial success with the spa is mirrored by Christiane's success in getting pregnant (see Ball 1988: 58). The 'miracle' – or absence thereof – is one of the points by which both plots are linked with wonderful irony. Though Andermatt eventually realizes that Père Clovis is faking both his lameness and his cure, he never doubts that the wonder of Christiane's pregnancy, that is, the restoration of her fertility, was caused by her taking the waters. And indeed, the account of a bath she takes early on in her stay stands out by virtue of its detailed, sensual descriptions and is spiced with numerous erotic allusions:

> She slowly disrobed, watching as she did so the almost invisible movement of the wave gently stirring on the clear surface of the basin. When she had divested herself of all her clothing she dipped her foot in, and the pleasant warm sensation mounted to her throat; then she plunged into the tepid water first one leg, and after it the other, and sat down in the midst of this caressing heat, in this transparent bath, in this spring, which flowed over her, around her, covering her body with tiny globules all along her legs, all along her arms, and also all over her breasts. … And Christiane felt herself so happy in it, so sweetly, so softly, so deliciously caressed and clasped by the restless wave, the living wave, the animated wave from the spring which gushed up from the depths of the basin under her legs and fled through the little opening toward the edge of the bath, that she would have liked to have remained there forever, without moving, almost without thinking. (Maupassant 1903: 74–5)

> Et elle se déshabilla lentement, en regardant le presque invisible mouvement de cette onde remuée dans le basin clair. Lorsqu'elle fut nue, elle trempa son pied dedans et une bonne sensation chaude monta jusqu'à sa gorge: puis elle enfonça dans l'eau tiède une jambe d'abord, l'autre ensuite, et s'assit dans cette chaleur, dans cette douceur, dans ce bain transparent, dans cette source qui coulait sur elle, autour d'elle, couvrant son corps de petites bulles de gaz, tout le long des jambes, tout le long des bras, et sur les seins aussi. … Et Christiane se sentait si bien là-dedans, si doucement, si mollement, si délicieusement caressée, étreinte par l'onde agitée, l'onde vivante, l'onde animée de la source qui jaillissait au fond du bassin, sous ses jambes, et s'enfuyait par le petit trou dans le rebord de sa baignoire, qu'elle aurait voulu rester là toujours, sans remuer, presque sans songer. (Maupassant [1887] 2002: 104–5)

Her love story with Paul Brétigny has thus served its purpose, and the survival of the Andermatts is assured. So, notwithstanding Christiane's deep disillusionment with love and life, both plots converge in a victory of sorts; or, as Ball puts it, 'energetic resolution, even though tainted with corruption, triumphs over all obstacles' (Ball 1988: 69).

Some seventy years after Maupassant, his compatriot writer Gabriel Chevallier incorporated a similarly successful spa creation into his *Clochemerle* series of satirical novels with *Clochemerle Les Bains* (1963), which can be read as an interesting twentieth-century update to *Mont Oriol*. We will turn to this novel in Chapter 5.

2.3 The sanatorium: Ferien vom Ich *([Vacationing from Oneself], 1915)*

> All those going on vacation from their selves … must gain more than mineral water and spa diversions can offer. Paul Keller[9]

As will be explained in detail in Chapter 3, the rise of the sanatorium was bound up with the birth-pangs of Modernity, which culminated in the cataclysm of the First World War. One response to the accompanying existential and psychological crisis was to preach a temporary return to a pre-modern lifestyle of naturalness, simplicity and manual labour, which was associated with childhood innocence and compared to a secular monastic retreat. This *Lebensreform* movement gave rise to such institutions as Riva del Garda in Italy and Monte Verità in Switzerland. And it is no accident that Paul Keller's phenomenally successful account of the founding of such an institution – *Ferien vom Ich* – appeared in 1915, one year into the First World War and three years before the appearance of the first volume of Oswald Spengler's account of the Decline of the West (see Spengler 1918).

While categorized as a sanatorium, the resort in *Ferien vom Ich* is a hybrid between a holiday village and a healing space, taking on the task of detoxing city-dwellers from the ills of modern society. Its founder stresses that it is designed less for the seriously physically ill, and more for those who are tired, no longer happy with the haste and hollowness of modern life, and who would like to start all over again with fresh energy (see Keller 1915: 49). The novel takes the form of substantial diary entries by a young German doctor named Fritz, who, upon his return from travelling the world, creates the sanatorium in his hometown of 'Waltersburg'. He, too, needs financial and organizational support, and he gets both from a wealthy American: Mr John Stefenson, who later turns out to be of German descent. Stefenson left his home country while still very young and acquired not just his money but also his social and commercial competence entirely in the new world. Fritz, too, conceives his resort in response to a resort already in existence – the noisy, worldly and superficial fashionable spa town of neighbouring *Neustadt* (New Town):

> During the five years of my absence the place has doubled in size. It has shot up with American rapidity. I saw the marble temples atop the 'spring', the 'promenade' with its endlessly manicured, endlessly colourful and endlessly boring flower beds, the band that … played an endlessly silly potpourri …; I saw a 'colonnade' with display cases where the beautiful and oh so 'inexpensive' brooches are on show …; I saw garish coloured glasses with the inscription

> 'Memento' or '*Souvenir de Neustadt*', wooden objects ranging from the carved stag to the children's toy …; and duly arrived at the theatre, where a notice announced that a promising writer (all promising writers debut in spa theatres) was to put on his first work 'Secrets of Neustadt' ….
>
> Während der fünf Jahre meiner Abwesenheit ist der Ort um das Doppelte gewachsen. Er ist mit amerikanischer Rapidität emporgeschossen. Ich sah die Marmortempel über den 'Sprudeln', die 'Promenade' mit ihren unendlich gepflegten, unendlich bunten und unendlich langweiligen Blumenanlagen, die Kapelle, die … ein unendlich albernes Potpourri spielte …; ich sah eine 'Wandelhalle' mit Schauläden, in denen die schönen und ach so 'preiswerten' Broschen prangen …, sah schreiend bunte Gläser mit der Aufschrift 'Zum Andenken' oder '*Souvenir de Neustadt*', Holzarbeiten, vom geschnitzten Hirsch bis zu dem Kinderspielzeug …., bis ich zum Theater gelangte, wo ein Zettel verkündete, daß ein vielversprechender Dichter (alle vielversprechenden Dichter debütieren in Badetheatern) sein Erstlingswerk 'Geheimnisse von Neustadt' zur Aufführung bringe …. (Keller 1915: 29–30)

In short, Neustadt has become part and parcel of the world of 'haste and hollowness' from which *Ferien vom Ich* offers a break. This is why Fritz is determined not to become a spa doctor in the conventional sense. Instead, he develops a treatment concept that harks back to monastic ideals, except that, unlike a monastery, it is not an institution for life, but a place offering a vacation break from life; and that it is not driven by religious, but by health considerations (see Keller 1915: 49). But the realization of this concept evolves through the interaction between Fritz and the American financier, who, rather than sharing the doctor's ideas and ideals, develops an interest in turning them into a business challenge for himself and is thus not dissimilar to Andermatt in *Mont Oriol*. Much of the storyline concerning the resort development is thus marked by the tension between those two approaches.[10]

Fritz's plans are rooted in a national-conservative world view and incorporate particular ideas about communal living: within the quasi-monastic framework – upon entry, one reflects upon one's life so far, sheds one's money, title and bourgeois name, puts on simple clothes and cuts oneself off from all sense of time, all worldly events and even friends and relations – the resort contains several model farms and fisheries in which the visitors/patients live and work as equals under a farmer's supervision (see Figure 2.1). The farm dwellings and huts are grouped around a centre with the 'town hall', accommodating all administrative offices and the resort's doctors, and a couple of public buildings for refreshments and modest entertainment. Those who are too weak to work the land will be given easier jobs such as serving refreshments, cooking, sewing and so on. Thus, it is a re-connection with nature and (imagined) pre-modern forms of society that forms the basis of the therapeutic concept. The specific type of work (always manual) is assigned to the patients by the doctors and may change in the course of their stay. Work is accompanied by the staples of spa and *Lebensreform* therapies such as mineral,

Figure 2.1 Cover of a 1944 edition of Paul Keller's novel *Ferien vom Ich*.

air and sun baths, as well as by psychotherapeutic sessions. For these purposes, the resort does contain a spa trail (*Bäderstraße*, Keller 1915: 83). The profile of the doctors employed is therefore quite different from anything known so far: they need to be psychologists more than physicians.[11]

Parallel to the creation of an infrastructure that looks rather unusual for a health resort, we witness a number of developments which we have already come across in *Mont Oriol*, and which are here driven by Mr Stefenson: securing the land and the legal rights, forming a company, organizing and carefully choreographing public events, persuading the locals of the benefits they will gain from the resort and using all the tricks of the trade when it comes to advertising. An enterprise designed to cure the ills of modern capitalist society is being developed by using its very means and mechanisms to maximum effect.

Likewise, and as seen in *Mont Oriol*, the wholesale restructuring of the area goes hand in hand with the re-interpretation of the new place as old and steeped in tradition. Here it is again the naming of significant venues that plays a crucial role. Interestingly, the process of producing tradition is also acknowledged:

> Some of our farms have traditional poetic names, such as … hill croft, sun croft … a large and a small hermitage. … We do not stint on Romanticism. Unfortunately, tradition is lacking in all of these things, but it will not take long to discover it; we have selected a canny peasantry, and their strong souls are

> so full of invention that all kinds of little stories will soon be spun around our settlements, faster than the ivy grows that we have planted on many a wall, or than the moss grows that we have laid on the sloping roofs.
>
> Manche unserer Höfe haben herkömmliche poetische Namen, wie … Berghof, Sonnenhof … eine große und eine kleine Einsiedelei …. Mit Romantik ist nicht gespart. Tradition fehlt ja leider allen diesen Dingen, aber sie wird sich bald finden; wir haben pfiffiges Bauernvolk ausgewählt, und das dichtet in seiner kräftigen Seele so viel zusammen, daß sich alsbald allerhand Geschichtlein um unsere Siedelungen spinnen werden, schneller als der Efeu wächst, den wir an mancher Wand einpflanzten, oder als das Moos wuchert, das wir auf schräge Dächer legten. (Keller 1915: 163)

The result seems to justify all these means in that the resort is not just mildly successful but overrun with visitors. It is shown to have found its very own niche in the market: ninety percent of the guests come from the big cities, many from positions of education, wealth and respectability, all – after initial problems with settling in – more than happy to 'return' to a 'child-like'[12] simplicity of life without any need to represent their social position. According to Fritz, they all came from socially oppressive confinement to enter this 'kingdom of green health' ('Reich unserer grünen Gesundheit', Keller 1915: 193). After a minimum of six weeks, they will return to their homes (and social positions), mentally and physically refreshed, knowing that their bourgeois life is not without alternatives, and having acquired a knowledge of, and respect for, people coming from different walks of life and the lower echelons of society. As explained above, this is not about changing contemporary society or curing its ills for good, but about providing temporary relief from them. In some ways, the resort life described in *Ferien vom Ich* comes closest to the Enlightenment ideals of a spa society: a social mix, freedom from stiff etiquette and the highest possible equality among the spa society. At the same time, its therapeutic concept is slightly reminiscent of the *völkisch* ideology that would soon take hold of the country.

As with the other resort creations considered earlier in this chapter, the conflict between the therapeutic and the commercial character of this place runs through the story like a red thread, posing the question of how different it really can be from the others. While Austen's and Maupassant's novels suggest that spa society follows the rules of the respective outside world in every detail (and use some narrative finesse for unmasking precisely this), Keller's *Ferien vom Ich* does not do so. Focalizing the narrative through Fritz, a man with clear ideas about what is wrong with the world around him and how to create a break from this, allows for a rather narrower perspective and leaves no space for the delightfully ambiguous accounts offered by the external narrators of *Sanditon* and *Mont Oriol*. But perhaps this is the way in which the real war, carefully omitted from the fictional story, creeps into it after all: the need for active relief was so urgent that this was no time for objective observation or ironic distance. Thus, *Ferien vom Ich* turns out to be heterotopian not only because the resort whose founding it describes is explicitly conceived as a place apart from the world around it, but also because the novel

itself has exactly the same effect. In it we find no reference to the war, but instead a strikingly frequent use of the word and notion of peace. As Alexander Honold puts it: 'Vacationing from Oneself … hit the bull's eye precisely in the systematically omitted reference … to a present that had completely different concerns and was therefore all the more willing to entrust itself to the sanatorium …, a *locus amoenus* that … could not be found anywhere in war-torn Europe' (Honold 1993: 307).[13]

2.4 Fictitious resorts: A critical engagement with contemporary societies

> The history of those spas is incredible.
> They are the only fairylands left upon the earth!
> Maupassant (1903: 322)[14]

Our account of novels from three different countries both followed a chronological order and was organized according to the types of resort created: seaside resort, thermal spa, sanatorium. Austen, Maupassant and Keller set their stories in a time close to their time of writing, each reflecting an actual trend of their period.

'"The great battle to-day is being fought by means of money"' (Maupassant 1903: 53; '"Le grand combat, aujourd'hui, c'est avec l'argent qu'on le livre"', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 84), says Monsieur Andermatt in *Mont Oriol*, and this holds true for all the fictitious resort creations we have considered. All three turn out to depend for their success on securing sufficient capital investment. As is well known to social historians, '[t]he spa was a business that required significant investment in infrastructure' as 'medical facilities, pump rooms and meeting places, hotels, parks, promenades' all had to be created upfront. And while, according to Blackbourn, 'there was no single pattern of who invested, developed, profited' (2001: 445), in our stories, remarkably, the investment tends to come from semi-international actors with a competence and experience in questions of business that far exceeds that of the local players. This competence, however, must be accompanied by a considerable cultural knowledge which pertains to local and regional specificities as well as to national ones. This cultural knowledge is necessary to create both an acceptance of the development among the local (rural) population and a reputation for the place among its prospective (metropolitan) guests. Most strikingly demonstrated in *Mont Oriol*, but present also in the other stories, was the necessity to culturally embed the new creation in the old cultural context; that is, to invent a myth for it and make it look as though it had always been there. These elements of the stories in particular reveal their authors' critical engagement with their contemporary societies – through the prism of the health resort. Austen explores 'the culture of invalidism, the commercialization of leisure and, more generally, the Condition-of-England' after the Napoleonic War (Sales 1996: 201). Maupassant explores 'the range of value systems on offer' in late nineteenth-century France, including the 'emerging nationalist discourse' (Harris 1990: 113). Keller participates in a critique of Western civilization prevalent in the early twentieth century, and he does so from a mainly national-conservative angle.

To an extent, this critical engagement also explains the conspicuous confinement of the stories to their respective national contexts: *Sanditon* makes no mention of any foreign visitor being expected, *Mont Oriol* has a Spanish marchioness with her Italian doctor appear briefly, *Ferien vom Ich* has an Americanized investor, but given the essentially transnational character of such places – and taking a glance at novels set in established spas such as Baden-Baden, for example – this is strikingly little. Likewise, the depiction of the medical aspects of spa life and the role of the doctors is very much a function of the authors' social criticism and does not consider them in their own right. Tom Parker wants to attract a doctor to Sanditon as this is supposed to induce trust in prospective health tourists; the developers of Mont Oriol know that attracting the right doctors means attracting their large, paying clientele; in *Ferien vom Ich*, appearing at a time of acute crisis, we have a shift from the physical to the social ailments the doctors are supposed to help their patients overcome. In that sense, all three narratives are interwoven with the 'cultural texts' of their epochs.

Interestingly, and without being their authors' strongest or most popular works,[15] the stories seem to have a strong and relatively timeless appeal: all three books have been adapted into films, even repeatedly. In an article published in 2017, Mary Gaither Marshall offers a relatively comprehensive list of the continuations and adaptations of *Sanditon* that had appeared up to that point. She concludes with the announcement of a film to be directed by Jim O'Hanlon, which was listed by the British Film Institute (BFI) in April 2016 as being in pre-production, but which by summer 2024 had still not appeared. It is possible that it was overtaken by a TV adaptation, which was aired and streamed between August 2019 and April 2023. Like virtually all the prose continuations, this screen version, too, works hard on the love plot surrounding the visiting Charlotte. But it does make the economic precariousness of Mr Parker's enterprise the backbone of its otherwise richly embellished storyline. The first series remains as undecided as Austen's text about the success or failure of Parker's enterprise, and only in the second and third one and after a number of setbacks is it assumed that Sanditon will flourish as a resort. *Mont Oriol* saw at least three adaptations for TV, one 4-episode Italian series in 1958, one Czech TV film in 1974 and a French one in 1978, all balancing the love and the business plots as Maupassant did, all offering a mixture of historical costume drama and some allusions to the respective times of film production.

Ferien vom Ich has also been the subject of three filmic adaptations, in 1934, 1952 and 1963, albeit all three German. Each of them is rooted in the time of their production, each focusing on the American financier Stefenson rather than the doctor who invented the resort, and each playing around with the notion of leaving one's bourgeois self behind and being one among equals. None of the three films, however, is concerned with conveying the social criticism present in the novel. Rather, they are all in the business of creating unpolitical and light-hearted holiday stories. In this sense, they are typical of a trend that applies to all the filmic adaptations mentioned here: in none of them does the strictly business side of founding a health resort feature prominently, and they are much more interested

in emphasizing the aspect of the resort offering its visitors something other than their everyday life, and being, in that sense, a fairyland.

The novels explored in this chapter are of course not the only examples of writers engaging in the literary experiment of creating such a space. We have already mentioned Charles Lever and Gabriel Chevallier but should add for instance Knut Hamsun's novel *Siste kapitel* (*Chapter, the Last*, 1923), set in the fictitious 'Torahus' sanatorium or Tina Pruschmann's novel *Bittere Wasser* (Bitter Waters, 2022), using the history of the Saxonian spa town Bad Schlema as a foil for a place she calls 'Tann'. Both follow the lifespan of their resorts from beginning to end. Whilst the foundation story in these and other cases does not form the centre of the plot as it does in the novels dealt with here, their resorts also function as the world *in nuce* and as such enable pointed commentary on the world at large. We will continue to explore this theme in the following chapters.

Notes

1 The original quotation reads: 'Il y aura bientôt plus de sources que de malades' (Maupassant [1887] 2002: 71).
2 Equally unsurprisingly, this discussion was ongoing, and lasted well into the twentieth century. Health professionals and institutions, in particular, kept trying to erect clear terminological barriers between health resorts and holiday resorts.
3 Susan Ford shows the centrality of the library, both to the town of Sanditon and to the novel itself (Ford 1997).
4 The original quotation reads: 'Il faut […] tout comprendre, tout prévoir, tout combiner' (Maupassant [1887] 2002: 84).
5 Think for instance of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878) or Theodor Fontane's *L'Adultera* (1882).
6 His brother-in-law Gontran observes about him: 'I feel that the same noise disturbs his brain as that heard in the gambling rooms of Monte Carlo – that noise of gold moved about, shuffled, drawn away, raked off, lost or gained' (Maupassant 1903: 54; 'Quand je passe auprès de mon beau-frère, j'entends très bien dans sa tête le même bruit que dans les salles de Monte-Carlo, ce bruit d'or remué, battu, traîné, raclé, perdu, gagné', Maupassant [1887] 2002: 85–6).
7 The published translation has misread the syntax of the sentence and speaks of 'commerce and contemporary industry' (Maupassant 1903: 163).
8 The published translation has suppressed the slow and painful nature ('façon pénible et lente') of the man's progress.
9 The original quotation reads: 'Alle, die einmal Ferien vom Ich machen […] müssen mehr gewinnen als durch Mineralwasser und Bäderzerstreuung' (Keller 1915: 85).
10 'So fügen sich deutsche Träumerei und amerikanischer Geschäftssinn zum Gespann eines positiven Denkens, das dem mechanischen Getriebe eines seelenlosen Zeitalters die Oase unbeschwerter Natürlichkeit entgegenstellt' (Honold 1993: 306; 'Thus, German pipe dreams and American business acumen combine to form a forward thinking team that sets against the mechanical workings of a soulless age an oasis of carefree naturalness').

11 According to Wolfgang Tschechne, the sessions described in the novel pre-empt several psychotherapeutic techniques developed in the course of the twentieth century (Tschechne 2007: 13).
12 The words *zurück* (back) and *kindlich* (child-like) occur with striking frequency in the text. The notion of childhood refers to both the individual person and the historical Ages of Man.
13 The original quotation reads: 'Die *Ferien vom Ich* ... haben gerade im systematisch ausgeblendeten Bezug ins Schwarze getroffen ... in eine Gegenwart, die ganz andere Sorgen hatte und darum um so bereitwilliger sich der Heilanstalt ... anvertraute, einem *locus amoenus*, der ... im kriegserschütterten Europa nirgends zu finden war' (Honold 1993: 307).
14 The original quotation reads: 'C'est incroyable, ces villes d'eaux. Ce sont les seuls pays de féerie qui subsistent sur la terre!' (Maupassant [1887] 2002: 339).
15 An exception in this regard is *Ferien vom Ich* which can be regarded as Keller's most successful publication.

3

From the Spa to the Sanatorium: Changing the Setting

'So you have come here just for the purpose of dying?' ('Sie sind also nur deshalb hergekommen, um zu sterben?') – is the first sentence of a narrative entitled *Die Krankheit* (The Disease). And the answer to this question reads: 'why else?' ('Weshalb sonst?', Klabund [1917] 1998: 181). Written in 1916 and set in a Davos sanatorium, this is a story by a young German author who wrote from personal experience.[1] The majority of patients there, like the author himself, were indeed doomed to die prematurely: they were suffering from tuberculosis, a disease that the medical profession had not yet found an effective cure for.

In the course of the nineteenth century, medicine had developed enormously as a science, gaining deep insights into the functioning of the human body and in turn devaluing the knowledge of the spa doctors as unscientific. The thermal and mineral spas and seaside resorts were left to provide the arena for the leisure and recreation activities of growing numbers of comfortably off clients. Attempts to put balneotherapy – a variety of internal and external water treatments which had been developed since antiquity – on a sound scientific footing, had had little success. Balneological treatments would at best be classified as part of 'alternative' medicine (see Steudel 1967: 82–4). By providing such treatments, however, these resorts and the doctors operating there also became the refuge and hope for countless sick people who could no longer be helped by conventional medicine (see Steudel 1967: 90).[2] The most prominent incurable diseases at the time were syphilis and tuberculosis, but there were others, too, not least a growing number of nervous conditions. Patients thus afflicted were increasingly concentrated in special institutions: sanatoria. 'By 1900, for example, Baden-Baden contained at least six large private sanatoria and, by 1905, five more' (Steward 2012: 75). But sanatoria also sprang up elsewhere, in newly founded climatic resorts and even on the edges of the big cities.

This development went hand in hand with decisive 'shifts in medical and cultural theories and discourses relating to health and sickness and the care of the body' (Steward 2012: 86). According to Gerd Grübler, these shifts were largely instigated by, and developed within, the literary discourse. By the late 1880s, all the crucial features of this change in thinking had been established in literary texts and were then taken up by medical circles around 1895 (see Grübler 2011: 79).

In 1885 and 1887 for instance, the German novelists Paul Heyse and Theodor Storm published novellas featuring sick people who could no longer be helped by conventional medicine – namely a heart condition and a cancer. Both stories – with Storm's title translating as A Confession ('Ein Bekenntnis') and Heyse's as A Matter of Death and Life ('Auf Tod und Leben') – are also concerned with the issue of assisted dying and thus the most extreme ethical question that a doctor can face. Interestingly, in both cases, the setting chosen for the discussion of these questions was a spa town.[3] The year 1893 then saw the publication of English author Beatrice Harraden's novel *Ships That Pass in the Night*, which has been identified by Vera Pohland as the first sanatorium novel in European literature (see Pohland 1984: 155). Harraden's bestseller started a whole wave of literary texts set in sanatoria. Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*) is often regarded as the high point of this wave, but it neither marks its end nor can it be regarded as prototypical (see Chapter 4).

In her thesis entitled *Das Sanatorium als literarischer Ort* (The Sanatorium as a Literary Setting), Pohland traces the emergence and triumph of the sanatorium novel from the 1890s onwards and asserts that by 1945 its heyday was more or less over (Pohland 1984: 8). Her corpus, however, comprising some twenty novels written in English, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Polish and Russian and published between 1893 and 1956, is by no means exhaustive.[4] The earliest literary text we have found that is set in a sanatorium is the poem 'Das Lied vom Sanatorium' (The Song of the Sanatorium) by Otto Ernst Freiherr von Springer first published in 1887, and as well as numerous novels and stories, there is also a plethora of poems referring to, and plays set in, sanatoria. The latter group is made up mainly of farces concerned with unmasking sanatorium doctors as medical frauds and money-grubbers. A very small number of stories are set in sanatoria where a mixture of physical and social ills is treated, such as Harraden's *Ships That Pass in the Night* (1893), Mann's *Tristan* (1903) or Knut Hamsun's *Siste Kapitel* (1923, *Chapter the Last,* 1929); and an equally small number omit the type of disease altogether, such as Bruno Schulz's 'Sanatorium pod klepsydrą' (1937, 'Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass', 1978) or Dino Buzzati's 'Sette Piani' (1942, 'Seven Floors', 1965). However, the most popular setting by far was the tuberculosis sanatorium, which we have found in novels and stories written in Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Ukrainian – and we are sure our list is incomplete. Many of these have an autobiographical background, many are set in Davos and many engage intertextually with Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, often offering a corrective to it (see also Chapters 4 and 6). Included in our corpus are both books written and set before and just after 1945, and a good number that look back from a time closer to the present. Interestingly, and contrary to what was asserted by Pohland, the setting retains its appeal well beyond the period immediately following the Second World War. (The Polish author Stanisław Lem even catapults the sanatorium into an extra-human future, when in his story 'Zakład Doktora Vliperdiusa' (1964, 'The Sanatorium of Doctor Vliperdius', 1977), he has mentally disturbed robots receive therapy.[5]) The most recent publication

we include in our corpus is the novel *Empuzjon* (2022, *The Empusium*, 2024) by Olga Tokarczuk (see Chapter 4). Its subtitle labels it as a 'Health Resort Horror Story' (or, to stay closer to the original, a naturopathic horror story – *Horror przyrodoleczniczy*), an allusion to the steady trickle of stories in the mystery and/or thriller genres for which the sanatorium provides a fertile setting. Indeed, this trend still seems to be on the rise (see Chapter 8). But sanatoria today aren't just good for providing fictional thrills: Abi Palmer's *Sanatorium* for instance, published in 2020, is an autobiographically informed enquiry into contemporary health politics (see Chapter 9). And in a book with the same title (*Sanatorium*, 2016) which satirizes the transformation of health care into anti-ageing and beauty treatments, the Russian writer Lyudmila Petrushevskaya brings together iconic female figures from European cultural history such as Madame de Staël, Jane Austen and George Sand.

Whichever corpus we use – Pohland's or our extended one – we see a substantial shift in European literature around 1900 away from the spa or *kurort* novel, typical of the nineteenth century, towards texts set in sanatoria, which seems to us to warrant some exploration. In what follows, we will first take a closer look at the illnesses treated (or at least mitigated) in sanatoria and the context in which they had emerged and then explore the various aesthetic and thematic implications that both the ailments and the institutions to which they were confined had, and continue to have, for the writers engaging with them.

3.1 The ailments treated: Physical, mental, social

Thomas Mann's novella *Tristan* of 1903 is set in a sanatorium named 'Einfried'. Of this institution we are told:

> Einfried … is most warmly to be recommended for all tubercular patients. But not only consumptives reside here: there are sufferers of all kinds – ladies, gentlemen and even children. … There are people with gastric disorders, … heart cases, paralytics, rheumatics and nervous patients of all sorts and conditions. (Mann 1970: 102)

> [F]ür Lungenkranke ist ‚Einfried' … aufs wärmste zu empfehlen. Aber es halten sich nicht nur Phthisiker, es halten sich Patienten aller Art, Herren, Damen und sogar Kinder hier auf …. Es giebt hier gastrisch Leidende … Herrschaften mit Herzfehlern, Paralytiker, Rheumatiker und Nervöse in allen Zuständen. (Mann [1903] 2004: 320)

Their only common ground would seem to be that they all are suffering from some affliction which could not be cured otherwise, and which thus brought them to the world of the sanatorium. But whether it is consumption or nerves or anything else, they are all, significantly, marked as diseases of civilization – the breeding ground for which is modern life.

Owing to the process of industrialization and urbanization Europe had undergone in the course of the nineteenth century, and due to the profound impact this had on all spheres of life, a series of new diseases arose among the population, generally attributed to the new and crowded living conditions in the big cities, the worsening pollution of air and water and the increasing levels of noise and stress in people's daily lives. In a publication called *The Sanatorium: A Self-supporting Establishment for the Lodging, Nursing and Cure of Sick Persons of the Middle Classes of Both Sexes*, published in London as early as 1840, we read:

> Many young people … come every year to London …. Most of the[m]... are not only removed to a distance from their own homes and take up their abode among strangers, but they lead in London a totally different course of life from that to which they have been accustomed …. The anxieties of business, the unusual fatigue caused in pursuit of it, the widely different mode of life, the irregular hours, the imperfect rest, and the less pure air in this crowded and life-exhausting city, are peculiarly apt to induce … indisposition, which by neglect becomes disease. (*The Sanatorium* 1840: 4–6)

The author observes that due to this situation, chronic diseases arise, and 'once excited into action, prove inevitably and rapidly mortal: such for example as scrofula and those tubercular diseases which terminate in consumption' (*The Sanatorium* 1840: 7). With the help of statistics, the author shows that among the registered deaths, 'consumption is more prevalent and more fatal than all [other] epidemic, contagious and febrile diseases put together' (*The Sanatorium* 1840: 8). It seems that by then, the earlier image of tuberculosis as a 'romantic disease' (Lawlor 2006) had given way to an understanding of its causes and its contagiousness as symptoms of the age of industrialization.

It was a deadly disease, hardly curable and spreading rapidly across the continent. It tended to start inconspicuously,

> with a cough; a cold …. But then that cough turned malevolent, becoming stronger and more painful and extracting blood with each spasm. The appetite would go, replaced by fatigue, a deep dullness that would pull the sufferers into lethargy. Eventually, bodies would begin to wither and dissipate from within. For most consumptives, this played out over months and years. Even when the end seemed imminent, it was as if the consumptives could not muster the energy to die – until, finally, they did, by the thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions. (Goetz 2014: x)

In 1854, the physician Hermann Brehmer opened his *Heilanstalt für Lungenkranke* (sanatorium for pneumopathic patients) in Görbersdorf in the Silesian mountains. The treatment he offered consisted mainly of lying in the fresh mountain air and observing a generous diet. For almost another century, there was no scientifically proven way of healing tuberculosis, and physical rest, sun, pure air and nutritious food seemed at least to stabilize patients. (This was later accompanied by highly

Figure 3.1 Patients taking the air on a sanatorium veranda in Davos. Photograph from the Gysi studio, around 1897.

invasive surgery for the more serious cases.) And even though Robert Koch had discovered the tuberculosis bacterium as early as 1882, antibiotics capable of actually curing the disease only became available in the 1950s. Sanatoria following Brehmer's Silesian model thus spread rapidly, and the sunbed cure, that is lying wrapped up on a balcony or veranda for almost endless stretches of time, became emblematic for life as a tuberculosis patient all over Europe (Figure 3.1). (In his *Magic Mountain*, Mann would coin the term 'horizontal mode of life' ('horizontale Lebensweise') for these cures; see Mann [1924] 2002: 308, 1995: 199.)

Eva Eylers observes that '[w]ith tuberculosis, and the growing conviction … that cities were [its] true breeding grounds …, also came the theory that there were places of health outside the city' (Eylers 2014: 668). This gave rise to the notion of the 'immune Gegend' ('immune area', Brehmer 1876) which was to serve as the 'other' to the city (see Eylers 2014: 670).

The stresses associated with the modernizing world, though, affected not just the bodily organs but also the 'nerves'. In the decades approaching 1900, nervous diseases became so prominent that Joachim Radkau refers to the period as the 'age of neurasthenia' (see Radkau 1998). The American neurologist George Beard coined the term neurasthenia in 1869, in order to denote 'a state of nervous exhaustion in which individuals could no longer summon the strength to deal with the stress and speed of modern metropolitan life' (Blackshaw 2012: 111).[6] Radkau elaborates:

> The neurasthenia epidemic that broke out in the 1880s is the most visible beginning of modern experiences of stress …. Neurasthenia … was both a

> cultural construct and a real affliction. The individual symptoms – gastric and intestinal complaints, impotence, palpitations, insomnia, states of anxiety and debilitation – are, viewed individually, ambiguous and unspecific; it was only when linked diagnostically together that they acquired the weighty status of neurasthenia.
>
> Die in den 1880er Jahren ausbrechende Nervositätsepidemie ist der sichtbarste Beginn moderner Stresserfahrungen …. Nervosität … war ein kulturelles Konstrukt und zugleich eine echte Leidenserfahrung. Die einzelnen Symptome – Magen- und Darmbeschwerden, Impotenz, Herzflattern, Schlaflosigkeit, Angst- und Schwächezustände – sind, für sich genommen, vieldeutig und unspezifisch; zur bedeutungsvollen Nervosität wurden sie erst durch verbindende Interpretationen. (Radkau 1998: 10–14)

Such diagnoses were offered both by the emerging psychoanalytical school and by a whole swathe of practitioners of alternative medicine and natural healing. In the German-speaking world (Germany, Austria, parts of Switzerland and Italy), the latter were also associated with the numerous *Lebensreform* movements, which often led to the establishment both of a community (practising some form of alternative lifestyle on a permanent basis) and of a sanatorium for temporary visitors who hoped to recover there from the kind of ailments mentioned before (see also Chapter 2). A prime example of such a combination was *Monte Verità* in Ascona, Switzerland, founded by Ida Hofmann and Henri Oedenkoven; an example of a doctor-led sanatorium practising natural healing was Christoph and Erhard von Hartungen's *Atmosphärische Kuranstalt für Nervenkranke und Diabetiker* (atmospheric sanatorium for neurasthenics and diabetics) in the Italian resort of Riva del Garda.

While for some of the illnesses mentioned earlier – syphilis, tuberculosis, some nervous disorders – conventional medicine has meanwhile found effective drugs, there are significant numbers of ailments against which it is still powerless. These include not only rheumatic diseases and degenerative diseases, but also social and stress-related illnesses (such as chronic fatigue syndrome and burnout), and most recently, Long Covid. In these cases, the old pattern of institutions like sanatoria stepping in where conventional medicine fails is reasserting itself.

3.2 Setting the scene

The design of all sanatoria, no matter which ailment they were attempting to treat, followed Brehmer's original idea of the healing space and developed it further. Just three years after Brehmer, Ludwig Binswanger in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, opened a *Privatanstalt für heilfähige Kranke und Pfleglinge aus den besseren Ständen der Schweiz und des Auslandes* (Private institution for the curable sick and those in need of care from the better classes of Switzerland and abroad). Yet, even though they developed in parallel with each other (and are not always differentiated by

writers of literary texts – see above), sanatoria for tuberculosis on the one hand and for the nervous diseases on the other were separate and distinct institutions. Sanatoria for neurasthenia and related ailments were often housed in villas and were frequently located in established spa towns, using their infrastructure as appropriate. One of the better known such establishments in a traditional spa town was perhaps Georg Groddeck's *Villa Marienhöhe* in Baden-Baden, which opened in 1900 and specialized in psychosomatic disorders.

Sanatoria for tuberculosis patients tended to be situated in mountainous areas known for their pure air, as pioneered by Brehmer. This led to the development of climatic resorts, of which the Swiss town of Davos attained the highest fame, and indeed the highest density of sanatoria.[7] Soon they had established their own, distinguishable architectural type, bearing the hallmark of 'healthy living': light, air, strict hygiene. The complex usually consisted of a wind-protected main building erected on an east–west axis, often with side wings and annexes, and a sunbathing hall to the south side. Later, the main building was supplemented by the typical long rows of balconies with supporting columns.

While the private sanatoria for the wealthy looked, and functioned, like a combination of hotel and hospital, those for the poorer patients, run by the state or by charities, were far less generous and not infrequently compared to prisons (we will come back to this later). Indeed, the sanatorium was an institution of social segregation: the rich and the poor were isolated differently. While there were some charitable sanatoria in places like Davos, poor tubercular patients tended to be housed in cheaper structures in or closer to the cities.[8] These were extended and developed further in the early twentieth century, catering for the increasing numbers of mainly working-class patients.

During the two World Wars, such establishments were used to treat the war wounded, but apart from these exceptional periods, they continued to function as sanatoria well into the second half of the twentieth century. All sanatoria acted as places of both asylum and confinement: the sanatorium thus served the need of the sick for healing, the need of the healthy for protection from infection and the need of the community to prevent the disease from spreading to endemic levels. It also ensured a kind of mental safeguarding of the healthy by physically and symbolically excluding the sick from society.

In the Soviet Union and, with a time lag, also in the countries of the Eastern bloc (see e.g. Angelova 2020: 110), social health care provision in spas and sanatoria took on a markedly different dynamic. As Johanna Conterio (2016: 136) notes: 'While public health systems throughout Europe developed mass sanatoria in the inter-war period, the Soviet Union was the only state in Europe to successfully nationalize its health resorts after World War I, offering unprecedented opportunities for their development into rich, "proletarian" resorts.' In Nikolai Ostrovsky's Soviet classic *Kak zakaljalas' stal'* (1932, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, 1952), this historical change of the setting from spa place to sanatorium is enacted in a highly symbolic manner when the patients of the sanatorium 'Communard' eradicate the last remaining traces of bourgeois spa culture by booing a dancing couple off the stage at the nearby spa town (see Ostrovsky [1932] 1989: 345, 1952: 124–5). Instead of being a

Figure 3.2 A typical example of a modernist lung sanatorium, here in Bulgaria. The sanatorium was built between 1932 and 1935 as a private investment by Dr Lyubomir Hadzhievanov. After the 1944 Bulgarian coup d'état and the implementation of Soviet-style socialism, it was nationalized. Georgi Markov, who used it as inspiration for his novella 'The Sanatorium of Dr Gospodov' (1966), took a cure here.

playground of decadent pleasure, the sanatorium was now a laboratory where the 'new Soviet man' was to be created (Figure 3.2). Accordingly, prophylaxis played an increasingly important role alongside the treatment of those who were actually ill. In addition to health factors, political 'good' conduct or personal networks became an increasingly decisive factor in the allocation of coveted places in the socialist sanatorium and the stay gradually became a privilege and status symbol (see Koenker 2013: 13, 32; Noack 2012: 234–5).

3.3 The sanatorium as a literary topos

An important part of life in the sanatorium was the institution's firm daily routine and its internal social order, which, though differing between types, was always strictly hierarchical. The aim was to fill the patients' days and at the same time to ensure their obedience. For the social order to remain stable, the medical personnel had to retain unquestionable authority. Pohland quite rightly asserts that 'in socio-historical terms, the sanatorium as an institution is situated between the opposites of a space free from external constraints and a "house of correction", and thus in a field of tension between two systems of order that constantly undermine each other' (Pohland 1984: 57).[9] There is no doubt that this is one of the main reasons why the sanatorium has received so much attention, both from intellectuals – see, for instance, Roland Barthes as sketched out in our introduction – and from

artists and writers. And although most of those who engaged with the sanatorium artistically or academically had themselves spent time in such an institution, the object of their writing is almost never purely autobiographical.

The idea that the health resort setting offers a world within the world is familiar to us from virtually all the spa literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, both the spa and the sanatorium qualify for the label 'heterotopia', as coined by Michel Foucault to describe the specific 'otherness' of these places: they are simultaneously detached from and mirror the outside world.[10] However, spa societies were marked by their relative openness, heterogeneity and fluidity. They were temporary assemblies of individuals, each of whom would determine their place in this society and play their role accordingly. They would thus enable relatively free intercourse between people of different backgrounds (be that socially, nationally or culturally). This was in accordance with core Enlightenment values, which were duly reflected on in the spa literature of the time. And even a story following an impostor and a cheat, or an extramarital affair, or indeed the plight of an incurable gambler, was still indebted to Enlightenment ideas in that it examined the full potential, as well as the merits and pitfalls, entailed by the principle of the freedom of the individual in society.

As social microcosms, sanatoria were not only much smaller and more homogeneous than spa towns, but they also existed under the sign of terminal decline. As we have sketched out above, the illnesses treated there both marked the limits of academic medicine and can all be seen as symptomatic of the state of the industrialized world towards the end of the nineteenth century. And things were changing at a rate that had never before been seen in history. Deep down this society feared it was nearing its own end, and an awareness of this started creeping into the public discourse. The sanatorium then, catering to the sick of (a sick) society, lent itself as a setting to contemporary writers, offering a micro-society, ideal for the artistic exploration of decadence and related themes. Therefore, we argue that the characteristics that made the sanatorium so attractive as a literary setting were its special relationship with the outside world, its familiarity with death and its specific spatio-temporal arrangements. Following Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the poetic text, we thus call it a distinct 'chronotope' (see Bakhtin 1975, 1981).

3.4 Contracting space – expanding time

Harraden's *Ships That Pass in the Night* is set in a fictitious climatic resort in the Swiss mountains: 'Petershof was a winter resort for consumptive patients, though, indeed, many people who simply needed the change of a bracing climate went there to spend a few months and came away wonderfully better for the mountain air' (Harraden 1893: 10). The *kurhaus* is similar to those we know from the mineral spas and comprises the usual rooms and apartments for guests, a dining room, a reading room, a concert room and so on, plus rooms for medical treatments. It houses an international society of guests. There are other such establishments in Petershof, and there is a network of paths designed for walking and for sledge

rides. Here as elsewhere, the sanatorium setting appears to be a spa town setting scaled down. In many texts of our corpus, the sanatorium consists of one building or a small group of buildings, surrounded by a park or garden. Yet, despite an open infrastructure – paths lead into the surrounding landscape, guests/patients are theoretically free to leave – there is a distinct atmosphere of remoteness and seclusion dominating these places. Often, it is the image of the mountain top that is invoked. Thus, the sanatorium in Nikolai Aseyev's Russian short story 'Sanatorii' (Sanatorium) of 1929/30 is called 'High Mountains' ('Высокие горы', Aseyev [1929/30] 1964: 154), and Sylvie Damagnez, in clear response to Thomas Mann, uses as the title of her novel a phrase that recurs repeatedly in *The Magic Mountain*: *Nous autres, ici, en haut* (Us up here, 2020).[11] The Bulgarian Sanatorium of Dr Gospodov in Georgi Markov's novel of the same name (*Sanatoriumut na Dr. Gospodov*, [1966] 2018: 165) is so high up in the mountains that the patients feel close to heaven, which is of course a description not only of the geographical location, but also of their existential situation. Blai Bonet works with a different image: his Catalan novel is called *El Mar* (1958, *The Sea*, 2014). Yet, there is no sea anywhere near the sanatorium, rather the landscape surrounding it and keeping it apart from the rest of the world is perceived as 'serene and alive, like the sea' (Bonet 2014: 7; 'és serè, vivent, com un mar', Bonet 1958: 12). The narrator in *Die Kälte: Eine Isolation* (1981, 'In the Cold', 1985) by the Austrian author Thomas Bernhard states that 'the outside world had receded from them long ago and was now out of sight' (Bernhard 1985: 283; 'Die Außenwelt hatte sich längst entfernt, sie war überhaupt nicht mehr wahrnehmbar', Bernhard 1981: 17). And for one of Eamonn McGrath's Irish characters in *The Charnel House*, 'the outside world and his previous existence seemed a chimera. The only reality was the room with its apple green walls and white sloped ceiling' (McGrath 1990: 47). Indeed, for the heroine of Franziska Reventlow's German novel *Der Geldkomplex* (The Money Complex, 1916) – which in contrast to the texts just mentioned is set in a sanatorium for neurasthenics – the sanatorium is a place to hide from the outside world, which is full of her creditors. And although Abi Palmer's *Sanatorium* (2020) is anything but out of this world – it is located on the Margaret Island in Budapest, and the World Wide Web keeps the protagonist connected twenty-four hours a day – she, too, feels cut off and in need of a (temporary) escape. Bruno Schulz's 'Sanatorium pod klepsydrą' ('Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass') is almost a non-place. It is located deep in a forest and entered only through a bridge, yet it is at the same time part of a town in which its inhabitants are present (sometimes even at the same time as being inside the sanatorium). In each of these cases, the sanatorium appears to be a hybrid between a closed and open institution; it is an integral part of the world around it, and it is a world of its own. No wonder that it also seems to have its own sense of time.

'How long did I actually spend at Grafenhof altogether? When was I finally discharged?', asks Bernhard's autobiographical narrator: 'I cannot remember' (Bernhard 1985: 338; 'Wie lange war ich überhaupt in Grafenhof? und: wann war ich dann endlich entlassen? Ich weiß es nicht mehr', Bernhard 1981: 148). It was not only young Hans Castorp who came to Berghof for a visit of three weeks

and ended up staying seven years. The latter amount of time had already been spent by Beatrice Harraden's hero Robert Allitsen in Petershof when the heroine Bernhardine Holme arrived. This is topped by two characters who have stayed in William Somerset Maugham's eponymous sanatorium for seventeen years. In the majority of stories, the protagonists enter the institution with the false hope that they might be out again in a month or two – 'soon again we will return to an active life' ('Pronto volveremos otra vez a la vida activa', Cela 1961: 19, 18) – and when this turns out to have been an illusion, they tend to lose their sense of time altogether. For the teenage patients in Linda Grant's sanatorium Gwendo in *The Dark Circle*, '[t]he hands of the clock seem to have stopped altogether. What day is it? What month? Stupor' (Grant 2016: 115). And in Dieter Forte's German novel *Auf der anderen Seite der Welt* (On the other Side of the World, 2004), the autobiographical hero 'increasingly often forgot to wind his watch' ('immer öfter vergaß, seine Armbanduhr aufzuziehen', Forte 2004: 86). Soon he decides that 'time is an illusion. It simply does not exist' ('Zeit ist eine Illusion. Es gibt sie gar nicht', Forte 2004: 109–10). The notion of endlessness is underscored by that of repetition: one day in a sanatorium is much like another. The firm daily routine, much as it serves to maintain discipline and a sense of order among patients, also annuls a logic of progression. There is no indication of evolution, time is not structured as gradually moving towards something, such as recovery and return home. Maugham has two sick lovers leave the sanatorium in the full knowledge that this will curtail their lives (the man is given three months under the circumstances). But they prefer a short, full life in the world to a prolonged existence in idleness in the institution. Claire Augereau (2020) thus uses the term *homo immobilis* in a double sense to characterize the patients' relationship to space and time in the sanatorium. In Schulz's 'Sanatorium pod klepsydrą', we even find a completely different temporal system in the sanatorium compared with the outside world. The doctor there explains to our protagonist:

> The whole secret of the operation … is that we have put back the clock. Here we are always late by a certain interval of time of which we cannot define the length. The whole thing is a matter of simple relativity. Here your father's death, a death that has already struck him in your country, has not occurred yet. (Schulz 1980: 116–17)

> Cały trick polega na tym … że cofnęliśmy czas. Spóźniamy się tu z czasem o pewien interwał, którego wielkości niepodobna określić. Rzecz sprowadza się do prostego relatywizmu. Tu po prostu jeszcze śmierć ojca nie doszła do skutku, ta śmierć, która go w pańskiej ojczyźnie już dosięgła. (Schulz 1937: 174)

3.5 Under the sign of death

The passage just quoted, and indeed the very title of Schulz's story – 'Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hour Glass'[12] – also allude to the matter of death, which

permeates these narratives in various different ways. In Mann's novella *Tristan*, death, and its description, come along in an almost incidental way:

> Sometimes a death takes place among the 'severe cases', those who are confined to their beds and do not appear at meals or in the drawing room; and no one is ever aware of it, not even the patient next door. In the silence of the night the waxen guest is removed and Einfried pursues the even tenor of its way: the massage, the electrical treatment, the injections, douches, medicinal baths, gymnastics, exudations and inhalations all continue, in premises equipped with every wonder of modern science […]. (Mann 1970: 102, ellipsis in the original)

> Dann und wann stirbt jemand von den „Schweren", die in ihren Zimmern liegen und nicht zu den Mahlzeiten noch im Konversationszimmer erscheinen, und niemand, selbst der Zimmernachbar nicht, erfährt etwas davon. In stiller Nacht wird der wächserne Gast beiseite geschafft, und ungestört nimmt das Treiben in „Einfried" seinen Fortgang, das Massieren, Elektrisieren und Injizieren, das Douchen, Baden, Turnen, Schwitzen und Inhalieren in den verschiedenen mit allen Errungenschaften der Neuzeit ausgestatteten Räumlichkeiten […]. (Mann [1903] 2004: 320–1, ellipsis in the original)

It is in accordance with this that the story does not end with the death of its frail heroine Gabriele Klöterjahn, but a reference to her young son Anton, who is described as a picture of health, sitting in his pram, laughing. This is in clear structural contrast to the very name of the sanatorium, as 'Einfried' not only evokes *Einfriedung* (enclosure – see above) but also contains the words *Einsamkeit* (loneliness) and *Friedhof* (cemetery). In Klabund's *Die Krankheit*, we similarly find men 'walking on soft felt soles' ('auf leisen Filzsohlen', Klabund [1917] 1998: 193) who come during the night to quietly carry a person out of the building. The next morning in the breakfast room, this person will be declared to have left the sanatorium. Of course, everyone knows what that means: they left feet first.

For while the institutions are shown as trying to make death invisible, their inhabitants are acutely aware of it and reflect on it constantly: it is a central part of their world as they form, in Bernhard's words, a 'society of the dying' (Bernhard 1985: 283; 'Todesgemeinschaft', Bernhard 1981: 16). Thus, death figures as a leitmotif in all stories set in tuberculosis sanatoria, as well as in some set in others. In Max Blecher's Romanian novel, *Vizuina luminată* (1937; *The Illuminated Burrow*, 2022), the protagonist, when noting that the patient in the room next door has died (very close to him, just behind a thin wall), reflects on his feelings about this and has to acknowledge that there was nothing special about the afternoon in question, it was just as banal and just as much part of a monotonous flow as all the other afternoons in the sanatorium. Elsewhere, patients take bets on who is going to be the next to die. In Bonet's *El Mar*, one of the young patients observes the dying process of his closest friend. Having sneaked into this room and been part of his friend's death that night, he now wants to embrace his own: 'What is needed so that I can die with an enthusiastic agony? … Through which door am I to exit so

that I might die an enthusiastic death?' (Bonet 2014: 91; '¿Què és necessari perquè jo pugui morir amb una agonia com un enthusiasme? … ¿Per quina agonia he de sortir per tal de morir com un enthusiasme?', Bonet 1958: 136).

Camilo José Cela's Spanish novel *Pabellón de reposo* (1943/4, *Rest Home*, 1961) is structured by a kind of refrain which occurs once in full length and then in shorter variations, each of which accompanies a patient's death:

> The wheelbarrow followed the trail that goes through the pines and borders the edge of the ravine above the brook in which the moon was reflected, cold and impassive, the very image of death. It was pushed by the gardener, the red-haired gardener who sings in a low voice while he prunes the rosebushes or the geraniums.
>
> When he goes uphill, he says 'Hoopla!' And the barrow, with its iron wheel which jumps over the rocky ground, replies with a shrill squeak of unoiled hubs, the sound dwindling away in the distance as it bounces from stone to stone, up the hill. When it passes along the smooth path by the pond, … the gardener, … softly, as always, intones his tender and pensive song.
>
> The wheelbarrow is of iron, with only one wheel. There was a time when it was painted green, a brilliant emerald green, but now it is old and faded, musty and colorless. Good enough for its purpose!
>
> Placed crisscross on the wheelbarrow, projecting on each side, the coffin looms out of the night shadows, like an old tree-trunk, struck by lightning.
>
> Inside, a dead man …. (Cela 1961: 53)

> La carretilla marchaba por el sendero, entre los pinos, bordeando el barranco, arrimándose al arroyo, en el que se reflejaba la luna, impasible y fría como la imagen misma de la muerte. La empujaba el jardinero, el pelirrojo jardinero, que canta en voz baja cuando poda los geranios o los rosales.
>
> Cuando marcha cuesta arriba dice '¡Hoop!', y la carretilla, con su rueda de hierro que salta sobre los guijarros, responde con el aguado chirrido del eje sin engrasar, que después se pierde, rebotando de piedra en piedra, monte arriba. Cuando va por el liso camino del regato, … el jardinero, … entona con su media voz de siempre su amoroso y pensativo cantar.
>
> La carretilla es de hierro, de una sola rueda. Estuvo en tiempos píntada de verde, de un verde del color brillante de la esmeralda, pero ahora y está vieja, ya apagada, ya mustia y sin color. ¡Para lo que la usen!
>
> Cruzado sobre la carretilla, saliendo per los lados, el ataúd parece, entre las sombras de la noche, un viejo tronco de encina derribado por el rayo.
>
> Dentro, un hombre muerto …. Cela [1943/4] 1961: 52)

Of course, the sentence quoted at the beginning of this chapter – the 'So you have come here *just* for the purpose of dying?' – also alludes to the knowledge of death looming, if not the determination to die. Klabund's heroine Sybil Lindquist manages it by chain-smoking (while suffering from a lung disease!); others, such as two characters in Konstantin Fedin's *Sanatorii Arktur* (1940), do it with morphine or a gun. They do so because they are incurable, and not just in the physical sense. (We will return to this.) In Georgi Markov's *Sanatorium of Dr Gospodov*, which is set in Bulgaria during the Second World War, the meaningful death of the partisans fighting fascism is compared to the senseless death of the tuberculosis patients (Markov [1966] 2018: 199).

Perhaps the strangest, yet most condensed example in this regard is Dino Buzzati's Italian story 'Sette Piani'. It has a kafkaesque plot in which a protagonist with a non-definable, yet seemingly minor ailment arrives in a sanatorium, and – for seemingly inconsequential reasons – gets progressively worse and dies. The building is arranged in such a way that the least serious cases are located on the top floor and able to look into the windows of the ground floor, where those patients are lying for whom there is no hope left. Our Mr Giuseppe Corte checks in at the top floor and eventually ends up at the bottom, with the blinds of his windows slowly closing to indicate his death. Here and elsewhere, it becomes clear that death is referred to both in its existential dimension and in its symbolic one: I am dead for the rest of the world whilst in the sanatorium. Both Buzzati and Schulz (see above) can be said to be working with the technique of purposeful narrative disorientation, in which the causalities of both sujet and fable dissolve – thus representing in their form the modernist sense of terminal confusion.

This is not to say that all tuberculosis patients die in the sanatorium. Mann's Hans Castorp leaves Davos to fight (and presumably die) in the First World War; Forte's, Bernhard's and A. E. Ellis's autobiographical heroes rejoin their respective post–Second World War societies. The subtitle of Bernhard's *Atem*: *Eine Entscheidung* (Breath: A Resolution) refers to the protagonist's key decision to live. Of course, the period following the Second World War also sees the introduction of the antibiotic streptomycin, which dramatically increased the chances of recovering from tuberculosis. Several stories set in this period thematize the fight between patients for this (then still) rare and expensive medication. In McGrath's *The Charnel House*, it is only given to selected young patients; in Grant's *Dark Circle*, it becomes the occasion for corruption; in Wolfgang Held's *Einer trage des Anderen Last* ([1995] 2002; Bear ye one another's burdens), it induces a demonstration of Christian charity. In any case, next to none of these departure stories leaves a doubt about the difficulties the successful convalescents have in reintegrating into life back home.

'You have come to a new world', had been Bernhardine's welcome in the sanatorium (Harraden 1893: 43), and Mr McLeod in Maugham's story knew: 'When you've been here a few years and you go back to ordinary life, you feel a bit out of it, you know' (Maugham 1951: 909).[13] Forte puts it more strongly: 'It is like being born anew. The umbilical cord is being cut again. [You] will return to life as a different person.' ('Es ist wie eine Neugeburt. Die Nabelschnur wird noch

einmal durchgetrennt. Er wird als anderer Mensch ins Leben zurückkehren', Forte 2004: 151.) McGrath uses similar imagery in *The Charnel House* (see McGrath 1990: 211, 219). Elsewhere, Forte compares the situation of the released patient with Kaspar Hauser, a character in German cultural and literary history who claimed to have grown up in a cave without human contact and only entered society at the age of sixteen, endowed 'with the stunned gaze of the stranger, the one who does not belong' ('mit dem erschrockenen Blick des Fremden, des Nichtdazugehörenden', Forte 2004: 260). As will have become clear, the sense of estrangement is caused both by the length of time the patients have spent 'away from the world', but also by the fact that inside the institution, a distinct way of life and social order prevail. One of the sentences most frequently quoted from Mann's *Magic Mountain* is 'A man changes … his ideas here' (Mann 1995: 7; 'Man ändert hier seine Begriffe', Mann [1924] 2002: 17). And not necessarily just one's ideas, but one's way of life.[14]

3.6 A world within a world apart

'The tuberculars have stopped being lawyers, engineers, merchants, painters, suitors, dissatisfied lovers,' we read in *Pabellón de reposo*, 'now they are nothing but sick people, people with sick lungs' (Cela 1961: 113, 115; 'Los tuberculoses han dejado de ser abogados, de ser ingenieros, comerciantes, pintores, novios, insatisfechos amantes; …. Ahora ya no son más que enfermos, que enfermos del pecho', Cela [1943/4] 1961: 112). They form a society in which the place of the individual is firmly assigned and from which emancipation can only be had by means of exit or revolt. Most of these stories thematize the relationship between *the doctor* – usually one person, who often owns the sanatorium and is always in a position of absolute power – and *the patients*, who have been placed collectively in his hands, and who must try individually or in small groups to deal with their situation. In discussions among patients, the doctors' competence is called into question and they are suspected of being uncharitable and greedy for money and/or power. This is particularly pronounced in stories set in sanatoria for neurasthenics, such as in Reventlow's *Geldkomplex*, where doctors are dismissed as greedy charlatans, but it is also present in tuberculosis sanatoria such as in Fedin's *Sanatorii Arktur*, in Markov's *Sanatoriumut na Dr. Gospodov* or in Bernhard's *Die Kälte*. A very special focus on a doctor's incompetence and thirst for power can be found in Grant's *Dark Circle* in which – at a time when the first doses of streptomycin have already arrived – he still uses his power to decide which patients have to undergo the enormously invasive procedure of pneumothorax which leaves them disfigured but not cured. The use of – physical and social – violence by doctors is also replicated in the institutional regime, which is particularly tough in sanatoria for the poor. In *The Rack*, written by the British author Derek Lindsay under the pseudonym of A. E. Ellis, the doctors' morning round 'had about it the precision of a military inspection' (Ellis 1958: 75); and in David Vogel's *Babet hamarpe* ('In the Sanatorium'), written in Hebrew, the very building of the sanatorium for penniless Jews is reminiscent of a barracks. Some characters in Vogel's, Bernhard's and

Grant's novels, among others, use the simile of the prison to convey their situation, and Bonet and McGrath go as far as to invoke the comparison of the concentration camp (see Bonet 1958: 150, 2014: 100; McGrath 1990: 10, 90). Of course, this seems worlds away from Mann's Berghof sanatorium in the *Magic Mountain*, yet some elements of such medico-social mechanisms of enforcement can be found even there (just think of the religiously observed times of temperature-taking).

Alongside the hierarchical relationship between medical personnel and patients, there are also clear distinctions of status among the patients themselves. These partly have to do with matters of socio-economic background in the world outside, which can be reflected in the rooms patients live in or the food they are served. But more importantly, the hierarchy among patients is related to institution-specific criteria such as their length of stay in the sanatorium. The most senior patient in Maugham's 'Sanatorium' for instance asserts: 'I've been here for seventeen years. I've got the best room here and so I damned well ought to have. Campbell's been trying to get me out of it, he wants it himself, but I'm not going to budge; I've got a right to it, I came here six months before he did' (Maugham 1951: 909).

Of one female patient it is said that '[h]er long residence had given her a sort of position, she was honorary librarian and hand in glove with the matron' (Maugham [1938] 1951: 913). The seating arrangements in the dining hall also reflect the social order among patients. Sometimes it is the severity of the disease that stipulates this hierarchy, which always has to do with the careful distribution of small privileges within an overall repressive system. Needless to say, such preferential treatments work in turn to strengthen the power of the medical personnel and the powerlessness of the patients.

Although in many respects the patients form a collective and are treated as such, each is also thrown back on his or her own resources and experiences a strong sense of individualization and loneliness. Thus, in most of these stories we find competing tendencies between collectivizing and isolating the subject – with both causing a loss of its autonomy. A case in point are the daily rest-cures. In Salvatore Satta's Italian novella *La Veranda* ([1928/1981] 2002), we read:

> The communal veranda stretches along the entire façade of the sanatorium. My place, at no. 17, is next to a wooden partition: a kind of screen, which however does not prevent one from hearing what is being hatched on the other side. The rules are clear: from 9 to 11 a.m. rest; during the lounging hours one must speak as little as possible, and always in a low voice. With the diligence of a neophyte I tuck myself into my blankets and I look for a quarter of an hour at the ceiling, where long cracks unfold, with the bizarreness of a mysterious language. The wind (or maybe a person) disturbs the leaves in the driveway opposite. A distant voice; a deckchair nearby, wriggling, a sigh, a breath. In short, there is nothing but my heart, beating, in the world.
>
> La veranda comune si stende lungo tutta la facciata del sanatorio. Il mio posto, al n. 17, è a ridosso di un tramezzo di legno: una specie di paravento, che però non

> impedisce di sentire quello che si fucina dall'altra parte. Il regolamento parla chiaro: dalle 9 alle 11 riposi; durante le ore di sdraio si deve parlare il meno possibile, e sempre a voce bassa. Con la diligenza di un neofita mi sono insaccato nelle coperte, e guardo da un quarto d'ora il soffitto, dove lunghe incrinature si svolgono, con la bizzarria di un misterioso linguaggio. Passa il vento (o forse è qualcuno) sopra le foglie, nel vialetto di fronte. Una voce lontana; uno sdraio, vicino, che scricciola, un sospiro, un respiro. In breve, non c'è che il mio cuore, che batte, nel mondo. (Satta [1928/1981] 2002: 42)

Everyone is lined up, lying next to each other, and – as a result of the prescribed quiet – alone with themselves at the same time. The particular tension between being part of a collective and being all alone is also manifest in the narrative perspectives applied in these stories, many of which oscillate between the use of autodiegetic narrators, focalizations moving from one person to another and the use of monologues by different patients. Cela's *Pabellón de reposo* and Bonet's *El Mar*, for instance, consist of series of monologues. The patients think and speak of each other a lot, yet with an irreconcilable distance between them. In *Pabellón de reposo*, they refer to each other not by name, but by their room numbers. Similarly, in *La Veranda*, the patients' names are replaced by the places they come from. In Markov's *Sanatoriumut na Dr. Gospodov,* job titles are used instead of people's names to reflect their social status. All of this together creates a sense of polyphony and unison at the same time, a fluctuating emergence and disappearance of voices. Everyone takes their place and thinks/speaks their role, yet there is no sense of action or progression.[15] It is a life and society in stasis.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the patients' motionless and claustrophobic situation in the sanatorium, they also feel invited to intensely reflect on the world they left behind – and which they may or may not re-enter.

3.7 Writing the world through the prism of the sanatorium

Referring to Talcott Parsons's *The Social System* (and, in particular, his reflections on the role of health and illness in social life), Pohland speaks of a double function ascribed to illness by society: stigmatization and legitimation. The sick are stigmatized for being economically inactive and potentially contagious, yet the institutional acknowledgement of disease legitimizes their status. Their illness is no longer a subjective, individual situation, but part of the human condition. It is this situation of being in and out of society at the same time – manifested physically and symbolically in the patients' institutionalization – that calls for reflection and discussion of what they are being withdrawn from. Thus, Pohland argues, the sanatorium as a literary space is the perfect place from which to interpret the world at large, as it allows for an informed yet relatively independent perspective (see Pohland 1984: 10). The stasis governing the micro-world of the sanatorium provides a good vantage point from which to observe and diagnose the processes evolving outside. Indeed, such reflections occupy a prominent place in virtually all

the texts of our corpus and tend to bunch around specific historical moments or turning points.

Emma Böhmer's novel *Im Sanatorium* (1911) is set in a sanatorium for nervous disorders, located just north of Berlin and recruiting most of its patients from this city. The patients' mental and physical afflictions are almost exclusively caused by social problems and classified as diseases of society. One of its doctors reflects on his patients as follows:

> The young doctor called to mind life in the big city, in the countryside, in a small village. Everywhere you came across people who were sick in body and mind – their poor, profoundly bewildered faces bore the stamp of suffering. Contentment, trust in God – these were rarely seen any more. Everyone complained of feeling constrained. … Rude health and uninhibited joy such as he had known as a student could no longer be enjoyed today, even by the young. … So, what was it that people were suffering from?
>
> Der junge Arzt vergegenwärtigte sich das Leben in der Großstadt, in der Sommerfrische, an einem kleinen Orte. Überall traf man jetzt seelisch und körperlich Kranke – die armen verstörten Gesichter trugen den Stempel des Leids. Zufriedenheit – Glaube? Selten sah man sie noch. Über Unfreiheit klagte jeder. … Urgesund, fröhlich wie als Student konnte man heute selbst mit der Jugend schon nicht mehr sein. … Ja, woran krankten die Menschen? (Böhmer 1911: 109)

The novel appeared in the period immediately preceding the First World War, and the narrative, focalized through a (female) patient, is replete with terminology of decay – 'our hyperculture bears signs of rot' ('unsere Überkultur trägt Fäulniszeichen', Böhmer 1911: 225) – and demise: 'We are moving rapidly towards the abyss' ('Wir treiben rapid dem Abgrunde zu', Böhmer 1911: 224). Many of these impressions seem to pre-empt what Oswald Spengler would soon term *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918, *The Decline of the West*). The novel *Siste Kapitel* (1923) by the Norwegian Nobel Prize–winner Knut Hamsun was explicitly read as a literary diagnosis of the demise of the West – writing its 'last chapter' as it were – and a clear expression of the cultural pessimism prevailing at the time. The sanatorium Paul Keller creates in his novel *Ferien vom Ich* (see Chapter 2) can in a sense be understood as an attempt to provide an antidote to such decay. Arguably, the very time in which the novel appeared (1915) meant that the attempt was doomed to fail.

Blai Bonet's novel *El Mar* is set in a sanatorium on Mallorca just after the end of the Spanish Civil War, depicting with enormous intensity the physical and moral crisis of its patients. All of them are young males suffering from tuberculosis, with their illness and expected deaths clearly linked to the experience of war and aggravated violence: the war has entered their bodies. In their monologues and their behaviour towards each other, the boys both reflect on and re-enact in the confinement of the sanatorium the violence they experienced during the war. They

are all victims and perpetrators (victims turned perpetrators turned victims), and for them the war is not over: 'It was the war that came after peace, the kind of war that penetrates the land, creates dark caves, and incites lust' (Bonet 2014: 158; 'Era la guerra que venia després de la pau, aquesta guerra que penetra en la terra, crea coves obscures i excita la luxúria', Bonet 1958: 230).

In Russian-Soviet literature, however, the vision of building a new society is initially reflected in narratives that are diametrically opposed to the decadence motifs described above. For example, Tatiana Dubrovskich (2015: 76) says of Nikolai Aseyev's sanatorium novella 'Sanatorii' (1929/30): 'In the sanatorium each of [the patients] not only experiences "bodily repair" but also undergoes a "therapeutic course" of spiritual growth' ('Каждый из них в стенах санатория не только подвергается "телесному ремонту", но и проходит "лечебный курс" духовного роста'). Konstantin Fedin's *Sanatorii Arktur* is a conscious response to Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* as the swan song of Western civilization, emphasizing by contrast the will to health of Soviet society, as we will discuss in detail in Chapter 4. Here as elsewhere in Soviet sanatorium texts, the institution stands metonymically for the society in transition to a state of health into which formerly sick individuals are to be successfully reintegrated. Granted, here, too, the specific chronotope of the sanatorium, with its stagnant time, its long corridors and the resulting labyrinthine spatial structures that simulate rather than stimulate movement, prevails, yet it seems to evoke a reaction consisting of experiment and change. Hence, Tatiana Dubrovskich notes that Nikolai Aseyev's sanatorium novella 'adequately depicts the disparate reality of the crisis period' ('[А]декватно изображает разрозненную действительность кризисного периода', Dubrovskich 2015: 73).[16]

We also found a good number of books – mainly Austrian, German, English, and Irish – that use the sanatorium setting to assess the state of Western Europe in the immediate post-war period. The novels of Phyllis Bottome, Hans Kades and A. E. Ellis, for instance, all published in the late 1940s or 1950s, are concerned with the effect of the Second World War on the people in their respective societies. The outlook in Bottome's story is as bleak as it is hopeful:

> In Europe … this is a haunted generation. I have the feeling that we let innocence die here, and that whatever is left alive of it is still threatened. In Canada or America there is the freshness and creative drive of a man who has never been sick. Such a man is always stronger than one of our patients who has recovered. And yet, does anyone know as much about health as the man who has once lost it – and *has* recovered? (Bottome 1954: 52, emphasis in the original)

At heart, this British novel is concerned with complex questions of guilt, and its protagonists know that any new beginning will have to be based on a coming to terms with the past. Much like Kades's Austrian novel, Bottome's is to a large extent narrated from the perspective of the doctors, interrogating their roles in the world of war and its immediate aftermath: 'What power we have to hurt each other – we who seem to have so little power to help!' (Bottome 1954: 239).

The immediate post-war period also features in novels of a later vintage, such as the books by Bernhard, McGrath and Wolfgang Held published in 1978, 1981, 1990 and 1995, respectively. The trend continues into the twenty-first century with Dieter Forte (2004), Christa Wolf (2012) and Linda Grant (2016). In a way, they are all founded on the assumption so clearly expressed in Bottome's novel, that the war is not over just because it is finished but has long-lasting effects. Bernhard's narrator remembers:

> At the end of the war, we all thought we had escaped, and so we felt safe; …, yet now, a few years after the war, we found that we had not escaped at all. Now at last the blow came. It had caught up with us. It was as though we were being called to account. And we too were not going to be allowed to survive. (Bernhard 1985: 293)

> Wir alle hatten bei Kriegsende gedacht, davongekommen zu sein, und fühlten uns sicher; … und jetzt, ein paar Jahre nach dem Krieg, waren wir doch nicht davongekommen, jetzt schlug es zu, hatte uns eingeholt, wie wenn es uns … zur Rechenschaft gezogen hätte. Auch wir durften nicht überleben! (Bernhard 1981: 39–40)

Grant, Held, Wolf and others interrogate the post-war project through the prism of the sanatorium. Interestingly, they identify very diverse tendencies in these social microcosms. The British Linda Grant, for example, characterizes the sanatorium as 'a kind of experimental station for what could be done to tear down the individual self and rebuild it in the model of the well-behaved citizen' (Grant 2016: 123), whereas the East German Wolfgang Held depicts it as a school of democracy. The question behind all the accounts written with hindsight is, how did we become who we are today?

3.8 Theorizing society under the sign of the sanatorium

By the first half of the twentieth century, the change of setting was complete, and the sanatorium text had achieved such prominence as to be given its first philosophical consideration. One of the leading proponents of this was the French semiotician Roland Barthes, who addressed the topic in his essays and lecture notes.

Roland Barthes wrote his 'Esquisse d'une société sanatoriale' ('Sketch of a Sanatorium Society', published posthumously in 2002) in 1947, in the wake of his own treatment for tuberculosis. He had spent about five years (1942–6) in the French student sanatorium at Saint-Hilaire-du-Touvet (Figure 3.3) and the Swiss sanatorium at Leysin (Samoyault 2017: 113). As his biographer Tiphaine Samoyault (2017: 116, 121) notes, the specific treatment of tuberculosis with an intensified form of rest-cure influenced his writing. Forced to work in bed, in a slightly reclining position, the young Barthes had to prioritize reading over

Figure 3.3 The Saint-Hilaire Student Sanatorium, France, where Roland Barthes underwent treatment for tuberculosis in the years 1942–5. Based on archive material and letters, Frédéric Goldbronn tells the story of this institution in his film *Les Fantômes du sanatorium* (The Ghosts of the Sanatorium, 2020).

writing. This led to his working in fragments, on slips of paper attached to books. Recording thoughts ran parallel to documenting bodily functions. Continuous logbooks register temperature curves and weight changes. Barthes and his fellow patients in the sanatorium turned this into a form of involuntary hospital art, 'a farcical way of writing one's body within time' (1977: 35; 'façon-farce d'écrire son corps dans le temps', Barthes 1975: 39). Reading the world and reading the body are simultaneous processes: 'the body becomes a set of signs. It is examined, weighed, measured, x-rayed, opened and segmented' (Samoyault 2017: 122).[17] His biographer emphasizes the author's preference for highly regulated work processes. The enforced immobility during the cure creates space for mental creativity. This is a recurrent topos of autobiographical testimonies of sanatorium stays. The clearly structured time and the reduction of external stimuli facilitate concentration, and getting bored prepares the ground for inspiration. One text that accompanied Barthes during his sanatorium stays was, once again, Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* (Samoyault 2017: 124; Watroba 2022: 19), to which the philosopher would return throughout his life. He characterizes the book as 'très poignant, cafardant, presque intolérable' ('very poignant, depressing, almost intolerable'), and re-reading it as a tuberculosis sufferer himself caused an overwhelming effect of recognition (Barthes 2002: 48, 2013: 16).

The particular spatial, temporal and social organization of the sanatorium, as we have seen in the previous sub-chapters, does not only influence personal attitudes and forms of writing. Rather, 'the paradoxical nature of the place' generates an 'alternative social life' situated between the intimacy of the family

and the anonymity of society (Samoyault 2017: 115, 121, cf. Samoyault 2015: 169, 177). The 'Sketch on a Sanatorium Society' is only a few pages long and unfinished. Nevertheless, it contains some observations of general importance. The depiction and critique of this very specific form of human togetherness is directed specifically at (and against) the Western bourgeois sanatorium. According to Barthes, the latter represents a 'puerile society' (Barthes 2018: 64; 'une société puérile', Barthes 2015: 87). The paternal role is assumed by medicine in the guise of the doctor: 'As both miracle worker and hotelkeeper, the sanatorium doctor … has final authority here' (Barthes 2018: 64; 'Les médecins de sanatorium, à la fois thaumaturges et hôteliers, sont … une autorité dernière', Barthes 2015: 87). The doctor becomes a quasi-divine authority. He condemns (diagnosis) and saves (therapy). In bourgeois society, Barthes goes on, the sanatorium therefore represents a relapse into the structural irresponsibility of childhood. The parallel consists, on the one hand, in the father's authority over the child (the patient), who must accept the rules, and on the other hand, in their economic dependency. The bourgeois sanatorium is thus both paternalistic and theocratic.

The counterpart in this 'almost-feudal social condition' (Barthes 2018: 65; 'cet état à peu près féodal de la société', Barthes 2015: 88) is the 'gang', the clique of the sick. This involves an exercise in solidarity within the group, in response to the enforced exclusion from the outside world. Joking and laughter are the ritual elements of this inner solidarity. In the *Magic Mountain*, for example, which as we know inspired Barthes's essay, the most seriously ill patients form a 'Half-lung club' (Mann 1995: 49; 'Verein Halbe Lunge', Mann [1924] 2002: 80). They amuse and frighten their fellow patients with macabre jokes. The aesthetically elevated form of the gang is the reading or music circle, which uses bourgeois art, in the sense of disinterested enjoyment, as the basis for fake socialization. Such circles or clubs within the sanatorium form and dissolve in endless succession. This is where the 'social illusion' reaches its apogee. But this 'sentimental humanist ethic' (Barthes 2018: 66; 'l'éthique sentimentale de l'humain', Barthes 2015: 89) is only an empty exercise because it has no other aim aside from masking the scandal of disease and of isolation from authentic society. It is therefore more of a method of repression, and Barthes here pre-empts the famous Foucauldian concept of biopolitics (see introduction), where enlightened care is in essence social control. And so, unlike the prominent spa utopias of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – we might think of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Gespräche für Freimaurer* (1778, 'Dialogues for Freemasons') – the sanatorium does not act as a training ground for the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere but, on the contrary, returns its society to a state of infantilism.

Barthes's sanatorium inmates thus constitute more a community than a real society, a simulation of social contact rather than a real interaction. A theological way of thinking prevails, which has to suppress teleological cause–effect relations (illness – therapy – healing) and transpose chance into meaning ('a constant shift from the contingent to the transcendent', Barthes 2018: 66; 'sans cesse passage du contigent au transcendant', Barthes 2015: 89). 'Suffering and truth' ('la souffrance … et la vérité') enter into a higher relationship. To this end,

a series of dissimulations are employed. They elevate the contingency of physical illness to the level of foresight. 'From two sides, *physis* and *antiphysis*, there is great pressure to give disease meaning; according to a well-known mechanism, a causality is turned into a finality because the mind finds the idea of meaningless catastrophe intolerable' (Barthes 2018: 66; 'Des deux côtés, *physis* et *antiphysis*, on s'empresse de donner un sens au mal; selon un mécanisme bien connu, une finalité est substituée à une causalité; car l'idée d'une catastrophe sans signification est intolérable à l'esprit', Barthes 2015: 89). (This is a mechanism that we can recognize again and again in the text corpus discussed above, e.g., in the texts by Satta, Bonet or Markov.)

A good thirty years later (1976–7), Barthes returns to the sanatorium as a stimulus for theoretical reflection in his first lecture series after being appointed professor at the prestigious Collège de France. The characteristic title Barthes used there was *Comment vivre ensemble: Simulations romanesques de quelques espaces quotidiens*, which he also kept for the publication of his lecture notes (2002, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, 2013). It is precisely this question of cohabitation that preoccupies many of the transnational narratives that we bring together in this book. As a temporary society of more or less voluntary character, the sanatorium, as has already been pointed out, is an ideal terrain for discussing and testing questions of the coexistence not only of individuals, but also of cultures, genders and classes. Barthes makes the point in relation to the specific sanatorium architecture: 'bedrooms and a room for socializing; intense, short-lived relationships' (Barthes 2013: 16; 'chambres séparées + lieu de convivialité; relations intenses et passagères', Barthes 2002: 48). In his reading of *The Magic Mountain* as a type of institution, he emphasizes its spatial isolation, the regimented and ceremonial aspect interrupted by erotic escapades, the experience of eternity evoked by the absence of external events and, in contrast to this, the abundance of social encounters intensified by enclosure. This corresponds essentially to the image of the 'fictional sanatorium' (Condrau 2010: 74), as outlined in the previous sub-chapters.

But Barthes is concerned with community in a much more general sense. His lectures not only deal with the sanatorium but also with the monastery (in its Eastern, less rule-based version, see O'Meara 2012: 118) or the residential house, in marked contrast to the solitary spaces of the single room or the uninhabited island.[18] In his self-portrait published a year earlier, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975; *Roland Barthes*, 1977), the author had already described the socio-spatial characteristics of the tuberculosis institutions in a similar and perhaps even more poignant way: 'tuberculosis projected you into a minor ethnographic society, part tribe, part monastery, part phalanstery: rites, constraints, protection' (Barthes 1977: 35; 'la tuberculose, elle, vous projetatit dans une petite société ethnographique qui tenait de la peuplade, du couvent et du phalanstère: rites, contraintes, protections', Barthes 1975: 39). In addition to the monastery, which appears from Foucault to Goffman as a sacred counter-model to the sanatorium (see introduction), Barthes refers here to the model of the phalanstery and

thus to the famous early socialist utopia of Charles Fourier: a community and built environment in which living, working – and loving – were to be practised together.

Barthes's utopia of positive social coexistence is played out between the two poles of 'idiorrythmie' ('idiorrhythmy') and 'proxémie' ('proxemics'; see Barthes 2002: 36, 155, 2013: 6, 111). Both words are neologisms, inspired by ancient terminology, typical of the French philosophical discourses of the time. Idiorrhythmy (in this specific spelling) means a communal life according to individual rhythms of the inhabitants (in a sense, a lived paradox). Proxemics refers to the harmonious order of things immediately surrounding the individual. On a more abstract level, the two terms express what Diana Knight (2008: 51) calls the 'twin fantasies' of 'Living-Together'/'Vivre-Ensemble' and 'Living-Alone'/'Vivre-Seul'. In the utopian sanatorium, they manifest themselves in the swift alternation between social space (salon, the balcony for the rest-cure) and private space (the bedroom). The extent to which idiorrhythmy is actually realized in the sanatorium is debatable. Other theorists, such as Erving Goffman (1961: 4), existentialize the rigour of its regime to the point that it represents a 'total institution'. Barthes, by contrast, who, despite the negative sides of the experience, actually enjoyed his stay at the sanatorium, is able to elevate the sanatorium society to an abstract model whose utopian potential lies in the combination of communality and solitude: 'The *Magic Mountain* … actually an idyllic narrative. Its "darkness" comes from death, not from affects. … In its account of the community: a very civilized, humane narrative' (Barthes 2013: 83; '*La Montagne magique* … en fait, récit humainement idyllique. Le «noir» du récit vient de la mort, non des affects. … Pour ce qui est de la communauté: récit très civilisé, humaniste', Barthes 2002: 122).

3.9 Changes in the fabric of Modernity

As should have become apparent in this chapter, the shift from the spa to the sanatorium is bound up with seismic historical developments which also altered the face of cultural production. Whilst the classic spa town and the discourses around it reflect Enlightenment values, the sanatorium and the discourses surrounding that are born out of Modernity and its discontents. Accordingly, the sanatorium develops as a distinct entity within the broader context of the resort narrative. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope' (see above) can help to elucidate its specificity and determine its essence. In Bakhtinian terms, the sanatorium as a medical institution and in its specific architecture, consisting of long corridors with patient and treatment rooms leading off them, is assimilated to the category of closedness. It is a topography that bespeaks discipline and control. The classic resort town, by contrast, is characterized by a tendency towards openness in its spatio-temporal structures and a higher degree of permeability to the outside world. This creates the conditions for the exercise of freedom and the transgressing of norms. Within the broader resort narrative then, the chronotopoi of the spa town and the sanatorium representing, respectively, openness and

closedness, enabling or disciplining spaces, epitomize the cultural and imaginary environments of the periods concerned.

The sanatorium stories discussed here touch on matters of medicine (its scientific advancements as much as its limitations and ethical questions) as well as changes in the fabric of modern industrial societies and the attendant effects on human psychology and well-being. Inevitably, the momentous political events of the twentieth century are also written into these narratives. And in as far as we are all still children of Modernity, the sanatorium continues to fulfil both its medical and its discursive functions. Thus, interrogating the period of Modernity through the prism of the spa-to-sanatorium shift throws into sharp relief many of the salient features of the period, whose relationship to each other cannot be seen so clearly elsewhere. This becomes particularly evident in the narrative and aesthetic parallels to be found in our transnational corpus. But it is no less strikingly present in the systemic competition between capitalist and socialist models of health and society.

Notes

1 The author's name was actually Alfred Georg Hermann Henschke, but he wrote under the name of Klabund. He was twenty-five when he published *Die Krankheit*, and he died at thirty-seven, from tuberculosis, in Davos (see Raabe, ed. 1990).

2 The original quotation reads: 'Sie waren Zuflucht und Hoffnung unzähliger Kranker, denen die Medizin mit ihren recht beschränkten therapeutischen Möglichkeiten keine Hilfe mehr leisten konnte' (Steudel 1967: 90).

3 In the case of Storm, it is the Bavarian spa Bad Reichenhall, and in Heyse's case, the Swiss resort Klosters (see Storm [1887] 1988; Heyse [1885] 1909).

4 Pohland's corpus consisted of Beatrice Harraden, *Ships That Pass in the Night* (1893); Thomas Mann, *Tristan* (1903); Hermann Hesse, *Aufzeichnungen eines Herrn im Sanatorium* (1910); Else Rema, *Sanatorium Esperanza* (1910); Emma Böhmer, *Im Sanatorium* (1911); Elisabeth Franke, *Das große stille Leuchten: Eine Erzählung aus dem Kurleben in Davos* (1912); Heinrich Nommsen, *Über den Reformen: Ein populär-wissenschaftlich-philosophischer Roman* (1912); Klabund, *Die Krankheit* (1917); Jakob Boßhardt, *Heilstätte* (1923); Knut Hamsun, *Siste Kapitel* (1923); Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (1924); Joseph Kessel, *Les Captifs* (1926); Hjalmar Kutzleb, *Haus der Genesung: Ein Sanatoriumsroman* (1932); Elly Grosser-Dressel, *Sanatorium Anti-Langeweile* (1937); Bruno Schulz, *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (1937); Herman Hoster, *Genesung in Graubünden: Roman eines Kurortes* (1937); W. Somerset Maugham, *Sanatorium* (1938); Konstantin Fedin, *Sanatorii Arktur* (1940); Dino Buzzati, 'Sette Piani' (1942); Phyllis Bottome, *Against Whom?* (1954) and A. E. Ellis, *The Rack* (1958).

5 In the Polish original, unlike in the translation, the term 'sanatorium' is not used, instead it is 'institution' = *zakład*).

6 Beard's text was translated into German in 1881 by Moritz Neisser, who worked for a time as spa doctor in Charlottenbrunn (Jedlina-Zdrój), under the title *Die Nervenschwäche* (*Neurasthenia*): *Ihre Symptome, Natur, Folgezustände und Behandlung*.

7 Of the thirty-six sanatoria that existed in Switzerland in 1905, eighteen were located in Davos (see Pohland 1984: 37).
8 According to Vera Pohland, the first *Volksheilstätten* (people's sanatoria) were established in 1892 (Pohland 1984: 34).
9 The original quotation reads: 'Sozialhistorisch gesehen ist das Sanatorium damit eine Institution, die sich zwischen den Gegensätzen von Freiraum und „Zuchthaus" bewegt und in einem Spannungsfeld zwischen zwei sich gegenseitig in Frage stellenden Ordnungssystemen.'
10 Foucault's word 'hétérotopie' ('heterotopia') is rendered in French as 'espaces autres' and in English as 'other spaces'. See Foucault (1967) and (1986) and the introduction to this book.
11 Very early on, Hans Castorp notices how frequently his cousin uses the phrase 'wir hier oben' (Mann [1924] 2002: 20), which Woods translates as 'us up here' (Mann 1995: 9).
12 The title of one German edition even reads 'Das Sanatorium zur Todesanzeige' ('The Sanatorium under the Sign of the Obituary', Schulz 2020).
13 Elsewhere, the doctor asserts that long-time patients like McLeod can no longer 'cope with the world outside' (Maugham 1951: 912).
14 The protagonist Simon in Paul Gadenne's French novel *Siloé*, for instance, undergoes a gradual but lasting transformation from a dyed-in-the-wool urbanite to a lover of nature who is no longer able to accept the city as his habitat. For this reason, the published translation into German bears the title: *Die Augen wurden ihm aufgetan* (*His Eyes Were Opened*, Gadenne 1952).
15 In a prefatory note to his fifth novel quoted as a kind of blurb to Cela (1961), the author says of his *Pabellón de reposo* (*Rest Home*) that 'it is a novel in which nothing happens and in which there are no blows, no assassinations, no turbulent love affairs, and only […] the minimum of blood […] to show that my characters are tubercular patients' (ellipses in the original).
16 As the socialist or Soviet sanatorium also increasingly transforms from a medical to a consumer-oriented vacation facility with a highly symbolic value (Koenker 2013: 32), critical and post-colonial depictions proliferate, especially in post-modern Russian and Ukrainian literature (see Chapter 4).
17 The original quotation reads: 'Le corps devient un ensemble de signes. On l'examine, on le pèse, on le mesure, on le radiographie, on l'ouvre, on le segmente' (Samoyault 2015: 178).
18 Barthes's 'textes-tuteurs' are André Gide's *La Sequestrée de Poitiers* (1930), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Émile Zola's *Pot-Bouille* (1882), Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924) and the *Lausiac History* of Palladius (see O'Meara 2012: 90).

4

Of meandering motifs and erupting source texts: Exemplary intertextual trajectories within (and beyond) the European resort narrative

Thermal baths, seaside resorts, climatic spas and sanatoria make up the typological quadrilateral of the European spa, which, as we have seen in the previous chapters, has been an overarching cultural phenomenon since the eighteenth century. The respective architectural types and patterns of medical and cultural knowledge circulate across the continent, just as the spa visitors, including their literary representatives, are increasingly on the move. The improvements in travel to which the spa owed so much of its rise continued exponentially and were accompanied by a revolution in means of communication. In the introduction to this book, we illustrated this development with a map visualizing the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig's stays in health resorts in the decades before the Second World War. In a similar way, the transnational geographies and mobility patterns centred on European health resorts are reflected in the travels of the Russian author Anton Chekhov (Figure 4.1). Not only did he reside seasonally in Yalta due to his tuberculosis, but his wider resort geography extends from Batumi in Georgia (then part of the Russian Tsarist Empire) to Kislovodsk in the Caucasus; Opatija (Abbazia) in Croatia (then part of Austro-Hungary); Nice and Biarritz. The author finally succumbed to tuberculosis in the small Black Forest spa town of Badenweiler (see Chapter 8).[1]

However, it is not just that authors travel; texts too circulate, forming an intertextually interwoven network. Earlier on, we discussed the various forms of intertextuality that characterize this overarching transnational spa text. These include concrete, traceable references as well as transmissions that are mediated through wider public discourses. In this chapter, we want to follow such trajectories in detail on the basis of a few selected examples. As we saw in the previous chapter, one text has become so central in this regard that it is almost impossible to say anything about the sanatorium – and the resort novel – without mentioning it: Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* of 1924.

Mann's *Magic Mountain* is everywhere, although in its own time it was only one of many sanatorium texts. It reverberates in numerous literary productions right up to the present day – be it as an unmissable presence, or in the form of passing

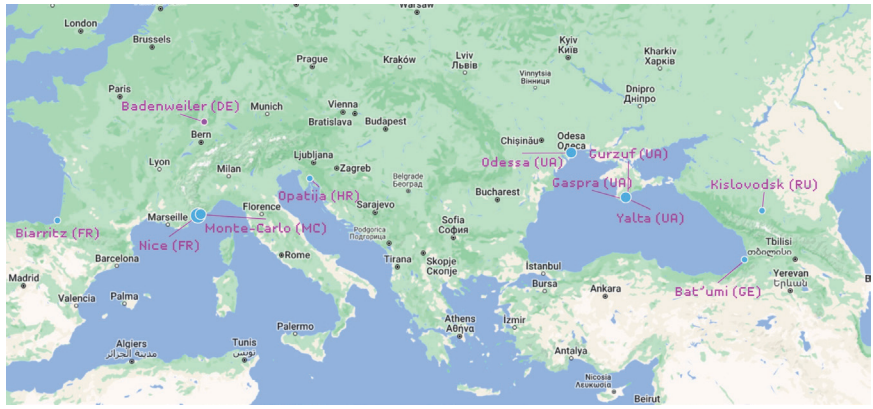


Figure 4.1 Map showing resorts that Anton Chekhov visited, including thermal, seaside and climatic resorts, based on his letters and selected biographies, generated with the Nodegoat database software. (Due to technical limitations, this map displays the national denominations of the respective health resorts for the year 2022. The fact that these borders were drawn differently during the author's lifetime, particularly with regard to Crimea, then part of the Russian Tsarist Empire, highlights that European resort culture reflects the dynamics of imperialist politics.)

allusions. Often, as in Phyllis Bottome's *Against Whom?* (1954), for example, or in Liselotte Marshall's *Tongue-Tied* (2004 – first published in German as *Die verlorene Sprache*, 1997), it is the actual descriptions of the respective sanatoria and their surroundings that recall passages in Mann's novel. The reference in René Crevel's novel *Êtes-vous fous?* (Are you mad?, 1929), to a 'gramophone mountain' ('montagne aux gramophones', Crevel 1929: 47), alludes to and underlines the way in which Mann's novel links technology and geography. And as we have seen in the previous chapter, the title of Sylvie Damagnez's novel *Nous autres, ici, en haut* (We, Up Here, 2020) follows its celebrated predecessor in making of that same geography a matter of physical and social perspective. In the blurb on the back cover of Dieter Forte's autobiographically inspired novel *Auf der anderen Seite der Welt* (On the Other Side of the World, 2004) there is mention of a 'magic-mountain like isolation' ('zauberbergartige Isolation', Forte 2004). Similarly, French critics considered Paul Gadenne's novel *Siloé* (1941) as his 'Magic Mountain' (Jouannaud 2017).[2] In the case of Salvatore Satta's *La Veranda* (1928/1981), indeed, the comparison helped to save the novel from oblivion when the juror of a prize it was entered for, but did not win, was so afraid of losing the equivalent of Mann's masterpiece that he badgered the author's widow to unearth and release the manuscript for posthumous publication.[3] Georgi Gospodinov's novel *Vremeubezhishte* (2020; *Time Shelter*, 2022), which won the International Booker Prize in 2023, thematizes the relationship between the past and the present by having sanatoria for dementia patients built in iconic Switzerland. These are as symbolic of the state of European society in the face of rampant historical forgetfulness and populism as Mann's

Berghof was for the supposed 'decline of the West', as coined by Oswald Spengler (see Chapter 3).[4]

Meanwhile, the German author Heinz Strunk has announced that he will publish a novel entitled *Zauberberg 2* on 28 November 2024, exactly one hundred years after the publication of Mann's original (see Hill 2023). Intertextual references to Mann are already evident in Strunk's recent novel *Ein Sommer in Niendorf* (2022, A Summer in Niendorf), in which he merges *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain* and updates Mann's narrative of decline and escape to the neoliberal era. With the announcement of *Zauberberg 2*, he shows himself to be an expert in neoliberal marketing strategies, exploiting the kudos Mann's novel still enjoys, and anticipating the renewed interest which the anniversary will almost certainly generate.

The position of *Der Zauberberg* in, and its effect on, world literature, have been appraised repeatedly (see, for instance, Boes 2015), most recently by Karolina Watroba. In her monograph *Mann's Magic Mountain: World Literature and Closer Reading* (2022), Watroba notes: 'There are numerous texts and artworks in different genres and media that explicitly engage with *The Magic Mountain*, to varying degrees. I have identified over a hundred such artworks: paintings, poems, songs, short stories, essays, but mostly novels and films, spanning ten decades, ten languages, and fifteen countries on five continents' (Watroba 2022: 26). She then offers selective close readings of nine works of literature and film from across the globe with a focus on their responses to Mann's text.[5] Some of the works she explores are also part of our, European, corpus (see also Chapter 3). In what follows, we, too, will concentrate on selected examples, albeit with a different focus, starting with a recent remake of Mann's novel: *Empuzjon. Horror przyrodoleczniczy* (2022; *The Empusium: A Health Resort Horror Story,* 2024) by Olga Tokarczuk. (See also Chapter 5, where we take a closer look at what might be called the 'Romanian *Magic Mountain*' – *Solenoid* by Mircea Cărtărescu.)

4.1 The East writes back: Transforming Thomas Mann's sanatorium narrative

Tokarczuk's novel begins with the arrival of her protagonist Mieczysław Wojnicz 'a student of hydroengineering and sewage systems, from Lwów' (Tokarczuk 2024: 11; 'Student inżynierii wodnokanalizacyjnej ze Lwowa', Tokarczuk 2022: 8) in the climatic resort of Görbersdorf in Silesia (now Sokołowsko in Poland):

> The view is obscured by clouds of steam from the locomotive that trail along the platform. To see everything we must look beneath them, let ourselves be momentarily blinded by the grey haze, until the vision that emerges after this trial run is sharp, incisive and all-seeing. Then we shall catch sight of the platform flagstones, squares overgrown with the stalks of feeble little plants – a space trying at any cost to keep order and symmetry. Soon after, a left shoe appears on them, brown, leather, not brand new, and is immediately joined by

> a second, right shoe; this one looks even shabbier – its toe is rather scuffed, and there are some lighter patches on the upper. (Tokarczuk 2024: 15)

> Widok przesłaniają kłęby pary z parowozu, które teraz snują się po peronie. Trzeba spod nich wyjrzeć, by zobaczyć wszystko, pozwolić się na chwilę oślepić przez szarą mgłę, aż wzrok, który wyłoni się po tej próbie, będzie ostry, przenikliwy i wszystkowidzący. Wtedy ujrzymy płyty peronu, kwadraty poprzerastane źdźbłami wątłych roślinek – przestrzeń, która za wszelką cenę chce utrzymać porządek i symetrię. Za chwilę pojawia się na nich lewy but, brązowy, skórzany, nie pierwszej nowości, i zaraz dołącza do niego drugi, prawy; ten wydaje się jeszcze bardziej sfatygowany – czubek ma nieco starty, lico w kilku małych miejscach odkrywa jaśniejsze plamki. (Tokarczuk 2022: 10)

What might appear banal is in fact a first conscious intertextual mirroring of the famous forerunner, specifically of the no less famous opening scene, in which the epic train journey to the sanatorium of the protagonist Hans Castorp is described in great detail over many pages. Every one of these details, from the incidental fashion accessory of the 'alligator valise' (Mann 1995: 3; 'krokodilslederne Handtasche', Mann [1924] 2002: 11) to the sublime panorama of the landscape, is of symbolic significance, or has had such significance attributed to it.

The 'clouds of steam from the locomotive', though, not only establish a direct motivic connection to the earlier text. Rather, they simultaneously hide and uncover the literary strategy with which the Polish author approaches her German model, namely through the palimpsestual use of different textual layers. These reveal themselves to the eye of any careful reader who succeeds in penetrating the thick smoke that has clouded the literary reception of the original for nearly a hundred years. Thus, this opening scene constitutes both an intertextual allusion and a metapoetic reading guide.

Let us then take the next step, literally, with and in this novel. For the shoes of Tokarczuk's protagonist, which introduce the novel and this chapter, are set in motion in the next sentence:

> For a moment the shoes stand still, indecisively, but then the left one advances. This movement briefly exposes a black cotton sock beneath a trouser leg. Black recurs in the tails of an unbuttoned wool coat; the day is warm. A small hand, pale and bloodless, holds a brown leather suitcase; the weight has caused the veins to tense, and now they indicate their source, somewhere deep inside the bowels of the sleeve. (Tokarczuk 2024: 15)

> Buty stoją przez moment niezdecydowane, potem jednak lewy rusza do przodu. Ten ruch na krótko odsłania spod nogawki spodni czarną bawełnianą skarpetę. Czerń powtarza się jeszcze w połach rozpiętego flauszowego płaszcza; dzień jest ciepły. Brązową skórzaną walizę trzyma drobna dłoń, blada, bezkrwista; od ciężaru napięły się na niej żyły i wskazują teraz swoje źródła, gdzieś głęboko, w trzewiach rękawa. (Tokarczuk 2022: 10)

Step by step, or rather snapshot by snapshot, the author presents her protagonist to her reader's eyes, starting with the shoes and the socks and moving on to the hands and sleeves. As hinted at earlier, the patient's onward journey from the station to the sanatorium is described in similarly minute detail. In this configuration of the protagonist, the parallels to, and the deviations from, the all-powerful *Magic Mountain* are kept in careful equilibrium. Thus, on the one hand, Wojnicz is characteristically like Hans Castorp in being an engineer, but on the other hand, unlike Hans Castorp, he is completely without means (think of the worn shoes). Moreover, at the time of his arrival, he is already seriously ill, as shown by a 'volley of short, dry coughs' (Tokarczuk 2024: 16; 'defiladę krótkich, suchych kaszlnięć', Tokarczuk 2022: 11). There is no solicitous relative to collect him from his point of arrival and introduce him, the visitor 'from the lowlands' (Tokarczuk 2024: 18; 'z nizin', Tokarczuk 2022: 13) to the ways of 'those up here'.[6] Rather, a coachman drives him to his new place of residence who, although young and freckled, with his bizarrely variegated uniform and his animal-like features, resembles a caricature of the mythical ferryman Charon. On the other side, not of a river but of a dark wood with a disquietingly unfamiliar, dank smell of decomposition, the health resort of Görbersdorf with its celebrated sanatorium appears (see Figure 4.2):

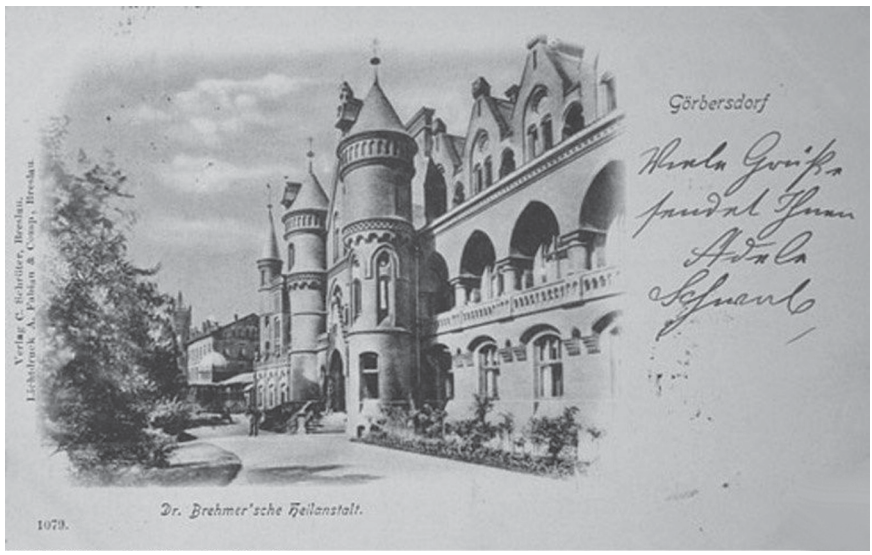


Figure 4.2 Postcard for the climatic resort of Görbersdorf and Dr Brehmer's sanatorium, similar to those from the private collection of Olga Tokarczuk, which the author incorporates as historical documentary material into her novel *Empuzjon*.

> the vast bulk of a redbrick edifice comes into sight, followed by other, smaller buildings, a street, and even two gas lamps. The brick edifice proves colossal as it emerges from the darkness, and the motion of the vehicle picks out rows of illuminated windows. The light in them is dingy yellow. Wojnicz cannot tear his eyes from this sudden, triumphal vision, and he looks back at it for a long time, until it sinks into the darkness like a huge steamship. (Tokarczuk 2024: 18)

> ogromna bryła budynku z czerwonej cegły, i zaraz inne, mniejsze zabudowania, i ulica, i nawet dwie gazowe latarnie. Budynek z cegły okazuje się kolosem, rośnie w oczach, a ruch pojazdu wydobywa z ciemności szeregi oświetlonych okien. Światło w nich jest brudnożółte. Wojnicz nie może oderwać oczu od tego niespodziewanego tryumfalnego widoku i jeszcze długo się za nim ogląda, aż ten utonie w ciemności, jak ogromny parowiec. (Tokarczuk 2022: 13)

The simile of the (sinking) steamship entails a double allusion to Mann's *Magic Mountain* and the international sanatorium of the Berghof: it picks up on the motif of the book on 'Ocean Steamships' which Hans Castorp reads to help pass the time on the long journey from Hamburg to Switzerland and metaphorically points to the themes of melancholy and decay which find expression in Mann's comparison of the building and its balconies to a sponge full of holes – in other words to a porous lung (Mann [1924] 2002: 18; Mann 1995: 8). Alongside the direct intertextual relation between the two literary works, written almost exactly a hundred years apart, it is possible to detect one of the semiotic or generic 'invariants' of the 'second-order' resort text – its tendency to use social metaphors in which the body of the individual and that of the collective are mapped onto each other.

Tokarczuk's novel, though, is not only a sanatorium novel modelled on *The Magic Mountain*, but also a gothic novel and a horror story. Mystical elements, such as are incidentally also present in the arithmomancy of Mann's original, are thus prevalent in Tokarczuk's narrative too, notably in the eponymous figures of the Empusae. These are witch-like figures which have their origins in Aristophanes's classical Greek comedy *The Frogs*, a play staged in the novel by the protagonists themselves (Tokarczuk 2022: 92). *Empuzjon*, the abstract noun Tokarczuk coins in her original title, is derived from this female figure of the Other, and evokes among many other possible associations that of a connection between emotion and medicine, of empathy and transfusion, if you will. (And while the English subtitle *A Health Resort Horror Story* refers specifically to the medical institution, the literal translation of the Polish original *Horror przyrodoleczniczy* – 'naturopathic horror' – contains a reference to naturopathy and the life reform movement. The latter expands associations to include elements of the criticism of civilization and the romanticization of nature and, resulting from this, the dialectics of social change and esotericism.)

In what follows we do not intend to undertake an exhaustive study of the ways in which the Polish writer reconfigures the work of her German predecessor. To do so in half a chapter would be impossible and would not serve our purpose here; in any case, this is work which will have to be done in detail by future studies of Tokarczuk's novel. Rather our aim is first to demonstrate, methodically and

in detail, how intertextual and discursive (culture semiotic) reception processes complement each other. Secondly, we will be focusing on certain selected aspects of Tokarczuk's sanatorium palimpsest that are of particular interest for the concerns of this book: namely, the metaphorical and metamorphotic nature of the resort, with its power to change both individual and society, and proceeding from that the elements of critique directed at post-colonialism and gender.

In *The Empusium*, it is not only individual topoi of setting, plot and themes that are invoked intertextually or indeed palimpsestually, but rather the narrative perspective itself. In *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann chooses an authorial perspective with an omniscient narrator. This narrator not only provides the overview of the life and experiences of his protagonist in the sanatorium (in a generally chronological order with a few prolepses), but also the meta-commentaries on contemporary history that have made the novel so famous. For this narrator, who is explicitly present in the text, Mann characteristically chooses the grammatical form of the first person plural, 'wir', which was taken over in both the English and the Polish translations of *Zauberberg*. For a German author writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, this 'we' is still a matter of narrative convention, suggesting the existence in the background of an implicitly masculine narrator.[7] Writing in the early twenty-first century, the Polish woman author programmatically replaces this ambivalently unmarked narrative position with a female collective. In the introductory list of characters, this is explicitly said to consist of '[n]ameless inhabitants of the walls, floors and ceilings' (Tokarczuk 2024: 12; 'Bezimienni mieszkańcy ścian, podłóg i stropów', Tokarczuk 2022: 9). These are not always clearly distinguished from the eponymous Empusae, the witches of old, or other female creatures of fable such as the forest spirits called Tuntschis. This feminine narrative collective is literally endowed with the penetrating universal gaze that was so impressively staged in the opening scene. The female 'we' not only sees through the smoke produced by the steam engine, but also takes cognizance of every detail, from the weeds that bring programmatic anarchy to the human striving for order, down to the wear and tear visible in the tips of the protagonist's shoes. (His shoes – that much can already be revealed in a narrative prolepsis at this stage – will play a crucial role in the course of the novel as a whole.) This omnipresent female observing authority can adopt the different perspectives (from above or below) that characterize the style of the whole novel. In the process, these female observers present themselves throughout as self-confident commentators both on the action and on their own existence, which outlasts that of human beings (see Tokarczuk 2022: 41, 204).

Unsurprisingly, literary critics from across the world have paid intense attention to the appearance of this *Magic Mountain* spin-off by the Polish Nobel Prize winner. And they have tended to see in the novel a feminist re-enactment of the Mann (see Tchorek-Bentall 2022; Ehlert 2023; Hochweis 2023). Alongside the subtle construction of the narrative perspective, it is the over-determined espousal of misogynist views by the characters in the novel that supports this view. Apart from the protagonist Wojnicz, we are introduced to the male residents of the 'men's guest house', who are given to debating at interminable length, and a sequence of mysterious women, who are either threatening (like the nurse Sydonia

Patek) or seductive (the anonymous woman with the hat: 'Kobieta w kapeluszu', Tokarczuk 2022: 303). The person who offers most scope for the projections of the protagonist is Klara Opitz: as early as the first chapter, shortly after Wojnicz's arrival in Görbersdorf, Opitz, the wife of his landlord, commits suicide for reasons that are never explained. Thus, the gender constellation of the original *Magic Mountain* becomes the experimental basis for a new narration.

The gentlemen of the company, all more or less seriously ill, exchange views on the subjects of war and peace, tradition and progress. Of existential importance for this international coterie, however, is the theme of 'woman', with her dangerous attractiveness and her weak reason, which is used among other things to justify excluding her from elections and political representation. This is something the gentlemen discuss with an obsessive exhaustiveness that ties in with the excessiveness of the debates in Mann's original – as reviewers have not failed to notice, not always approvingly (see, for instance, Kijowska 2023). In the final credits of the book, Tokarczuk emphasizes that all of these misogynist utterances are unmarked quotations from male authors ranging from antiquity to the twentieth century, from Simonides of Keos to Jack Kerouac.

While it is true that the constellation of characters in the original *Magic Mountain* is stereotypically divided into discussants (Settembrini, Naphta) and men of action (Mynheer Peperkorn) and into seductive and manipulative women (the famous Clawdia Chauchat, whose blouse has diaphanous sleeves), the gender constellation surrounding the androgynous Hans Castorp is already notably fluid. For he has a crush not only on his female fellow patient with her Kirghiz eyes, but also on Pribislav Hippe, his former fellow pupil, who is of Slavic descent. For quite a long time, what Gremler identifies as the 'erotic dimension of *The Magic Mountain*'[8] was interpreted biographistically as a hidden account of Mann's own bisexuality. With the advent of queer studies in the last decades, though, attention has been drawn to the more fundamental dismantling of stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and what Gremler calls 'the breaking down of the heterosexual matrix and the norm of unambiguous gender dualism'.[9] 'The world of the *Magic Mountain*', she writes, 'that is mainly connoted as masculine, undermines the postulate of polarity in sexual desire in a way that can be labelled as queer'.[10]

The Polish writer then has her protagonist, whose Eastern origin recalls that of Mann's Pribislav Hippe, take the next step, involving a change of gender identity. The indications of this shift multiply in the course of the plot, which at first is still dominated by the discursive mass of misogynistic opinion. Heinrich Detering (1994) has noted a similar tactic of concealment and exposure in the homoerotic plotlines in Mann's work (see Gremler 2012: 244). In *The Empusium*, it is linked to dress codes: hats, veils, rustling silks and – shoes! At first Wojnicz swaps his scuffed shoes, which were described to us in the very first scene, for the hiking boots of his landlord Willhelm Opitz. But he leaves the world of Görbersdorf in elegant ladies' shoes because he gives expression to his natural hermaphrodism, and his existence as a 'frail human being' (Tokarczuk 2024: 310; 'wątła ludzka istoto', Tokarczuk 2022: 290), by slipping into the clothes and boots of the late Klara Opitz:

> As in the windows of a huge room, in his mind's eye he could see the shapes his future would take. There were so many possibilities that he felt strength gathering within him, but he could not find the words; all that entered his head was the German phrase 'Ich will', but this was something greater that went beyond the usual 'Ich'. He felt plural, multiple, multifaceted, compound and complicated like a coral reef, like a mushroom spawn whose actual existence is located underground. (Tokarczuk 2024: 323)

> Zobaczył w swoim umyśle, niczym w oknach ogromnego pokoju, jakie kształty przyjmie jego przyszłość. Było tak wiele możliwości, że poczuł wzbierającą w nim moc. Nie umiał znaleźć słów, do głowy przychodziło mu tylko niemieckie „Ich will", ale było to coś więcej, co wykraczało poza zwykłe ja. Czuł się mnogi, wielokrotny, wielopoziomowy, złożony i skomplikowany jak koralowa rafa, jak grzybnia, której całe prawdziwe istnienie mieści się pod ziemią. (Tokarczuk 2022: 302)

With this, Tokarczuk transports the classic spa narrative of the metamorphosis – Wojnicz keeps Apuleius's work of the same title on his bedside table – to our present of queer and trans identities.[11] At the same time, she merges the literary genres of the sanatorium novel and the fantastic horror story, and of the open and closed chronotopes of the spa town and the sanatorium.

The question of gender and sexuality, though, is not the only aspect of Thomas Mann's novel that Tokarczuk addresses in *The Empusium*. She also offers a post-colonial, perhaps not even critique, but rewriting of the East–West cultural typology that *The Magic Mountain* entails. 'A great deal of Asia hangs in the air here', we read in Mann. 'It is not for nothing that the place teems with Mongolian Muscovites' (Mann 1995: 239; 'Hier liegt vor allem viel Asien in der Luft, – nicht umsonst wimmelt es von Typen aus der moskowitischen Mongolei!', Mann [1924] 2002: 368). This is the warning issued by Hans Castorp's mentor, Herr Settembrini, to his young charge on the Magic Mountain. In the physically salubrious air, he should take care not to get infected with dangerous ideas, since he is after all a son of the godly, civilized West ('Sohn des Westens, des göttlichen Westens, – … Sohn der Zivilisation', Mann [1924] 2002: 368).[12] What follows is an application of this essentialist cultural theory specifically to the 'other space' of the health resort in its particular temporality: 'This liberality, this barbaric extravagance in the use of time is the Asian style – that may be the reason why the children of the East feel so at home here' (Mann 1995: 239; 'Diese Freigebigkeit, diese barbarische Großartigkeit im Zeitverbrauch ist asiatischer Stil, – das mag ein Grund sein, weshalb es den Kindern des Ostens an diesem Orte behagt', Mann [1924] 2002: 369).

In this way gender attributions can go beyond the level of personal identity and become allegories of the cultural, whereby nationalities are coded as either masculine or feminine. The passage from *The Magic Mountain* cited above demonstrates this in exemplary fashion: the West as the proactive, restrained and restraining element dominating space and time is connoted as masculine, the East in its apparently infinite temporal and spatial extension as receptive and feminine.

Settembrini, the representative of the Enlightenment (the Western principle), and Naphta the Jesuit, who represents the Oriental principle, battle over the soul of the young Castorp, who is caught between the two poles. It is only the thunderclap of the indicatively masculine war that frees him from the clutches of 'Asia' and 'Muscovite Mongolia', embodied in the seductive, Kirghiz-eyed Russian woman Clawdia Chauchat. The matrix of nation and gender in *The Magic Mountain* thus turns out to be considerably more stereotypical than the constellation of characters, which is now amenable to queer readings.

This cultural essentialism of *The Magic Mountain* has of course not gone unnoticed in the secondary literature (see Kuznetsova 2012; Watroba 2022). It goes beyond the views attributed to the character Settembrini to suffuse the fabric of the work as a whole, not least, as we have just seen, in the way the West is regarded as having been saved from Oriental decadence by the outbreak of the war. To that extent, Mann also subscribed to the typical contemporary fashion for apocalyptic downfall scenarios à la Oswald Spengler (see Beßlich 2002; see also Chapter 3). However, this typology of Mann's, which turns the resort into a 'feminine' and therefore 'oriental' space, has so far impinged astonishingly little on resort research in more general terms.[13] Yet, what we are dealing with here is a characteristic 'inner Orientalism' that goes beyond the individual example of Mann's novel. The East as Europe's other, then, does not lie beyond its borders but is internalized in spatially and temporally specific enclaves.

The 'children of the East' by contrast have taken careful cognizance of Mann's diagnosis and offered literary responses to it. To rephrase a famous slogan of post-colonial literary theory coined by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), we could say that 'The East writes back'. One of the earliest reworkings of *The Magic Mountain* from an Eastern perspective is the novel *Sanatorii 'Arktur'* (1940; *Sanatorium Arktur*, 1957) by the Soviet Russian writer Konstantin Fedin (see Watroba 2022: 51–68).[14]

Programmatically, Fedin sends a Russian, or rather a Soviet engineer to Davos for recuperation in the 1930s. Levshin is the only patient who leaves Arktur in good health. His recovery, though, is not primarily due to his individual physical condition, and also only secondarily to his medical treatment, but rather to the promise of a meaningful life offered by a return to Soviet society. Here the illness is regarded as 'meaningless', it can only be overcome by means of a promised re-integration into the body of the Soviet people, with whom Levshin feels connected through the umbilical cord of an intensive correspondence with his colleagues. Typical here is the image of the newly recovered lung of the attainted engineer, which no longer resembles a porous sponge as it did in Thomas Mann, but is compared instead to a bellows, as required by the Soviet progress narrative:

> Levshin took fearless breaths of the fickle *Föhn* and in his mind he kept repeating something that a friend had written to him; 'Work your bellows properly. I hope the holes have healed up'. (Fedin 1957: 115)

> Левшин вдыхал безбоязненно, ровно струю коварного фёна, и с ясностью повторялось в его памяти письмо друга: «Раздувай хорошенько свои мехи. Надеюсь, дырки-то в них затянуло совсем, а? (Fedin 1983: 57)

The Soviet author has his engineer travel to the 'real' magic mountain of Davos, but transports him into the future of Mann's *Magic Mountain*, to the inter-war decade of the 1930s. Our contemporary Polish author by contrast relocates place, plot and protagonist to the East of Europe. At the same time, she moves not forwards, but backwards in the history of the sanatorium. For it was in the Silesian town of Görbersdorf that Dr Hermann Brehmer opened the first sanatorium for the treatment of tubercular patients in 1854 which served as the template for the sanatoria in Davos (see Chapter 3).

In Tokarczuk's novel, different constructions of the East overlap. Historically speaking, this multicultural region lies at the intersection of various dynasties and empires: Polish Piasts, the Bohemian crown, the Habsburg monarchy, Prussia and the German Empire, all had their role to play before Silesia, after the period of German National Socialism and the Second World War, reverted to Poland. Tokarczuk's hero Wojnicz is from even further East, namely from Lemberg, today L'viv in the Ukraine, which at the time in which the novel is set belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Wojnicz's mother tongue is Polish, and the German he speaks is old-fashioned standard German (Tokarczuk 2022: 97). His father brings him up in the Polish spirit, but also instils in him the belief that 'every citizen of this great superpower must be a useful part of it' (Tokarczuk 2024: 108; 'każdy obywatel tego ogromnego mocarstwa musi być jego przydatną częścią', Tokarczuk 2022: 100). Among the collective of patients in the men's boarding house, he feels doubly exotic with his fluid sexual, but also linguistic and cultural, identity

> as if he did not belong to any of these groups, and ethnicity was not enough for him to define his place in the jigsaw puzzles they were always making, changing the vectors of strength, dependence and advantage. (Tokarczuk 2024: 106)

> jakby nie należał do żadnej z tych grup i pochodzenie nie wystarczało mu do określenia swojego miejsca w układankach, które ciągle tworzyli, zmieniając wektory sił, podległości i przewagi. (Tokarczuk 2022: 98–9)

This statement refers to his position in the classroom constellation of the German-language grammar school in Lemberg, but can just as easily be applied to the situation in which he finds himself in the cosmopolitan, but nonetheless strongly Prussian-influenced Görbersdorf.

The Polish patient feels that, on account of his background, he is less than well treated by the responsible Dr Semperweiß, and rebels (Tokarczuk 2022: 236–7). Surprisingly, though, the doctor not only refutes this charge, but also respects his apparent anomaly as a particular form of perfection. Black and white thinking, he says, serves to shore up an uncertain sense of self and to combat feelings of

inferiority. Especially in light of the cultural essentialism of the Mannian hypotext, the implication is clear. Like his indeterminate gender, the blending of East and West in Wojnicz's background as in the region from which he comes can also be seen as a step on the way to perfection. Thus, Tokarczuk extends the queerness of Thomas Mann's novel to include the dissolution not only of gender but also of fixed national identities.

In a book that pre-dates Tokarczuk's, and is somewhat less subtle than hers, the Polish author Paweł Huelle had already deconstructed the German – or more generally, the Western – *Magic Mountain* from a post-colonial perspective. His novel *Castorp* from 2004 constitutes a prequel to Mann's novel: recounting the pre-history of world literature's celebrated patient. In her recent monograph on *The Magic Mountain*, Watroba points out how 'Huelle explores Mann's underlying cultural assumptions about Eastern Europe, shaped by Germany's imperial ambitions' and 'subverts stereotypes about the inferiority of Slavic cultures' (Watroba 2022: 161).[15]

Huelle takes a passage from Mann's original novel and makes it the occasion for his narrative digression. There it is said that Castorp, before his arrival in the highland of Davos, spent four semesters at the Danzig Polytechnic (Mann 1995: 35; Danziger Polytechnikum, Mann [1924] 2002: 59) as a student of the – symbolically significant – subject of engineering science. The young Castorp goes against the wishes of his uncle consul Tienappel with his choice of this city, which, while being part of the German Empire, is regarded by the latter as too far East and therefore dangerous.

'The days,' says Tienappel, 'when our forebears set out for Tallinn, Riga, Königsberg or Danzig' (Huelle 2007: 1; 'Czasy, kiedy nasi przodkowie wyruszali do Tallina, Rzgi, Królewca czy Gdańska', Huelle 2004: 7) and subdued the East by either 'establishing an office or fighting a crusade' (Huelle 2007: 2; 'nie założysz kantoru ani nie przywdziejesz rycerskiego płaszcza', Huelle 2004: 7), 'are over, never to return' (Huelle 2007: 1; 'minęły bezpowrotnie', Huelle 2004: 7). All the greater then is the danger the East poses for Western civilization, as it is less rational and a place 'where manners forged so painstakingly might plunge into chaos' (Huelle 2007: 2; 'w których wypracowane z takim trudem formy mogą pogrążyć się w chaosie', Huelle 2004: 8). On the very first pages, Huelle picks up on *The Magic Mountain*'s cultural stereotypes of the solid disciplined West and the laissez-faire undisciplined East. The historical context, however, is marked even more clearly as colonial. Only a few pages later, while Castorp is on the steamer that takes him to Danzig, he becomes embroiled in the global power games of the time. Among his fellow passengers is a certain Pastor Gropius, a clergyman who after many years of serving as a missionary in Africa 'among the blackest tribes of Bantustan' (Huelle 2007:10; 'najczarniejszych plemion bantustanu', Huelle 2004: 14) is now relegated to Poland. Between the pastor and another passenger, Herr Kiekiernix, the representative of a Belgian timber firm whose Dutch nationality is a glancing reference to Mijnheer Peeperkorn from the original *Magic Mountain*, a heated dispute develops on the subject of the competing European empires and their struggle for supremacy:

> Colonisation is as old as humanity itself, my good Sirs. The Greeks, the Romans – these are universally known facts. However, let us take our German nation as an example. We have been late in reaching Asia and Africa, indeed. But in the east of Europe? For hundreds of years we have brought law, order, the harmony of art and technology. If not for us, the Slavs would long since have fallen into anarchy. It is thanks to our benefaction that they have found their place in the family that bears the name of civilisation and culture. (Huelle 2007: 19–20)

> Kolonizacja jest zjawiskiem tak starym jak ludzkość, proszę państwa. Grecy, Rzymianie, to są powszechnie znane fakty. Weźmy jednak za przykład nasz niemiecki naród. Spóźniliśmy się w Azji i Afryce, prawda. Ale na wschodzie Europy? Od setek lat niesiemy prawo, ład, harmonię sztuki i technikę. Gdyby nie my, Słowianie dawno popadliby w anarchię. To dzięki naszym dobrodziejstwom znajdują swoje miejsce w rodzinie, której na imię cywilizacja i kultura. (Huelle 2004: 22–3)

At first, this application of colonial fantasies to his chosen place of study does not strike a chord with the somewhat noncommittal young Hans Castorp. What have the Poles who live in Danzig to do with the tribes of Africa, asks the Hanseatic freshman. And who are these Kashubians of whom the captain says that he 'never knew what they were thinking' (Huelle 2007: 27; 'Nigdy nie wiadomo, co myślą', Huelle 2004: 29), but who, according to the helmsman, unlike the 'Polacks' ('polaczk[i]') 'don't want to slit our throats' (Huelle 2007: 28; 'Przynajmniej nie chcą nam podrzynać gardeł!', Huelle 2004: 29). Thus, the context of geopolitical tensions and incipient revolutionary and military events is established.

The young Castorp, wholly unpolitical as he is, fails (at first) to reflect on this side of things, while the lack of discipline foreseen by his uncle sets in shortly after his arrival. He pursues his engineering studies with no great enthusiasm but throws himself all the more eagerly into the pleasures of the nearby seaside resort: Sopot with its typical resort structure, its assembly rooms, promenade and warm baths was built in the newest fashion and with the latest technology, and even featured treatments based on electricity. While taking his baths, Castorp witnesses, unwillingly but not without enjoyment, the clashes between the conflicting world views of his male fellow bathers. The antipodes Settembrini and Naphta are transposed from the Swiss mountain air to the tubs filled with water from the Baltic Sea (see Watroba 2022: 139). Succumbing as it were to the genre compulsion of the resort novel, a mysterious Slavic beauty called Wanda also puts in an appearance, and our protagonist duly falls in love with her. The topic is enriched with the equally commonplace cosmopolitan aspect of the coming together of different nations, and with a detective/spy plot which is somehow connected to the obscure figure of Wanda, a Polish woman, and her Russian lover, an officer. The precarious geographical position of the Polish nation between German and Russian expansionist ambitions is mirrored in this love triangle.

A special role is also reserved for the above-mentioned Kashubians, the local ethnic minority with West–Slavic Pomeranian roots that fell victim to both

Germanicizing and Polonizing tendencies. Significantly, this ethnic identity is linked here to gender identity, as we have already shown for Tokarczuk's novel. For the Kashubian servant girl, the principal representative of this group in the novel, is in a lesbian relationship with Castorp's landlady. Together, both women murdered her husband, a Prussian officer – something that Hans does not get to hear about until after his return from the 'the East, that never does us any good!' (Huelle 2007: 232; 'Wschód nigdy nie jest dla nas dobry!', Huelle 2004: 202) to the Hanseatic city of Hamburg.

At the end of the novel, the omniscient narrator, who has also taken over Mann's characteristic collective 'we', exceeds the temporal horizons of the pre-text in the direction of the future. He imagines Hans Castorp, ordered by the war back down to the plains, walking again through the streets of Danzig and its suburbs, not as a soldier but as a witness: in 1914, after the battle of Tannenberg, when German soldiers drive Russian prisoners of war through the streets; in 1939, after Germany's attack on Poland, when SS storm troopers swarm through the city; in 1945, when it is the turn of the Germans to flee from the advancing Russians. The palimpsest of these historical visions ends in the present, in which the Polish language and Polish identity have established themselves 'irrevocably' ('bezpowrotnie') in Danzig/Gdańsk (Huelle 2007: 233, 2004: 203).

Huelle's Castorp remains an ambivalent figure, crossing not between genders, but between cultures, immune to the feverish 'moments of glory' (Huelle 2007: 233; 'chwila chwały', Huelle 2004: 203) which repeatedly prompt his countrymen to overrun their Easterly neighbours. At the same time, Huelle does not suspend Thomas Mann's stereotypical, essentialist presentation of 'the East' (see Watroba 2022: 161) but rather exaggerates it in such a way that it tips over into the parodic and reveals its phantasmagorgical dimension. In the Baltic seaside resort of Sopot, the engineer-to-be draws his first breaths of that fatal resort air which makes him susceptible to stay for years on the Magic Mountain. In short, without Danzig, there is no Davos. Something similar happens in Tokarczuk's *Empusium*. What is generally considered as the origin of the sanatorium novel in *The Magic Mountain* is traced back to its historical and narrative sources in an Eastern Europe shaped by centuries of imperial domination and oppression. The 'Children of the East' take Thomas Mann's thesis of the resort as a topos connoted as Eastern and feminine and write back to it in a spirit of emancipation, critically, ludically, yet not without a certain fondness for its originator.

4.2 'Off to Nice with the samovar': Chekhov as the founder of national and international resort narratives

For the European resort text, the seaside town of Yalta in the Crimea, the scene of bitter discursive and military disputes in the past as in the present, has an iconic status comparable to that of Davos. Like the Baltic resort of Sopot or the climatic resort of Görbersdorf that feature in the Polish novels by Tokarczuk and Huelle, the Crimea with its numerous clinics and sanatoria is situated in a part

of Europe in which over time different imperial claims (of the Ottoman and the Russian empires) and different ethnic and national identities (Tatar, Russian and Ukrainian, but also Greek, Armenian and Jewish) have met. This multiplicity can be seen as an expansion of the transnationality explored in connection with Thomas Mann. And it is in accordance with this logic that, in this chapter, we fail to observe the chronological order of historical occurrences and literary works and instead move back in time, literary history and in the typology of the health resort from the sanatorium to the seaside resort and spa town and from Thomas Mann to Anton Chekhov.

For the person who put Yalta on the mental map of the European resort narrative was the Russian prose-writer Anton Chekhov with his masterly story 'Dama s sobachkoi' ([1899] 1977, 'The Lady with the Dog', 1917) from 1899. 'The Lady with the Dog' is one of the most frequently analysed stories in world literature (Parts 2008: 140) and has inspired many adaptations, including the popular Italo-Russian co-production *Dark Eyes* (Italian: *Oci ciornie*; Russian: *Ochi chernye*, 1987) directed by Nikita Mikhalkov with Marcello Mastroianni as the male lead. In exemplary fashion, it exhibits the features of what we are calling the resort narrative, without being in any way schematic. The love story between Dmitry Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna can only take place in the transgressive space of the resort town as a locus of what Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova (2023: 654) call 'codified deviation'. The temporary segregation from social roles and spaces permits adultery and facilitates the love that ensues. In the process, the characters of man and woman develop in countermotion: the shy and honourable Anna Sergeyevna acquires increasing authority and power over her only seemingly sovereign and cynical seducer Gurov. In a way that is somewhat unusual for the resort novel, the romance outlasts the temporal limits of the sojourn and forces the protagonists to lead a happy–unhappy double life as secret lovers after their return to the milieu of their hometown.

This love plot takes place in a setting characterized by typical resort infrastructure with its promenades and parks, refreshment pavilions, grand hotels and exotic places to visit, and against the background of the magnificent Crimean landscape which, with its specific combination of romantic idyll and sublimity, has itself become a topos. This special quality has led to the Crimea being referred to as the 'Russian riviera' (see Mal'gin 2006), and it is inscribed as such in the comparative map of European dream destinations. This sublime landscape contrasts with the simultaneously petty and grand spa society, which may attract the metropolis to the provinces, but is basically a place dominated by mechanisms of bourgeois scrutiny and social control. Chekhov lays bare the macho male gaze, when the serial seducer Gurov examines the female new arrivals – 'the lower race' (Chekhov 1917; 'низжая раса', [1899] 1977: 128) – on the promenade with a view to their availability and seducibility. As noted above, the irony of the story is that Anna Sergeyevna, once seduced, manages, despite her complete despair over her status as a 'low woman' (Chekhov 1917: 10; 'низкая женщина', [1899] 1977: 132–3), to make the macho dependent upon her emotionalism. Yet, despite the sovereignty she achieves in the course of the story, Anna is still the opposite of the femmes

fatales that we meet in the novels of Dostoevsky (*Igrok*, 1866, *The Gambler*) und Turgenev (*Dym*, 1867, *Smoke*). Thomas Mann's seductress Clawdia Chauchat is the best-known descendant of this type of Russian *kurort* vamp, which was still going strong in the second half of the twentieth century, albeit with increasingly satirical traits. Here we can see how specific motivic strands develop within the narrative – in this case, the female character in the transgressive space of the resort.

Among the classics of Russian literature, Anton Chekhov is one of those not tainted with the charge of imperialism (see Offord 2023), unlike, say, Dostoevsky, who, in his celebrated spa novel *The Gambler* gives full rein to his jingoism in the language attributed to his characters (Dostoevsky [1866] 1989: 590–1, 606, 1972: 8–9, 34). Yet, because in 'The Lady with the Dog' all traces of multiculturalism have been removed, the story has played a decisive role in creating the image of the modern Crimea as a purely Russian place:

> The transformation of the peninsula from an oriental to a Russian region was also clearly and widely popularized in one of the most influential descriptions of the Crimea from the end of the nineteenth century: Chekhov's 'The Lady with the Dog'. Yalta in particular, the resort on the South coast, is presented as a place of fashionable European elegance that need not fear comparison with Western Europe. … Chekhov's Crimea, then, is a 'civilized enclave' within Russia. … What is described is a doubtless refined, but undoubtedly Russian community, in which neither national underclasses nor the so-called inorodtsy make an appearance.
>
> Die Transformation der Halbinsel von einem orientalischen zu einem russischen Gebiet wurde auch in einer der bereits erwähnten wirkungsmächtigen literarischen Krimbeschreibungen aus dem ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert, Čechovs „Dame mit dem Hündchen", deutlich und weithin popularisiert. Vor allen Dingen das an der Südküste gelegene Jalta wird darin als ein mondäner, europäischer Ort geschildert, der den Vergleich mit Westeuropa nicht zu scheuen brauchte. … So ist auch Čechovs Krim ein ‚zivilisierter Bezirk' innerhalb Rußlands. … Geschildert wird ein zwar raffiniertes, aber ohne Zweifel russisches Gemeinwesen, in dem weder nationale Unterschichten noch die sog. Fremdstämmigen vorkommen. (Jobst 2007: 339)

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, this Crimea myth accretes into a commonplace with a life of its own (see Kur'ianov 2019). This occurs not only in literary works but notably in artistic representations of the sublime landscape of the Crimean riviera, as for instance in the works of Isaak Levitan (see Lisitsyna 2018).[16] The Crimea narrative reaches well beyond Chekhov and his age and can be found for example in the propaganda poems of the Russian revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky ('Evpatoriia', 1928), in Nikolai Ostrovsky's Civil War epic *Kak zakalialas' stal'* (1932, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, 1952) or Vasily Aksyonov's fantasy novel *Ostrov Krym* (1981, *The Island of Crimea*, 1983). In his Crimea poems, Mayakovsky notably enriches the aristocratic and bourgeois

encomia with the slogan that is still current today, praising the 'Crimean smithy' as the place where the health of the Soviet Union is forged anew: 'a speedy repair job / of people proceeds // in that huge / Crimean smithy' ('The Crimea', Terras 1983: 129; 'Людей / ремонт ускоренный // в огромной / крымской кузнице', 'Krym' 1927, Mayakovsky 1968: 293).

It is thus not surprising that the contemporary author Victor Pelevin in his novella 'Zhizn' nasekomych' (1992, *The Life of Insects*, 1998) should set the end of the Soviet Union against the background of the dilapidated spa and sanatorium heritage of the Crimea (see Schmidt 2014). Here the typical architecture is systematically recorded in its decline: the main building appears as 'an oppressive gray structure' (Pelevin 1998: 3; 'мрачным серым зданием', Pelevin [1992] 1999: 125), the stars on the columnns of the façade are cracked, from the kitchens, laundry and hairdresser's seep the smells of the working parts of the sanatorium. A statue of Lenin is 'entangled in grapevines all the way up to its silvery bosom' (Pelevin 1998: 4; 'по серебристое лоно увитый виноградом', Pelevin [1992] 1999: 126) while the bust of the co-founder of the Russian Crimea text, Anton Chekhov, has gathered moss (see Pelevin 1999: 166, 1998: 47). Pelevin's broken sanatorium hints only sketchily at the dichotomies of the heterotopia, instead deconstructing them in figures of decay. The collapse though also entails the liberation of a place that had been overwritten by the narrative in a way that extinguished its history and its particular character:

> Night in the Crimea is astonishingly beautiful. As the sky darkens, it rises away from the earth and the stars are clear and bright. The Crimea is imperceptibly *transformed from the health resort of the Soviet Union* into a Roman province, and your heart is filled with the inexpressibly familiar feelings of all those who have ever stood on its ancient roads at night, listening to the song of the cicadas and gazing up at the sky without thinking. (Pelevin 1998: 40, emphasis added)

> Удивительно красива крымская ночь. Темнея, небо поднимается выше, и на нем ясно проступают звезды. *Из всесоюзной здравницы* Крым незаметно *превращается* в римскую провинцию, и в душе оживают невыразимо понятные чувства всех тех, кто так же стоял когда-то на древних ночных дорогах, слушая треск цикад и, ни о чем особо не думая, глядел в небо. (Pelevin [1992] 1999: 160, emphasis added)

In a text which appeared in German translation under the programmatic title 'Post-soviet Paradises' ('Postsowjetische Paradiese'), the Ukrainian author Serhii Zhadan turns a comparable gaze on the underworld of the celebrated Crimean resorts (Zhadan 2009).[17] The text was published in 2008, six years prior to the Russian annexation of the Crimea. Zhadan's sanatorial town is still functioning, but he reverses the classical focus and portrays the sanatorial zone from the point of view of the local population, consisting mainly of drunks, criminals, the unemployed and prostitutes. The people who supposedly live in paradise dream themselves away for lack of prospects. It is the low season, and the few guests are essentially the

old Soviet elites, especially military officers. The resort facilities and the sanatoria themselves have also seen better times. Within this setting, Zhadan locates several micro-stories: two young pseudo-criminals, Bodja and Vjetal, embark on a typical coming-of-age story set in the mythical Crimea. They befriend and clash with members of the local population and migrant workers from neighbouring post-Soviet states. By doing so, they discover the ghetto-like, neglected, yet lively-anarchic neighbourhood of the Crimean Tatars on the outskirts of Yalta.

In both Pelevin and Zhadan, then, the same anti-heroes appear: petty criminals, corrupt officials, racketeers and prostitutes. Both authors refuse to show the glamorous side of resort life but offer us instead glimpses into the place's underworld. Pelevin portrays the post-Soviet health resort under the pressure of capitalist economic transformation and 'Americanization'; in Zhadan, the 'transnational' appears in the form of inter-ethnic contacts, alternating between solidarity and conflict, between minorities and migrants (Tatars, Moldovians, Ukrainians) in this post-Soviet space.

Chekhov's story though doesn't only serve as a core text for its Russian avatars and for Ukrainian and Crimean counter-narrative, but beyond its national, sometimes imperial and sometimes post-colonial, continuations, it has also had a rich reception in world literature. In their intertextual network analysis, for example, Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova link it to Maupassant's *Mont Oriol* (Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023: 656; see Chapter 2). That, they say, was influenced by Turgenev and by Mikhail Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni* (1840, *A Hero of Our Own Times*, 1854), both in turn drawing on Walter Scott's *St. Ronan's Well* (1824). Lines of reception based on provable contacts thus criss-cross the European national literatures in all directions. In what follows we will be concentrating on the less well-researched after-effects in the twentieth century.

In her story 'The Lady with the Pet Dog' (1972), the American author Joyce Carol Oates adopts the perspective of a female narrator.[18] Given the way in which the basic constellation of characters in Chekhov's pre-text – with the male seducer and the female seduced – invites a stereotypical reading, this is a perfectly logical step. It is a forerunner of the numerous attempts made in the twentieth century to re-imagine the indicatively masculinist resort text from a feminist position, as we have seen above with Olga Tokarczuk's *Empusium* (see also Chapter 8). Oates makes a number of further characteristic changes to the original. In the first place, the setting is transposed from the romantic seaside resort near the end of the Tsarist period in Russia to present-day Nantucket, an island off the east coast of the United States famously associated with whaling. This in itself demonstrates how the European resort narrative has gone progressively global – which is one of the reasons why this example is so important. Moreover, Oates rearranges central elements of the plot. Thus, the story begins not with the moment of adultery in the seaside resort but with the later meeting of the now separated lovers at a concert (in the Chekhov, it was the opera). The genesis of the affair is thus presented in a series of flashbacks, whereas in the Russian original, the story largely follows a linear chronology.

The focalization is restricted to the inner perspective of the female protagonist, who shares the name of her Chekhovian precursor: Anna. The strongly authorial perspective of the omniscient (but not moralizing) narrator in the Chekhov, by contrast, had made it possible to present the inner worlds of both protagonists in parallel. The symbolic dog of the title also occurs only once in Oates's text, as a citation. Its function is properly deictic: it belongs to the male protagonist and not the 'lady' – a realignment that is entirely in keeping with the inversion of gender roles in the text. In one of the drawings her lover does of her, Anna is holding it in her lap. In other respects, Oates's story remains close to Chekhov's original in placing the prevailing feeling of shame at the emotional centre of the transformation of the American Anna also. The Russian Anna is ashamed of being a fallen woman. For Oates's protagonist, by contrast, shame is a liberating emotion, a sign of vitality, life and love. Where shame is no longer possible, as in her relationship with her husband, love too is at an end: 'There was no longer even any shame between them' (Oates 1972: 343). The development of the characters in Oates, then, is the opposite of that in Chekhov: what makes Chekhov's story so modern is that the male character Gurov undergoes the main change. Coded at the beginning as strongly macho, he gradually in the course of the story discovers his feelings and is altered forever. In the Oates, by contrast, it is the adulteress who is able to break free. At first we are told: 'She needed this man for her salvation' (Oates 1972: 341). Yet, she succeeds in attaching to the anti-social feeling of shame an emancipatory significance. She becomes the mistress of her own life trajectory, her emotionality and her energy, independent of husband and lover: 'And she did not hate him [her lover], she did not hate herself any longer; she did not wish to die; she was flooded with a strange certainty, a sense of gratitude, of pure selfless energy. … What triumph, to love like this in any room, anywhere, risking even the craziest of accidents!' (Oates 1972: 343).

Whereas the texts discussed so far have shared Chekhov's genre of prose fiction, the work by the Polish author Sławomir Mrożek which bears the resonant title *Miłość na Krymie* ('Love in the Crimea') is a theatre play dating from 1993 (Mrożek 1995). Its subtitle is 'Komedia tragiczna w trzech aktach', 'a Tragic Comedy in Three Acts', and it is important to note that our resort text with its characteristic features is subject to metamorphoses not only of gender but also of genre. Unlike Oates, Mrożek remains true to the original plot location in the Crimea, but he too updates the action. Each of the three acts covers a different central period in the Russian history of the Crimea. The first act in Chekhovian style is set in the pre-revolutionary years of the 1910s, the second takes place during the Bolshevik Revolution and the third takes a programmatic leap forward to the perestroika years of the author's own present. In the words of his English editor Daniel Gerould, the Polish playwright 'views the collective traumas of European social upheaval through a parody of cultural stereotypes' (Gerould 1994: 13). For Mrożek (as for Pelevin), it is precisely the Crimea's status as a kind of hyper resort that makes it a suitable setting for the literal dramatization of the Russian history of Europe. As Gerould puts it: 'Through the passage of time and the succession

of different regimes, the playwright poses the problem of identity in dissolving structures' (Gerould 2004: xlv).

In terms of form, the Polish exile, who left socialist Poland after the crushing of the Prague Spring, offers not only a fusion of the two genres in which Chekhov excelled, but also what Gerould calls 'a pastiche of borrowed themes and motifs' (Gerould 2004: xlv). This cited material, we argue, goes beyond the single Chekhovian pre-text and incorporates the central elements of the resort text as such. The stage set, which Mrożek describes in excessive detail in the stage directions, represents the interior rooms and the balcony of a formerly aristocratic villa, which by 1910 had been turned into a pension for paying guests. Characteristically, if confusingly, this pension is called 'Nice' ('Nicea'), thus conjuring up by way of background, the mental map of European Riviera resorts. Chekhov himself often liked to travel to this French winter resort, as we can see on the map of his health itineraries (see Figure 4.1). But as the enigmatic intellectual Zachedrynski says in the play: 'We would even travel to the real Nice with the samovar' ('ale my do prawdziwej Nicei jeździmy z samowarem:', Mrożek 1995: 24). Here then we see a form of 'self-orientalization' attributed to the Russian resort visitors by their Polish analysts, mirroring the 'apparent orientalization' of the European health resort as a 'Muscovite' or 'Asian' space as undertaken by Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain* (Mann [1924] 2002: 368, 1995: 239).

The sea and the cypresses form the typical Chekhovian Crimea background: 'Behind the balustrade can be seen the tops of the cypresses, behind that the sapphire blue sea and beyond the horizon the azure blue of the sky' ('Za balustradą widać wierzchołki cyprysów, dalej ciemnoszafirowe morze, a nad horyzontem jasny błękit nieba', Mrożek 1995: 12). In the first act, the entire cast of characters – intellectuals, officers, teachers, merchants, actors, writers, servants – lose themselves in the contemplation of precisely this paradisiacal scenario and because of their premonitions of its destruction fall into a genre-typical melancholy. Lenin puts in a premature appearance in this first act. He mistakes the firing of the Chekhov gun, which has played such a decisive role in theatre history, for the Aurora's canon shot and the beginning of that revolution, which according to Mayakovsky was to turn the Crimea into the smithy forging the health of the Soviet Union (see above).

In the second act, which brings to the stage precisely this transformation from aristocratic recreation ground to workers' recuperation place, a parody of the futuristic artist appears (in a swimming costume!): Zubatyj (the Snapper), 'the proletarian poet, who is staying in the "Red Guard" convalescent home' ('proletariacki poeta, przebywający w Domu Wypoczynkowym "Czerwonogwardzista"', Mrożek 1995: 51). And the villa itself is turned into the office of the 'Commissioner for Matters of Theatre, Press and Publishing on the Council of the People's Commissars' ('Naczelnika Do Spraw Widowisk, Prasy i Wydawnictw Przy Radzie Komisarzy Ludowych', Mrożek 1995: 52). In the third act, there are no poets left, just Petya, the entrepreneur and self-made man, lying on a deckchair on the beach and drinking Coca-Cola. Within the oligarchical system of perestroika, Petya has taken charge of the profitable trade that is prostitution (Mrożek 1995, 112–13).

There are ghostly guest appearances by officers of the White Army and finally Catherine the Great, under whom the Crimea was first conquered by Russia. At the end, the peninsula gets swathed in mist and the curtain falls.

'Love in the Crimea' then, is 'a contribution to the growing literature of Chekhov sequels and elaborations' (Gerould 1994: xlv). Another such sequel is the play with the programmatic title 'The Yalta Game' by the Irish playwright Brian Friel, which was first performed in 2002. The title of the collection in which the play was originally published – *Three Plays After* (2002) – suggests that it too might be a 'pastiche' typical of the Chekhov sequels (Gerould 2004: xlv). The constellation of characters and the setting are even closer to the original. Dmitry Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna are the only characters who appear in the play; the inevitable dog is never actually seen on stage but is described in the stage direction as 'imaginary' and is the subject of elaborate mime. In a monologue given before Anna's first appearance, Gurov offers an account of Yalta which brings together the traditional elements of the resort text (sociability and transnationality, nature and architecture, entertainment and fashion, but significantly not illness and therapy) in a particularly concentrated form:

> Believe me, when the summer season is at its height, there is no resort in the whole of the Crimea more exciting, more vibrant, than Yalta. The crowds. The bustling restaurants. The commotion of different languages. The promenade. The elegant municipal park. The obligatory daytrip to the silver waterfall at Oreanda. The nightly ritual of going down to the quay and watching the new arrivals pouring out of the Theodosia ferry with its lights dancing and expectant. And of course the mysterious Black Sea itself that embraces and holds all these elements together, especially at night when the water is a soft, warm lilac and the moon throws a shaft of gold across it. (Friel [2001] 2016: 95)

Even at the start of the twenty-first century, the resort text is still present and can be reactivated with the use of a few key terms. The phrase 'embraces and holds all these elements together' can be seen as defining the function of the resort narrative, which is here delegated to the superhuman force of the sea.

The character constellation remains basically the same: Gurov and Anna meet in a café, where the lady-killer and experienced resort visitor makes overtures to the shy new arrival. As in the original, he uses the small dog as an intermediary in the process. Yet, the relationship between these two people is quite different, in that they are not so much lovers as partners in a game. Accordingly, the hierarchical relationship between seducer and seduced shifts more in the direction of gender parity. The game that both play is the eponymous Yalta Game, which consists of observing the other guests and filling in their stories in a manner that adds a slightly absurd Beckettian element to the Chekhovian mix (see Germanou 2017: 486) and subtly updates the historical setting of the original Russian story:

> He [Gurov] breaks off suddenly, leans into her [Anna] and speaks very softly, almost conspiratorially.

> Don't look now; but there's a young man over there on your right. Pink cravat, white shoes. See him?
>
> ANNA Yes?
>
> GUROV Watch what he's slipping into his coffee.
>
> ANNA Sugar?
>
> GUROV Liquid heroin. … Had to be taken down from the top of the cathedral spire last Sunday. Before Vespers. They say his wife ran off last month with a cavalry officer. (Friel [2001] 2016: 98–9)

Friel's two speaking characters alternate between interior monologue and dialogue, changing perspective between introspection and extrospection in ways that constantly complement and counteract each other. The change is marked typographically by setting the dialogical exchanges in bold. In the course of the game, Anna increasingly gains self-confidence, allowing herself ever more risqué observations, for example, of an erotically explicit meeting of a pair of lovers on the promenade (Friel [2001] 2016: 104–5). The process of transference from prose narrative to dramatic dialogue allows for a very particular kind of intertextuality, for it enables Friel to take quotations word for word from the narrative text and put them in the mouths of his characters. Anna's famous exclamation after the consummation of the relationship with Gurov (the act itself characteristically constitutes a gap in the story) is an especially impressive example of this: 'You'll be the first not to respect me now' (Friel [2001] 2016: 103) now appears, as a quoted quotation, as part of the retrospective reflections of the male protagonist.

The post-modern character of this 'play after' also finds expression in the naming of the dog, which Anna and Gurov baptize together while on a visit to the famous waterfall of Oreanda, giving it the name of Yalta. Thus, the constant business of searching for the dog, which out of jealously forces itself between the two lovers, leads to the comic, metafictional question: 'Where's Yalta?' – that applies both to the imaginary dog and to the placing of the mythic place in the present.

Friel's re-enactment of Chekhov thus becomes increasingly an exploration of the question of fiction itself, as the interior monologue of Gurov's following the departure of his beloved illustrates:

> Now this was a subtle game; sly almost. There is no silver waterfall at Oreanda.
>
> What?
>
> None. And there never was a Marino Hotel.
>
> You're joking.
>
> The Theodosia ferry was a ghost ship. No municipal park, no promenade; no town square.
>
> No town square?

> All a fiction. All imagined.
>
> Oh come on!
>
> Was there even – could it be thought even in a sly game – was there ever an Anna? (Friel [2001] 2016: 108–9)

With his Yalta, then, the Irish playwright takes literally the central metaphor of the resort as a stage and at the same time emphasizes its heterotopian and hence indicatively unreal character so as to make it stand not for society, but for fiction itself, for make-believe.

4.3 Spa poetry: Primal sources of the spa narrative

For our final, lyrically compressed trajectory through transnational resort literature, we leave the rest-cure rooms of the climatic resorts and the promenades of the seaside resorts and return to the place where the myth originated, to the spring – with a poem by the Bulgarian writer Nadya Radulova from 2020 (39):

FOUNTAIN

While
you patiently
wait until
it is
your turn
at the fountain

between the picture house, the banja-baschi mosque and the stop of the number 20 tram, amidst the diffused shower of noise from horns, brakes, car alarms, and try to hear this ancient day and night uninterrupted grumbling under your feet, you imagine for a moment how this voice that precedes all human voices, siphoned every day into throats, hoses, bottles, trunks, trailers, how this whole

admixture of magnesium iron manganese sodium potassium selenium nickel zinc cyanide copper arsenic boron lead etc etc suddenly just bursts out, shattters the fragile crust of civilization and overwhelms us, and washes us with all our greek roman thracian and all kinds of other roots upwards and away, and it all goes down the pan and up the spout, goes to the devil and to the recycling centre for antediluvian institutions, and drowns us in our own thirst, and swallows us in our own throats… Such a pure clear end
somehow undeservedly clear
and pure.

You lean forward and drink.

ЧЕШМЯНО
Докато

чинно
си чакаш
реда на
чешмите

между Дома на киното, Баня Баши и спирката на трамвай 20, сред дисперсния шум на клаксони, спирачки, аларми, и се напрягаш да чуеш онова древно денонощно гъргорене под краката ти, за миг си представяш как този глас преди всички човешки езици, всекидневно запушван в гърла, туби, бутилки, багажници, ремаркета, цялата тази смес от магнезий желязо манган натрий калий селен никел цинк цианид мед арсен бор олово и пр. изведнъж просто избухне, взриви крехкия амбалаж на цивилизацията и ни залее, и ни обърне с всичките ни гръцки римски тракийски и всякакви там коренища нагоре, и ни прати на кино, на баня, в депото за рециклиране на допотопни съоръжения, и ни удави в собствената ни жажда, и ни погълне в собствената ни глътка… Толкова чист и прозрачен
завършек.
Някак незаслужено прозрачен
и чист.

Навеждаш се и отпиваш.

Radulova constructs – in the truest sense of the word – an iconic drinking scene: a human individual bends over the fountain and drinks, receiving a gift of nature, the healing water. Significantly, this primal scene unfolds in a chaotic urban environment. Best known in this respect is doubtless the Hungarian capital Budapest, with its numerous mineral springs and baths. Over the centuries these have absorbed influences from all manner of bathing cultures, from the ancient Roman via the Ottoman to that of the Habsburg K & K monarchy and were places both of healing and of pleasure and relaxation.

Radulova's drinking scene takes place in the here and now in another European capital city, namely Sofia in Bulgaria. It is perhaps less well known that this is, after Budapest, the capital city with the largest number of mineral springs in Europe. They are numbered at between forty and fifty. One of the best known is situated on Baths Square (Ploštad Banski), which even has water in its name. The use of this spring is also associated with ancient Roman and medieval Ottoman traditions and buildings, bath houses and fountains.

Accordingly, the fountain poem makes use of a traditional form, the baroque *carmen figuratum* or shape poem, to capture anew the centuries-old spa text. The writer emphasizes the uncanny origins of the thermal waters in the volcanic depths of the earth. It is true that man has tamed it for his own purposes, and yet it still retains its power to overthrow the status quo. And so, the poem combines

apocalyptic visions with a gesture of humility that is properly pious. Thus, Radulova makes it possible to connect the resort narrative to today's climate fiction, which is concerned to describing the role of human beings in the anthropocene and to create an awareness of the responsibility that mankind bears towards Creation.

The subterranean force of thermal springs has long been a source of fascination. And so, Radulova's poem is able to transport us to a very different time and place, to the Bohemian triangle of spa towns at the end of the eighteenth century and specifically to Carlsbad (now Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic) and its famous geyser. The hot water gushes out of the depths of the earth to a height of up to twelve meters and has riveted travellers for centuries (see Schieb 2016: 24). Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who was a regular guest in Carlsbad, and who was a literary figure with a special and unusual interest in the natural sciences, was particularly fascinated by this phenomenal water feature. On 2 September 1809, the geyser exploded, with the result that one spring dried up almost completely and another began flowing in a slightly different place. Goethe comments:

> From the very beginning they have handled the matter without any real understanding or insight and so constricted this important natural phenomenon that it was forced from time to time by violent means to give itself room to breathe. … The geyser, encased in a wooden box placed immediately above the crack in the ceiling, gushes powerfully upwards and then flows down a kind of gutter, from which the drinking vessels can be filled. It is a great sight to see this seething, boiling force, that they had once, very much in the manner of Philistines, compelled to sit up and beg – which, to be precise, is the source of all prior and subsequent mishaps.
>
> Von jeher hat man die Sache ohne eigentliche Übersicht und Einsicht behandelt und diese bedeutende Naturwirkung so in die Enge getrieben, daß sie sich von Zeit zu Zeit gewaltsam Luft machen mußte. … Der Sprudel quillt in einem hölzernen Kasten, der unmittelbar auf den Riß der Decke aufgesetzt ist, gewaltsam herauf und läuft in einer Rinne ab, so daß die Becher untergehalten werden. Es ist ein großer Anblick, diese ungeheure siedende Gewalt zu sehen, die man sonst sehr philisterhaft gezwungen hatte, Männerchen zu machen; woher, genau betrachtet, alles frühere und spätere Unglück gekommen ist. (Goethe ([1810] [1896] 1987: 309, 311)

The precarious balance between the sublime healing and destructive powers of nature, on the one hand, and human fragility and hubris, on the other, is what links these two works from such different epochs and contexts. But both texts can also be read as meta-commentaries on literary form, which likewise represents the (vain) striving of human beings to tame nature. Goethe's 'wooden box' is the equivalent of Radulova's baroque form of the shaped poem, which controls the flow of language.

In her literary guide to the Bohemian spa towns, Roswitha Schieb brings together further poems devoted to the Carlsbad geyser, in which the volcanic power of the

mineral waters is invoked sometimes as a means of heightening masculinity or the fighting spirit, and sometimes as something capable of sweeping away class-based social barriers (Schieb 2016: 24–42). As late as 1932, the Czech prose-writer and socially critical journalist Marie Majerová is moved to pen a hymn to the 'Tryskající Vody' (gushing waters):

> You are the salt of the earth, you waters gushing forth from unexplored depths, that break through the shell of the earth with your handful of pearls! Hot springs, salt springs, you are the salt of the Bohemian earth! You alone enrich Bohemia's sons and daughters with minerals that are well worth their weight in gold. … What dizzying sinuosity in this circulation of minerals from the elemental stone of the earth via humans to the flowers and clouds!
>
> Vy jste sůl země, vy vody tryskající z neprozkoumaných hlubin, rozbíjející skořápku zemské kůry pěstí plnou perel! Horké prameny, slané prameny, vy jste sůl české země! Toliko vámi dostává se jejím synům a dcerám nerostu, jenž je nad zlato. … Jaká to závratná klikatina je koloběh nerostu od prahory přes člověka ke květu a obláčku! (Majerová 1953: 66)

Majerová, a feminist author from the independent state of Czechoslovakia, founded in 1918, nationalizes the universal natural heritage of the geyser and makes it a gift explicitly for the local population. She thus gives expression, after the centuries-long domination of the Bohemian lands by German-speaking empires, to the post-colonial impulse.

Goethe's well that dries up and springs anew elsewhere, or Majerová's (slightly skewed) metaphor of the 'dizzying sinuosity' (in the Czech original a no less peculiar 'dizzying zig-zag', 'závratna klikatina') can equally serve as metaphors for the way the spa text – as an undercurrent of the broader resort narrative – works and gets transposed through centuries and cultures. In our twenty-first century present, this is evident not only in the writings of the Bulgarian author Radulova, but also in a poem by the Irish poet Harry Clifton with the 'classical' title 'Taking the Waters' (Clifton [1994] 2014: 77–8):

> Taking the Waters
>
> There are taps that flow, all day and all night,
> From the depths of Europe,
> Inexhaustible, taken for granted,
>
> Slaking our casual thirsts
> At a railway station
> Heading south, or here in the Abruzzo

Bursting cold from an iron standpipe
While our blind mouths
Suck at essentials, straight from the water table.

Our health is too good, we are not pilgrims,
And the nineteenth century
Led to disaster. Aix and Baden Baden –

Where are they now, those ladies with the vapours
Sipping at the glasses of hydrogen sulphide
Every morning, while the pumphouse piano played

And Russian radicals steamed and stewed
For hours in their sulphur tubs
Plugged into the cathodes of Revolution?

Real cures for imaginary ailments
Diocletian's, or Vespasian's.
History passes, only the waters remain,

Bubbling up, through their carbon sheets,
To the other side of catastrophe
Where we drink, at a forgotten source,

Through the old crust of Europe
Centuries deep, restored by a local merchant
Of poultry and greens, inscribing his name in Latin.

Here too, the motif of the natural gift of healing water is linked to contemporary concerns about the way human beings waste natural resources and is thus given a touch of climate fiction. Geological and historical metaphors intersect; the elemental force of nature and fragile human civilization coexist in a state of precarious tension that might erupt at any time. Yet, the eruptions could just as well affect social conditions: 'History passes, only the waters remain.' (Compare Mrożek, where only the Black Sea survives historical cataclysms.) Moreover, Clifton emphasizes an aspect of the resort that is typical and of central importance for this book: its European dimension. The poem takes us from the ancient Romans to revolutionary Russians and plots a geographical constellation on the mental map of European spas that includes the French town of Aix-les-Bains, the German Baden-Baden and the Italian Abruzzo. Like the springs, the source texts, irrespective of direct contactological intertextual references, are always finding new places to bubble up in.

4.4 Serious playfulness

The lines we have drawn between exemplary resort texts in this chapter clearly show the wide variety of intertextual procedures adopted. These range from individual allusions to the adoption and transformation of classic themes and plots, settings and character constellations. The longer the topos has evolved through history, the more comprehensive and global the references become. Contactological, provable allusions interact with the broader literary and societal narratives, whether we wish to regard these as second-order culture semiotic texts, as Morgan (2014) does, or as a form of genre memory from the perspective of Mikhail Bakhtin (see Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023 and our introduction). The forms of intertextual interplay then reflect the respective societal and political discourses of their time: they constitute feminist, queer or post-colonial counter-readings and broaden the middle and upper-class, eurocentric, 'white' health resort to include neglected ethnic, social and gender perspectives.

In the case of iconic texts such as Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* or Anton Chekhov's 'The Lady with the Dog', the referential frame goes beyond simple intertextuality to encompass complex rewritings and updatings of the respective narrative worlds in the form of sequels and prequels. In the process, intertextuality becomes more and more of a game, as the programmatic title of Brian Friel's play *The Yalta Game* indicates. The texts themselves then also offer central metaphors for the forms of intertextuality employed: the clouds of steam obscuring a text as a result of its reception, through which we apprehend the original (Tokarczuk's metaphorical equivalent of Genette's palimpsest theory) or the eruptive power of the source texts, that run dry and then re-emerge in different, unexpected places.

Notes

1 This map was created as part of the seminar 'The European Spa. Entanglements, Itineraries, Maps. A Digital Humanities Approach' at the University of Amsterdam and Freie Universität Berlin in the summer semester 2020. The sources used include Callow (2001), Rayfield (1998) and Serekin (2010).
2 The original quotation reads: 'Jérôme Garcin écrit de *Siloé* que ce fut *La Montagne magique* de Gadenne.'
3 See https://www.adelphi.it/libro/9788845904677.
4 See The International Booker Prize, https://thebookerprizes.com/the-booker-library/prize-years/international/2023 (accessed 7 November 2023).
5 Watroba offers close readings of Erich Kästner's prose fragment *Der Zauberlehrling* (1938), Konstantin Fedin's novel *Sanatorium Arktur* (1940), A. E. Ellis's novel *The Rack* (1958), Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* (1987), Paweł Huelle's novel *Castorp* (2004), Alice Munro's story 'Amundsen' (in *Dear Life*, 2012), Hayao Miyazaki's animated film *The Wind Rises* (2013), Paolo Sorrentino's film *Youth* (2015) and Gore Verbinski's film *A Cure for Wellness* (2016).
6 In Mann's novel, the phrase 'Die hier oben' and its oblique forms 'Derer hier oben' and 'Denen hier oben', with the initial D capitalized even in the middle of a

sentence, recurs like a leitmotif (see e.g. Mann [1924] 2002: 220, 226, 232, 407, 435, 477, 713, 737, 951). Woods (Mann 1995) does not translate the phrase consistently. The most frequently repeated rendering, with or without the article, and with or without inverted commas (which Mann does not use) is 'people up here' (see e.g. Mann 1995: 149, 264, 282, 309).

7 According to a different interpretation of this narrative perspective, the plural also includes the reader (see Feuerlicht 1970).

8 The original quotation reads: 'die erotische Dimension des *Zauberberg*' (Gremler 2012: 239).

9 The original quotation reads: 'Durchbrechen der heterosexuellen Matrix und der Norm des eindeutigen Geschlechterdualismus' (Gremler 2012: 243).

10 The original quotation speaks of: 'Die hauptsächlich männlich bestimmte Welt des *Zauberberg* mit seiner als *queer* zu bezeichnenden Durchbrechung des Postulats der Polarität im sexuellen Begehren' (Gremler 2012: 256).

11 It is, however, important to note that in Wojnicz's case, the transformation is an external one that serves to bring out the identity at the core of his personality:

> Essentially, he remained the same person, but differently prepared; one could say differently served, differently garnished. Now he resembled the woman in the hat who had stirred such emotion in him and whom he had hankered after. (Tokarczuk 2024: 323–4)
>
> W gruncie rzeczy pozostał tym samym człowiekiem, tylko inaczej przyrządzonym; można by powiedzieć – inaczej podanym, inaczej ugarnirowanym. Teraz przypominał ową kobietę w kapeluszu, która wzbudzała w nim takie poruszenie i do której tak tęsknił. (Tokarczuk 2022: 303)

12 Woods (Mann 1995: 239) has 'a Son of the West, of the divine West', and does not translate 'Sohn der Zivilisation' at all.

13 This gap in perception might also have to do with the fact that the sanatorium novel and the spa narrative and the particular forms of heterotopia they embody are usually read and discussed entirely separately from each other.

14 As with many sanatorium texts, the novel is modelled on Fedin's own experience. Konstantin Fedin suffered from tuberculosis and was sent by his supporter and mentor Maxim Gorky to Davos to be cured.

15 Watroba, however, does not pursue a post-colonial reading of Mann's novel, preferring instead to concentrate on its aesthetic qualities.

16 Both Kur'ianov and Lisitsyna wrote their articles after the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Their interpretations are designed to underscore the genuinely Russian character of the Crimea and can thus be understood as part of the political justification for the forced occupation.

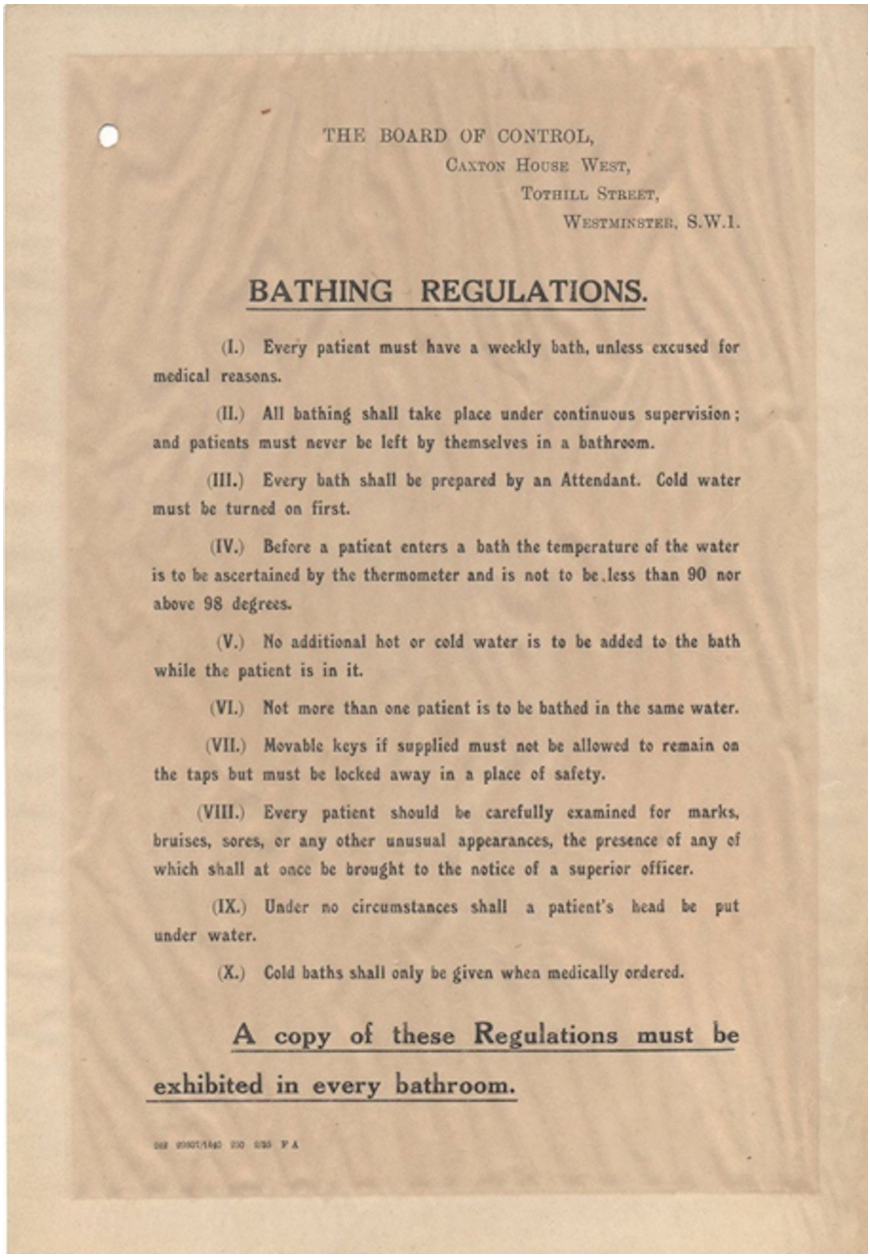
17 The original title was 'Pasport morjaka', 'The Sailor's Passport' (Zhadan 2008).

18 There are comparable cases in the Russian-language reception. See Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's 'Dama s sobakami' (The Lady with the Dogs, [1993] 2001) and Lyudmila Ulitskaya's *Bol'shaia dama s malen'koi sobachkoi* (The Tall Lady with the Little Dog, 2008).

5

SCRUTINIZING HEALTH RESORTS AS PLACES OF DISCIPLINE AND SURVEILLANCE

'Surveillance is a feature of modernity', note Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson in their introduction to *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility* (2019: 3). It is also, of course central to the relationship between doctor and patient. Indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 3, it is partly because society in the late nineteenth century was itself seen to be sick, as well as incubating real illnesses, that surveillance came to play such an important role in it. The European health resort, operating as it does at the intersection of medicine and society, was particularly sensitive to historical developments of this kind. So it is not surprising that surveillance turns out to be a recurrent theme in resort literature. Socio-geographically, the health resort was a relatively limited space, peopled by an unusually heterogeneous group of temporary visitors and local residents and thus inviting a regime of supervision and control. And as in the history of medicine more and more emphasis came to be placed on empirical observation, so the bodies of the patients became the objects of ever more detailed practices of inspection and documentation. It is not for nothing that the bathers of Harrogate were never to be left alone and their bodies were to be subjected to minute physical examination (see Figure 5.1). With every new development in the progress of bureaucracy, with every advance in the technology of measurement and documentation, the tendency alters and gathers strength. The interplay between care and control is something that Michel Foucault has demonstrated with particular bravura in his various contributions on the historical development of state biopolitics (see introduction). David Armstrong speaks of 'Surveillance Medicine' that 'maps a different form of identity as its monitoring gaze sweeps across innovative spaces of illness potential' (Armstrong 1995: 403). In this chapter, we will use selected examples ranging from the nineteenth to the early twenty-first century and taken from across Europe to trace the emergence and development of a 'surveillance narrative' in spa literature and the evolving broader resort narrative.



THE BOARD OF CONTROL,
CAXTON HOUSE WEST,
TOTHILL STREET,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1.

BATHING REGULATIONS.

(I.) Every patient must have a weekly bath, unless excused for medical reasons.

(II.) All bathing shall take place under continuous supervision; and patients must never be left by themselves in a bathroom.

(III.) Every bath shall be prepared by an Attendant. Cold water must be turned on first.

(IV.) Before a patient enters a bath the temperature of the water is to be ascertained by the thermometer and is not to be less than 90 nor above 98 degrees.

(V.) No additional hot or cold water is to be added to the bath while the patient is in it.

(VI.) Not more than one patient is to be bathed in the same water.

(VII.) Movable keys if supplied must not be allowed to remain on the taps but must be locked away in a place of safety.

(VIII.) Every patient should be carefully examined for marks, bruises, sores, or any other unusual appearances, the presence of any of which shall at once be brought to the notice of a superior officer.

(IX.) Under no circumstances shall a patient's head be put under water.

(X.) Cold baths shall only be given when medically ordered.

A copy of these Regulations must be exhibited in every bathroom.

Figure 5.1 Bathing regulations displayed in Harrogate's Royal Baths.

5.1 'Docile bodies': Mary Shelley reports on Bad Kissingen, Karl Marx on Enghien-les-Bains

'You know, also, how grievously my health has been shaken; a nervous illness interrupts my usual occupations, and disturbs the ordinary tenor of my life', writes Mary Shelley in the first letter of her epistolary travel account *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843* (Shelley 1844: 2). In the course of these journeys, she spent time in Baden-Baden, Brückenau, Bad Brocklet, Teplitz (Teplice) and Bad Kissingen, among other places. Her choice of Kissingen for the longest spa stay was determined by Augustus Bozzi Granville's seminal publication *The Spas of Germany* of 1837 (see Chapter 1). Following her intensive work on her late husband's literary estate and her editing of his complete works,[1] she suffered from exhaustion, chronic headaches and depression, and was hoping to restore her health by a combination of travelling to places both new and familiar and taking a cure in a spa town. (Her chronic headaches only later turned out to have been caused by a brain tumour.) The waters of Kissingen were reputed to help in the treatment of nervous diseases, Granville himself practised there, and so she joined the droves of English health tourists to the Continent and went for a 'Cur' in Kissingen in the summer of 1842 (Shelley 1844: 184). In her estimation, Kissingen was a spa town that placed considerably more emphasis than others on medical treatment, and that did so at the expense of the pleasurable side of spa life. Being the only sick person within a group of visitors (she was accompanied by her maid, her son Percy Florence and his friends Alexander Knox and Henry Hugo Pearson[2]), she was especially sensitive to the potential conflict in interests between the health- and the pleasure-seekers visiting the place: 'It is odd enough to seek amusement by being surrounded by the rheumatic, the gouty, the afflicted of all sorts' (Shelley 1844: 184). Her account of the group's stay in Kissingen is very much marked by this sensitivity: 'I trust to receive benefit in the end; but it is rather an infliction upon my companions … to live, as they say, surrounded by *lepers*' (Shelley 1844: 188, emphasis in the original). And while she counted herself firmly among the sick, she felt progressively unhappy about the spa regime which she considered more and more unreasonable and unhelpful.

Thus, though she had initially put much hope in the 'Kur' at Kissingen, she was soon irritated by the daily routine and medical regimen ('All the Germans get up at four, and parade the gardens to drink the waters till nearly eight; I contrive to get there soon after five'; Shelley 1844: 185). Moreover, the sociable events disappointed her by their boredom, and the dietary regime she found unbearable:

> The King of Bavaria is so afraid that his medicinal waters may fall into disrepute if the drinkers should eat what disagrees them, that we only eat what he, in conjunction with a triumvirate of doctors, is pleased to allow us. Every now and then … notice [is] sent from this council … to the effect that, whoever in Kissingen should serve at any table pork, veal, salad, fruit &c. &c. &c., should be fined so many florins. (Shelley 1844: 185–6)

Her criticism levelled at a disciplining and controlling spa regime culminates in the ironic prophetic stipulation:

> It is surprising that, to forward the cure, all letters are not opened first by the doctors, and not delivered if they contain any disagreeable news. As yet, they only exhort the friends of the sick to spare them every painful emotion in their correspondence; but Kissingen will not be perfect, until the post is put under medical *surveillance*. (Shelley 1844: 198, emphasis in the original)

Scholars have picked up on these lines in a number of ways. Esther H. Schor, looking at the narrative economy of the entire book, takes them to serve as preparation of Shelley's later political statements regarding the state of Italy at the time:

> Surveillance, regime, tyranny; for all its wryness, Shelley's politics of the false cure of Kissingen launches the central concerns of her second journey: the tyranny of Austrian and French imperialism, and the abuses of papal and priestly authority. Like the cowed, enfeebled patients of Kissingen, the Bohemians 'bear the marks of conquered people …. They remember that they were once free'. (Schor 1993: 244)

Elizabeth Dolan reads them as 'preceding Foucault's argument that modern institutional control is implicitly state control' (Dolan 2008: 141). Analysing Shelley's use of language and, in particular, her choice of military and political terms – the *parading* patients, the *triumvirate* of doctors – Dolan finds in Shelley 'what Foucault would identify in *Discipline and Punish* as the emergence of "docile bodies" in the eighteenth century, a phenomenon involving … control of the "modality" of individual bodies in multiple institutional settings' (Dolan 2008: 142).

However, Shelley's references to spa towns in *Rambles* are not limited to Kissingen, and her descriptions, say, of Brückenau, bear all the marks of enjoyment:

> There is a sense of extreme tranquillity in these secluded spots in Bavaria, where you seem cast on an unknown, unvisited region, and yet, on reaching the watering-place itself, find all the comforts of life 'rise like an exhalation' around. The hills round Brukenau *[sic]* are much higher and more romantic than at Kissingen. … The public gardens, instead of being a melancholy strip of ground …, are extensive and resemble an English pleasure-ground; a brawling stream, the Sinn, adorns them; everything invites the wanderer to stroll on, and to enjoy in fine weather Nature's dearest gifts …. I should have been glad to stay at least a week in this agreeable retirement, and drink the waters; but we could not now alter our arrangements. (Shelley 1844: 200–2)

For Dolan, such accounts are less related to the spa towns referenced and more to the narrative economy of the *Rambles* as a whole: they serve to foreshadow Shelley's landscape descriptions later on, mainly of Italy, and her stance that landscape in

itself can be more healing than institutionalized medicine (see Dolan 2008: 135). And indeed, Shelley's descriptions of Kissingen, which are considerably more extensive than those of any other spa town visited during her journeys, suggest that she noticed, and concentrated on, an element of spa life there which was not a dominant feature at the time, but which had started to emerge in a number of places. Thus, Heidi Liedke concludes that 'as early as in the 1840s, a few decades before the widespread establishment of medical institutions of all kinds which the Victorian age is notorious for, Shelley voiced her critique and worries that would be equally applicable in other contexts in the later part of the century' (Liedke 2019: 27).

One of those who experienced this development at a more advanced stage later in the century was the German philosopher and revolutionary Karl Marx. Due to a series of health problems, he got to visit a fair number of European health resorts in the course of his adult life. Marx suffered from liver trouble and rheumatism, but also had bronchitis and painful carbuncles. The letters he wrote from the resorts to family and friends describe his illnesses, treatments and daily routines, and contain some sharp observations of the spa society around him. Many of them are addressed to Friedrich Engels, his close friend, collaborator and sponsor, who also paid for these sojourns. In 1882, the year before his death, Marx spent time in three different resorts: Monte Carlo, Enghien-les-Bains in France and Vevey in Switzerland. The main ailment treated was an ongoing, painful cough. His stint in Enghien was different from the others in two respects: Enghien is situated just north of Paris. Marx stayed with his daughter Jenny Lafargue and her family in Argenteuil and made a fifteen-minute train journey to and from Enghien every day, rather than lodging there and being part of the spa society. More importantly, he was exposed to treatments there that went beyond breathing the clean and soothing air in Monte Carlo and Vevey and marked the newest developments in balneotherapy, including shower techniques ('douches') and sulphur inhalation. In a letter of 4 July 1882 addressed to Engels, he describes the treatment as follows:

> So far I have had 2 sulphur baths with douches, tomorrow the third; I have yet to encounter anything more splendid than the shower bath (alias douche); from the bath one climbs onto a slightly raised board, en 'nature'; the bath attendant then manipulates the jet (about the size of a fire hose) like a virtuoso his instrument, commands the movements of the corpus and successively bombards all parts of said corpus (save the head, (the cranium)), for 180 seconds (alias 3 minutes), sometimes more gently, sometimes more strongly, legs and feet included, and always progressively crescendo. … In the inhalation room the atmosphere is dark from the sulphur vapours; you stay there 30–40 minutes; every 5 minutes you suck, at a certain table, special sulphur-laden vapour in aerosol form (from one of the tubes (zinc) with spigots); each man is encased in rubber from head to foot, then they march in file around the table ….[3]
>
> Ich habe bis jetzt 2 Schwefelbäder *mit douches*, morgen das 3te; etwas Herrlicheres als das Spritzbad (alias douche) ist mir noch nicht vorgekommen; aus dem Bad

> steigt man auf ein etwas erhobnes Brett, und zwar en 'nature'; der Badwärter behandelt dann die Spritze (vom Umfang von Feuerspritze) wie ein Virtuos sein Instrument, kommandiert die Bewegungen des corpus und bombardiert einem das corpus wechselnd alle parts *(save the head, (die Hirnplatte)),* während 180 Sekunden (alias 3 minutes), bald schwächer, bald stärker, bis zu den Beinen und Füßen inkl. und stets fortschreitend crescendo. … In dem Saal der inhalation ist die atmosphere dunkel von den Schwefeldämpfen; hier Aufenthalt 30–40 Minutes; alle 5 Minuten saugt man an gewissem Tisch mit speziellem pulverisierten, schwefelschwangeren (aus einem der Röhren (Zink) mit Kranen) Dampf; jeder Mann in Caoutchuc vermummt von Kopf bis Fuß, dann marschieren sie hintereinander um den Tisch herum …. (Marx 1967: 75)

The re-medicalization of the cure thus captured here entails characteristics that are far removed from most accounts of nineteenth-century spa life and much more akin to descriptions of life in sanatoria that became prominent from the early twentieth century (see Chapter 3). In Marx's distanciating description (as if looking at himself from the outside), the patient is first reduced, in his defenceless nakedness, to the role of passive accomplice in the virtuoso performance of the person wielding the hose and then dressed in an ungainly uniform and made to undergo a routine that is reminiscent of contemporary depictions of prisoners in the exercise yard. The account reaches its humorously ironic climax in Marx's reference to an 'innocent scene from Dante's *Inferno*' ('unschuldige Szene aus Dantes inferno', Marx 1967: 75).[4]

One month later (on 3 August 1882), Marx reports that, though people are normally only exposed to the sulphur treatment for three weeks, the local doctor decided to extend his to double this time. (His otherwise strong constitution, and the meagre success so far, would justify that.)

> I shall, of course, follow the doctor's advice. I hope you will *in any case* come and spend a few days here …, not only so that we may confer about *que faire après*, but more especially, you must understand, because I long to see you again after all these damned *vésicatoires* and one or two very close shaves! (Marx 1992: 297)

> Natürlich füge ich mich durchaus dem ärztlichen Rat. … Ich hoffe, daß Du *jedenfalls* für einige Tage herkommst …, nicht nur, um mit Dir zu beraten, *que faire après*, namentlich aber begreifst Du, wie sehr ich mich danach sehne, Dich wieder zu sehn nach allen diesen damned vesicatoires! und ein paarmal nah beim Umkippen! (Marx 1967: 77)

In both accounts then, the patients feel subjected to the rule of a force outside their control: the medical personnel. Compared with Mary Shelley's, the perception of the treatments as torment is intensified in Marx's account, yet both patients invest at least some belief or hope in these treatments. Turning, to varying extents, into Foucault's 'docile bodies', they do, however, both keep their sharp, analytic perspective on the medical institution they experienced.

5.2 'The advent of an inquisitorial medical era': Gabriel Chevallier updates Guy de Maupassant

A more refined, or perhaps better disguised, version of hell than Marx had described, is to be found in Gabriel Chevallier's novel *Clochemerle les Bains* of 1963.[5] We have no indication whether Chevallier might have read, or been inspired by, any accounts such as those cited above, but that hardly matters, for he would not have needed to. Writing decidedly from a mid-twentieth-century perspective, he was sufficiently acquainted with the ways in which institutions of surveillance and discipline worked, and he applied this knowledge to the institution of the health resort.

Clochemerle les Bains is the third part of Chevallier's popular trilogy of *Clochemerle* novels, satirizing life in a fictitious wine-growing village in France's Beaujolais region.[6] It sees the discovery of a mineral well in the village, which is followed by the large-scale development of a thermal spa and the reconfiguration of the entire village in accordance with this. The venture turns out to be a spectacular success, with Clochemerle outstripping not only all the famous watering places in France, but also places of European standing such as Carlsbad or Baden-Baden. Much of the storyline is reminiscent of Guy de Maupassant's novel *Mont Oriol* of 1887, which described the creation of the creation of a new thermal spa as a fully fledged capitalist enterprise (see Chapter 2). The success of this venture was grounded in an intimate knowledge of how spa towns and spa societies work, and a corresponding attention to every little detail. Chevallier's novel can easily be read as a twentieth-century update of Maupassant's. Significantly, this story is set in the years 1937 to 1939.

Key elements from *Mont Oriol* such as the existence of a rival spa town, some resistance from the local vine-dressers who need to be won over with the help of money, the complete redesign of the village into something much bigger, the implicit knowledge that it is not really the water's properties that have a healing effect, the combination of health, holiday and beauty in the spa stay, the need to bring the medical profession on side, the invention of traditions – all are common to both stories. The very process of developing Clochemerle les Bains, too, seems to copy and outdo that of Mont Oriol. Although this time the brain and driving force behind all this is a new doctor, he can only really start his project in tandem with a rich financier. The element of foreignness attached to Andermatt in *Mont Oriol*, here takes the shape of a native Clochemerlian who had left the place as a very young man, made fantastic amounts of money in America and is now determined to repeat his financial success in his native land. The helpful connection to the upper echelons of society, in Mont Oriol provided by the Marquis de Ravenel, here comes from a local politician. Thus, the trio of Doctor Léo Suffock, financier Toine Bezon (now known as Tonio Texas) and Senator-Minister Barthélemy Piéchut constitutes the triumvirate of medicine, finance and politics that possesses the means to make things happen. Similar to the company in *Mont Oriol*, they are careful to take the right steps at the right time, make sure they draw in the local church, and secure the support of the inhabitants by opening up new, or larger, business prospects for them: the inn-keeper turns into the proprietor of the grand

hotel and so on. They even incorporate the traditional local craft of winemaking into their schemes by inventing a 'vino-aqueous regime' ('une station vino-thermale', Chevallier 1963: 188), alternating the intake of wine and mineral water and selling a new vintage called 'Cuvée du curiste' (Chevallier 1963: 190) to the spa guests. The physical and social upheaval for everyone – old houses demolished, new ones built, new property lines drawn – is thus sweetened with the prospect of easier, greater incomes for most. Parallels with *Mont Oriol* can also be found in the careful choreography of public events, the eventual emergence of more springs, the naming of said springs,[7] the discussion and placing of advertisements, some character constellations,[8] the use of speaking names, marriages of convenience – to name but the most obvious. In general, the pattern of imitating and exceeding Mont Oriol prevails. Clochemerle les Bains has a wider variety of hospitality and entertainment venues (tea rooms, restaurants, bars, a theatre and a cinema), and its outdoor facilities include a tennis court, a swimming pool and a golf course, some of which would have been unknown in Maupassant's time. A small, but significant deviation from Maupassant is the change of primum mobile from the banker (Monsieur Andermatt) to the doctor (Léo Suffock), who does not shy away from anything when it comes to reaching his goals, and whose physical and mental likeness to Napoleon may well not be accidental. More importantly, his name bears the sound of *suffoquer* – to suffocate, hinting quite strongly at the kind of medicine he has in mind (see below).

Two processes within the resort development receive much more extensive descriptions than in *Mont Oriol*: attracting influential members of the medical profession to support and/or settle in Clochemerle and obtaining all the legal pronouncements needed to open the facilities. These negotiations serve to lay bare the state of French society at the time, with the mechanisms of bribery and corruption crossing all social, political and regional boundaries. Dr Suffock's attempts to become a player in this game are crowned with success (he manages to catch the 'biggest sharks in the profession' (Chevallier 1964: 173; 'les deux plus terribles caïmans de la profession', Chevallier 1963: 168), as are those of Piéchut who gets some big names of politics and entertainment to come to Clochemerle while he himself moves closer to the centre of political power.

Where Clochemerle les Bains does not just exceed Mont Oriol, but enters completely new territory, is in the field of medicine, in which striking references are made to biopolitics. It all starts off relatively inconspicuously with Dr Suffock's high ambitions: he is determined to create a resort that puts all other hydrothermal establishments in the country to shame, and of course he wants to become the head of this super-spa. But whilst he agrees with all colleagues drawn into the project that medical and commercial success must go hand in hand, his schemes exceed theirs by far in that he is convinced that '[g]ood health must be imposable. … That is why he was preparing the advent of an inquisitorial medical era' (Chevallier 1964: 228; 'La bonne santé doit être imposable. … C'est pourquoi il préparait l'avènement d'une ère médicale inquisitoriale', Chevallier 1963: 221). As part of this preparation, he intends to create

> a medical sheet for every individual, to be appended to all his other identity documents: driving licence, insurance certificate, national service card, trade-union card, etc., in short that inseparable file which the free man of our day must produce when summoned by the various branches of the police who keep a watching brief over him. (Chevallier 1964: 227)

> la fiche médicale obligatoire, à joindre aux pièces d'identité: permis de conduire, attestation d'assurance, livret militaire, carte d'électeur, carte d'ancien combatant, carte syndicale, etc., bref à cet inseparable dossier que l'homme libre de notre temps doit produire sur sommation des multiples polices qui ont droit de regard sur lui. (Chevallier 1963: 220)

For the promotion of his ideas, he founds the 'Hydrothermal Research Centre' which holds regular meetings in Clochemerle and is willingly attended by the great and the good of the profession because of the exquisite hospitality offered for free. During these meetings, he effectively establishes the objectives of science and public health care as an excuse or a disguise for establishing an all-round system of patient surveillance. And while the old local Doctor Mouraille thinks him mad, all other members of the new 'research' centre go along with Suffock's plans as long as these guarantee them increasingly substantial incomes.

How well those two aims can be combined might be best shown in the following initiative of Suffock's:

> He organised his famous consulting vans, equipped for blood tests and X-ray examinations. On their sides the following words were inscribed in capital letters: CLOCHEMERLE WATCHES OVER YOUR HEALTH. And on the door of each van: FREE CONSULTATIONS NO ENTRANCE FEE. These vans toured the countryside and drew up in the main square of every village. The nurses operated somewhat in the manner of sages and soothsayers …. Money was never mentioned, but each individual on being handed back his slip, was told: 'You will be well advised to consult the Medical Centre of Clochemerle.' Or else: 'You are urgently advised….' etc. (Chevallier 1964: 412)

> Dans ce but il créa ses fameux camions de consultation, équipés pour les prises de sang et les examens radioscopiques. Ils portaient de chaque côté en grandes lettres:
>
> CLOCHEMERLE
> veille sur
> VOTRE SANTÉ.
> Puis, à la porte du camion:
> CONSULTATIONS GRATUITES
> Entrée Libre

> Ces camions battaient la campagne et s'installaient sur la place principale des agglomérations. … Les infirmiers procédaient un peu à la façon des mages et devins. … On ne parlait pas d'argent, mais en retournant leur fiche aux particuliers on leur conseillait: "Vous aurez intérêt à consulter le Centre Médicale de Clochemerle." Avec cette variante: il serait *urgent* que vous veniez consulter. (Chevallier 1963: 404)

And even though the consultations at this Medical Centre of Clochemerle are not expensive, the long cures prescribed by it are. (And as the notes include information about the patients' economic situation, they are immediately put into classes – first, second and third – which determine the quality of treatment and the fees.) However, a modern reader is more likely to be struck by the amount of personal data that can be harvested in this way and fed into Léo Suffock's medical sheets. Perhaps even more striking in this regard are the descriptions of the main spa treatments and facilities. Again, they start inconspicuously enough by giving the patients' daily routine, including seeing the doctor and receiving their instructions, and progressing to the pump room in order to receive their bath, or douche, or massage, or whatever else had been prescribed. But then they turn to the oversight of it all, describing Dr Suffock in his

> command post, a vast glassed-in rotunda comparable to a watch-tower, from which he overlooked and dominated the whole pump-room. A switch-board connected him to the various branches, another line to the public exchange. (Chevallier 1964: 350)

> poste de commandement, vaste rotonde vitrée comparable à une tour de contrôle, d'où il surplombait et embrassait l'ensemble de l'installation. Un standard téléphonique le reliait aux différents services, une autre ligne le reliait à l'extérieur. (Chevallier 1963: 342)

Immediately, descriptions of Bentham's Panopticon come to mind, a prison design that makes sure no inmate can ever be out of the guard's sight. Foucault, in *Surveiller et punir* (1975, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977), used this as a starting point to trace all aspects of surveillance and disciplining developed in European penal systems since the late Enlightenment period, and to show how they gradually infiltrated other institutions of Western society, including medical ones, and eventually became internalized and regarded as normal by the members of those institutions. (The totalitarian regimes of twentieth-century Europe thus did not have to *invent* their mechanisms of surveillance and punishment – they were already in place.) What we see at work in Clochemerle are 'biopolitics' in the purest Foucauldian sense: The increase of the patients' physical strength is inextricably bound up with a decrease of their legal sovereignty and – ultimately – their political strength. Moreover, the therapeutic setup is 'focused not on training and disciplining individuals' but the collective (Mitchell 2021: 3).

Seeing Dr Suffock sit in his 'command post', or preparing hundreds of files and index cards and rolling out a classification method that would 'enable him to identify any patient in a matter of minutes by revealing his personal particulars "from a medical point of view"' (Chevallier 1964: 285; 'permettre d'identifier en quelques minutes n'importe quel malade, en révélant ses caractéristiques de "matière médicale"', Chevallier 1963: 278) becomes an even more telling image when considering the years in which the story is set. With this historic context in mind – and the narrator makes sure the reader is reminded of it constantly – we see that what is happening in this narrative is a parallelization of sleepwalking into the war and sleepwalking into a totalitarian surveillance system, which disguises itself for long enough as healthcare. The good citizens of Clochemerle and their guests only wake up when it is too late, and 'the war' is used as an excuse for all disciplining and controlling measures in place within and beyond the realm of the health resort. A story of this kind could of course only have been written with the knowledge of modern authoritarian state forms and their workings, and of the deleterious uses to which medical science was put in them.

In light of this, some episodes in the book take on a radically new aspect. The chapter 'On the Brink of Disaster' ('On frise les catastrophes'), for instance, would seem at first glance to have the function of providing the necessary setback within the plot – just to make sure that things don't go too smoothly. In it, some cases of typhoid transpire in Clochemerle, which, if they became public, would deal a mortal blow to a newly created health establishment working with water. A comparable threat of contamination of the water and a health hazard for spa guests had been identified by Dr Thomas Stockmann in Henrik Ibsen's play *En Folkefiende* (1882, *An Enemy of the People*, 1963). There, in order not to let the town's financial sources dry up, the scandal is covered up and the enlightened spa doctor becomes the eponymous enemy of the people. Luckily for Suffock in Clochemerle, the source of the contaminated water gets identified and eliminated quickly, and the matter is thus resolved. Yet, to make sure that no one even thinks of the possibility, Suffock 'debaptizes' typhoid and instead invents the disease of 'gastro-cerebral fever' (Chevallier 1964: 301; 'fièvre gastro-cérébrante', Chevallier 1963: 294). This simple substitution has the effect of erasing contagion from Clochemerle and with it the danger of an epidemic. Even though epidemics are a centuries-old phenomenon, for Chevallier's readers, the Spanish flu would have come to mind, which had ripped through Europe in the aftermath of the First World War and prompted radical overhauls of its public health systems. But there is also an interesting discursive aspect surfacing here, showing the defining power of language: if the word typhoid doesn't exist in Clochemerle, the disease doesn't either.

All of this, however, is wrapped up in highly entertaining descriptions of spa and village society, of amusements, love affairs and all sorts of trivia. And as part of this package, the characters, as much as the reader, seem to swallow it all: the blatant sexism and nationalism, the unmasking of medical care as inhumane capitalist exploitation, the controlling ideas of one little man being allowed to lead to the

installation of a system of comprehensive surveillance of each person from birth to death, and the complete transparency of the subject vis-à-vis the state authorities. Granted, compared with the nineteenth-century accounts considered earlier in this chapter, health care and treatments do not come with palpable (physical) discomfort in Clochemerle les Bains. On the contrary, the stay there is equated with a most pleasurable holiday. The power of the medical personnel over the patient, so brilliantly described by Karl Marx, is no longer perceived by the patient in physical terms, but it has moved into the realm of knowledge and it operates on a mass basis. Moreover – and beyond the novel's historical setting – we see all the requirements met in Clochemerle for a fully fledged neoliberal health system in which surveillance and profiteering work smoothly hand in hand. According to Robert Mitchell, 'the neoliberal goal of establishing a fully optimized market society requires the development of ever more expansive and precise biopolitical technologies' (Mitchell 2021: 17). This is exactly what Clochemerle's Dr Suffock set out to achieve.

Among Chevallier's *Clochemerle* novels, the first one is the most famous, and the one considered here gets the least mention. Together, they are perceived as satirical portraits of the little oddities of rural French society. The dust cover of *Clochemerle les Bains*'s British edition claims that 'In this new novel, M. Chevallier has found the fullest expression for his philosophy of the good life, a tragi-comedy in which the near-medieval Clochemerle enters the modern world and embraces it as ardently as a lover his mistress, whether for the better or for the worse the reader must judge for himself' (Chevalier 1964). The publishers, it seems, expect the readers to happily re-enact the ignorance of the fictional characters – visitors and Clochemerlians alike. However, it will not escape the observant reader's attention that the humour employed in this novel is far from innocent and more like a laughter from hell.

In our reading then, this novel is anything but light-hearted entertainment, and the special quality attested to it in its reviews has less to do with comedy than with sharp observational power. By using a nineteenth-century spa narrative – Maupassant's *Mont Oriol* – as a template and updating it in light of recent developments in the world, Chevallier has depicted the inconspicuous beginnings of totalitarianism, the conflation of care and control that is invariably at its heart, the ways in which perceived self-interest led to complicity and deliberate ignorance, the extent to which cynical manipulation corrupts language, the chilling connection between science and economic and political power and, above all, the inability or unwillingness of societies to recognize the warning signs in time.[9]

5.3 Uncanny surveillance: Mircea Cărtărescu's children's sanatorium in the novel Solenoid

With the next novel we move our 'surveillance narrative' to the second half of the twentieth century and to the eastern part of Europe in which by then the communist system had been established. During the Cold War, health policy played an

important role in the systemic competition between capitalism and communism. In addition to the task of keeping the working population productive, it was also meant to prove which form of society was the 'healthier' one. In most countries of the Eastern bloc, the institution of the sanatorium continued to exist alongside the traditional health resort; in some, it replaced the spa resorts altogether, even after the introduction of drug therapy for tuberculosis – and thus the end of the emblematic recumbent cure (see Chapter 3).[10]

The doyen of contemporary Romanian prose, Mircea Cărtărescu, sets a symbolically significant part of his thousand-page novel *Solenoid* (2015) in a children's sanatorium. As a child, the autofictional narrator (Mironescu and Mironescu 2021: 67) tested positive for tuberculosis, a disease which at that time was endemic among the poor. His parents – half on the advice of, and half coerced by, the medical personnel – sent the boy for a stay in the tuberculosis prophylaxis sanatorium in Voila in Transylvania. The admission papers are referred to as 'internment documents' ('foile de internare', Cărtărescu 2015: 263), the transported children as 'deportees' ('deportatele', Cărtărescu 2015: 339) – language that already underlines the parallel between medical institution and internment camp. As they cross the threshold to this 'other place', the children have their heads shaved (if they have lice) and are given coloured markings (if they have pustules that might indicate infectious diseases). The doctor in charge, who is actually presented as a likeable person capable of empathy, nonetheless appears as a mythical authority guarding the entrance to the 'infernal paradise' of the sanatorium:

> A superior creature used [the stethoscope] to palpate, who knows for what purpose, the bodies that housed, under their velvety skin, soft, complicated organs that throbbed, extended and retreated like living animals in a subterranean lair. (Cărtărescu 2022: 334)

> O creatură superioară se folosea de el ca să ne palpeze, în cine ştie se scop, trupurile ce-adăposteau, sub pielea catifelată, organe moi, complicate, ce zvâcneau, se-ntinedeau şi se retrăgeau ca nişte animale vii într-o vizuină suberană. (Cărtărescu 2015: 339–40)

The medical examination becomes a demonstration of an obscure power pursuing unclear aims. The milieu of the sanatorium is like a barracks, with thirty beds and lockers in a Spartan dormitory, which makes all children the same, despite the different animals on their pyjamas, the last vestige of individuality linking them to their families and their homes. The spatial arrangement of the whole place is stringently organized, and the movement of the 'inmates' subject to authoritarian control. 'The instructor was still telling us things in a harsh and rigid tone; rules for behavior, punishments' (Cărtărescu 2022: 335; 'Pedagogul ne tot spunea câte ceva, pe un ton aspru şi inflexibil: reguli de comportare, pedepse', Cărtărescu 2015: 342) – a positively Foucauldian formulation. At night, for example, it is not permitted under any circumstances to leave the dormitory, so the young people regularly wet their beds.

At the heart of this architecture of surveillance are the washrooms. With their emphasis on fresh air and horizontality, complemented since the 1950s with medication, tuberculosis sanatoria had moved some way from the therapeutic spaces and means of the traditional spa resorts. Allocating a central position to the ablutory complex as a place of physical exposure, by contrast, brings with it a return to characteristic themes and motifs. The shower cubicles have no doors. The rooms are characterized by the antithesis of cold, white tiles ('and everything was glacial, unmoving, and frighteningly quiet', Cărtărescu 2022: 331; 'și totul era glacial, încremenit, de o tăcere înfricoșătoare', Cărtărescu 2015: 337) and uncontrollably hot vapours. In their aseptic sterility, they resemble a labyrinth in which a person is in danger of getting lost. Here, at the heart of the sanatorium, the children are subjected by sadistic supervisors – men and women – to a brutal system of surveillance and discipline. In the process, the stripping of the body is explicitly used as a strategy for humiliation:

> I had never seen other children without their clothes. At home I knew how shameful it was for someone to see your bare bottom. … I was very embarrassed, I felt like a little animal in a herd; I had been abandoned in a place where I had vanished into a group of small, naked bodies, dreading the next unforeseeable trial. (Cărtărescu 2022: 336)

> Nu mai văzusem copii dezbrăcați. Știam de-acasă ce groaznic era să te vadă cineva-n fundul gol … Mi-era foarte rușine, maă simțeam ca un mic animal într-o turmă, fusesem abandonat într-un loc îin care dispărusem într-un grup de trupuri mici și goale ce așteptau, speriate, alte încercări, cu neputință de prevăzut. (Cărtărescu 2015: 342–3)

The personnel of the sanatorium are described as sadistic, with a thoroughly stereotypical intimidating exterior (the male warders are excessively hirsute, the females monstrously fat). They are explicitly referred to as 'Nazi', thus reminding us of our previous example – Chevallier's *Clochemerle* – which prefigured the totalitarian intensification of the use of the health resort in an apparently light-hearted manner.

The enforced washing treatments in *Solenoid* implicitly entail the use of sexualized violence:

> We were forced under the scalding jets that shot out of tight nozzles. … [One of the caretakers] twisted and wrung me out like a rag. 'Bend over!' And then I felt the sponge going over my bottom, between my buttocks, then over my wiener and nuts, and I knew how shameful it was to show them to anyone, let alone let someone touch them. I tried to keep my legs together, but the massive woman easily pushed them apart, with insectoid disinterest. (Cărtărescu 2022: 336–7)

> Am fost vârâți cu sila sub jeturile opărite ce cădeau din pâlnii … Mă sucea și mă răsucea ca pe-o pană. „Acum lasă-te pe vine!" Și deodat-am simțit buretele

> trecându-mi peste fund, printre fese, și apoi peste cocoșelul și oușoarele despre care știam cât e de rușinos să le arăți cuiva, darmite sălași să-ți fie atinse. Am încercat să strâng picioarele, dar femeia cea masivă mi le-a desfăcut cu ușurința și nepăsaresa uneia insecte. (Cărtărescu 2015: 345)

The interplay of care and control, as sketched out in the previous sub-chapters, is especially fraught when the people taking the cure are children. Children are particularly helpless and vulnerable. At the same time, as future citizens – and instruments of production – they are central to the concerns of state health politics (Schmuhl 2022). In the history of health resorts, children as patients are a relatively recent phenomenon. Children used to accompany their parents on their visits to a spa town. If they were ill themselves, child patients were not usually treated in special institutions created for that purpose. It is not until the end of the nineteenth century that we begin to see the spread across Europe, from Russia to England, of sanatoria specifically founded for the treatment of children – encouraged by such different factors as aristocratic charitability, private enterprise operating in the health sector and early state social security initiatives, especially in the struggle against the disease of the poor that was tuberculosis (see Rushton 2016). Under totalitarian regimes such as Fascist Italy (Winkelmann 2010) and National Socialist Germany (Kock 1997), these institutions increasingly served an ideological function. In the 1920s, for instance, Mussolini oversaw the founding of hundreds of special children's sanatoria, the so-called colonie. According to Arne Winkelmann, their purpose was the militarization and ideologization of the children; health issues were secondary. In the Soviet Union, too, sanatoria specifically for children were established, the first of this kind from 1925 being the *Artek* in the Crimea, which attained a mythical status that still persists today as the focus of nostalgic longing for an idealized socialist childhood.[11]

In *Solenoid*, Cărtărescu fictionalizes this fatal nexus of control and care using the example of Romanian children's sanatoria, in which the state forms the social body of the future. This is not to say that *Solenoid* is a dedicated sanatorium novel. The sanatorium in Voila, however, is the only place apart from Bucharest that plays an actual and symbolic role in the text. In that respect, the narrative construction of space continues a tradition that was typical of the transnational nineteenth-century European spa novel in which the spa town constituted the programmatic opposite to the metropolis. Moreover, Cărtărescu, like Chevallier with regard to his model Maupassant, follows the paradigm of the transnational resort narrative as laid out in Chapter 4 in his use of intertextuality – in this case with seemingly obligatory allusions to Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. Unlike Chevallier with Guy de Maupassant, however, Cărtărescu does not use his predecessor as a motivic blueprint or take over his constellation of characters. Rather, he amalgamates the main themes of his forerunner: the experience of time (rendered narratively in the discrepancy between narrated time and the time of narration, with the relatively uneventful plot being stretched to more than a thousand pages), the role of space and nature, the underlying idea of enchantment, albeit stripped entirely of the element of satire. Individual iconic scenes are replayed, such as the famous passage

in Mann's novel where Hans Castorp glimpses in an X-ray his inner self, his future and his own skeleton. In Cărtărescu, this appears as follows:

> Someone was looking inside my lungs through my now transparent flesh, I could feel their gaze in the fourth dimension, one that could … examine the formation of stones in your kidneys. I felt the weight of that gaze as it understood me not only wholly, from within and without and in all directions at once, but also as an animal stretched out in time, … understanding in a glance not only the shape of my body but also my fate. (Cărtărescu 2022: 199)

> Cineva privea în plămânii mei, prin carnea mea devenită transparentă, percepeam acea privire dintr-a patra dimensiune, capabilă … să contemple procesul de formare-a pietrelor în rinichii tăi. Simțeam adânc în mine greutatea acelei priviri care nu doar că mă percepea întreg, pe dinafară și pe dinăuntru și din toate direcțiile deodată, dar mă și-nțelegea ca pe-un animal prelungit în timp, … percepând dintr-o privire nu doar forma trupului, ci și destinulu meu. (Cărtărescu 2015: 206)

The aspect of surveillance as visual control is presented here subliminally. The gaze penetrates in turn the human body, the soul, space, time and the fate of the individual. What in Gabriel Chevallier had been socio-political and bureaucratic, here has become metaphysical. Characteristically, the glass watchtower of the spa panopticum from which Chevallier's medical entrepreneur Dr Léo Suffock commands the bodies placed under his control, is in Cărtărescu relocated underground. The observing authority becomes itself invisible, escapes the gaze of those it controls and thus becomes even more uncanny. The juvenile first-person narrator witnesses the following scene:

> I saw one of the beds begin to sink, slowly, as though it were on the platform of a large, silent elevator. I thought I was seeing things, but I looked at Traian and he nodded: 'Every night, or almost every night, one of us is taken.' The bed, with the child asleep in its sheets, descended under the floor, without the slightest sound, and when the boy's body was completely below, the floor closed above him, leaving an unexplained interruption in the regular series of beds. (Cărtărescu 2022: 423)

> încetișor, de parc-ar fi fost așezat pe platforma unui mare și silențios lift. Am crezut că mi se pare, și m-am uitat la Traian, dar el a-ncuviințat din cap: „În fiecare noapte, sau aproape, e luat câte unul din noi." Patul, co copilul adormit în așternutul lui, cobora sub podea, fără nici del mai mic sunet, și, când și trupul băiatului s-a aflat cu totol dedesubt, podeaua s-a-nchis deasupra, ca o-ntrereupere de ne-nțeles a șirurilor regulate de paturi. (Cărtărescu 2015: 432)

Our guide through this underworld is another child, Traian, who has stopped taking his medication and is now able to see clearly. Traian removes the veil of

illusion from the eyes of the first-person narrator, who almost allowed himself to be 'fooled by the paradise in Voila' (Cărtărescu 2022: 342; 'fiu păcălit de paradisul', Cărtărescu 2015: 351). (The paradisiacal counter-world to the inside of the sanatorium building where, as sketched out here, sadism prevails, consists of the surrounding mountains, woods and orchards.) The tables are at least partly turned on the regime of surveillance when the young patients, whose perception is no longer dulled with medication, start to study their controllers and come to the conclusion that these are actually 'robots', or 'automata' (Cărtărescu 2022: 416; 'roboț', 'automat', Cărtărescu 2015: 426). These are marked out as a secret brotherhood by tattoos that resemble vaccination scars. Yet, despite this partial emancipation of the involuntary detainees, the sick, there remains the fear of possible manipulation by an unknown power that takes on the features of a horror scenario:

> Had I been manipulated by them the way wasps rub the necks of spiders they pull from their webs, to find the vulnerable ganglions? Had they paralyzed me with an injection in my brain stem, in that area called *locus coeruleus*? Had I woken suddenly, completely unable to move, in a hall with white walls, in the blinding intensity of lights over dozens of operating tables? … Had I seen disfigured faces leaning over me? (Cărtărescu 2022: 423)

> Fusesem manipulat de ele așa cum viespile frământă ceafa păianjenilor răpiți din plasa lor, în căutarea ganglionilor vulnerabili? Mi se făcuse o injecție paralizantă în trunchiul cerebral, în zona numită locus coerueleus? Mă trezisem deodată, fără să pot face nici o mișcare, într-o sală cu pereți albi, luminată orbitor de faruri suspendate peste zecile de mese de operație? … Văzusem fețe desfigurate aplecate asupra mea? (Cărtărescu 2015: 433)

Together with the clearsighted Traian, the first-person narrator tries to escape from the total surveillance by non-human beings. But the attempt fails and the two are brought back. The conspiracy goes beyond the tuberculosis sanatorium Voila and includes the whole 'paternal' order (the mothers are presented as well-meaning suckers). The sanatorium stands for the repressive 'phallogocentric' social order, here in its communist guise.

5.4 Where capitalist and mythical control fantasies merge

With this horror scenario of a resort in which the inmates are not cured but manipulated by unknown agents for unknown goals, we return to the beginning of our chapter: to the Romantic author Mary Shelley. In world literature, Shelley is less well known for her autobiographical reflections cited above than for her gothic novel *Frankenstein*, in which the scientist of that name creates an artificial human – or rather a 'being'. Shelley started writing her novel in the years 1816–17, not at a spa town but in a villa on Lake Geneva, forced by the weather – the famous

volcano eruption on the Indonesian island of Tambora caused an unprecedentedly cold summer – to stay inside in the company of her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Romantic adventurer and writer Lord Byron. In the novel itself, the circumstances that galvanized its creation are acted out again, but this time in the spa setting. What this results in, though, is not the creation of a literary myth, but the discovery by the protagonist of natural philosophy and its subsidiary, alchemy, represented by the works of the Renaissance philosopher, physician and astrologer Cornelius Agrippa:

> Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age, we all went on a party of pleasure to the *baths near Thonon*: the inclemency of the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. (Shelley [1818] 2020: 22; emphasis added)

The young Frankenstein discovers the pseudoscience of alchemy while on the search not for gold but for eternal life. The author then finished her novel while actually staying in the celebrated spa town of Bath (Groom in Shelley [1818] 2020: lii), which is traditionally more closely associated with the spa novels of Jane Austen.[12]

The biographical sequence of events does not permit a direct link to be made between the 'biological engineering' in *Frankenstein* and Mary Shelley's descriptions of her spa experiences discussed earlier in this chapter, since these date to the 1840s. However, there are clear historical, thematic and discursive parallels between Frankenstein's alchemy-inspired attempts to make a new human being out of dead matter, and balneology, which developed in the late Middle Ages out of what Gantenbein calls a 'medical or pharmaceutical alchemy' (Gantenbein 2011: 115). These parallels are to be found in the techniques of the manipulation of the body and the hope – or hubris – of the creation of a new life force: 'but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!' (Shelley [1818] 2020: 23). The novel is also to be seen in the context of the scientific and medical discoveries of its time, notably galvanism and its experiments on the dead bodies of animals and human beings, which could apparently be brought back to life by electric shocks (see Groom in Shelley [1818] 2020: xxvii). Accordingly, Nick Groom sees in the novel a 'parable of the dangers of scientific and technological progress' (Groom in Shelley [1818] 2020: ix).

For our purposes, this connection forms a fitting way to close the argument of this chapter, which has sought to oppose the presentation of the health resort as a place of transgression of norms with the counter-narrative of the health resort as a place of increasing control, which arose almost automatically out of developments in medical treatment. Generally, the Romantic horror story is enjoying a noticeable renaissance in the presentation of the health establishment, and especially of the sanatorium, in contemporary popular culture (see Watroba 2022: 116–30; we

are also strongly reminded of the horror resort story by Tokarczuk, discussed in Chapter 4). And it is doubtless no accident that Cărtărescu's uncanny tuberculosis sanatorium Voila is situated in Transylvania, which is also the home of the master vampire and Frankenstein's later twin, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

A striking instance of this combination presents itself in the American director Gore Verbinski's horror film *A Cure for Wellness*. As in *Dracula*, the central figure is an ambitious young man who travels to a distant world which turns out to be a great deal more sinister than he expected. In this case, though, the place with all the old-world eeriness of Dracula's castle is actually a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps and thus a variation on Mann's *Magic Mountain*. Like Frankenstein, the doctor in charge there, Dr Volkmer, is looking for a cure for mortality. The production of his elixir involves the exploitation of eels on the one hand and the patients on the other: the equivalent of the panopticon becomes a glass water tank. The combination of sexual violence and social engineering suggested in *Solenoid* is here focused on the figure of Hannah, whom her father tries to rape in an attempt to produce immortal offspring. And as in *Solenoid*, a patient who discovers that he is being held against his will under false pretences sets about uncovering the dark secrets of his surroundings while undergoing baleful treatments that make him doubt his sanity (Figure 5.2). The background against which all this occurs, though, is precisely the United States in which Chevallier's Toni Texas had made his enormous fortune. Our hero in *A Cure for Wellness* is actually an ambitious Wall Street banker who has laid himself open to blackmail by engaging in some illegal trading. His mission is to bring back a recusant colleague who has turned his back on neoliberal capitalism. Yet, the place that colleague finds refuge in – his Monte Verità – turns out to be a factory in which, literally, the sweat of the unwitting and unwilling patients is harvested by a ruthless egomaniac for his own ends. The wellness that is to be cured, then, is precisely the turbo-charged neoliberal hypertrophic form of the spa that suavely fleeces its customers while pretending to minister to their needs.

In this perspective, it is interesting to note how Natasha Parcei's account of the film uncannily echoes the aspirations of the *Lebensreform* movement, but in a post-modern, rather than a modernist context. Verbinski, she writes 'offers a critique of contemporary Western society' (Parcei 2019: 409). And she goes on: 'The sanatorium is posed as providing "the cure" for "the sickness" of the modern condition' (Parcei 2019: 410). The difference this time, though, is that the cure is no better than the condition. On the contrary, as Jo Livingstone puts it:

> In the movie, two strains of moneymaking compete. Financial services go up against the wellness industry in a fully binaristic duel: city versus mountaintop, suit versus white coat, aggression versus docility. Both industries exploit those they profit from, and *A Cure for Wellness* is at its best when showing how contemporary philosophies of 'health and wealth' are, at base, all the same old sin. By throwing in some Nazi overtones via blond haircuts and *Marathon Man* references, Verbinski firmly connects contemporary Californian wellness bullshit to the nastiest of European body-narratives. (Livingstone 2017)

Figure 5.2 Uncanny environment. A dilapidated corridor in the Beelitz Sanatorium (Germany), one of the central filming locations of *A Cure for Wellness* (2016). Picture taken in 2005.

Thus, in *A Cure for Wellness* we find the literary models and social discourses explored in this chapter amalgamated in a quasi-alchemical way: intertextually the *Magic Mountain* and the gothic novel from *Frankenstein* to *Dracula*, socio-critically the capitalist-neoliberal model of body politics à la *Clochemerle* and the mythical-mystical dimension brought up by *Solenoid*.

Notes

1 Percy Bysshe Shelley had died in 1822, his complete works, edited by his widow, came out in 1839 and 1840.
2 See Williams (2000: 189).
3 This translation does not take into account Marx's linguistic idiosyncrasies, including his frequent change of language, swapping between German, French and English. The standard translation's attempt to do so by typographical means is distracting (Marx and Engels 1992: 290–1); so here, we have provided our own version of the text.
4 Even though used in a slightly different way there, it is no coincidence that Dante's *Inferno* is also invoked in one of the sanatorium novels discussed in Chapter 3 (McGrath 1990: 2).

5 The phrase 'the advent of an inquisitorial medical era' was quoted from the English translation (Chevallier 1964: 228). In the title of the translation, which appeared a year after the original, in 1964, the name of the place is hyphenated.

6 *Clochemerle les Bains* followed *Clochemerle* (1934) and *Clochemerle Babylon* (1951).

7 The main spring receives a 'non-committal' geographical name, another one the name of Suffock's wife Babasse.

8 Both novels, for instance, have an old, resident doctor in the spa who is outplayed by the new developments. Dr Bonneville in *Mont-Oriol* succumbs reluctantly, Dr Mouraille in Clochemerle knows from the start that this is not stoppable and so willingly helps where he can.

9 In his autobiographical book *L'Envers de Clochemerle* (*The Other Side of Clochemerle*, 1966), Chevallier notes that '[t]he bourgeoisie gives the name of "order" to whatever serves it and its interests. That is why it respects the army and the police [and …] is able to live – in defiance of democracy which takes sides with the left – with a totalitarian regime giving the appearance of an organized faction – what is generally known as fascism' (Chevallier 1966: 9).

10 The symbolic significance of the resort town as a marker for political regime change is emphasized by a number of authors from the literatures of Eastern Europe. In Milan Kundera's Czech novel *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* ([1982] 1985, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 1984), the protagonists flee from political persecution and surveillance to a small provincial spa town (unsuccessfully, as it has already been sovietized). In her novel *Le vieil homme et les loups* (1991, *The Old Man and the Wolves*, 1994), Bulgarian literary theorist and writer Julia Kristeva has, in the late socialist period, a pack of the mythical predators attack a fictitious health resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The job of the first-person narrator, who wants to solve the associated deaths, is explicitly compared to the investigative work of a state security agent! Kristeva's resort novel is agent thriller and allegory of communist totalitarianism at the same time, both of which coincide in the act of surveillance.

11 After the end of the Second World War, as the competition between the systems in East and West solidified, a particular symbolic significance accrued to the children's spa stay as evidence of superior health policies. In both German states, for instance, between 1950 and 1980, millions of children and young people were sent under the auspices of what was known in West Germany as 'Kinderverschickung' (literally: Sending children away) and in East Germany as 'Kinderkuren' (spa stays for children) for prophylactic spa stays either in mineral spas or in seaside resorts, that lasted several weeks (see Schmuhl 2022; Todtmann 2022). In the past decade, the idea that these provided individuals with the chance to recuperate while participating in leisure activities and thus represent social progress has been called into question. In the West German context, an increasing number of reports by those affected speak of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. These in turn form the basis for literary and dramatic works of documentary fiction that thematize these child spa stays as an instrument of discipline and control. A good example would be the play *Heim | Weh. Kinderkuren in Deutschland* (NOst|a(y)lgia: Children in German spas) by the post-dramatic playwright Gernot Grünewald, first performed at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg in 2022.

12 Today, a virtual Mary Shelley Museum and interactive city tours with Jane Austen compete for custom among the visitors to the town. On contemporary interactive, pop cultural re-imaginings of the spa heritage in literature, see Chapter 8.

6

SPAS AND SANATORIA AS PLACES OF TRAUMA AND MEMORY

Jan Koplowitz's autobiographically informed novel *'Bohemia' – Mein Schicksal* ('Bohemia' – My Destiny, 1979) revolves around a spa hotel which was built and run by his grandparents in Bad Kudowa (Kudowa-Zdrój), a small mineral spa in Silesia with a long tradition. What was special about this hotel was its adherence to kosher rules, which turned it into a magnet for Jewish spa guests. The extensive and varied plot of the novel thickens twice: at the times of the First World War and the Second World War. While in the narrative covering the years 1914–18 the owners succeed in making the hotel a safe space for its guests[1] and manage to defy all external attempts at harming them, the account of the period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s is a catalogue of progressive losses: of guests, property, freedom, dignity, lives. When the narrator, focalizing the story through one of the few Holocaust survivors in the family, arrives at the end of his account, it becomes clear to the reader that what they have witnessed, while reading this book, is a process of trauma management on the part of the narrator and the author. A cursory look through the rest of Koplowitz's work reveals that some narrative blocks of this account are also present in other texts of his, again indicating a process of working through trauma. Having in the previous chapter dealt with accounts of experiences of structural and physical violence within the health resort, we now turn to the traumatic effect of violence from beyond the institution on the resort and its visitors and patients.

Trauma and fiction, according to Robert Eaglestone, are interrelated in a profound way, not least because they are both characterized by a search for words. The question, however, is, 'in what ways does any fiction text represent trauma. How is a wound put into words?' (Eaglestone 2020: 288). We agree with Eaglestone that, whilst there are typical features of (non-fictional) trauma narratives (repetition, fragmentation, time loops, backward chronology, refusal of closure), these can, but don't have to, be used by 'trauma fiction' (and are in any case preferred techniques of post-modern writing regardless of its subject). That is why Eaglestone asks: 'Why should one form of fiction be the "correct" one for the representation of trauma? Why should one definition of trauma be the only form of wound?' (Eaglestone 2020: 291).

In what follows, we will explore a variety of texts from across Europe that reference real experiences of war and destruction in the first half of the twentieth century. With the question in mind about 'the way[s in which] fiction might appropriate trauma' (Eaglestone 2020: 291), we will consider what kind of traumatic experiences get linked to spas and sanatoria in these texts, and how they are narrated. We will also explore the circumstances under which health resorts can come to function as *lieux de mémoire* for such experiences.

6.1 Aharon Appelfeld's Badenheim*: The illusion of the health resort as a safe space*

Aharon Appelfeld's novella *Badenhaim, 'Ir Nofesh* (1979) is set in a fictitious spa town and follows one spa season from beginning to end. Whilst the original Hebrew title simply refers to Badenheim as a spa town, the American translation includes a specific historical date: *Badenheim 1939*.[2] The resort of Badenheim is, at the beginning of the narrative, a spa town like many others: of smallish size and 'modest beauty' and, as always in the spring, 'about to be invaded by the vacationers' (Appelfeld 1980: 1). The reader is told that it is visited mainly by middle-class Austrian Jews, most of whom have become regulars over the years. Each season is accompanied by an Arts Festival, so Badenheim's visitors come for both, the waters and the music. The first chapters see the place fill up, as every year, with guests and artists, full of joyful anticipation: 'The hotel was a hive of activity. The spring light and the laughter of the people filled the streets, and in the hotel gardens the porters once more carried the brightly colored baggage' (Appelfeld 1980: 5). At the same time, there is something foreboding in the air from the start, expressing itself among other things in the repeated claim that the last winter had been a 'strange' one (Appelfeld 1980: 1, 5), in the exaggerated nervousness on the part of the festival's impresario Pappenheim, or in the visions of one of the town's (sick) inhabitants, who is 'haunted by a hidden fear' (Appelfeld 1980: 10) and sees disease, violence and death where everyone else sees joyous life. And almost imperceptibly at the beginning, yet growing in presence by the day, measures of control and discipline come in, all carried out by a so-called Sanitation Department, the 'jurisdiction' of which 'had been extended' out of nowhere (Appelfeld 1980: 11). For a long time, all its measures (they 'put up fences', 'planted flags', 'unloaded rolls of barbed wire, cement pillars and all kinds of appliances'; Appelfeld 1980: 15) are taken by the visitors to be in support of the festival and as a sign of its growing importance: 'otherwise, why would the Sanitation Department be going to all this trouble?' (Appelfeld 1980: 15). Badenheim 'throbbed with a hectic, feverish gaiety' (Appelfeld 1980: 16), determined not to notice anything that might get in the way of its established seasonal routines. Even when it becomes clear that these measures are not being taken to make the festival a bigger success and do in fact isolate Badenheim from the outside world, its inhabitants and guests are all too preoccupied with their own affairs and quarrels to understand what is happening

to them. Rumours and suspicions are rife, increasingly setting people against each other and almost eradicating the sense of the 'public' (Appelfeld 1980: 11) that has prevailed before. A 'modest announcement' (Appelfeld 1980: 20) requesting all Jews to register with the Sanitation Department is acceded to by them all. This brings the issue of Jewishness, identity and otherness to the forefront of their minds in a way that had not happened before. But instead of realizing the fatal implications of this newfound status, they fall back on the sectarian bickering between Western and Eastern European Jews (*Ostjuden*). And at the end, we see them line up in a very orderly fashion and march, as requested, to the nearby station. They are to board a train 'to Poland', which – still to their surprise – turns out to consist of 'an engine coupled to four filthy freight cars': ' "Get in!" yelled invisible voices. And the people were sucked in' (Appelfeld 1980: 147). In a highly condensed manner (and a very short span of time), the narrative turns Badenheim from a fully functioning spa town into a detention camp on the way to the gas chambers.

The story is told by an extra-diegetic narrator, allowing for the frequent use of classic narrative irony whereby the readers are able to extract different meanings from sentences than the characters. An example is a conversation between the impressario and one of his musicians, in which the latter 'was sure that they were in for a lot of surprises. No one would dare laugh at Badenheim anymore'. While 'Pappenheim knew this was only the flattery of an old musician afraid of losing his job' (Appelfeld 1980: 17), readers would attach an altogether more sinister significance both to the surprises and the lack of laughter. What is played out in this narrative, then, is the ease with which a place designed for health, pleasure and sociability can be turned into one of terror and death. Step by little step, all the institutions that facilitate spa life and culture are made inaccessible. Particularly chilling in this respect is the blindness with which those affected refuse to understand and resist. David Clay Large speaks in this connection of 'blinkered frivolity and wilful self-deception' and sees in this 'an allegory on the condition of Central European Jewry on the cusp of its annihilation' (Large 2015: 351). An early, shorter version of the text had stressed their discipline and willingness to obey by ending with the sentences: 'No one pushed. No one cried' (Appelfeld 1977: 44). In the later version, this is replaced by a biting deictic irony: there the last sentence of the narrative, uttered by the festival's impresario, assumes that '"[i]f the coaches [of the train] are so dirty it must mean that we have not far to go"' (Appelfeld 1980: 148). Accordingly, Emily Miller Budick stresses that the book is less concerned with explicating the events as such than with highlighting 'the victims' incomprehension … that prevents self-reflection or action' (Budick 1999: 224). And Chaya Shacham adds that much of the novella's impact 'stems from the historical reverberations' in the readers' minds (Shacham 2004: 197). Following a statement by Appelfeld himself, Shacham also points to the kafkaesque quality of the prose, both in terms of use of language and in terms of constructing a story that is abstract yet filled to the brim with human experience.[3]

6.2 Healing and harming: Moral mutability in Stanisław Lem's Hospital of the Transfiguration

A very specific experience lies at the heart of Stanisław Lem's first novel *Szpital przemienienia* (*Hospital of the Transfiguration*, 1988), written in 1948 and originally published as the first part of a trilogy in 1955. As Lem himself attested, the book draws on his experiences in the Second World War and under German occupation, without however, being autobiographical in the narrow sense.[4] The setting of the novel is a psychiatric sanatorium in Poland after the German invasion in September 1939, which in the course of the war turns into a death camp for the current patients, in order to then become a hospital for wounded SS officers.[5]

The different types of sanatoria share the common denominator of the importance of isolation: they cut their inmates off from the rest of the world, both physically and symbolically. In most literary accounts of sanatorial life, this is the main characteristic of the setting and creates a micro-society of its own with an often peculiar, sometimes distorted relationship to the world outside. Lem's novel is no exception to this. As in Appelfeld's *Badenheim*, we see here a defined space transform and change its function from healing to terror. In stark contrast to *Badenheim*, though, in the *Hospital of the Transfiguration*, no physical changes are necessary to facilitate such a conversion. Whether the sanatorium is a place of respite and healing, or of imprisonment and terror, is shown to be a matter of perspective. This is made particularly evident by focalizing the narrative through the newcomer to the sanatorium, Dr Stefan Trzyniecki: having just arrived there, seeing the state of the patients' rooms, and witnessing the habitual maltreatment of patients by some staff, he is shocked and convinced that he won't stay for long. But – helped, of course, by his own comfortable situation – he gets used to these things and even swallows the Mengele-like experiments conducted by one of his fellow doctors without raising an alarm. Like most other doctors there, he prefers to think of the positive aspects of the sanatorium, the few patients actually cured or at least made fit to go back to their lives outside, and the writer who seeks to escape political oppression by hiding there as a patient. The gaze is similarly averted from the fact that there is a war going on and the country is under occupation: no one speaks of the war, and although everyone knows of the resistance activities happening in the neighbourhood, this, too is negated by silence: 'It's like being outside the Occupation, in fact it's even like being outside the world' (Lem 1988: 34; 'I jak poza okupacją, co tam, całkiem jak poza światem', Lem [1948] 1975: 58).

The self-delusional nature of this position is thrown into sharp relief when one evening a vanguard of the German and Ukrainian troops comes to the sanatorium, inspects the buildings and announces that they will return the next morning, exterminate all patients and take possession of the place. By no means all the staff disagree with the Germans' attitude that the lives of their patients are worthless, and they certainly won't put their own lives at risk for those in their care. Some disappear, some denounce the attempts of others to hide patients, others again offer their services to the Germans. Our protagonist leaves the

sanatorium in shock and with a consciousness of guilt, yet his life goes on.[6] Indeed it becomes clear in the course of the narrative that what he is witnessing is not a singular occurrence: shortly before the German and Ukrainian soldiers take over the sanatorium CHRISTO TRANSFIGURATO, there is talk of another one having been emptied (with the patients brought to a concentration camp) and turned into a military hospital. The transfiguration of the title, then, which affects both the place itself (which changes its function twice) and the people who work there (whose moral compass is likewise twice re-calibrated), applies not only to the eponymous hospital, but also to its equivalents throughout the country.

6.3 Incurable trauma: Blai Bonet's novel The Sea

A different, yet comparably intense entanglement between sanatorium and war can be found in Blai Bonet's *El Mar* (1958, *The Sea*, 2014; see also Chapter 3) which is said to have been inspired by Bonet's stay in a tuberculosis sanatorium on his native Mallorca. The novel is set in 1942, with the Spanish Civil War not long over and still affecting everything that happens in the sanatorium. In a way that is quite typical of modernist trauma fiction, as sketched out by Eaglestone and others, there is no traditional plot in *El Mar* and no coherent narrative. Instead, the book consists of a series of monologues by two patients (Manuel Tur and Andreu Ramallo), a nurse (Francisca Luna) and the sanatorium priest (Gabriel Caldentey). In their monologues, Manuel and Andreu, aged eighteen and nineteen, respectively, speak about their childhood and youth during the Civil War in their Catalan village, where they witnessed local people being humiliated and killed by Francoists. These are the events that dictate the course of their lives – and make them kill in their turn. During their stay in the sanatorium where they have nothing else to do except to engage in intense dialogues with God, their war trauma comes to the fore. It is further exacerbated by the coincidence of meeting each other in this closed space, as well as Sister Francisca, who also comes from their village. Thus, the leitmotifs of their monologues are time, war and sin. Significantly, the tuberculosis that both boys suffer from is explicitly linked to their experience of war and aggravated violence. In his second monologue, having just recounted the worst atrocity he had observed in his life,[7] Manuel declares: 'It was after witnessing that horror, all that shame, that the disease began to burn inside me' (Bonet 2014: 21; 'Després d'haver vist au'quell horror i tota la vergonya, el mal començà a ser ardent en mi', Bonet 1958: 34). Illness here has social rather than physical causes.

Despite all the medical and pastoral efforts of the nuns and the priest, the sanatorium does not serve as a place of healing for the two young men. Rather, the terror and destruction brought by the war seem to be reverberating within its walls: 'On the bedside table, a stone dish full of empty bottles of *Trombyl* shines like the barbed wire of a concentration camp must shine in the middle of the day' (Bonet 2014: 100; 'Damunt la taula de nit, un plat de pedra, ple d'ampolles de Trombyl, buides, lluu, com deu lluir, al migdia, el fil de pua d'un camp de

concentratió', Bonet 1958: 150). Thus, there is no prospect of coming to terms with the past, of breaking the circle of killing and being killed, or of eventually reconnecting with life. As the priest observes about Manuel Tur, 'he never knew that health existed' (Bonet 2014: 176; 'no sabé que existís la salut', Bonet 1958: 254). Eventually, Manuel kills Andreu, and then himself: 'They die like dogs, in the flower of youth' (Bonet 2014: 161; 'Moren com cans, a la flor de l'edat', Bonet 1958: 234). So, although the sanatorium is situated on a hill and seen by the villagers as a place 'up there' (Bonet 2014: 121, 141; 'allà dalt', Bonet 1958: 180, 206), it does not in fact belong to a different world, but turns out to be a continuation of the war through other means. In much the same way, the verbalization of trauma does not help to overcome it. There is no healing.

6.4 Overcoming trauma: Liselotte Marshall's novel Tongue-Tied

In Liselotte Marshall's autobiographically inspired novel *Tongue-Tied*, a health resort turns out to be the place of both traumatization and overcoming trauma.[8] Rachel, a Jewish woman living in New York and London, is taken by her job as an interpreter to the Swiss village and sanatorium where she survived the Holocaust. Suffering from bone tuberculosis, she had been sent there as a child of four, at her father's expense. After she had spent more than ten years there, her family – except for one aunt – was murdered in the camps and the National Socialist authorities in Germany prevented her father's money from leaving the country. However, she was kept on in the sanatorium as an assistant nurse with no salary. In 1946, her aunt procured for her a visa which enabled her to settle in the United States. Although it is a coincidence that the job in 'Péniel'[9] comes up in the present, it is clear that this trip into her past, as it were, was sorely needed: the novel starts with her mental and physical breakdown. Indeed, her life up to that point had been marked by the fact that the experiences of these years remained unprocessed. The story running in the present is thus interlaced with memories of the time in the sanatorium and the climatic resort as a whole and with the attempts to link up *then* and *now*. The things she needs to come to terms with include the long absence from home and the successive loss of her family, the feeling of loneliness and the absence of love in the institution, the sometimes overly strict regime there, the absence of privacy, the question of being Jewish, the feeling of guilt for having survived and her ambiguous position vis-à-vis her Swiss hosts, who saved her from the death camps, yet at the same time exploited her almost like a slave.

During her renewed stay in Péniel, she meets the people who used to run the place as well as former fellow patients, and in her conversations, in pairs or larger groups, works through and eventually accepts this period as having shaped her and enabled her to live: 'No place where life prevails is wholly bad. Not even Péniel, especially not Péniel. Although it had meant confinement, dependency, humiliation, and pain, there were always breaks in the clouds to let through light and warmth' (Marshall 2004: 256).

This process of reconnection and recovery is strongly linked to the question of language: having spoken German as a child at home, been thrown into French at the sanatorium and then into English upon her arrival in the United States, the protagonist feels she has no mother tongue. (In her own perception, she translates, in her job as an interpreter, between three languages she is familiar with, but she does not call any of them her own.) In her various conversations in Péniel, she manages to connect not only her past and present, but also her languages. The success of this trip into the past is probably also helped by the fact that the place has since been transformed from a health resort into a tourist destination, and that most of the old sanatorium buildings now appear to be hotels. With the sanatorium no longer in action, the spell that Péniel once cast on the girl is broken, and the place now seems to accept the woman as a visitor who is free to come and go. For her and her former fellow patients, it has now taken on the quality of what Pierre Nora calls a *lieu de mémoire*.

6.5 'Toxins released': The health resort as a place of forgiveness in Tessa de Loo's The Twins

Whereas in all texts previously dealt with, the sanatorium or spa was a place itself imbued with history and memory, in Tessa de Loo's novel *De Tweeling* (1993, *The Twins*, 2000), the spa is rather a place in which the act of memory becomes possible. The story is set in Belgium's Spa, where two twin sisters – originally from Cologne – meet by coincidence after seven decades of separation. After the recognition of their identities (which is joyful for one and irritating for the other), both recall the circumstances of their separation and then tell each other their life stories. Following the early death of both parents, the girls were separated at the age of four and sent to different relatives: one to a farmer in the German Eifel, the other to a cultured bourgeois family in Amsterdam. The one who grew up in Germany (Anna) became implicated in Nazi crimes, while the other (Lotte) married a Jew, who was killed in the Holocaust. The perspectives of victim and perpetrator are thus symbolically attributed to the two twins.

The conversations between the two are having Anna speak a lot and seek forgiveness, while Lotte – who is traumatized by the violence she experienced – typically speaks less and is not prepared to understand or even forgive. In the end, Anna dies unexpectedly in the bathtub, and Lotte realizes that she has begun to understand – not forgive – her sister's life choices. Lotte's last words in the novel are an acknowledgement of their sisterhood. The narrative is set up in such a way that the spa in one of its classic capacities, as a meeting place of strangers, here becomes the meeting place of two people who have become estranged. And the baths they take (both are old ladies suffering from arthritis) help to release their repressed memories:

> During the first two weeks of the cure guests usually had to struggle with an unfathomable weariness … caused by … the release of … poisonous materials

> stored up in the adipose tissues. For the two sisters there were, in addition, the toxins released during their talks, alongside the obstruction in their relationship and their memories, which were being put to severe test. But usually a turning point was reached half-way through the treatment. … Anna and Lotte experienced some of this effect too. They were both reviving physically, only their spirits were lagging behind, but then they were undergoing a quite different cure, the therapeutic effect of which was much less certain. (De Loo 2000: 234)

> Gedurende de eerste week van de kuur hadden de badgasten gewoonlijk te kampen et een peilloze … vermoeidheid veroorzaakt door het loskomen van … in het vetweefsel opgeslagen gifstoffen. Voor de twee zusters kwamen daar nog de toxines bij die vrijkwamen tijdens hun gesprekken, naast de blokkades in hun verwantschap en hun zwaar op de proef gestelde geheugen. Maar halverwege de behandeling trad er meestal een kentering op. … Ook Anna en Lotte voelden iets van dit effect, lichamelijk knapten ze allebei op, alleen hun geest bleef nog achter, maar die werd dan ook aan een heel andere kuur onderworpen waarvan het therapeutisch effect veel ongewisser was. (De Loo 1993: 261)

Thus, the story establishes a metonymic relationship between the physical restoration, the activation and communication of memory, and the restoration of the relationship between the two sisters.

Not long after De Loo's novel appeared, Charles Najman screened his documentary film *La mémoire est-elle soluble dans l'eau* (1996, Can Memory Dissolve in Water?). It takes as its premise the fact that, as part of reparation agreements, the Federal Republic of Germany paid for biennial spa stays for Holocaust survivors. The film is largely set in Évian-les-Bains and juxtaposes scenes of spa treatment with scenes in which survivors confront their trauma by talking. The answer the film gives to the question of its title is negative: it is not a question of washing away memories, but of keeping them alive and learning to live with them.

6.6 Transgenerational trauma: Tanya Malyarchuk's Oblivion

Another text that deliberately intertwines the past and the present and thus the experience of trauma and the attempt to overcome it, is a novel with the programmatic title *Zabuttia* (2016, Oblivion) by Tanya Malyarchuk. Here, too, we find a metonymic relation between illness, trauma and memory at the heart of the narration. The trigger for the trauma is again the violent history of the twentieth century, but this time starting well before the advent of the Second World War and narrated from a perspective less often explored in research and literature, namely the Ukrainian one.

Malyarchuk recounts the fates of Ukrainian independence activists in the early twentieth century and the inter-war period. The main character of her novel is the historian and political thinker Viacheslav Lypynsky (1882–1931), who – himself

of Polish descent – authored central works of Ukrainian historiography. Following the failed attempt to form an independent, non-communist Ukrainian state in the wake of the October Revolution, Lypynsky, a convinced monarchist, lived in exile in Austria and Berlin, among other places. Because he suffered from tuberculosis, he spent a lot of time in Austrian and Polish sanatoria, including the famous Sanatorium Wienerwald in Pernitz, Austria, and the Sanatorium Jezewo in Zakopane, Poland. In the novel, the fate of the historical protagonist struggling for breath and sovereignty is interwoven with that of the unnamed first-person narrator of the twenty-first century, who experiences unmotivated panic attacks.

The two narrative strands are connected in multiple ways. On the level of plot, the first-person narrator, in her desperate search for a foothold in the past, connects with her historical hero, with whom she coincidentally shares a birthday. On a symbolic level, both strands share a similar correlation between (psychosomatic) disease and collective trauma. Formally, it is the difficulty of breathing – expressed in the rhythm of the language as well as in the repetitive formula 'inhale' ('вдих') / 'exhale' ('видих', Malyarchuk 2016: 14) – that ties them together.

Let's first look at the historical strand in some more detail. The sanatoria where Lypynsky, as a person of frail physical and mental health,[10] spends so much time are places where Ukrainian emigrants meet, thus transforming these places of rehabilitation and rest into cells of political activity. The rest-cure in particular gives them the opportunity for political discussions with like-minded people and opponents: 'They lay in the cold, discussing the deplorable state of Ukrainian education and politics, and making intricate plans to save them' ('Вони лежали горілиць на холоді, обговорювали жалюгідне становище української освіти й політики і будували хитромудрі плани з їх порятунку', Malyarchuk 2016: 131). The imperial underpinning of this geography of suffering can be seen in the fact that the Ukrainian political émigrés in the European sanatoria are taking their cures under difficult material circumstances and are less likely to be cured than they are to die, while the Crimea as their place of longing – with its spa towns where they would ideally like to be cured – remains under Russian control and thus out of reach (Malyarchuk 2016: 147). Equally inaccessible are the glamorous centres of the Western European spa landscape: 'Tuberculosis was considered the favourite disease of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and Zakopane their favourite "Switzerland". Davos, the best pulmonary resort in Europe, could only be afforded by the really rich' ('Туберкульоз був улюбленою хворобою української інтеліґенції, а Закопане — їхньою улюбленою «Швейцарією». Лише справді заможні могли дозволити собі Давос — найкращий легеневий курорт Європи', Malyarchuk 2016: 125). The Ukrainian exiles thus end up in an intermediate space, in the Central European borderland. But the sanatorium and the tuberculosis treated there have a more fundamental relationship to political issues, when physical illness – with all its social implications – is equated with the repressive power of Tsarist autocracy: 'Tuberculosis and Russian absolutism are our greatest enemies, they work hand in hand wherever they can' ('Туберкульоз і російське самодержавіє — наші найбільші вороги, які помагають одне одному, як можуть', Malyarchuk 2016: 146–7).[11]

Illness and its iconic 'home' – the sanatorium – are metaphorically charged throughout the novel. The commitment to Ukrainian independence is characterized as a 'virus' ('вірус', 131) and descriptions of the healing mountains alternate between 'desert' ('пустеля', 318) and 'homeland' ('домівка', 308) – each in its own way referring to the endless, obligatory rest-cures in these places. In her account of the cure, Malyarchuk focuses particularly on the rhythmic activity of breathing: 'Inhale-exhale. Two hours. Three hours. As if he were rocking in a cradle stretched between two mountain peaks above a deep valley' ('Вди-их-видих. Дві години. Три години. Ніби гойдався в колисці, натягнутій між двома гірськими вершинами над глибокою долиною', Malyarchuk 2016: 16). The image of the cradle suggests the child's comfort and security in the safety of the family home and thus constitutes the strongest possible contrast to the emigrants' forlornness, and the sanatorium becomes a highly ambiguous place. Traumatization manifests itself in the novel in a variety of ways: in the substitution of physical for mental pain, in the decomposition of language and in the loss of memory. All these aspects are touched upon in the *Oblivion* of the title and are further metaphorized as the 'blue whale' ('кит') that denotes time 'swallowing' ('поглинає') memory (Malyarchuk 2016: 8).

Significantly, the different generations react differently to these challenges. The characters in the historical strand such as Lypynsky counteract the impending loss of memory with their political activity:

> If I have something to say, I say it, if not, I keep silent. If there is a cause for joy, I rejoice; if disaster is looming, I suffer. I do not hide.
>
> Як маю що казати, кажу, як ні — мовчу. Як є чого, радію, а коли надходить біда — страждаю. Я не ховаюся. (Malyarchuk 2016: 144)

The suppression of history and memory in the subsequent decades of Soviet totalitarianism, by contrast, leads to total speechlessness among the later generations who are being held 'hostages' ('бранців', 213) to history. It is their accumulated inability to remember, which, a hundred years later, gives rise to the narrator's intense anxiety disorder:

> The 'heart in my throat' felt so agonising, especially the first few times, that I would have thrown myself out of the window, had I been able to move at these moments. Racing heart, pain in the chest and temples, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea. The worst thing, though, was not these physical symptoms but the distortion of reality that permeated my whole being, a new perception of it, as if from the other side, from where there is no return. It was sheer mortal terror; this is how the living conceive of death.
>
> «Серце в горлі» бувало таким нестерпним, особливо перші рази, що я викинулася би з вікна, якби в той момент могла рухатися. Аритмія, біль у грудях і скронях, брак повітря, запаморочення, нудота. Втім, справді

> нестерпними були не фізичні страждання, а викривлення реальності, нове її сприйняття, ніби з протилежного боку, тамтого, звідки вже не повертаються. Це був увесь жах смерті, як про неї думають живі. (Malyarchuk 2016: 8)

Indicating inherited trauma, she declares that '[i]n my chest the First World War has broken out' ('У моїх грудях розгорілася Перша світова війна', Malyarchuk 2016: 217–18). Thus, it is now up to her to take on the historic struggle:

> I tried to put these attacks into words, they are my army, I am a writer after all, but the words dissolved as if someone had boiled them and stirred them with a wooden spoon. The words no longer had any meaning. The end I was experiencing was the end of all time within me and could not be described in the usual way. I needed new words, a new truth, and the search for them dominated all my thinking.
>
> Я намагалась описувати свої приступи словами, вони — моя армія, я ж літератор, але слова розлізалися, ніби їх хтось варив, помішуючи дерев'яною ложкою. Слова більше нічого не означали. Кінець, який я переживала, кінець усіх часів у мені, не міг бути описаний старим способом. Потрібні були нові слова, нова правда, і їх пошук захопив увесь мій розум. (Malyarchuk 2016: 7)

The novel sets up parallels not only between the lives of its historical and its contemporary protagonists but also between physical and psychological illness (tuberculosis, neurasthenia, anxiety disorders). Contemporary physical ailments are an expression of protracted historical trauma: the suppression of Ukrainian national identity. Healing will only be possible if and when this specific cause of illness also gets addressed. Thus, *Oblivion* is a book about the history of Ukraine and its transgenerational traumas, and the historical setting of the sanatorium is used to symbolize precisely that history.

6.7 The health resort narrative as memory fiction

Our cursory journey has shown that, across cultures, spas and sanatoria have served extensively as settings for traumatizing events and for their remembrance. According to Aleida Assmann, 'there has been a strong alliance between memory and place. … This topological orientation leads logically to architectural complexes as embodiments of memory' (Assmann 2011: 146, 147).[12] In this context, the health resort is a paradigmatic topos of European memory fiction, not least because it developed a very specific architectural complex of its own. The sanatorium in particular, with its closed structure, the long corridors and many floors, is conducive to dystopian interpretations and modernist depictions. This helps to explain why it features so prominently in twentieth-century trauma

literature. The health resort is by definition a place with a specific function. As a place of healing, it is also a place of hope. But because the cure it offered was at best an amelioration, and because in many cases the sanatorium functioned as a waiting room for death – whereby confinement there also had overtones of terminal imprisonment – its actual associations were often diametrically opposed to its avowed aim. Furthermore, as a place onto which a wide variety of dreams, longings and fantasies were projected, it often served as the setting for radical disillusionment. In the course of the twentieth century, of course, a succession of violent conflicts frequently entailed a literal descent into barbarism. In concrete terms, it is its infrastructure – the coexistence of accommodation and treatment facilities – that allows for different functions ranging from healing place to prison camp. And indeed, over the decades, very different experiences – and memories – overlap in concrete sites. In the Bohemian town of Jáchymov, for example, a radon spa and a stalinist labour camp in the uranium mines existed side by side (see Chapter 7). Also (though not to be mixed up with the above), famous Grand Spas such as Baden-Baden or Wiesbaden served as military sites for the occupying powers after the Second World War.

Our corpus also shows that, unsurprisingly, the Second World War and the Holocaust are at the centre of literary works dealing with historical trauma experienced within the realms of the health resort. Accordingly, many of the authors considered are of Jewish origin, writing in a variety of languages such as English, Hebrew and Polish. Across literatures and cultures, a transnational approach to the subject thus emerges, ranging from Italian to Catalan to Dutch literatures. But other violent events of the twentieth century, such as the First World War, the Spanish Civil War or the Russian-Soviet suppression of Ukrainian state independence, find their resonance, too. Our selection of texts duly covers different generations of writers and their temporal proximity to the events referenced: with Bonet and Lem, we have contemporaries describing their experiences of violence and war in direct contemporaneousness, with Liselotte Marshall, a Holocaust survivor, who wrote her novel retrospectively and after a 'latency period'[13] of half a century. And with Tanya Malyarchuk, we have a representative of (at least) the third generation who focuses on the transgenerational effect historical trauma can produce.

A more recent literary development is the trend towards what Eaglestone calls 'trauma-Kitsch' (Eaglestone 2020: 292). In particular, in the entertainment segment of the literary market, we find novels and thrillers using sanatorium settings to deal with history's proverbial skeletons in the cupboard. A good example of this is Sarah Pearse's *The Sanatorium* (2021), which combines the pattern of the locked-room mystery with the task of coming to terms with the past. The story is based on existing reports about the medical abuse, killing and secret burying of (allegedly) mentally ill women from Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, which had happened in a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps (Sanatorium du Plumacit). It uses its plot to reactivate the memory of the atrocities committed, a memory that is still present yet hidden in the building and its surroundings. The erstwhile sanatorium had meanwhile been successfully transformed into a

luxury hotel, and one of the characters staying there is a detective on holiday. Gradually she realizes that a series of murders committed during her presence there had the function of making links to the horrors of the past. Thus, by solving the murders committed in the present, she uncovers the crimes committed several decades ago and finally gives voice to their victims. In this bestseller, then, the link between state violence, sanatoria and trauma becomes the stuff of popular detective fiction. At the same time, the novel's wide readership is introduced to a significant aspect of the history of the institution sanatorium (see also Chapter 8).

Finally, it is worth noting that the awareness of the health resort as a place of trauma as well as healing, first identified and explored in literature, is also influencing current developments in the social and cultural repositioning of the resorts themselves. Their 'dark side' is now being presented in museums, and memories of violence and repression are also being inscribed in the public sphere through a variety of media. One example is the Czech Jáchymov, where the town's double history as both a spa and a labour camp is presented as interconnected (see Hignett, forthcoming); another is the German Bad Sassendorf, which is currently publicly addressing the physical and mental abuse that occurred in recovery camps for children in the post-war period, the so-called *Kinderverschickung* (see Chapter 5).

While the classic spa novel of a Jane Austen or a Fyodor Dostoevsky has long been used for marketing purposes and (despite both authors' rather negative depictions of the respective spas) helped increase their glamour, much of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century resort literature is involved with transnational memory discourses and debates that are as indispensable as they are uncomfortable.

Notes

1 With the start of the war, all the foreign guests in the spa counted as enemies and potential spies and were due to be interned. To spare them this experience, the owner of the hotel arranged with the authorities that they could stay in his hotel as an alternative form of internment. This put him under increasing financial pressure as the guests' finances soon dried up and nobody had expected the war to last for that long.

2 The text has been translated twice. In both cases, the place name is spelt with an 'e' and the date is added. See Appelfeld (1977, 1980).

3 Shacham quotes from Appelfeld's *First Person Essays*: 'No sooner did we touch the pages of *The Trial* than the feeling gripped us that he was with us in all our experiences. Every line said we. […] Kafka restored words to us suddenly' (Shacham 2004: 190).

4 In Lem's preface to the German edition of 1975, we read about the book:

> it contained my experiences from the time of the war and the occupation, not in the form of autobiographical elements but of the attempt to give expression to my relationship with the world as I perceived it at the time.

> es enthielt meine Erfahrungen aus der Zeit des Krieges und der Okkupation, allerdings nicht autobiographische Elemente, sondern nur den Versuch, meinem damaligen Verhältnis zur erkannten Welt Ausdruck zu verleihen. (Lem 1975: 6)

5 As laid out in Chapter 3 of this volume, sanatoria were initially founded to treat tuberculosis, but quickly diversified their function to tend to a variety of ailments including forms of mental illness. There is thus considerable overlap between sanatoria and what used to be known as 'lunatic asylums'. Lem's 'hospital' sits precisely in this space.

6 A stark marker of this apparently uninterrupted existence is the fact that Trzyniecki and a female colleague have sex that very night as they are in the process of leaving the sanatorium.

7

> We would sweat like pigs … trying to avoid seeing the men being marched down our street, shackled and with hands folded over their bellies …. The men were … forced to drink castor oil … and paraded … around the village while singing patriotic tunes … and they wept like women and they couldn't walk because inside their trousers things were less than clean. (Bonet 2014: 21)

> nosaltres suàvem com condemnats … per no veure els homes que passaven pel carrer, engrillonats, amb les mans juntes damunt el ventre … els forçaven a beure oli de ricí. … i els feien passejar pel poble cantant cançons patriòtiques … i ploraven com dones i no podien caminar perquè dins els pantalons no tot era net. (Bonet 1958: 33)

8 The book was first published in German translation under the title *Die verlorene Sprache* (Marshall 1997). The English original appeared seven years later.

9 The place name is fictitious, alluding to the biblical place Peniel (Genesis 32).

10 Thus, he decrees that he is to be stabbed through the heart after death, to avoid being buried alive. The dark ceremony, which mixes a bit of Balkan Gothic atmosphere into the traumatic ambience, is said to have been performed in the Austrian sanatorium Wienerwald (Malyarchuk 2016: 12). The author adds to this mixture a reference to the fact that the then unknown writer Franz Kafka had been treated here a few years earlier, thus alluding to the transnational spa narrative that we presented in Chapter 4.

11 It is an interesting fact that it was Selman Waksman, an American of Ukrainian descent, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1952 for his discovery of the remedy streptomycin, which finally defeated tuberculosis. It is no accident that Malyarchuk refers to this in her novel (Malyarchuk 2016: 313). This too is a kind of geopolitical victory over this disease, which Malyarchuk has her protagonist say was an instrument of power of the Tsarist autocracy.

12 The original quotation reads: 'es besteht eine unverbrüchliche Verbindung zwischen Gedächtnis und Raum. … Von dieser topologischen Qualität ist es nur ein Schritt zu architektonischen Komplexen als Verkörperungen des Gedächtnisses' (Assmann [1999] 2018: 158). See Toroš (2021: 72).

13 In trauma research, this is understood to be 'a period of time from the traumatic event and its repression to the reaction to it' (Toroš 2021: 66).

7

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS: PARADIGMS OF REFLECTIVE NOSTALGIA

In 1960, the French author Alain Robbe-Grillet and director Alain Resnais worked on a film called *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961, *Last Year in Marienbad*), an arthouse production in black and white that famously combines the themes and techniques of the nouveau roman and avant-garde film. It is set in a grand hotel consisting of a baroque castle and elaborate French gardens, which may or may not belong to a spa town. In it, a man tries to convince a woman that they had met the year before and that she had promised him to leave her old companion and come with him this time. While he recounts to her various episodes from their past time together, she struggles to remember, and it remains unclear to the viewer whether the man's accounts are based on actual events or not. When he (X) shows her (A) a photograph of herself on a garden bench, claiming that he took it during their previous encounter, she responds:

A: Yes, I do. No, I don't. I don't know. I don't remember.
X: You know who took it.
A: You're lying.
X: It was last year. I had to insist on taking it. You said it would make you uneasy.
A: Yes, that's true. I was right. (quoted in Hays 2018: 1)

Later, we see her open the drawer of a cabinet in her room that shows her to be in possession of countless copies of this same photograph. Does that mean that she knows very well, but hides this memory from her old companion and herself? Or rather, that X had accosted her with his story and this same image numerous times before? There is even uncertainty about where the picture was taken, though the possibilities all have spa associations. In the words of David Hays: 'X asserts that the image was taken at Frederiksbad, but when A replies that she has never been to Frederiksbad, he admits that it could have been taken elsewhere – "At Karlstadt. At Marienbad. At Baden-Salsa. Or even here in this *salon*"' (Hays 2018: 5, emphasis in the original).

In his article, which is concerned with 'knowing and not knowing' in the film, Hays points out that 'At a superficial level, the viewer … is challenged to discern

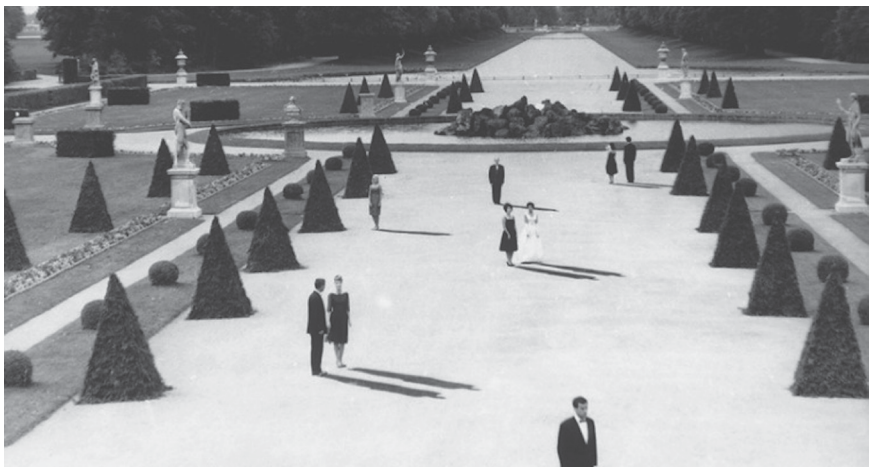


Figure 7.1 Film still from Alain Resnais, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad.* The human figures in the scene cast exaggerated shadows, the (taller) trees cast none.

what "really" happened "last year"' (Hays 2018: 3). But rather than offering us clues that would enable us to solve the mystery, the film wraps us in an increasingly comprehensive uncertainty about the past. As Hays puts it, 'elements and situations within the film invite interpretation but offer no clear solutions' (Hays 2018: 3). He goes on to demonstrate the ways in which both the plot and the images of the film display complex, labyrinthine structures, with the camera moving through and merging different spaces; and he draws our attention to exaggerated and missing shadows, numerous close-ups sequenced in repetition and freezes that turn out to be none (see Hays 2018: 25). And the result, in the words of a German critic at the time, is that 'At no point in the film can the viewer be sure whether what they are seeing on the screen is present or memory, dream or waking dream'.[1] The viewer gets ensnared by an increasingly enigmatic world (Figure 7.1).

In 1983, the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky made a film entitled *Nostalghia*. In it, a Russian writer named Andrei Gorchakov travels to Italy to write a biography of an eighteenth-century Russian composer who had lived in Italy and been successful there, but who returned to Russia out of longing, only to take his own life. Andrei travels to the various places where his compatriot stayed, including the Bagno Vignoni, a Roman thermal spa in Tuscany. Whilst he dispenses with the help of his interpreter, he develops a close bond with Domenico, an old man who is shunned by the locals as a madman. In the penultimate scene of the film, we find Gorchakov crossing the ruined thermal pool with a burning candle in his hand. He does so at the behest of Domenico who had told him that this would be the way to rescue the world. Keeping the candle's flame alive from one end of the pool to the other turns out to be harder than expected, and Gorchakov repeatedly fails. Finally, he manages with his last ounce of strength to carry the burning candle through the entire length of the pool (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Thermal baths in Bagno Vignoni (Italy), where one of the key scenes in Andrei Tarkovsky film *Nostalghia* takes place. Where its hero Gorchakov once ritually carried a burning candle through the empty pool, today the lights of the restaurants are shining. Photograph taken in the 2010s.

Ulrich Greiner quite rightly insists that it makes little sense to try and faithfully recast the film's plot, as this would not capture its character (see Greiner 1984) – a feature it shares with Resnais's *Marienbad*. Greiner likens watching the film to a dream in which the notion of progression is suspended. Indeed, one of the film's most obvious features is the frequent use of 'long, slow takes in which little or no action occurs' (Burns 2011: 105). Thus, the job of the camera is 'not the tracing of a movement so much as the unfolding of an image' (Burns 2011: 116). For Christy Burns, this marks Tarkovsky's 'refusal of narrative and … create[s] spatial-temporal correlatives to nostalgia and loss' (Burns 2011: 104).

Both films, then, challenge conventional notions of memory and temporality and question the narratability of the past. Neither film is concerned with the actual spa(s) it refers to, nor with spa life in any concrete form. But both quite specifically choose this setting as a springboard for someone's search for a lost world and their efforts to remember, recreate or reimagine it. Carrying a candle through what is left of the life-giving water in the ruin of an ancient spa is a powerful metaphor for attempting to save the world for the future by preserving the spirit of the past. Resnais's questioning of the very memorability of such a past through the indistinguishability of real and half-real spa towns underlines the difficulties behind such attempts. The counterpoint of setting and title in both films says a great deal about the nimbus attaching to the spa as a place of lost grandeur,

elegant leisure, insouciant romance and above all about its ability to contain and symbolize the past in its relation to the present. This is what makes it such a perfect locus for retrospective longing. With their enigmatic insistence on discontinuous images, both films thus also explore the complex nature of nostalgia: What is it we are actually seeking to recover? How do memory, imagination and desire interact in this process, how does this 'historical emotion' (Boym 2007) correlate to the Here and Now, and how much is it bound up with a present experience of crisis?

L'Année dernière à Marienbad and *Nostalghia* are only the tip of an iceberg. The decades since have seen a surge in films and books using spa towns and health resorts in general as their historical settings, and doing so in a more concrete and spa-specific way than Resnais and Tarkovsky. In examining these, we will be drawing on the useful distinction that Svetlana Boym makes between 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia. While 'restorative nostalgia returns and rebuilds [an imagined] homeland with paranoic determination', reflective nostalgia 'dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging' and puts a special focus on the 'unrealized dreams of the past and the visions of the future that have become obsolete' (Boym 2007). In that sense, it has a 'prospective', if not utopian side to it: 'The consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales' (Boym 2007). Two almost pure examples of such consideration are to be found in Sholem Aleichem's epistolary novel *Marienbad* (1911, written in Jiddish) and Otto Flake's German novel *Hortense oder die Rückkehr nach Baden-Baden* (1933, Hortense, Or the Return to Baden-Baden). Whilst Aleichem offers a glimpse into a particular moment in Jewish life and culture in European spas at a point when this was about to become precarious, Flake evokes the spa as a place of cultural encounter, tolerance and emancipation, just when these values had come under massive attack.[2] Thus, both engage with their respective present (and future) by presenting the past in a manner that combines 'longing and critical thinking' (Boym 2007).

However, as Resnais and Tarkovsky amply demonstrate, the psychological constructs of memory, imagination, desire and repressed trauma (invoked by Boym in her use of words like 'longing', 'imagined homeland', 'passion', 'fear' and 'obsolete', Boym 2007) often work together in ways that blur the distinction between truth and appearance, reality and imagination, and the various time-worlds of past, present and projected future. The fact that they do this deliberately also means that nostalgia is being performed and questioned at the same time. In what follows, we will thus take Boym's concept as a starting point and identify a number of different paradigms of reflective nostalgia as used in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century texts set in health resorts.

7.1 Tracing the footsteps of literary heroes

It is common knowledge that many writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries frequented spa towns and other resorts – be it the large cosmopolitan or the quieter provincial ones – for health, or networking purposes, or in search of

inspiration and an atmosphere conducive to writing. Apart from the well-known literary results, such as Dostoevsky's *Gambler* (*Igrok,* 1866), Maupassant's *Mont Oriol* (1887) or Mann's *Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924), many writers from the past also refer to the importance of such places in their letters and memoirs. More recently, however, they have themselves begun to feature as literary figures, (re)created by other, younger authors for their own ends.

Quite a number of texts focus on one particular author's journey to one particular spa town. An early example is Leonid Tsypkin's novel *Leto v Badene* ([1982] 2003, *Summer in Baden-Baden*, 1987) in which a present-day narrator traces Dostoevsky's trip with his wife to Baden-Baden in 1867, his obsessive gambling in the casino there, and his increasing impoverishment as a result of this addiction. Written towards the end of Tsypkin's life in the years leading up to the centenary of Dostoevsky's death in 1881, the novel deals among other things with the deleterious relationship between writers and repressive regimes.[3] In it, the spa setting serves as a place of revelation about the author. What drives the narration is a quest to understand how the humanity emanating from Dostoevsky's literature can at all coincide with the misogyny, egotism and anti-Semitism of the man himself, and how Dostoevsky can have become such an important figure for the narrator, who, like the author, is a Jewish intellectual in Soviet Russia. W. G. Sebald's collection *Schwindel: Gefühle* (1990, *Vertigo* 1999) includes a piece called 'Dr K.s Badereise nach Riva' ('Dr K. Takes the Waters in Riva') which contemplates the relationship between life and literature by putting the genesis of Franz Kafka's story 'Der Jäger Gracchus' ('The Hunter Gracchus', written in 1916/17) into the context of a sojourn at the famous naturopathic sanatorium of Dr Hartungen in Riva del Garda.[4] Martin Walser's novel *Ein liebender Mann* (2008, *A Man in Love*, 2019) reconstructs Goethe's stay in Marienbad in 1823, in which he made his infamous offer of marriage to Ulrike von Levetzow, 55 years his junior (an offer which was rejected by her mother). The epicentre of the narrative is the story of the genesis of Goethe's famous poem 'Marienbader Elegie', written in an attempt to come to terms with this experience. Along similar lines, Ralph Günther, in his novel *Goethe in Karlsbad* (2022), uses the spa town of Carlsbad as a starting point and terminus for three interwoven stories that revolve around Goethe's conceptions of writing, love and social norms. In all these cases, a writer chooses an episode in the experience of a past writer and uses it to explore the relationship between biography and text, life and writing and thus to illuminate his own poetics. And while the depictions of the resorts are markedly different in each text, they all, precisely in their function as heterotopias, offer a sense of heightened intensity in which the emotional, intellectual and practical aspects of life are thrown into sharper relief.

Walter Kappacher's novel *Der Fliegenpalast* (2009, *Palace of Flies*, 2022) is a slightly different case. It recounts Hugo von Hofmannsthal's stay in the Austrian spa town Bad Fusch in the summer of 1924. Apart from being a place imbued with memories (of the summers he had spent with his parents there), the spa functions as a seismograph for the state of Austrian and European society in the years after the First World War, which had marked a break in Western civilization and the death

of the Habsburg Empire. The narrative establishes parallels between the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the loss of old ways of life attendant upon the technological changes in the period, the physical decay of the artist (Hofmannsthal died in 1929), the decay of society and the decay of spa culture. Significantly, these parallel strands are depicted as permeable and mutually interdependent. It is not for nothing that Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918/1922; *The Decline of the West*, 1926) is specifically referred to (see Chapter 3).

Ali Smith's novel *Spring* (2019) for its part interrogates the very depictability of past (resort) life. A film director in need of a job is approached by a large film company to shoot an (entirely fictitious) 'comedy fuck', featuring Katherine Mansfield and Rainer Maria Rilke in the Swiss resort area of Sierre, with the grand hotel room and the cable car cabin as preferred settings. (The real Katherine Mansfield stayed there from June to August 1922 and wrote her last story and her will there before dying of tuberculosis in 1923; the real Rilke was a regular in the area from 1921 onwards, becoming famously associated with the castle of Muzot. He died of leukaemia in 1926. There is no proof that their paths ever crossed.) In a bid to uphold a certain level of artistic integrity, the filmmaker makes a counter-proposal:

> I see it shaped formally like a series of postcards from these writers' lives. By which I mean depiction of very slight moments from their lives that will act as revelations of depth. This I think is more in keeping with … the truth of a relationship between two people who did not know each other and about which and whom, even though they may be famous writers with well-documented lives, we still know next to nothing. … Also it gives us a way to … gesture towards some of the other things happening at the time in history, I mean in the world as it was – as well as to the world as it is right now – but all of this with some courtesy towards truth and to what we know and don't know in this instance. (Smith 2019: 97–9)

This description might serve as a blueprint for a fair number of spa novels and films. And it says a great deal about the fashion for unreconstructed restorative nostalgia that our film director's ideas are rejected by the company and he finds himself jobless again.

7.2 Capturing historical moments in the burning-glass of the health resort

What Kappacher tried to establish in *Fliegenpalast* with reference to one historical figure, others have approached by way of a literary mosaic. In his bestseller *1913: Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts* (2012, *1913: The Year Before the Storm*, 2013), and its sequel *1913: Was ich unbedingt noch erzählen wollte* (2018, 1913: What I Absolutely Still Had to Tell You, 2013), Florian Illies arranges biographical snippets about, and documentary fragments written by, key figures from the world of art, music, science and literature. In doing so, he offers an illuminating

depiction of German and European society in 1913, the year leading up to the First World War. In the roughly 550 pages that make up the two books together, we find just over a hundred references to just under forty European spas and resorts. While this can be seen as proof of the centrality of such places in the lives of the individuals selected, it also – and perhaps more importantly – points to the significant role they played in society and history at large. It is not for nothing that Stefan Zweig's memoirs *Die Welt von Gestern* ([1942] 2017, *The World of Yesterday*, 1943) repeatedly refer to his own stays in such places when describing seismic political changes such as the outbreak of the First World War (which saw him in Baden bei Wien) and of the Second World War (when he was in Bath), but also the assassination of important political figures (such as Walther Rathenau in 1922 when Zweig was staying in Westerland, see Figure 0.2).

It is also not for nothing that Zweig appears as one of the most important protagonists in Volker Weidermann's book *Ostende: 1936, Sommer der Freundschaft* (2014, *Summer before the Dark: Stefan Zweig and Joseph Roth, Ostend 1936*, 2016). In it, Weidermann throws a spotlight on one point in time of this world of yesterday, at which several German and Austrian authors met for the last time, all fleeing from Nazi Germany, all waiting for visas to take them as far away as possible: Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, Irmgard Keun, Egon Erwin Kisch, Ernst Toller, Arthur Koestler, Hermann Kesten et al. The scenery is misleadingly pretty – 'sun, sea, drinks – it could be a holiday among friends', as the dust cover puts it.[5] The narrative is arranged in the form of a round dance, beginning and ending with Stefan Zweig and Joseph Roth. It also offers at its end a proleptic glimpse of the lives and deaths of all those involved after that summer of 1936, and of Ostend's fate as a seaside resort and a place of refuge for fugitives. Like Illies's *1913*, this book is not fictional in so far as it is based on established historical and biographical facts. Its impact and literary quality arise from the latent tension between the finite character of this particular encounter and the setting of the resort which derives its entire *raison d'être* from enabling an uninterrupted cycle of such meetings, and from its perpetuation of the culture they embody. Thus, the book suggests that the fate of finitude has also come to the seaside resort and the way of life practised there. (Interestingly, in the same year as Weidermann's book came out, Zweig's memoirs were also proclaimed to have been the inspiration for Wes Anderson's film *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, which offers a very different take on the same historical period: post-modern, decidedly light-hearted and certainly not concerned with historic truth – nostalgia performed as a tongue-in-cheek farce.)

Another book that captures a specific historic moment through the prism of the resort is Serbian author Dejan Tiago-Stanković's novel *Estoril: Ratni Roman* ([2015] 2019, *Estoril: A War Novel*, 2018). Here, we have a fictional story based on detailed historical research and woven into a set of real events in a real historical setting: Estoril, the fashionable seaside resort on the Portuguese Riviera, during the Second World War. Due to its political neutrality under António de Oliveira Salazar, Portugal soon became a staging post on many refugees' escape routes out of Europe, as well as a place of exile for those who forcibly or voluntarily remained

in Europe. Estoril's closeness to Lisbon almost turned it into an outpost of the capital, housing many refugees from all over Europe in its hotels and guesthouses and creating, as it were, a very special kind of spa society:

> Estoril was more like Biarritz or Monte Carlo than ever. With hindsight, it is interesting that no one at the time realized what was more than palpable all around us: that these were the first days of the brief but glamorous period that was to become known as *the golden age of the Riviera*. (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 10, emphasis in the original)

> Štaviše, Estoril je tih dana, više nego ikada ranije, podsećao na Bijaric ili Monte Karlo. Sa današnje tačke gledišta zanimljivo je i da tada niko nije predvideo ono što se uveliko osećalo svuda oko nas: a to je da su već tekli prvi dani onog doba, nedugog ali glamuroznog, koje će docnije biti nazivano *zlatnim dobom rivijere*. (Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 9–10, emphasis in the original)

At the heart of the novel's plot are the (really existing) Palácio Hotel and the Grand Casino, and the story is told from a contemporary point of view. It is initially focalized through the retired manager of the Palácio, who starts by declaring that 'I'm so old that all I remember is what I've invented myself' (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 9; 'Ja sam toliko star da se sećam samo onog što sam izmislio', Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 7). Following on from this, the focalization moves freely between the characters, with each of them revealing and concealing things as they see fit. Many of the central characters are based on real-life models, such as Carol II, ex-king of Romania and his mistress (and later wife) Elena Lupescu; Jan Paderewski, the famous Polish pianist and politician; Ian Fleming, the British agent and author; Alexander Alekhine, the Russian chess grand master; Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the French pilot and author and Duško Popov, a double agent (British and German) of Serbian descent, who is said to have inspired Ian Fleming's *James Bond* series. The central fictional figures are Mr Black, the American hotel manager; Mr Cardoso, the local inspector from the Portuguese Political Police (PVDE); Bruno, the driver of the hotel; Lino, the hotel's concierge; Maria de Lourdes, the cook in the staff kitchen, and her son Papagaio; and Gavriel (Gaby) Franklin, a Hassidic boy from Antwerp who is ten years old at the time of his arrival in the hotel and fifteen when he leaves.

The narration starts with Gaby's arrival: he is the son of a Jewish family of jewellers from Antwerp, who had to leave their home in haste when the German Army advanced, and tried to get to Portugal. However, the bureaucratic hurdles that needed to be overcome in order to get across the intervening borders were multiplied exponentially, so that the parents paid someone to smuggle their son to Estoril first, telling him to wait for them there as they would follow as soon as they had the necessary papers. This puts him in a position of a 'lost child' (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 12; 'izgubljeno dete', Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 12) who will, in fact, never be joined by his parents. (We are to assume that they did not survive their flight.) But as he is in possession of more than enough money and

gemstones to pay for a very long stay, the hotel manager decides to put him up nevertheless, rather than sending him to an orphanage. Gaby gets looked after by almost everyone working in the hotel, and in a way, the Palácio becomes his family and home for these five years. His young age and situation as well as his somewhat outlandish looks (he wears the full Hassidic attire) and unfamiliarity with the world make his interlocutors perceive him 'as if he's from another planet' (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 107; 'kao da je pao s neke druge planete', Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 142). It is this position of the outsider to the hotel society that allows him to befriend the kitchen maid and the hotel driver as much as the ex-king, the double spy, the chess master and the writer. One of the many conversations between Gaby and Carol reads:

> 'Is it hard being a king?'
> …
> 'I think it must be much easier to be a king than to be a doorman,' ….
> 'Yes and no. Kings, I cannot deny, have many privileges, but being a doorman has its advantages as well.'
> 'For example?'
> 'For example, when a doorman wants to marry, he can choose from lots of girls and fall in love with anyone he wants. But when I wanted to marry, I could only choose from among princesses. There were only three suitable girls at the time and I was simply unable to fall in love with any of them.'
> 'And what if a doorman wants to marry a princess?'
> 'You have a point there, I must admit.'
> 'I won't be able to fall in love with just any girl either. She'll have to be of my faith. And my parents will have to like her.'
> 'There you go. Like me.' (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 106)
>
> – Je li teško biti kralj?
> …
> – Ja mislim da je mnogo lakše biti kralj nego, na primer, vratar saopštio je dečak.
> – I jeste i nije. Kraljevi, to ne mogu poreći, imaju puno privilegija, ali i biti vratar ima svojih prednosti.
> – Na primer
> – Na primer, kada jedan portir hoće da se oženi, on može da se zaljubi u koju god hoće. Ali kad sam ja hteo da se ženim, mogao sam da biram samo između princeza. U to vreme su bile samo tri adekvatne prilike, a ja jednostavno nisam uspevao da se zaljubim ni u jednu od njih.
> – Ja isto neću moći da se zaljubim u bilo koju devojku. Treba da bude moje vere. I treba da se dopadne mojim roditeljima.
> – Eto sličnosti!' (Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 140–1)[6]

It is precisely because of this situation of being just another guest in a heterogeneous crowd, that despite it being a time of exile, Estoril really felt 'like a spa' for Carol. 'He was treated with the utmost respect here, but without too much pomp or

ceremony, as if he were a real king on an unofficial visit to a friendly country' (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 132; 'kralju je u Estorilu bilo kao nam banjskom oporavku. Ovde su se prema njemu odnosili s visokim uvažavanjem, ali bez preterane pompe i ceremonije, otprilike kao da je pravi kralj u nezvaničnoj poseti prijateljskoj zemlji', Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 175).

All guests and staff become involved with Gaby at a level of familiarity they would avoid with other characters present, so the most jarring elements of society all coalesce around one person. Moreover, the constellation of place, time, events and characters allows the author to depict the resort as a microcosm of human society in the world of war, in which people otherwise set against each other can peacefully coexist:

> Sitting on the [beach] sand not far from each other were two families. One was German: husband, wife, nanny and three small children. The parents were basking in the sun and the children, like children everywhere, were rolling half-naked in the sand. … Sitting a few steps away was a blond, pretty child; he looked as if he would never grow up. You could tell from his clothes that he was Jewish. Barefoot but in a suit with rolled-up trouser legs, he both walked and talked softly. He was not alone; he was playing with a little yellow dog that looked like a fox. It was as if neither group noticed the other. … Across from them, a bit further on, close to the waves, was a group of Englishwomen. … Among them were children, mostly the sons and daughters of officers of the British colonial army travelling from overseas territories to their homeland, which few remembered and where many of them had never set foot. (Tiago-Stanković 2018: 180–1)

> Na pesku, nedaleko jedna od druge, sedele su dve porodice. Jedna beše nemačka: muž, žena, dadilja i troje sitne dece. Roditelji su se sunčali, a deca, svud jednaka, valjalasu se, polugola, po pesku. … Na nekoliko koraka od njih sedelo je dete, po odori se videlo, jevrejsko, plavokoso i lepo, kao da nikada neće porasti. Bosonogo, ali u odelu okraćalih nogavica, hodalo je krotko i govorilo tiho. Nije bilo samo, igralo se s malenom žućkastom kujicom nalik lisici. Jedni uz druge, kao da se međusobno nisu primećivali. … S druge strane, malo dalje, uz same talase, grupa Engleskinja.… Ima među njima i dece, uglavnom sinova i kćeri oficira britanske kolonijalne vojske na putovanju iz prekomorskih teritorija ka matičnoj zemlji u kojoj dobar deo njih nikada ni bio nije ili je se ne seća. (Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 240–1)

Sometimes, a constellation like this can become potentially explosive, such as when officers of the German Army attend a casino party where the entertainment is provided by Jewish musicians (see Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 191, 2018: 144).

This social, political and cultural hotchpotch is supplemented by a further, literary dimension. The narrative weaves a rich intertextual net, quoting from, or alluding to, a wealth of documentary[7] and fictional texts such as Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*[8] or Fleming's *James Bond*. The novel thus has a hybrid character in

several respects: it is a hybrid in terms of genre in that it combines the characteristics of a war or historical novel with those of a spy thriller, a coming-of-age story and even an adventure novel. But it is also expressly hybrid in its references to the past, in that it plays a rich game with historical documentation and fiction, memory and imagination.

Likewise, it makes full (and playful) use of the narrative potential of this historically charged locus. As the reference to Biarritz (quoted above) makes clear, the novel plays with the ironic trope that Estoril under the threatening conditions of the war and the shadow of the Holocaust recalls the heyday of the spas and seaside resorts and all they stood for in terms of social integration, holidays from normal life and acceptance of the other. In its structure, its setting and its cast of characters, the novel enacts the relationship between a real and an imagined past. And by introducing a character who is looked after by all (Gaby), it foregrounds an element of utopia which contrasts strongly with the usual portrayal of life under war and dictatorship.

7.3 Shedding light on historical blind spots

Gaby's regular visits to the staff kitchen in *Estoril* and his friendship with people like Maria and Papagaio de Lourdes are rare features both in the 'classic' spa novels, from the nineteenth century, and in the more contemporary publications dealt with in this chapter. People working in the resorts, in particular those serving in the lower ranks (washerwomen, cleaners, kitchen workers, etc.), are almost never taken any notice of. Anneli Jordahl's *Augustenbad en sommar* (2011, A Summer in Augustenbad) addresses this blind spot. The novel is set in the Swedish spa Augustenbad (also known as Bie hälsobrunn) at the beginning of the 1890s. Augustenbad was a well-known, cold-water spa, which was named after its founder Carl August Aurell and which updated its treatments under Per Axel Levin and his son Astley. Jordahl's story touches on all the topics known from the classic spa novels: hedonism versus suffering, heightened life versus the fear of death, people from different walks of life encountering each other, and doing things and playing roles that are different from what they were used to at home. Mixed in with these are themes that began to surface at the end of the nineteenth century: the spa regime as an all-encompassing system of discipline and control (see Chapter 5), the advance of natural medicine and *Lebensreform* concepts (see Chapter 3) or the question of how to treat social ills (such as alcoholism) and venereal diseases (such as syphilis). The novel picks up on these themes in a way that enables it to comment on the nineteenth century itself: its class system, its sexual hypocrisy and its position on the cusp of Modernity. The depiction of one of the women patients (Amanda), for instance, has a decidedly feminist twist to it. She is not just the mysterious aristocratic woman, but specifically the victim of her husband's dissipation: the disease that makes her special is not consumption (as it was, famously, in Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux Camélias* and its operatic adaptation by Giuseppe Verdi), but syphilis, and her dying is not touching, but

ugly. What makes Jordahl's novel stand out even more is its attention to the lives of both the poor in the spa and the spa workers (especially the women among them), and the relationships between the guests and the workers. One of the central characters is the ironing maid Maria, who, though she'd love to study and take up a profession, has had to work from a very young age to help her mother feed the family. She is seduced and becomes pregnant by one of the spa guests (Andreas, a would-be artist who was sent to the spa by his rich wife to combat his alcoholism), and she dies in an attempt to abort. Much of the narrative follows her and her mother's daily routine and discusses her dreams and fears. Moreover, the interactions Maria and her mother have with patients and other spa workers, as well as with the poor patients housed in a secluded shack away from the main facilities, receive broad attention. They also, incidentally, provide the occasion for astute descriptions of the different quarters inhabited by the different social groups in the resort. By combining the perspectives of the three central characters (Andreas, Amanda and Maria), the narrative offers an insight into the different worlds within the world of the health resort.

Jordahl's ability to find the right tone for each of these characters (and others of their social station) has received praise from a number of reviewers, such as Maria Larsson and Nina Lekander, who also pick up on the ways in which the narrator's language manages to marry a historical plot with a contemporary worldview. Anna Mayrhauser reads *Augustenbad en sommar* as an ironic homage to the classic spa novel, which – using its setting and tone – starts off as a 'lucid summer dream' yet ends as an 'indictment of nineteenth-century class society' (Mayrhauser 2013).

Jordahl also laces her story with references to the non-fictional sources she used. Before the narrative starts, we learn that:

> All characters in the book are fictional, but the Sörmländska cold water spa institution did exist. Dr Liljedahl [the spa doctor in the book] borrowed ideas from Per Axel Levin (1821–1891), but also from other doctors with, at the time, innovative theories on addiction treatment and hydrotherapy.
>
> Alla karaktärer är fiktiva, men den sörmländska kallvattenkuranstalten har existerat. Doktor Liljedahl har fått låna idéer av Per Axel Levin (1821–1891), men också från andra läkare med, på den tiden, nydanande teorier om missbruksvård och hydroterapi. (Jordahl 2011: 4)

And at the end of the book, Jordahl thanks the daughters of Märta Strand, a cleaner in Augustenbad, for sharing with her historical documents in their possession and the knowledge and stories passed down from their mother (Jordahl 2011: 150). Thus, under the cloak of summer reading, we find a remarkable attempt at correcting the usual privileged and classist view of nineteenth-century spa life, and one which uses oral history as a means of giving a voice to the hitherto unnoticed.

Another recent instance of focusing on the workforce as much as on the guests also comes from Scandinavia: the Danish TV series *Badehotellet* (2013, Seaside Hotel) by Hans Fabian Wullenweber and Jesper W. Nielsen. The series is set in and around a

small seaside hotel on Jutland and, starting in 1928, follows the lives of its regular visitors and its staff over the years, weaving together individual biographies and world history. While the depiction of staff life is on the whole more positive than in *Augustenbad en sommar*, the series does address questions of class, tensions between the different strata of society and the abuse of privilege. It is a neat irony that social awareness and feminist tendencies, which were slow to take off in spa literature and for a long time made little headway there, should now be especially visible in works of popular culture. We will return to this observation in our next chapter.

7.4 The underside of (resort) history

The aspects of historical spa life that Jordahl sheds light on are not the only respects in which discrepancies appear between the standard image of past spa life and other hidden realities. In historiography as much as in imaginative literature, precious little can be found on the less glamorous roles the health resort was to play, especially in twentieth-century military conflicts and under dictatorships. Jaroslav Rudiš's novel *Winterbergs letzte Reise* (2019, Winterberg's Last Journey) narrates European history as a history of wars, tracing it to cities, battle fields, railway junctions and spa towns. The central characters in this story are Jan Kraus, a geriatric nurse who accompanies seriously ill patients during the last days of their lives, and his client Wenzel Winterberg. The latter is ninety-nine years old and was born in what, back then, was called Reichenberg, and is now the town of Liberec in the Czech Republic. As a Sudeten German, Winterberg was expelled from Czechoslovakia after the Second World War and settled in West Berlin. When Kraus meets him, he is lying in bed, inanimate and mentally absent. It is Kraus's mentioning of the place name Vimperk (the Czech town where he was born, the German name of which is Winterberg) that brings the old man back to life. He wants to embark on a final journey with Kraus in search of his lost love – a rail trip that takes them from Berlin to the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Italy and Bosnia Herzegovina, and finally back to Germany. Apart from the cities and battlefields they visit and discuss, a good number of spa towns and seaside resorts play a role along the way, including Bad Ischl, Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary), Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně), Ilidže, Sankt Joachimsthal (Jáchymov), Franzensbad (Františkovy Lázně), the Artesian Bath in Budapest, the Balaton Resort, Fiume (Rijeka), Pula and Abbazia (Opatija).

> 'Abbazia…. Seaside resort and winter health resort', listen, dear Mr Kraus, a winter health resort! At last, here the inns are not closed in winter, here people dance and eat and make love, yes, yes, the right place for us, …. Not far from the Hotel *Quarnero* there is a monument to the director of the Southern Railway and founder of the spa, F. Schüler, who died in 1894, indeed, indeed, the railways not only connect cities and ports and battlefields and crematoria and people and history and stories, but also spa towns.

> „Abbazia …. Seebad und Winterkurort", hören Sie, lieber Herr Kraus, ein Winterkurort! Endlich, hier sind die Gasthäuser im Winter nicht geschlossen, hier wird getanzt und gegessen und geliebt, ja, ja, der richtige Ort für uns, … Unweit des Hotels *Quarnero* ein Büstendenkmal des Direktors der Südbahn und Gründers des Badeortes, F. Schüler, gestorben 1894, richtig, richtig, die Eisenbahn verbindet nicht nur die Städte und Häfen und Schlachtfelder und Feuerhallen und Menschen und Geschichte und Geschichten, sondern auch Kurbäder. (Rudiš 2019: 453–4)

The fact that Winterberg insists on using an old travel guide, namely the 1913 edition of the *Baedeker für Österreich-Ungarn* (Baedeker for Austria–Hungary), provides for a – sometimes bizarre – spectrum of historically determined perceptions of the places visited. Given that the guide refers to a world before the First World War, an interesting tension emerges between the cases where the descriptions match what is described (buildings, squares, landmarks, even railway lines are still the same) and the discrepancies between not just their old and new names, but between the cultural and political assessments provided by Baedeker (and Winterberg) and the present perspective (often provided by Kraus). The planning of a spa visit is a case in point:

> [Winterberg, having just read in *Baedeker* about Joachimsthal:] 'Everyone should perhaps take a radium bath in St. Joachimsthal … Yes, yes, we're going to Jáchymov, I'm looking forward to it.'
> [Kraus:] 'I don't want to go to Jáchymov.'
> [W] 'Really?'
> [K] 'That's where my grandfather was imprisoned ….'
> [W] 'In the *kurhaus*?'
> [K] 'In the labour camp.'
> [W] 'I see… My book says nothing about a labour camp.'
> [K] 'That was later, under the communists, the uranium plant. …'
> …
> [W] 'Bad Ischl then? Bad Ischl is nice, there were no camps there … Although… Who knows. Unfortunately, it's not that far by train from Bad Ischl to Ebensee or Mauthausen.

> 'Alle Menschen sollten vielleicht ein Radium-Bad in Sankt-Joachimsthal nehmen … Ja, ja, wir fahren nach Jáchymov, ich freue mich schon.'
> 'Ich will nicht nach Jáchymov.'
> 'Ach nein?'
> 'Da war mein Großvater eingesperrt ….'
> 'Im Kurhaus?'
> 'Im Arbeitslager.'
> 'Ach so… Über ein Arbeitslager steht in meinem Buch nichts.'
> 'Das war später unter den Kommunisten das Uranwerk. …'

…
'Dann doch Bad Ischl? In Bad Ischl ist es schön, da gab's keine Lager … Obwohl… Wer weiß. Nach Ebensee oder nach Mauthausen ist es von Bad Ischl mit dem Zug leider auch nicht so weit…' (Rudiš 2019: 421–2)

So, while Winterberg tries hard to stick to the pre–First World War truth his *Baedeker* offers him, he knows full well how futile this is, as otherwise he would not be able to locate sites of the Holocaust atrocities (such as the concentration camps Ebensee and Mauthausen) on the historic maps. The only place for which Winterberg does not refer to any guide is Peenemünde, a resort on the island of Usedom on the Baltic coast, where much of the work on the development of the V-1 and V-2 rockets in the Second World War took place and where he served as a German soldier at the time. This is, as he puts is, where he began to suffer from history ('Hier bin ich an der Geschichte erkrankt, ja, ja, genau an diesem Ort, seitdem bin ich von der Geschichte so derangiert', Rudiš 2019: 533):

He talked about the war and the restricted area and the Army Research Centre and about new secret weapons. He talked about the rockets that flew high above the island. About the rockets that exploded. … He talked about officers and scientists and SS-men and their wives and the children. He talked about bathing in the sea. He talked about the professor in the white coat who developed the rockets. He talked about his beautiful secretary. … He said that there was blood on the rockets. He said that many more people died in the process of producing the rockets than in the attacks. He talked about the Czech forced labourers and the prisoners of war and the concentration camp inmates. He talked about the air raids. … He talked about the corpses of fire and bomb victims. Of screaming and chaos and rage and panic and fear. Of the many dead prisoners. Of the unexploded bombs on the beach. Of the graves in the sandy soil. Of the lime with which the corpses had to be covered.

Er erzählte vom Krieg und von der Sperrzone und der Heeresversuchsanstalt und von neuen geheimen Waffen. Er erzählte von den Raketen, die hoch über der Insel flogen. Von den Raketen, die explodierten. … Er erzählte von Offizieren und Wissenschaftlern und SS-Männern und deren Frauen und den Kindern. Er erzählte vom Baden im Meer. Er erzählte vom Professor im weißen Kittel, der die Raketen entwickelte. Er erzählte von seiner schönen Sekretärin. … Er erzählte, dass an den Raketen Blut klebte. Er erzählte, dass bei der Herstellung der Raketen viel mehr Menschen gestorben sind als bei den Anschlägen. Er erzählte von den tschechischen Zwangsarbeitern und den Kriegsgefangenen und den KZ-Häftlingen. Er erzählte von den Luftangriffen. … Er erzählte von Brandleichen und Bombenleichen. Von Geschrei und Chaos und Wut und Panik und Angst. Von den vielen toten Häftlingen. Von den Blindgängern am Strand. Von den Gräbern im Sandboden. Vom Kalk, mit dem man die Leichen bestreuen musste. (Rudiš 2019: 529–30)

It is at this point that Kraus (and the reader) understand Winterberg's obsession with history and historical battles in particular: he tries to make sense of his own experiences and actions by putting them into a larger context of European history (in which endeavour he starts, by the way, much earlier than with the First World War). As in our previous quotations from Winterberg's accounts, it is the juxtapositions – Nazi officials working on the most destructive weapon they can imagine whilst their wives and children are bathing in the sea – that give this historical narrative its depth.

Thus, the novel creates a palimpsest of Central Europe's history and its 'beautiful landscape of battlefields, cemeteries and ruins'[9] (Rudiš 2019: 181). This turns it into a means of combatting what Beat Mazenauer calls 'historical forgetfulness' ('historische Vergesslichkeit', Mazenauer 2019). One of the sentences frequently repeated by Winterberg is: 'This all makes me very melancholic' ('das macht mich alles sehr melancholisch'). At the same time, the ground bass of melancholy is offset by a very particular kind of black humour, possibly as a way of making the ineluctability of history easier to bear.

The double use of the Bohemian town of Jáchymov in the 1950s as a radon spa and a forced labour camp (see above) is also the central theme of Josef Haslinger's novel *Jáchymov* (2011). The novel recounts the life and suffering of the (real-life) Czech ice hockey goalkeeper Bohumil Modrý (1916–63), who, as a falsely accused political prisoner in the early 1950s, was forced to work mining uranium in one of the Gulag-like penal camps in Jáchymov, and who after his release died a slow death from the effects of radiation. The story is told through the encounter and dialogue between Modrý's daughter and a publisher, who is sent to the spa facilities to find relief from the pain related to his ankylosing spondylitis (morbus Bechterew). They meet in Jáchymov when he goes there to check out the facilities before committing to a cure of several weeks, and she goes there to see for herself the place of her father's incarceration and mistreatment. By bringing those two characters together and by making them jointly explore the whole town, the narrative links Jáchymov's two faces as health resort and forced labour camp, a place of life and of death, so as to make them inseparable. When Findeisen (the publisher) really does take the cure in Jáchymov, he cannot think of the grand hotel, in which he lodges, and the oxygen treatments, reflexology, hydrotherapy, dry carbonic baths, electrotherapy, inhalations and radon baths which he receives, without also thinking of the forced labour camp.

Thus, the novel does what Rudiš's character Wenzel Winterberg had asked of historical narratives: 'You can't just tell the one story if you want to understand history, if you want to understand us.' ('Man kann nicht nur die eine Geschichte erzählen, wenn man die Geschichte, wenn man uns verstehen möchte', Rudiš 2019: 167).

7.5 Elucidating the present through the prism of the health resort

Attempts to understand 'us' and our world today through our complex history can also be regarded as the backbone of three novels that are decidedly set in

their present: Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Durcheinandertal* (1989, Topsy-Turvy Vale), David Schalko's *Bad Regina* (2020) and Janine Adomeit's *Vom Versuch einen silbernen Aal zu fangen* (2021, On Trying to Catch a Silver Eel). Each of these authors has created, in their respective countries (Switzerland, Austria and Germany) a fictional spa town (based on real models[10]) that has seen better days and is now looking for ways to regain the wealth and allure of their golden age. In doing so, the authors make it perfectly clear that these places do not just stand for themselves, nor for all spa towns of the respective country, but for that country itself, if not the Western world as a whole.

Dürrenmatt's *Durcheinandertal* is in its very structure a topsy-turvy tale of a village, its *kurhaus* and the wider world. The *kurhaus* and its surroundings, which have traditionally brought business to, and fed, the neighbouring village, are bought up for a vast sum by the 'Swiss Society for Morality' (an offshoot of the 'Boston Society for Morality'), and put to new uses: in the winter, the *kurhaus* serves as a hiding place for the world's worst professional killers; in the summer, it functions as a 'house of poverty' ('Haus der Armut', Dürremnmatt 1989: 49). The world's richest people take a cure there under the slogan 'joy through poverty' ('Freude durch Armut', Dürrenmatt 1989: 125), living without service and in meagre conditions:

> A veritable craze for living poor took hold of the millionaires and millionaires' widows; general managers made the beds, private bankers did the vacuum cleaning, tycoons set the tables in the dining room, top managers peeled potatoes, multi-millionaire widows cooked and did the laundry; oil sheiks and tanker magnates mowed the lawn, weeded, pruned, cut, hammered, polished, painted and paid immense sums for this.
>
> Ein wahrer Fimmel, arm zu leben, ergriff die Millionäre und Millionärswitwen, Generaldirektoren machten die Betten, Privatbankiers staubsaugerten, Großindustrielle deckten im Speisesaal die Tische, Spitzenmanager schälten Kartoffeln, Multimillionärswitwen kochten und übernahmen die Wäscherei; Ölscheiche und Tankermagnate mähten den Rasen, jäteten, stachen um, sägten, hämmerten, hobelten, strichen an und zahlten dafür immense Preise. (Dürrenmatt 1989: 57)

For someone even vaguely familiar with twentieth-century Swiss history, this implies a combination of two Swiss traditions that looks equally bizarre and plausible: being a service provider to the world of finance and big business, and being regarded a 'health paradise' and thus a preferred location for a variety of *Lebensreform* projects (see Chapter 3).[11] Dürrenmatt's *kurhaus* under new ownership is doing just that and seems to square the circle of harmonizing the boom of global capital with alternative living. Of course, this new arrangement is

> not without problems, for the activities that were formerly taken care of by the village were now carried out by the guests, who smiled, laughed, warbled,

> cheered, hooted and shrieked as they did so. It was a crying shame: after all, the *kurhaus* and the village had formed an economic unit.
>
> [n]icht problemlos, denn die Tätigkeiten, die sonst vom Dorf besorgt wurden, übten nun die Gäste aus, sie lächelten, lachten, trällerten, jubelten, johlten und quietschten dabei, es war ein Jammer, hatten doch das Kurhaus und das Dorf eine ökonomische Einheit gebildet. (Dürrenmatt 1989: 57)

Not surprisingly then, the village suffers from increasing deprivation, and one winter, the villagers set fire to the *kurhaus*, yet get drawn into the flames and die as well: the worlds of money and of poverty are inextricably bound up with each other. This plot is accompanied by one in which the world's various 'societies for morality' – all highly criminal syndicates of course – buy each other up and merge with each other with increasing frequency, and it is embedded in complex discourses about religion, money and morality. The whole thing, we are told early on in the novel (Dürrenmatt 1989: 21–2), is to be read with the sound of God's diabolic laughter in the back of our minds; the inferno created in this small Swiss valley is thus to serve as an allegory for the state of the world.[12]

Deprivation has already taken hold of David Schalko's *Bad Regina* by the time his novel opens. The descriptions of Bad Regina's history as a health resort invoke all the usual features of European spa towns in general – the bath, the casino, the grand hotel, the sociable events, the luminaries attending (here: the 'emperor's brother') – and some known features of Bad Gastein in particular – the radon bath therapy, the erection of a conference centre in the 1970s, the development of a ski-resort and mass tourism infrastructure in the 1990s. The latter two were of course standard attempts made by a number of erstwhile glamorous European spa towns to survive the decline of visitor numbers in the late twentieth century, and in the novel, none of these has helped to stem the tide of Bad Regina's inexorable demise from a queen of spas to a ghost town in the Alps ('Geisterstadt in den Alpen', Schalko 2020: 178).

> What on earth had happened? Was it their pride that had been their undoing? Was it the arrogance, already detectable in the very houses? They were like knives stuck into the sheer face of the mountains. … The valley was a deep incision. The rushing waterfall a bloodletting that drained the last energy from the place. Without lifting a finger, they all watched their own disappearance.
>
> Was war bloß passiert? War es der Hochmut, der ihnen zum Verhängnis wurde? War es die Arroganz, die man schon den Häusern ansah? Wie Messer steckten sie in den steilen Bergwänden. … Das Tal war eine tiefe Schnittwunde. Der rauschende Wasserfall ein Aderlass, der die letzten Lebensenergien ausleitete. Tatenlos sahen sie alle beim eigenen Verschwinden zu. (Schalko 2020: 10)

In an almost touching sub-plot, the local policeman collects from the increasing number of abandoned houses objects that are suitable to represent the place

(once it's completely gone) in the spa-town-museum into which he turns his own home. As there will be no need for him as a policeman by then, he sees himself as a curator and the future museum director. To underline the universality of the process of decline described in the plot, the book is also full of echoes of European spa novels.

The story ends with scenes suggesting a kind of reverse colonialism and the return of the dispossessed: the anonymous person buying up all the properties in town, whom everyone believes to be Chinese, turns out to be the American descendant of a former Jewish doctor in Bad Regina. But rather than taking possession of the place himself, he hands it over to an African tribe which settles there – an arguably over-determined allegory of the powerlessness of Europe in the new world order. On its dust cover, the book is called 'an acerbic and hilariously funny literary fantasy about the downfall of Europe' and 'a brilliant literary allegory on a dying continent'.[13]

As Adomeit's title 'On Trying to Catch a Silver Eel' aptly suggests, her book is about an attempt that is doomed to fail from the start: the rejuvenation of a dilapidated former spa town to new glamour and riches. The fictitious town of Villrath had lost its mineral spring seventeen years ago (due to an earthquake) and, as this had been its sole economic basis, had sunk into complete deprivation. As some excavation work by a railway company seems to have reactivated the spring, the townsfolk draw new hope: they try to find investors to renovate and refurbish the place and bring back the crowds of solvent tourists and health-seekers. To aid these attempts, they seek media attention and resuscitate some former traditions (see Chapter 2), such as the annual summer fête with its mascot and its bespoke drinking mugs. Significantly, everything they come up with is from 'back then': the once forgotten boxes full of old mugs with the town's arms, the former mascot with her old costume (in need of some alteration to accommodate her new proportions), the old rhetoric about the healing properties of the water and so forth. Their ideas about possible investors are also somewhat outdated. Following a number of hiccups, the first investor from the wellness industry withdraws, and they end up with a Swiss-based, international retail firm that turns the former spa town into a 'shopping paradise' named 'Villrath Outlet City' (Adomeit 2021: 422). Needless to say, neither the old *kurhaus* nor the promenade play any part in this remake, and the newly recovered spring gets covered up again. The sell-out couldn't be more complete. Andreas Urban quite rightly concludes that this is not a novel about the refurbishment of a spa town, but about hope in its futile variety. As one of Villrath's senior residents declares: 'Second chances are rare. In fact they don't exist at all' ('Zweite Chancen sind selten. Gibt's eigentlich überhaupt nicht', Adomeit 2021: 98). As observed in Rudiš, Dürrenmatt and Schalko, here too, the helpless sadness of inevitable decline can only be bearably depicted with the help of humour.

In the novels of this last section, the restorative nostalgia of the residents of formerly prosperous spa towns is met with what Dürrenmatt would call the derisive laughter of God. What we are presented with instead is the end of history (in Fukuyama's sense), the end of truth, the perversion of morality, the reversal of

colonialism and the definitive decline of Europe and all that it once stood for. It is at least noteworthy that all three books come from countries, and are set in locations, in which spa life played a particularly important role in nineteenth-century society and in which spas had (and to an extent still have) a particularly positive aura attached to them. What they are punished for, explicitly in the Dürrenmatt but implicitly in the other two as well, is their neglect of that side of spa life which is the focus of the reflective nostalgia as practised by, for example, Jordahl. Instead, they have unthinking recourse to what might be called a re-founding myth – a habit which is presented as a symptom, if not as the cause of Europe's decline. Other novels direct their reflective nostalgia specifically to those moments where it became apparent that this decline was irreversible and so at once invoke and repudiate restorative nostalgia. What we find in all texts considered in this chapter then, is also an examination of the foundations on which European society and its institutions were (and still are) based. Lived history is bound up with trauma; recounted history is necessarily biased and in need of questioning and correcting. The image of the spa town produced here cites the established notion of heterotopia (as both utopia and dystopia) – only to leave it behind and invoke instead the spa as a microcosm of the old Europe in the process of becoming a continent in crisis within a crisis-ridden world.

Notes

1 The original quotation reads: 'Zu keinem Zeitpunkt des Films kann sich der Zuschauer sicher sein, ob das, was er gerade auf der Leinwand sieht, Gegenwart oder Erinnerung ist, Traum oder Wachtraum' ('A, X und M' 1961).
2 The original title of Flake's novel was *Hortense*. As the book was being printed just when Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party came to power in Germany, Flake had the title extended – suggesting a return to the humanist and Enlightenment values the nineteenth-century spa town stood for.
3 In this respect, it is significant that it was originally published in serial form in a weekly newspaper, the *Novaia Gazeta*, published by and for the Russian exile community.
4 A further historical layer is inserted into the narrative through the title, which alludes to the 1809 spa novel by Jean Paul: *Dr Katzenbergers Badereise* (Dr Katzenberger's Spa Trip).
5 The original quotation reads: 'Sonne, Meer, Getränke – es könnte ein Urlaub unter Freunden sein.'
6 In the Serbian edition available to us, the sentences: 'And what if a doorman wants to marry a princess?' / 'You have a point there, I must admit', have no equivalent. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to investigate further and thus cannot say how this came about.
7 The novel includes not only quasi-quotations from newspaper articles but also reproductions of actual pages, such as the front page of the *Diario de Lisbŏa*, dated 16 March 1941 (Tiago-Stanković [2015] 2019: 152, 2018: 117).
8 In an unpublished interview with Yana Lyapova, the author said that his reading of Saint-Exupery's correspondence had prompted his first idea for what was to become

Estoril, and that the character Gaby was modelled on the little Prince. Indeed, several descriptions of, and episodes including, Gaby bear clear allusions to Saint-Exupery's character: the appearance of Gaby as if being 'from another planet', the description of his dog as fox-like and some of his encounters with other guests, such as King Carol, are cases in point. It is a nice twist in *Estoril* that Saint-Exupery (the character) sends the Book *Le Petit Prince* (which did indeed appear in 1943) to Gaby when it comes out and asks for his opinion. We are grateful to Yana Lyapova for sharing her insights with us.

9 The phrase is in English in the original and recurs several times. See, for example, Rudiš (2019: 180, 181, 422, 530).

10 Dürrenmatt is said to have modelled his *Kurhaus* after the hotel 'Waldhaus' in Vulpera, Schalko's Bad Regina recalls Bad Gastein in many details and Adomeit 's 'Villrath' is located at the entrance to the Ahrtal and on the other side of the Rhine from Bad Honnef (Adomeit 2021: 14).

11 For the complex relationship of the *Lebensreform* movement with capitalist society, see, for instance, Rindlisbacher (2021).

12 There is an uncanny anecdote attached to this novel: Dürrenmatt finished work on it in April 1989, and the Swiss Hotel 'Waldhaus' in Vulpera burned down in May 1989. See for instance: https://www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article205167991/Durch einandertal-Friedrich-Duerrenmatt-setzt-ein-Hotel-in-Flammen.html (accessed 16 August 2023).

13 The original quotations read: 'eine bitterböse und urkomische literarische Fantasie über den Untergang Europas' and 'eine brillante literarische Allegorie auf einen sterbenden Kontinent.'

8

THE HEALTH RESORT IN THE POPULAR LITERARY IMAGINATION

The spa novel in its classic shape had its heyday in the nineteenth century and was deeply enshrined in a nineteenth-century world. Spa towns were part and parcel of the complex processes of modernization in Europe as well as the discourses surrounding them. (And indeed, the characteristic developments in the period – be they advances in science and technology, the extensive restructuring of society, the development of a market economy, the shifts in the relationship between the genders, the advent of mass tourism, mass culture and mass entertainment – all figure in these novels through the prism of spa life and society.) The loss of the spas' importance in early twentieth-century society is clearly reflected in their relative disappearance from the literary scene and – as discussed in Chapter 3 – the handover, as it were, from the spa to the sanatorium as a central scene of human interaction. The 'coming together of different worlds' (Blackbourn 2001: 435) – so characteristic of the classic European spa towns – was no longer exclusive to them. As shown in the previous chapter, however, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries saw a strong re-emergence of the health resort in all its shapes – thermal spa, seaside resort, climatic resort, sanatorium – as a literary setting.

The historian David Blackbourn picks up on the re-emergence of the classic spa town in particular, and explains this as follows: 'In the late twentieth century these watering places have once again become a favourite, this time with the authors of coffee table books and writers for the weekly magazines of quality newspapers. Their interest is reminiscent of a slightly earlier English obsession with the country house as an object of longing and symbol of an imagined better past' (Blackbourn 2001: 435). And indeed, not only are the spa's parks and gardens, promenades, *kurhaus*, casinos, grand hotels as photogenic as the English country house, but they are equally full of ghosts of the past and thus offer glimpses of lost worlds of glamour. It is precisely because of these ghosts, of course, that the fascination with the English country house is not limited to coffee table books. It also features prominently as a setting for historical romances, detective stories and thrillers, and class-based fictions such as rags-to-riches stories or narratives about interlopers. And the same applies to spas.

Yet, as with the texts considered in Chapter 7, it would be wrong to assume that the motivation behind this choice of setting is restricted to a 'longing' for 'an

imagined better past' and thus to 'restorative nostalgia' (Boym 2007). As will be shown in the following, popular fiction, too, engages, at least partly, with what we called in the previous chapter the underside of resort history and historical blind spots. And like their counterparts from the upper echelons of the literary market, these books, too, are written from a decidedly presentist point of view, and their glimpse into the past is motivated by their authors' contemporary concerns. As the critic Heinz J. Galle would have it, they might not display too much *Geist* (wit, intellect, originality), but all the more *Zeitgeist* instead (Galle 2004: 133).[1]

For this chapter, we will concentrate on three different strands of contemporary popular literary culture: historical novels set in spa towns and seaside resorts, crime fiction, and literary and cultural practices that take their cue from, but go beyond the realm of, literary spa fiction.

8.1 Historical novels set in spa towns and seaside resorts

One of the observations made in the previous chapter pertained to the scarcity of fiction engaging with the lives of those who worked in the resorts, in particular in lower-paid jobs, and especially women. We found this aspect addressed in Anneli Jordahl's *Augustenbad en sommar* (see Chapter 7), a novel written by a woman and declared to be perfect summer reading for women. (The marketing of the book's German translation certainly puts it in this market segment.) While this is a rather disputable categorization, there is indeed a plethora of novels 'for summer reading' in which questions of gender and class, and oppression and exploitation at work in the resort are getting addressed. We will, in what follows, leave Jordahl's Scandinavian setting and move south to consider French and German examples.

Gérard Georges's *Mademoiselle Clarisse* (2013) is set in the thermal spa of Royat in the Auvergne region, in the years between 1860 and the *belle époque*. Clarisse Siccard's father Victor works as an odd-job man in Royat's municipal baths. Her mother Rolande had worked there as a cleaner before tuberculosis forced her to stop. The book, written in the third person, begins with the mother's death and a graphic description of the discovery of her bloody body by her daughter. Although Clarisse's education is initially paid for by the town's mayor, she has to leave school shortly after her benefactor's death and starts work as a water attendant at the baths. The workplace is described as strictly hierarchical, and no secret is made of the dangers of sexual harassment awaiting a nubile young woman in such a place. However, Clarisse is strong enough to resist any such advances as she has been in love since childhood with the wild Hippolyte Boudot. The night before he is called up to serve in the Franco-Prussian war, he persuades her to have sex with him. While waiting for Hippolyte's return (having been pregnant and lost the child), Clarisse continues to work at the baths and so becomes involved in looking after an elderly spa guest, a widower called Octave Duron. When he dies, Clarisse becomes his sole heir. She decides to move into his house, but not to give up her, by now, senior position at the baths. Despite the rumour that Hippolyte has died in the war, Clarisse continues to feel his presence, and it transpires that he has indeed

repeatedly returned to Royat. It is only when he is traumatized and broken that he turns to Clarisse, and she takes him into her house. However, the happy ending is subverted when, despite her best efforts to cure him, he commits suicide.

There is a second female heroine in the book, Marie, whose life is closely related to Clarisse's. It offers, as it were, alternative decisions and turns, in that Marie is much more outgoing and ready to take risks, ensures that she takes over most of her husband's wealth before divorcing him and ends up as a very successful hotel owner in her own right. From the bibliography at the end of the novel, we learn that she is based on the real Marie Quinton, who authored a book of memoirs (Gérard 2013: 278). As well as extensive descriptions of the bath houses, the novel contains details of the sorts of water dispensed, how they were diluted and what illnesses they were supposed to cure, and a careful account of the uniform worn by Clarisse in her capacity as a water attendant. It details changes in clientele, as when the English become more numerous and the French need to be encouraged to visit their local spas rather than going elsewhere. It ends with the *belle époque*, enabling Clarisse to live out most of her life before the outbreak of the First World War. A good number of pages are devoted to the visit of Napoleon III and his wife, of the future British King Edward VII and the actress Lily Langtry, and of the French General Boulanger and his mistress Marguerite Brouzet, adding to the historical verisimilitude. The spa clearly features as a place of sexual and social transgression (or would-be transgression), and the device of pairing Clarisse and Marie helps to sketch out a history of women in this environment.

The plot of Sophie Oliver's German trilogy *Grandhotel Schwarzenberg* (2020–21) begins just before Clarisse's story ends. It is set in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Reichenhall, with volume one (*Der Weg des Schicksals* – The Path of Destiny) covering the years 1905–11, volume two (*Rückkehr nach Bad Reichenhall* – Return to Bad Reichenhall) the years 1911–27 and volume three (*Der Beginn einer neuen Zeit* – The Dawn of a New Era) the years 1928–56. The story follows the lives of some central characters and their families, who are given in a list at the beginning of each volume and who cover all social strata, from the most menial servant (a kitchen maid who ends up married to a *Gauleiter*), via the lower middle classes (a minor civil servant) to rich businessmen and aristocrats. With Anna Gmeiner, the daughter of a poor cottager, at the centre of the story, we get to observe the life of a female character from the lowest echelon of society, her daily fight for food and heating, the loss of her parents and brother due to work-related illness and accidents, the cruel treatment she receives at the hands of almost everyone above her in the town, including physical violence and rape, and the covering up of the latter by the (upper class) family of the man who committed it. We also witness her arduous but steady ascent in society, with her first marriage to Leonhard Achleitner, an ambitious civil servant (who marries her at the behest of his boss in order to cover up the rape and its consequences, and who is promised rapid advancement in return) and her second marriage to Michael Schwarzenberg, her real love, who had to leave Bad Reichenhall, made his money in America instead and comes back rich to open and run the eponymous *Grandhotel* with her. (No mention is made of Anna's formal

education; she is, by the looks of it, educated by life.) At the other end of the spectrum, there is the family von Feil, sitting at the top of the social hierarchy in Bad Reichenhall – responsible among other things for the mistreatment and rape of Anna and others – whose unstoppable decline runs in counterpoint to Anna's ascent. By the end of the saga, Anna has died of old age, but we see her grandchildren continue to run the hotel. The narrative is firmly woven into Bavarian, German and world history, with the stock market crashes in 1907, 1923 and 1929, the First World War, the Nazi regime, the Second World War, the division of Germany into zones of occupation after 1945 and the West German 'economic miracle' all playing a role. It also reconstructs the development of Bad Reichenhall as a spa town and centre of salt production, including the construction of all the infrastructure landmarks (salt factory, hotels, parks, cable car, casino, etc.), visits by luminaries and even the production of a feature film – *Miss Evelyne, die Badefee* (English title: *Miss Evelyne*) – that did indeed come out in Germany in 1929 and was designed to attract more tourists to Bad Reichenhall.

Thus, both *Mademoiselle Clarisse* and *Grandhotel Schwarzenberg* offer detailed (and authentic) historical narratives with astute observations and criticism of social injustice and combine these each with a rags-to-riches story. Another narrative paradigm can be found, for example, in Martina Frey's *Das Brunnenmädchen* (2014, The Water Attendant) and Corina Bomann's *Winterblüte* (2016, Winter Blossom), two German novels in which female protagonists come to cross class and get to know the opposite end of the social hierarchy for a limited period of time. As in the novels just discussed, here too we are given precise spatio-temporal co-ordinates, though this time tied to moments rather than periods in history: *Das Brunnenmädchen* is set in Wiesbaden in the spa season of 1890, *Winterblüte* in the Baltic resort of Heiligendamm in December 1902.

Martina Frey's central character Sophie works as a water attendant in a pump room in Wiesbaden, pouring the mineral water into the spa guests' cups. Together with her younger sister, she has come from a nearby village to earn some money and help her family out financially. Her sister works as a housemaid for a local family, and together they rent a tiny and overpriced attic room for the duration of the spa season. When Sophie learns that a rich bourgeois man has tried to seduce her sister Annelie without committing to her, she swears revenge. She manages to smuggle herself into noble society by wearing dresses 'borrowed' from rich women (she is regularly tasked by her landlord, a tailor, with doing unpaid sewing work in her spare time). Because of her beauty – and because she is taken to be one of their own – Sophie attracts the attention of wealthy male spa guests and inhabitants of Wiesbaden and is invited into their circles. She thus gets to know their world from the inside, moving between the two worlds on a daily basis. She progressively falls for the man (Maximilian) who (she thinks) has hurt her sister, so that she is unable to carry out her self-assigned task of revenge. She also has more and more dealings with Carl, the only person in his circle who discovers her background, and who, by witnessing her charitable actions towards people even poorer than herself, increasingly falls in love with her. Carl and Sophie will duly

get married at the end, as will her sister and the man who actually broke her heart, namely Maximilian's coachman. Maximilian, although he had also fallen in love with Sophie's vivacity, loveliness and natural charm, succumbs to marrying the aristocratic girl his mother had long intended for him. Altogether then, there are three nuptials in prospect: one among the servants, one among the rich and one cross-class. (The latter is attenuated by the fact that Carl learns that he isn't quite as wealthy as he thought he was.)

In Bomann's *Winterblüte*, the well-off hotelier family Baabe is preparing for the big winter ball. The engagement of their daughter Johanna is to be announced (with one aristocratic and one middle-class suitor for her to choose from), but she wants nothing more than to marry the man she loves – who comes from a family her parents reject due to an old feud. Then a young woman is washed up on the beach, presumed to be a shipwreck survivor. She is found and rescued by the son of the Baabe family, Christian. She cannot remember her name or where she came from. She is put up in the hotel, where she is looked after by Johanna and Christian and becomes their friend and love interest, respectively. When she has recovered physically, but still does not know who she is and where she comes from, mother Baabe gets increasingly suspicious of her being an impostor, forbids any contact between her and Christian and puts her to work in the hotel. Gradually, her memory returns and it transpires that she is in fact the daughter of a count (Maximilian von Hettstedt). Having turned eighteen, she (Helena von Hettstedt) was on her way back from Stockholm, where she had spent the previous seven years at a finishing school, to her father in Rostock. She seems to have fallen from the ship at night while sleepwalking on deck. At the end of the story, Christian and Helena get engaged and Johanna is allowed to marry the man she loves. The double happy ending aside, the narrative set up allows for extensive zooming in on the lives and work of all the social strata present in the resort: the middle classes, running the hotels and guesthouses, their wealthy and partly noble clientele, and their personnel. The character Helena is in the extraordinary position of experiencing first-hand – albeit only for a few days – life at the opposite end of her inherited social standing: as a washerwoman, she is consigned to the hotel's underbelly, having to carry out the hardest and lowest-paid work. Unsurprisingly, she is happy to return to her old background, but claims that she would not have wanted to do without her cross-class experience.

All these texts, then, use the setting of the resort to explore a theme which is one of the staples of the romance genre: the relationship between love and class (Figure 8.1). And they all (in particular *Mademoiselle Clarisse* and *Grandhotel Schwarzenberg*) suggest that a considerable amount of historical research has gone into the depictions of the locations described, local or global events, famous visitors and so on and thus achieve a degree of authenticity. (Where Gérard offers a bibliography of his historical sources, Oliver has glossaries at the end of each volume, explaining to the reader some local or historical terminology and some historical events.) They also offer valuable insights into what Diana Holmes (2013: 161) calls 'the texture of the everyday [of their] period, from food and clothing to fashion and entertainment'. And yet they are not concerned with historical authenticity as

Figure 8.1 Book covers of (a) *Mademoiselle Clarisse* and (b) *Das Brunnenmädchen*. Although both books give lengthy descriptions of their protagonists' hard lives and working conditions before their ascent in society, the covers only depict *belle époque* glamour.

such. The heroines of all four novels betray a consciousness and have aspirations that fit our times much more closely than theirs. About Anna, the heroine of Oliver's family saga, we learn early on that:

> She would never resign herself to the place in life that fate had intended for her by the accident of her birth. Poverty and hunger compelled her family to face a daily struggle for survival, in which people whom Anna loved lost their lives. She longs for prosperity, not because of the prestige it entails, but because of the security it offers.
>
> Sie würde sich niemals mit dem Platz im Leben abfinden, den ihr das Schicksal durch den Zufall der Geburt angedachte. Armut und Hunger zwangen ihre Familie zu einem täglichen Überlebenskampf, bei dem Menschen, die Anna liebte, zu Tode kamen. Sie sehnt sich nach Wohlstand, nicht wegen des Ansehens, sondern wegen der Sicherheit. (Oliver 2020: 17)

Water attendant Sophie in Frey's novel shows neither humility nor appropriate deference ('zeigte sich weder demütig noch angemessen gehorsam', Frey 2014: 152) towards her betters and does not see why she should, and even the gentle Clarisse

disobeys the orders given to her by her benefactor's daughter (a girl of her own age) and is thrown out of his house as a result.[2] All four novels contain not only detailed descriptions of the hard work these women have to do, but also criticisms of the disregard and contempt with which they are treated by their masters. Repeatedly, the question gets asked as to whether these have ever regarded their servants as thinking, feeling human beings or taken any interest in their lives – and if not, for what reason. And of course, once our heroines have made their way up the social ladder, they evince a social conscience due to their own past life experiences: their morality and economic success go hand in hand.

Similarly, all our heroines can be said to have feminist inclinations. Anna asks:

> Is it at all fair that we women are subjected to your arbitrary will all our lives? Have we no say in anything? First the father, then the husband, as if we couldn't manage to think independently for ourselves.
>
> Ist es denn gerecht, dass wir Frauen zeitlebens eurer Willkür ausgesetzt sind? Haben wir nichts zu sagen? Erst der Vater, dann der Ehemann, als ob wir es nicht fertig brächten, für uns allein zu denken. (Oliver 2020: 86)

Sophie, in her conversations with young men, plainly demands equal treatment and is therefore denounced as a liberationist, and in *Clarisse*, Marie lives a remarkably self-determined life, getting married and divorced according to her own will, taking over her father's business and implementing the changes necessary for success. Even the women characters from the upper echelons of society join this chorus: Katharina von Feil (in *Grandhotel Schwarzenberg*) bemoans the fact that her parents treat her like a puppet and that their choice of husband for her has nothing to do with her wishes and everything to do with the aim of keeping up the family's standing. And daughter Johanna in *Winterblüte* detests both the suitors chosen for her by her mother (for their money and title, respectively) and tries everything she can to get to marry the man *she* wants.

The combination, in all these narratives, of astute socio-critical observations with happy endings – both in romantic and in economic terms – suggests a celebration of today's society in which gender equality and the equality of social opportunity for all is at least granted by law: see how far we have come. (On a less generous reading, the resort in these novels could even be seen as an exemplary arena for neoliberal ideology: if you work hard enough, you can become what you want to be.) This affirmative historical narration forms an interesting contrast to what we have found in our previous chapter, where the authors referred to the historical setting out of an awareness of contemporary crisis and in a bid to shed light on this with the help of the past. But there is more to these popular novels than the affirmation of today's (neoliberal) status quo. They are also part of a wider discourse that addresses the relative absence of women in historical writing. In the words of Diana Holmes (2013: 152), they 'enable the re-imagining of traditionally androcentric histories from a woman's perspective' by reworking traditional plots and putting female figures centre stage. This is exactly what makes them so popular

with female readers. It is only logical that the stories considered here are situated historically towards the end of the golden age of European spa towns and within a period in which the processes of modernization had started to change European societies. (*Grandhotel Schwarzenberg* starts synchronously with the others, but then sees things through into the second half of the twentieth century.) They use the setting of the spa town for exactly the same purpose as their predecessors from the nineteenth century: the heterotopian qualities of this social microcosm allow for patterns of possible social change to be prefigured on a small scale.

8.2 The health resort in contemporary crime fiction

Among the books that holiday-makers and health tourists are expected to want to read, crime fiction has a prominent place. And a surprisingly large number of such stories are actually set, and displayed for purchase, in precisely the resorts they visit. Indeed, many a sleuth from a classic European detective series has at some point stayed at a resort and/or taken a cure. Thus, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot went to the Cornish seaside, Georges Simenon's Maigret to Vichy and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's Pepe Carvalho to a (fictional) spa town in the valley of the 'Río Sangre'. The plot patterns of *Peril at End House* (Christie 1932), *Maigret à Vichy* (Simenon 1967, *Maigret in Vichy*, Simenon 1969) and *El balneario* (1986, The Spa) are broadly similar: the detective is set to take a time out from his daily work and routines and goes to a resort – Poirot to be on holiday, Maigret and Carvalho to undertake a much-needed fasting cure. However, not long after their arrival, a dead body turns up, and they cannot but get involved in the ensuing investigation. In the process of this, the resort's infrastructure turns out to be connected in significant, often symbolic ways to the crime committed. This narrative pattern has remained productive to the present day (and we will come back to it); but the crime novel set in a health resort has burgeoned in recent decades, and the narrative patterns have diversified. In what follows, we will introduce the patterns we have found and examine the question of what it is that makes the resort such an eminently suitable setting for this genre.

Montalbán's Pepe Carvalho novels are known for the way in which, alongside their detective plot, they offer a politically incisive account of the period of transition from Francoism to democracy in Spain, and *El balneario* is set in the same period. It draws on all the standard ingredients of a spa novel, such as the spa infrastructure (park, *kurhaus*, treatment rooms, pool, etc.) and the varied international clientele, with wonderfully sharp portraits of guests and personnel. (That it does so in a playful way becomes immediately clear when we read the name of the spa doctor: Gastein.[3]) The establishment is owned and run by a Swiss health company and specializes in weight loss cures. It occupies the site of an ancient spa (with Roman and Arab roots), which is physically represented by a pavilion (in Moorish style) in which the traditional mud treatments are offered. Everything else is new. It turns out, though, to have been built with blood money: two Swiss businessmen helped two female Belorussian fascists to invest the proceeds of

atrocities committed during the Second World War and founded the spa in Spain with the active connivance of a Francoist. The murders that occur are all connected in some way to this fact. Yet, they are not motivated by revenge on the part of the victims but brought about when the past of the perpetrators threatens to – and in the end of course does – catch up with them. The spa infrastructure offers a classic closed-room scenario, and what is played out there is a multifarious microcosm of European history and national identities.

A relatively recent English novel following the pattern of the detective travelling to a resort and uncovering past crimes while solving present ones, is Sarah Pearse's *The Sanatorium* (2021). In it, the detective Elin Warner has taken some time off from her job and travels from Exeter to a luxury resort in the Swiss Alps to celebrate her estranged brother's engagement. From the outset, she has misgivings about the place, sensing something untoward behind the super-modern, stylish interiors. And when the snowstorm in the mountains thickens, and her brother's fiancée disappears, the crime story is in full swing. As in *El balneario*, a whole series of murders occurs – all linked with each other and with past atrocities (as explained in Chapter 6). In her direct sequel, *The Retreat* (2022), Pearse tries to reuse her recipe for success, shedding, however, the political dimension of the story. This time, Elin Warner travels to an eco-wellness retreat on an island off the coast of south Devon: 'Most are here to recharge and refresh. But someone's here for revenge' (Pearse 2022: book cover). As in the previous book, the resort is temporarily cut off from the world by a gigantic storm and turns out to have a dark past. In this case though, the location is an old school rather than a sanatorium, and the dark past is not bound up with the institutional abuse of patients, but with the doings of an individual serial killer: a group of teenagers were murdered there by their carer some twenty years before. The revenge story is a personal one, directed against members of one particular family. In some respects, this book also recalls an Agatha Christie classic, namely *And Then There Were None* (1940), which is set in a mansion situated precisely on an island off the coast of south Devon. Pearse plays with the notion of a planned series of murders as developed by Christie – and then inserts her detective figure to forestall its completion.[4]

This kind of individual or communal historical trauma is ascribed to many a resort in numerous best-selling works of crime fiction. Health resorts are of course by no means the only places with such attributes, but the combination of the 'dark past' with the resort's beautiful, if not idyllic, surface, its function of aiding recuperation and revitalization, and its heterotopic openness to heightened life experience makes for a powerful set of narrative ingredients and facilitates the creation of an enigmatic atmosphere. Time and again, authors work with 'what lurks behind the idyll' (Fischer 2012).[5] Almost all the 'Great Spa Towns of Europe', and many smaller ones, thus provide the settings for an ever-growing number of crime novels. Moreover, we see the practice of serialization extended from a character (as seen in the cases of Poirot, Maigret, Cavalho and so on) to a place. Thus, we find a rich crop of crime novel series set in, say, Baden-Baden (by Charlotte Blum, among others), Bath (by Peter Lovesey, among others[6]) or in the same unnamed alpine mountain resort (by Jörg Maurer[7]). Each of these series has one detective figure

investigating successive murders in the same place, and more often than not, a piece of historical knowledge about the resort proves to be key in solving the crime. Even more fertile in this regard seems to be the seaside resort, be it along the French Riviera (for instance, in novels by Bernard Deloupy), the German Baltic coast (for instance, in novels by Eric Walz, writing as Eric Berg) or the coast of Norfolk in England (in novels by Henry Sutton, writing as Harry Brett). The marketing for such series tends to work around the notion of the 'seaside noir'.

Both these series and individual spa novels could be read as bound up with what Eva Erdmann calls 'transformation of the genre from a literature of crime into a literature of geographical and cultural orientation' (Erdmann 2011: 274). In her long-term overview of international crime fiction, Erdmann observes that: '[t]he analytical method of solving a criminal case, as practised by the heroic detective Dupin in the nineteenth century while sitting in his winged armchair reading the paper, has been superseded by a method consisting of fieldwork, the search for clues and the pursuit' (Erdmann 2011: 274). This goes hand in hand with the shift of narrative focus from the social to the geographical environment and even entails the use of geographical maps in some of these novels (Erdmann 2011: 275).[8] The new, 'geographical agenda' (ibid.) of the crime novel brings it closer to the genre of travel writing: In both cases readers become familiar with places they might never (or: not yet) have been to, and learn to orient themselves there, topographically and culturally, in ways strongly reminiscent of classic travel guides (see Chapter 1). And with a map included, the detective novels even turn into travel guides themselves (see Erdmann 2011: 276). Indeed, Erdmann even goes so far as to say that '[c]ertain crime novel series are intended solely for the belletristic export of local cultural and geographical narratives' (Erdmann 2011: 278). And the mushrooming of series set in seaside resorts as shown above – and indeed their display in the bookshops and tourist centres of such resorts – would support her contention.

Just how apt Erdmann's observation is for our settings can be seen in a number of recent developments. In 2018, a compilation of eleven crime stories was published under the title: *Mörderische Prachtbäder. 11 Krimis rund um Soletherme und Moorbad. Mit 125 Freizeittips* (Murderous Luxury Resorts. 11 Crime Stories From Saline Spas And Mud Baths. With 125 Tips for Leisure Activities). The eleven stories are set in eleven different German and Czech spa towns,[9] and in each a murder mystery is solved – or a crime prevented – in the space of some twenty pages. Whenever the protagonist approaches a site of historical or cultural interest, a number appears in the text which directs the reader to the endnote section where descriptions of all the marked sites and tips for leisure activities are provided in the manner of a standard travel guide. This volume is itself part of a series called *Kriminelle Freizeitführer* (Criminal Leisure Guides), which includes books that have the same format, but are set, say, around Lake Garda in Italy, on the Baltic island of Usedom or the German North Sea coast. Often the sleuths at work are not professional detectives but lay people who happen to be spa guests and thus combine a health break with cultural tourism and some crime-solving. This kind of interactive literature is also the perfect blueprint for leaving the realm

of the printed book altogether and entering into game-like activities which mimic the actions of these literary figures.

8.3 Beyond the printed page: Health resorts in popular cultural practices

Many resorts today invite their guests to participate in interactive events, and even a cursory glance reveals that among these, crime-related walks rank highly. Harrogate and Bath in England offer Murder Mystery Trails, Royal Leamington Spa has a *Bloody Leamington Spa* walking tour, the German Bad Zwesten advertises *Fit in den Tod: Eine kriminalistiche Wanderung* (Fit for Death: A Criminalistic Hike), Bad Dürrheim presents *Das Solegeheimnis* (The Secret of the Saline) and the Swiss Bad Ragaz invites a younger audience to walk its *MounTeens Detektiv-Weg*. Other European spa towns, such as the French Montpellier, the Czech Karlovy Vary or the German Baden-Baden, are included in globally run Murder Mystery Games. All of these are guided tours in which participants are introduced to a crime scene and invited to become detectives for the duration, walking through the place in both a topographical and a historical sense. Bad Dürrheim, for instance, highlights the woods, meadows and parkland along the walk and links this tour with the doings of the Grand Duchess of Baden, the historical founding figure of the spa. Harrogate concentrates more on its 'winding backstreets and hidden corners', promising a succession of clues on the way that help the walkers 'unlock incredible stories from the past and solve the mystery at the end' (Visit Harrogate, n.d.). They thus offer a blend of physical and intellectual activity combined with a heightened experience of either nature or townscape and snippets of history. As befits the genre, the historical references work around the notions of a dark past and hidden secrets (real or imagined), which are best suited to provide the investigative springboard for the walkers turned detectives.

'[B]y walking the city's streets as well as interacting with witnesses, victims and villains, the sleuth turns … from a passive observer of the urban environment into an active character who not only observes, but also participates in the life of the [place] and builds a possible meaning' for it (Pezzotti 2019: 137).[10] The process thus instigated 'is an endeavour that involves mind as well as body' and has the potential to turn 'into an emotional journey where space and time collide in a mental "time travelling" ' (Pezzotti 2019: 138–9). Moreover, by re-enacting a well-known literary pattern, the participants give it a new lease of life.

But it is not just that fictional worlds and their protagonists take on an existence beyond the printed page; their creators – the authors themselves – also make their way out of history and into the present in order to vouchsafe visitors an 'immersive experience'. Enthusiastic readers of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (([1913–27] 1972, *In Search of Lost Time*, 1992), for instance, flock to the French seaside resort of Cabourg which is generally regarded as being the model for what in the novel is Balbec. Thus, Cabourg's esplanade is now called 'Promenade Marcel Proust', its Grand-Hôtel taken to be that described in the novel and its room No. 414 is designated as the author's room. Proust is supposed to have stayed there

Figure 8.2 The Jane Austen Festival: Visit Bath.

repeatedly and written significant parts of *À la recherche* in it. In particular, the view from the window is said to be congruous with those described in the novel. Accordingly, the hotel owners have restored the room to the way it might have looked in Proust's time, giving Proustians the feeling of actually inhabiting the author's world. And indeed, the room is pre-booked for years in advance (see proust-ink.com).

Likewise, in today's Bath, Jane Austen is everywhere. There is a museum devoted to her, and there are walking tours available both as brochures (Reeve 2006) and audio guides (Visit Bath 2019). The best way to try and relive the past, though, is the Jane Austen Festival, where in the words of the organizers, hundreds of Jane Austens, dressed in the costumes of the time, meet for a stroll through the town (Visit Bath 2023; see Figure 8.2).

In the Croatian seaside resort Opatija, which up until the First World War was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, people celebrate instead a 'Kaiser-Festival' (Emperor Festival, Opatija, n.d.), commemorating the glamorous visits there of the Emperor Franz Josef I and his wife Elisabeth of Austro-Hungary, known as Sisi. Sisi, in particular, is a real person from history who, having featured in numerous novels and films (which regularly also include health resorts), has achieved an elevated mythical status almost like that of a fictional character. (Just in the last couple of years she has figured in a book by Karen Duve (*Sisi*, 2022) and films by Marie Kreutzer (*Corsage,* 2022) and Frauke Finsterwalder (*Sisi und Ich*, 2023).) And Anton Chekhov, the founder of the Yalta myth, even pays a visit to readers in their own homes, via their smart phones.

For the *Chekhov Pishet* (Chekhov Writes) project, the author's voluminous correspondence has been made available in digital form. Every day, users of the project receive a letter from Chekhov, albeit not in their letterboxes, but on

their phones. The date of the letter tallies in each case with the date on which it is received. This makes it possible for interested parties to accompany Chekhov on his visits both to Yalta and to a number of European spa towns. On 28 November 2023, for example, Chekhov shared his ambivalent feelings about the Crimean resort, which is not only a place with the best climate for your health, but also very boring compared to the vibrant atmosphere in Moscow (*Chekhov Pishet*, 28 November 2023, https://t.me/chekhovpishet/1840). On 28 June, though, he had already signed off from the Black Forest Spa of Badenweiler with a letter written a few days before his death, in which a note of hopelessness is mitigated by disparaging remarks about his host country:

> The food here is very tasty, but it does not do me much good. … Apparently my stomach is ruined beyond all hope. About the only remedy for it is to fast, in other words, to refrain entirely from eating, and that's that. And the only medicine for being short-winded is to keep perfectly still. / There's not a single well-dressed German woman; their lack of taste is depressing. / Keep well and cheerful now. My regards to Mother, Vanya, Georges, Grandma and all the rest. Write. I kiss you. I clasp your hand. Yours A. (Chekhov 1973: 474)

> Питаюсь я очень вкусно, но неважно, то и дело расстраиваю желудок. …, желудок мой испорчен безнадежно, поправить его едва ли возможно чем-нибудь, кроме поста, т. е. не есть ничего – и баста. А от одышки единственное лекарство – это не двигаться. / Ни одной прилично одетой немки, безвкусица, наводящая уныние. / Ну, будь здорова и весела, поклон мамаше, Ване, Жоржу, бабушке и всем прочим. Пиши. Целую тебя, жму руку. Твой А. (Chekhov Pishet, 28 June 2023, https://t.me/chekhovpishet/1794)

Not only is Chekhov's gift for observation and his wit no less readily in evidence in these letters than in his published works, but these missives, when received daily, are uniquely intimate and immediate in their effect.

The multimedia project *Art Yalta 1900*, also designed specifically for use on a smart phone, focuses on one iconic event in Chekhov's relationship with the Crimea (Figure 8.3 a and b). In that year, the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT), with its directors Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and Konstantin Stanislavski, gave a number of guest performances in the Crimea. The MAT's successful productions of Chekhov's plays, several of which were written specially for them, helped to cement their reputation. And in 1901, Chekhov married Olga Knipper, who was an actress with the group. As Chekhov remained at his residence in Yalta when she returned to work in Moscow, the two had a long-distance relationship which produced a rich crop of letters (many of which the *Chekhov Pishet* project, of course, resends). *Art Yalta 1900* draws on the literary historical facts and the exchanges of letters to create a 'documentary media project', comprising both a website (in Russian and English) and a film in the format of a 'screen life'. This means that all the events are shown only on the screen of a computer or a smart phone. Chekhov's interactions with artists, writers and theatre friends, and not

Figure 8.3 (a) Yalta on your mobile. (b) When Anton Chekhov rings you and Maxim Gorky sends a text.

least with his wife, are presented as if they were taking place on today's social media. Maxim Gorky gives his comments on reading 'The Lady with the Dog' in the form of a status update: he was strongly tempted to start an affair of his own, he said (see Chapter 4). But Tolstoy, Chekhov himself was afraid, was appalled. In between whiles, Anton and his Olga are on Tinder – whereby it should be pointed out that these interactions are simulated in the form used by the Russian popular social media platform VKontakte – which also sponsors the project, together with the MAT museum in Moscow and the Chekhov House in Yalta.

Politically, these historical reconstructions and simulations are not neutral. *Art Yalta 1900* was conceived in the years 2022 and 2023: that is, after the Russian annexation of the Crimea and its war of aggression against the Ukraine and is

supported by state funds. With its media aesthetic and orientation towards the smart phone, it is deliberately targeted at the younger generation. Beyond the broadly influential popularization of the myth of Yalta, to which Chekhov so decisively contributed, this project helps, willingly or unwillingly, to reinforce the official narrative of the Crimea as a genuinely Russian cultural space. Conversely, the 'Kaiser-Festival' in Opatija in Croatia referred to earlier harks back to what from a modern perspective looks like a period of colonialism (see Rapp and Rapp-Wimberger 2013). Or again, the island of Brijuni, off the same Croatian coast, which was developed as a winter resort by the entrepreneur Paul Kupelwieser at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, also proudly recalls the status it enjoyed as the residence of Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia. Two of its main attractions are a Tito Museum and a ride in a 1953 Cadillac once owned by the Marshall (Brijuni National Park, n.d.). Together, these examples show the selective use the resorts make of their heritage today in order to appeal to the popular imagination. And they also demonstrate that even historically antagonistic periods can be equal grist to the eclectic mill of tourism marketing.

Thus, the fashion for immersing oneself in the particular history of a spa town or seaside resort through multi-media positioning or collective dressing up is analogous to the process of progressive exploration offered by murder mystery trails or themed guided walks. And while works of literary fiction or spectacular biography remain the basis for these experiences, they become increasingly divorced from the actual business of reading itself. And ironically, it does not greatly matter whether a particular writer or other famous visitor said positive or negative things about a place. Jane Austen's remarks about the spa town of Bath for instance were not exactly flattering (see Massei-Chamayou 2021: 66–7); Dostoevsky's time in Baden-Baden was marked by material and mental distress, as his wife Anna Dostoevskaya ([1867] 1993: 187–9) notes in her memoirs. The Russian novelist even coined the negatively charged neologism *baden-badenstvo* (Dostoevsky ([1876] 1994: 219, see Soroka 2019: 436) in order to express the complacent provinciality of the German spa town and turn it into a political slogan that can be applied beyond its borders. For marketing purposes, what matters is that today's tourists and patients are able to add to their enjoyment of a place the aura of walking in the footsteps of, or even imagining the possibility of meeting, an A-list celebrity from history or fiction.

8.4 Historical re-enactments of the 'golden age' of spa life: Between emancipation and instrumentalization

In literary studies, it is comparatively rare to find works of popular culture and high literature treated within the same framework, and our field is no exception. This kind of canonical thinking, of course, ignores the fact that works which are now regarded as classics, such as Austen's Bath novels or Dostoevsky's *Gambler*, were, in their own time, works of mass entertainment. First and foremost, then, focusing on popular culture helps to remind us of the nature of that entertainment.

Right at the start of this volume, we noted a symbiotic relationship between resorts and resort literature and explored their interactions. Health resorts of whichever kind have long relied on popular texts for their popularity. At the same time, the modern resort, as a place of recuperation and vacationing, constitutes a special heterochronotope: its visitors have time on their hands, and one of the activities they can spend it on (alongside, say, interminable discussions of politics and philosophy) is reading – or listening to literature, or watching plays.[11] And there is indeed a special pleasure to be drawn from reading a text that is actually set in the place where you are spending your vacation. The reason why so many Victorian novels have spa scenes in them (see Chapter 1) may not just be that so many British travellers frequented continental spa towns, but also that, while there (as well as in preparation for their journeys), they read novels in which these places featured. In many ways, the texts discussed in this chapter are the direct descendants of those works of literary entertainment. The novels that were the subject of the first section of this chapter not only belong firmly to the established popular literary genre of the romance; they use it, exactly as their predecessors had done, to feed the Cinderella dream of betterment and hence to criticize society. Austen & Co kept this criticism within acceptable bounds by the happy ending and the pointing of a moral; the reader was reassured by the adoption of a conventional framework which also allows for small freedoms in the handling of conventions. Exactly the same is true of the contemporary examples considered here, with the added twist of historical distanciation.

Because these romances are also historical novels (and in the case of *Grandhotel Schwarzenberg* even belong to the genre of the chronical novel), they are able to shed light not only on the history of the health resort, but also, specifically, on the ways in which that history has been romanticized. They do so both by subscribing to the transfigurative discourse and by making it explicit. It is not for nothing that repeated reference has been made in this chapter to the period which is generally regarded as the golden age of the spa towns and whose name is like a byword for restorative nostalgia: the *belle époque*. Nor is it an accident that novels which also feature episodes of the most abject poverty should have on their covers images of elegantly dressed women (see Figure 8.1 a and b). Yet, at the same time these novels do make a point of filling what is a significant gap in the classic spa novels by reminding us at least of the existence of the wretched downside of the much-fêted glamour of the nineteenth-century spa town. And even if at the end they restore the status quo by allowing the heroine to escape up the social ladder, they do not allow her to forget where she came from – or us to forget the dark side of the idyll.

The same is true of the detective novels that have also featured in this chapter. The detective novel itself is a child of the age that invented the news press. The crimes that are solved there are precisely – and sometimes explicitly – those that help to fill the pages (notably the local pages) of broadsheets and tabloids. This means not only that the readers of these media constitute a community which has a vested interest, and may well itself want to play a part, in the solving of the crime, but also that a kind of localized seriality is built into the whole enterprise.

Like the happy ending of romance, the solving of a crime entails the restitution of order and enables the place where the crime happened to return to a state of (imagined) idyllic innocence. Yet, the enduring shadow of the crime means that henceforth this innocence will always be contingent. The fact that a crime was once possible in a place means that another crime, or a series of crimes, can also always take place there. (The newspaper, indeed, depends for its continued existence on this circumstance.) In this respect, the health resort is the precise heterotopic equivalent of the English country house and village: a place whose natural beauty and hence whose innocence is over-determined so as to make it the perfect location for a series of crimes.

Unlike the English country village, though, the resort town is characterized by its fluctuating population. The relationship between 'here' and 'elsewhere', which is often such an important plot device in localized detective fiction, is much easier to engineer there, and the reasons why people come to a particular spa town or seaside resort are at once more diverse and more potentially sinister, but also more easily kept hidden, than those which bring visitors to villages. Hence, resorts naturally harbour those secrets that are indispensable to crime novels. By definition, too, they have imbricated histories dating back to their foundation (see Chapter 2), which can cast their shadow in various ways on the present. As places of healing, where people come for treatment, they offer special opportunities for mistreatment leading to death. And as noted earlier, they constitute a special heterochronotope, meaning that the people in them have suspicious amounts of leisure time, which they can use both to commit crimes and to solve them.

The features that make all resorts so well suited as locations for detective fiction are potentiated in the case of the sanatorium, which can also fulfil the function of the closed space or the isolated castle, and which very often has extensive networks of subterranean passages and those cellars that are apt to house dark secrets. Unlike spa towns and seaside resorts, though, sanatoria are rarely idyllic and never innocent. On the contrary, as we have repeatedly noted in previous chapters, they are often associated with terror and trauma. Thus, just as the shift from the spa to the sanatorium entailed a move from the comparative levity of Enlightenment values to the special Angst of Modernity, so detective novels set in sanatoria tend to be bleaker and more concerned with the terrible crimes of history than their spa town equivalents. For that reason, they also lend themselves less readily for use in advertising.

That so many resorts should seek to attract visitors using activities that are related to, but go beyond, literature in the broadest sense, is symptomatic of what has changed in spa culture – and what has not. Clearly, the question of what people should do with their time is as urgent for those advertising murder mystery tours as it was for those trying to sell treatments, or guidebooks, or spa novels. And those participating in such tours are as much in the business of exploring heterotopias as those reading fiction or those visiting a place that is designed to be different from their normal environment. Moreover, walking was a standard feature of spa life long before Bad Ragaz decided to try and tempt its younger visitors to follow its *MounTeens Detektiv-Weg*. To that extent, these new developments can

be regarded simply as a contemporary update to the kinds of activities that the resorts have always offered their guests. But they are also part of a growing trend of transnational 'literary tourism' (see Knipp 2017; Jenkins and Lund 2019).

What is new is a fascination with simulacra, the immersion into a virtual reality, the combination of 'screen life' and experience on site. This has led to a completely different understanding of the category of 'authenticity'. These immersive, interactive extensions partake in the trend towards 'historical reenactments', which Vanessa Agnew attributes to 'history's affective turn' (Agnew 2007: 299): that is, an experience of history that relies on individual experience in real-world environments instead of historical sources and (literary) texts. It was perhaps inevitable that today's resorts should seek to tap into these 'new' ideas in a bid to position themselves on the market, while also seeking to a certain extent to stay true to what they have always done. They too can draw on whatever piece of the past best suits their purposes in persuading their guests to spend their spare time on activities that cost them money. In doing so, they are bringing up to date a tradition that is an integral part of spa history (see Chapter 2). But they are also running the risk of propagandistic manipulation on the one hand and of disregarding completely the truths of history on the other. How the relationship between tradition and innovation, cure and wellness, is evolving in the face of new media realities and neoliberal tendencies in health policy is reflected in the texts, artworks and activist practices discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

1 The original quotation reads: 'Generell ist zu konstatieren, dass die Unterhaltungsliteratur – in der Goethezeit wie in der heutigen – zwar weniger Geist enthält, dafür aber umso mehr Zeitgeist' (Galle 2004: 133).
2 In this episode, a colonial reference is made that we have not found elsewhere: in the comparison between Clarisse and Ramonita, a black doll belonging to Irène, her benefactor's spoilt daughter, whose owner treats her like a slave and whips her if she feels she has not been sufficiently submissive.
3 The name is a clear reference to the famous Austrian spa Bad Gastein and part of a whole series of name games played in the novel.
4 *And Then There Was None* is one of Christie's crime novels that has no detective. It is almost as if Pearse completes her set of characters with the detective figure in order to truncate the series to two.
5 The original quotation reads: 'was hinter der Idylle lauert' (Fischer 2012: 104).
6 Due to Bath's current character, Lovesey's series around detective Peter Diamond is more neatly categorized as urban crime fiction. However, some of the novels in the series clearly work on Bath's spa history and infrastructure. These are the ones we have listed in our bibliography.
7 The unnamed resort is said to be modelled after the Bavarian Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which is located on the border between Germany and Austria and in close proximity to Italy.

8 One of the authors Erdmann cites in this regard is Manuel Vásquez Montalbán (Erdmann 2011: 276).
9 The spa towns covered are Bad Brambach, Bad Lobenstein, Františkovy Lázně, Bad Steben, Bad Brückenau, Bad Kissingen, Bad Staffelstein, Bad Bocklet, Bad Elster, Karlovy Vary and Marianske Lázně.
10 While Pezzotti's article concentrates on crime fiction set in Italian cities, the author concedes the equal importance of 'crime fiction set in provincial cities and in the countryside' (Pezzotti 2019: 140).
11 In Aharon Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939*, one of the acts engaged by the impresario Pappenheim is a pair of Rilke readers, and many of the larger spa towns, of course, have theatres.

9

THE NEW WORLDS OF WELLNESS

9.1 Revolt in the spa: In defence of the public good of bathing culture

Der thermale Widerstand (The Spa'tan Revolt) is the programmatic title of a play by the Austrian playwright, prose writer and theatre scholar Ferdinand Schmalz, which premiered in the 2016/17 season at the Schauspielhaus in Zurich. Of all things, the good old thermal spa is to become a cell of resistance against the contemporary body cult and neoliberal practices of self-optimization (the original also eschews capital letters):

> then the spa becomes the place for reclaiming the body. a body with no particular function or purpose, like a broken cog in the machinery of the beauty industry. in this architecturally separate, segregated space, a new body image – no, it is not an image – it is an actual body that can be cultivated here.
>
> dann ist das kurbad der ort einer wiederaneignung des körpers. eines zweckfreien, nicht funktionierenden körpers, wie ein kaputtes zahnrad im getriebe der schönheitsindustrie. in diesem baulich abgetrennten, abgesonderten raum lässt sich ein neues körperbild, nein kein bild, ein körper selbst lässt hier sich kultivieren. (Schmalz 2016: 45)

In an opening monologue, bath attendant Hannes outlines the essence of a visit to a health resort. This consists of the paradox that in order to relax, it is necessary to observe rules, some of which are quite strict (silence, hygiene, dress code; Schmalz 2016: 5). Elsewhere, we have called this the dialectics of norm fulfilment and norm transgression (see introduction). Increasingly, in the baths themselves widely different needs and mentalities meet, which escalate into conflict: between the true spa-goers ('cureonauts'/'kureutinnen und kureuten'; Schmalz 2016: 5), who devote weeks and months to restoring their health while observing strict dietary and cure regulations, and the day-trippers seeking quick and cheap relaxation or just fun. The crucial difference between the two groups is the fundamentally different relationship to time and thus to the possibility of discovering the resort as a different, even transformative place beyond the impositions of everyday life: 'a

day guest at the spa is a joke nothing more' ('ein tagesgast im kurbad ist ein witz mehr nicht'; Schmalz 2016: 9).

The following characters appear: Hans, the anarchist lifeguard with a class-struggle mentality; Roswitha, the resort manager, who is looking for new investors to revitalize the establishment; Marie, who visits the place as one such investor and combats her own stress symptoms with manic freediving; other staff, such as the second lifeguard, Walter, who is having an affair with the manager, and Leon, the masseur, who is caught between the two camps. The play also features a geologist, Dr Folz, who examines the chemical composition of the water (and as a scientist takes the place of the otherwise ubiquitous spa doctor). The geologist is there to provide an expert opinion in preparation for the takeover of the resort by a soft drink manufacturer. As the future investment depends on this expertise, the manager tries (unsuccessfully) to bribe the scientist. Last but not least, the spa society itself is present, bathing and performing speeches in iambics in the manner of an ancient chorus. In the following, the various characters in their different roles act out the conflicts about the future of the resort (Schmalz 2016: 52):

> **walter**
>
> with the investment come new opportunities for each and every one of us.
>
> **hannes**
>
> as slaves of a wellness industry. and under the pretext of a new crisis, they will close the baths. just like the library and the theatre.
>
> **walter**
>
> these are developments that you won't be able to stop.

> **walter**
>
> mit dem investment kommen neue möglichkeiten auf jeden von uns zu.
>
> **hannes**
>
> als sklaven einer wellnessindustrie. und unter vorwand einer neuen krise schließen sie das bad. genauso wie die bücherei und das theater.
>
> **walter**
>
> das sind entwicklungen, die wirst auch du nicht stoppen können.

The venerable institution of the thermal spa as a place of healing and as part of the cultural heritage comes under threat from the neoliberal pressure to privatize. Schmalz and his protagonists significantly place it alongside other key institutions of public welfare and social interaction. Hannes had dreamed of a 'self-administrated resort' ('selbstverwaltetes Kurbad', Schmalz 2016: 72), which would reflect the communal and social aspects of the traditional institution. However, this utopian democratic bathing society could only exist as a space separate from the political public sphere: 'fortified by the spa, this protected space, an open plurality can be rediscovered here' ('ummauert von dem kurbad,

diesem geschützten raum, lässt eine offne vielheit sich hier wiederfinden', 45). It is precisely the temporary turning away from the 'polis' (45) at large that would facilitate contemplation and thus renewal, not only for the individual, but also for the 'social body' ('Gesellschaftskörper', 41). The actually existing spa society, however, displays moral ambivalence and physical inertia. On the one hand, it wants to be spared the neoliberal impositions that come with the wellness society; on the other hand, it is unwilling to rise from the pool to actively fight to save the bath as a communal space. The bath attendants discuss the possibilities of individual resistance, with Walter siding with his lover, the manager Roswitha. To justify her restructuring, she refers to 'customer demands' ('Kundenwünsche') that require 'adaptation to the complex situation of the wellness market' ('Anpassung an die komplexe Situation des Wellnessmarktes', 32).

The rampant wellness buzz and trend is ironized in the increasingly absurd treatments that spas have to offer in order to inspire their new clientele: 'alpenpackung swiss deluxe', 'java lulu ritual', 'mare's milk thalasso' ('Stutenmilchthalasso', 46–7). These therapies typically mix and market global and regional exoticism. What is more, the author extrapolates grand metaphors about the state of society from them (18):

hannes

i no longer trust our comfortable ease.

leon

then perhaps this palace of wellness is not the right place for you.

hannes

it is exactly here though that things have to be set in motion, here in this hell of complacency.

hannes

ich trau unsrer behaglichkeit nicht mehr.

leon

da sind sie hier in diesem wellnesstempel vielleicht fehl am platz.

hannes

gerade hier muss man doch ansetzen, in dieser hölle der bequemlichkeit.

From the 'hell of complacency' in its guise as a 'palace of wellness', it seems, there is no escape. Elsewhere, Walter speaks of a 'paradise depression' ('Paradiesdepression', Schmalz 2016: 5), a classic critique of escapism (such as was directed, incidentally, at the European spa town itself in its golden age, for example, in Dostoevsky's invective against the place as the epitome of wealthy philistinism; Dostoevsky [1866] 1989: 606, 1972: 34). Critique, indeed, is Schmalz's stock-in trade, and in that he continues the long tradition of satire in resort literature (see i.a. Chapters 1 and 3). An important element in this is the extravagant use of language. In addition to using striking metaphors, Schmalz derives veritable swarms of neologisms from

the terms 'cure' and 'wellness' and their natural elements of water or heat. And he does not shy away from corny puns, wordplay, allusions and alliteration (see Schauspielhaus Zürich, 2015/16).

In the course of the plot, Hannes forms a resistance cell in the service areas of the bath to combat the aforementioned attempts to turn it into a palace of wellness and amusement pool. Being trained not only in sociological analysis but also in military guerrilla tactics, he deliberately engineers the cathartic catastrophe. The entrances are blocked, the water pipes break, the saunas explode. In the end, though, the rebellious bath attendant is found strangled with a towel. Subliminally, the doomsday scenarios in the baths – through their epic metaphors of flooding and drowning – also echo the global themes of climate change and migration (Figure 9.1).

The play is preceded by a number of epigraphs (Schmalz 2016: 3), as diverse as an excerpt from the military manual *Der totale Widerstand* (1957, *Total Resistance*, 1965) by the Swiss army officer and military tactician Hans von Dach, and a quotation from the monograph *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* by the American sociologist Saskia Sassen (2014). This sets the political tone of the play right from the start. The expulsions that Sassen discusses can be territorial, monetary or symbolic in nature. In the quotation chosen by Schmalz, she speaks of 'subterranean trends' or 'subterranean dynamics' (Sassen 2014: 6), which, hidden behind the apparent diversity of contemporary society, provide for persisting inequalities. This latently uncontrollable and threatening nature of the thermal waters is invoked in a great number of texts from historical descriptions (see Schieb 2016: 31–8) to twenty-first-century poetry (see also Chapter 4). Following in this tradition, Schmalz also merges geological and

Figure 9.1 The pool attendants practice insurrection. Photos of set design and costumes of the performance of the play *Der thermale Widerstand* by Ferdinand Schmalz 2016/17 at Schauspielhaus Zürich. Set and costume design: Dominik Freynschlag, Noelle Brühwiler. Photo by Raphael Hadad.

sociological categories in his pledge to use thermal water not just for therapeutic purposes but for revolutionary ones.

In Schmalz's theatrical analysis, the wellness society that threatens to take over the traditional health resort is a symptomatic example of broader economic and social changes and trends. The privatization of spa culture seems like one instance among many of the 'expulsions' that Sassen (2014: 4) describes as a sign of the times and a representative consequence of what she calls 'brutal' globalization (Sassen 2014: 4). Despite – or because of – its strong political thesis, the play has found its way not only onto a good number of theatre stages,[1] but into the thermal baths themselves. In 2023, the Landestheater Coburg performed the play at the ThermeNatur Bad Rodach (Figures 9.2a and 9.2b), for the following reason:

> In his humorous and, above all, linguistically hilarious resort drama, the Austrian writer Schmalz thematizes the crises of our permanently drenched affluent society, which are clearly evident even in a place of relaxation such as a thermal spa.
>
> In seinem humoristischen und vor allem sprachlich irrwitzigen Thermenspiel verhandelt der österreichische Schriftsteller Schmalz die Krisen unserer permanent durchnässten Überflussgesellschaft, die selbst an einem Ort der Entspannung wie dem Thermalbad deutlich zu spüren sind. (Landestheater Coburg).

Figure 9.2a Photograph of the stage set for the performance of the play by Ferdinand Schmalz *Der Thermale Widerstand* by the Landestheater Coburg in the NaturTherme Bad Rodach, 2023, slogan: 'The Baths to the Bathers'. Stage and costumes: Philippe Roth. Photos by Sylvain Guillot.

Figure 9.2b 'Immersive theatre'. Photograph of the stage set for the performance of the play by Ferdinand Schmalz *Der Thermale Widerstand* by the Landestheater Coburg in the NaturTherme Bad Rodach, 2023.

We will give further examples of how the phenomenon and concept of wellness are deployed in contemporary artistic works in due course. But before doing so, we will first take a look at the genesis of the concept and its academic and cultural critique.

9.2 From cure to wellness: Origins and contemporary usages of a contested term

Nowadays, the term 'spa' conjures up images of beauty treatments, massages, pampering and all sorts of interesting therapies such as those satirized in The Spa'tan Revolt. In short, the word is redolent today of the growing wellness industry, which is busy mass-producing individual well-being and serenity, and thus embodies a contradiction that is typical of our times. Yet, as we have shown earlier in this volume, the original meaning of the word spa has next to nothing to do with this. The semantic shift of the term reflects a radical change both in the configuration of spaces and the therapeutic and social practices observed. The time taken for the treatments shrinks, as does the social interaction that was so characteristic of the 'classic' spa town.

Contrary to what is often assumed, the term 'wellness' is not of contemporary origin either; nor is it a linguistic fusion of 'well-being' and 'fitness'. Rather, as Pamela Heise (2015: 355) shows, it emerged at about the same time as the term 'spa'.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* first recorded the word in 1654, defining it as 'a state of well-being or good health' (Heise 2015: 355). Its current career, however, began in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States as part of the emerging preventive medicine movement (see Heise 2015: 355). The concept was developed and promoted primarily by the public health expert and statistician Halbert L. Dunn (1896–1975). He used the term 'high-level wellness' as a synonym for 'positive health' (Dunn 1959: 786). This early concept of wellness, Heise emphasizes, was 'revolutionary with regard both to the theory of science and to the politics of health'[2] because it represented a departure from the 'traditional, pathogen oriented health system of the USA'.[3] Dunn was concerned with increasing physical and mental health for both 'man *and* society' (Dunn 1959: 787, emphasis added), contrary to today's widespread perception and criticism of wellness as individualistic and latently asocial.

In calling for a paradigm shift away from a focus on disease and death and towards an emphasis on health and quality of life, Dunn drew on a comprehensive social diagnosis. He identified four parameters that characterize the everyday life of the modern individual and require a new approach to public health: the world is becoming smaller, faster, older and more conflicted as a result of demographic and technological change. The statistically higher life expectancy is thus accompanied by increased psychological stress. Dunn's diagnosis has lost none of its relevance in the third decade of the twenty-first century and shows strong similarities with the diagnoses of current wellness trends offered by Andreas Reckwitz's *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten* (2017, *The Society of Singularities*, 2020) or Zygmunt Baumann's concept of *Liquid Modernity* (2000, cf. Dimitriou 2019: 65, 71).

Scholars have noted an inner connection between Dunn's wellness concept oriented towards public health on the one hand and the zeitgeist currents of the New Age with their esoteric tendencies on the other (Blei 2017). But the analogies go back even further: 'In the late nineteenth century, newly prosperous Europeans created a wellness culture that went by another name: "life reform"', Blei 2017). Both shared the same cultural diagnosis (the mental overload of the individual in the modern world) and proposed some of the same remedies to overcome it, including regular physical activity in the open air, vegetarianism and a diet of raw fruit and vegetables (see also Chapter 3). What is more important, according to Blei (2017), is that 'health' and 'beauty' were indissolubly linked as interdependent variables. Ironically, the life reform (*Lebensreform*) movement, despite its criticism of modern society, was instrumental in creating a health market for the wealthier classes with its successful products including health guides but also private sanatorium treatments (Blei 2017).

Dunn's holistic approach to wellness of the late 1950s has been overshadowed by a growing emphasis on individual responsibility for personal health, which is increasingly becoming a lifestyle issue and an indicator of social difference. Carrie Basas (2014: 1052) speaks of a 'shift from wellness as a holistic focus on health to a personal responsibility narrative'. In their book of the same name, Carl Cederström and André Spicer (2015) use the term 'wellness syndrome' to designate this development, which they characterize as the counterpart to

professional self-optimization. Making an effort to be beautiful and happy becomes an imperative of a 'bio-morality', a term that Cederström and Spicer (2015: 5) take from the Slovenian philosopher Alenka Zupančič (2008) and rephrase as follows:

> Our concern in this book is not with wellness per se. Our concern is how wellness has become an ideology. As such, it offers a package of ideas and beliefs which people may find seductive and desirable, although, for the most part, these ideas appear as natural or even inevitable. The ideological element of wellness is particularly visible when considering the prevailing attitudes towards those who fail to look after their bodies. These people are demonized as lazy, feeble or weak willed. … When health becomes an ideology, the failure to conform becomes a stigma. (Cederström and Spicer 2015: 3–4)

The philosophical framework for these dynamics in the field of contemporary body culture and the spa/wellness complex in the narrower sense continues to circle around the concept of 'biopolitics' in the wake of Michel Foucault, notably in the interplay of 'disciplinary society' ('société disciplinaire', see Lorenzini 2017) and 'technologies of the self' ('techniques de soi', see Foucault 1982). The latter are intended to make the individual pursue 'a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault 1988: 18; 'un certain état de bonheur, de pureté, de sagesse, de perfection ou d'immortalité', Foucault [1982] 1994: 785). With the general computerization of society, these 'technologies of the self' are increasingly digitally based, via self-tracking apps and gadgets that measure and stimulate physical activities – and more and more even the state of relaxation (see Grewe-Salfeld 2021).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, induced by these changing technological conditions, Gilles Deleuze formulated a paradigm change from Foucault's 'disciplinary society' to a 'control society'. In his 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle' (1990, 'Postscript on Control Societies', 1995) Deleuze argues that society and the individual are no longer disciplined by central institutions, from prison to clinic, but that the control mechanisms have been decentralized – outsourced to the individual itself, in order to cut expenditure, and relying on the ubiquitous new digital technologies:

> *Control societies* are taking over from disciplinary societies. … It's not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there's a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us. With the breakdown of the hospital as a site of confinement, for instance, community psychiatry, day hospitals, and home care initially presented new freedoms, while at the same time contributing to mechanisms of control as rigorous as the harshest confinement. It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons. (Deleuze 1995: 178, emphasis in the original)

> Ce sont les *sociétés de contrôle* qui sont en train de remplacer les sociétés disciplinaires. … Il n'y a pas lieu de demander quel est le régime le plus dur,

> ou le plus tolérable, car c'est en chacun d'eux que s'affrontent les libérations et les asservissements. Par exemple dans la crise de l'hôpital comme milieu d'enfermement, la sectorisation, les hôpitaux de jour, les soins à domicile ont pu marquer d'abord de nouvelles libertés, mais participer aussi à des mécanismes de contrôle qui rivalisent avec les plus durs enfermements. Il n'y a pas lieu de craindre ou d'espérer, mais de chercher de nouvelles armes. (Deleuze 1990: 241–2, emphasis in the original)

'Sites of confinement' (Deleuze 1995: 178; 'milieux d'enfermement', 1990: 241–2) are supplemented by modular systems and perpetual self-optimization processes, what Deleuze (1990: 247) calls 'la formation permanente' ('continuing education', Deleuze 1995: 179). In the field of medicine, this means, among other things, that the figure of the doctor disappears, and alphanumeric automated processes identify potential patients and 'subjects at risk' (Deleuze 1995: 182; 'des sujets à risque', 1990: 247).

In the past thirty years since its formulation, Deleuze's concept of the control society has experienced a quasi-congenial technological realization in the now ubiquitous digital applications. Smart watches and life-logging technologies help to constantly supervise work–life balances, physical appearance and performance (see Grewe-Salfeld 2021). The possibilities of continuously measuring oneself in one's physical performances – including during the only seemingly unproductive phases of sleep – are the technological equivalent of the inward-looking mindfulness practices of meditation or yoga. The 'quantified self' movement (Lupton 2016) culminates in the concept of 'life hacking' (see Grewe-Salfeld 2021) as the notion of enabling oneself to live longer, if not yet forever, through self-imposed and auto-controlled assessment and evaluation in the domains of exercise and nutrition. In addition to their negative or even dystopian potential, which invites criticism or alarm (see Cederström and Spicer 2015: 102–6), such life-logging and self-control technologies can, however, also have emancipatory uses, in the sense that they relieve the chronically ill from the constant supervision by medical institutions (Grewe-Salfeld 2021: 221–2).

9.3 The health resort out of control in Erik Svetoft's Spa

Like Schmalz's play, Erik Svetoft's dystopian graphic novel, which appeared in Swedish in 2021 and in English translation in 2023, massively resists the blandishments of twenty-first-century wellness oases.[4] But if Schmalz's method was to stage the dialectic between the traditional spa establishment and its modern incarnation as extravagant, bright, kitsch melodrama, Svetoft's book is more a monochrome nightmare: the spa complex succumbs to forces of darkness and dirt that seem to be at least partly psychological. There is no overarching coherent narrative here; instead, the sense of menace, relieved occasionally by feel-good interludes and some very dark humour, is built up over a series of episodes, which

enable Svetoft to show off the richness of his craftsmanship in extraordinary, sometimes intertextual detail.

The institution at the centre of this book is described as a 'World-class spa hotel' (Svetoft 2023: 78). The treatments offered ('tailored expressly to your needs and wishes', see our introduction) include massages with revitalizing face masks, the chance to bathe in nutrient-rich spring water, and a special 'platinum package' with the use of 'exclusive spaces' (Svetoft 2023: 8, 53, 101, 46, 163). The aim is to create space for 'relaxation and human interaction' (6), 'reflection and growth' (7), 'experiences and new impressions, new views and perspectives' (9), 'motivation' and 'inspiration' (10). Just how closely all this is related to self-optimization is made clear by the existence in the book of two separate sets of team-building exercises. The one is offered to a group of ambitious employees, who symptomatically refer to some of their out-group colleagues as 'losers' (128). The other is part of a training and disciplinary programme for the hotel staff. And as in Schmalz's play, the whole thing is bound into a logic of late capitalism symbolized in a quiescent board of directors and reflected in phrases like 'fresh capital' and 'new investors' (254).

The dialectic played out in Schmalz's play is represented here by the figures of the spa director and his father. The former is a dutiful manager, who has clearly read the manuals and is not averse to a little chemically assisted meditation in his efforts at self-optimization. His father, who actually built the business, is a sybaritic maverick who is shown to be ultimately on the same wavelength as the mafia-like, corrupt hotel inspectors who resort to raw violence if their payment is insufficient. At one point, the whole financial basis of the institution is shown to be rotten when the money in the safe physically disintegrates. That there is a potentially political, revolutionary dimension to this decay is suggested by one episode, in which a chef, whose cooking has been disparaged by the VIP guest in the platinum suite, kills said guest with a cleaver and takes his place. In another, which has a whiff of ironic nostalgia about it, a butler and a maid similarly shoot what appear to be their employers (Svetoft 2023: 282). Very early on, a whole page (13) is devoted to the menial and back-breaking work in the laundry, and considerable implicit criticism is levelled at the way in which management treats staff.

The threat to the establishment is shown to be much wider than this, though. It starts with what is 'probably moisture damage' (Svetoft 2023: 16), enhanced symbolically by a single splash of dirt, but it grows to become a whole-scale invasion of pigs and other creatures which, like the eels in Verbinski's *A Cure for Wellness*, combine the uncanny with the viscerally unpleasant. Here as so often the passages under the hotel are labyrinthine and haunted, and individuals are in danger of being done to death by bony hands in them. And the book starts with what looks like rotting corpses and is peopled with ghosts, who not infrequently share the quality of uncanny sickness and terror with Munch's scream or Dalí's melted watches. The upshot is the precise opposite of the avowed purpose of the spa business in the first place. Instead of relaxation and healthy growth, we are presented with tension and death. Even the waters turn harmful.

9.4 Dubravka Ugrešić: The human body as a territory of control

In her work, which encompasses a number of different genres, Dubravka Ugrešić has concerned herself precisely with the dialectics of self-optimization and people burning out, as diagnosed by Cederström and Spicer (2015). A consequence of these dynamics is the need to 'reelaks', as one of her fictional characters, the massager Mevludin, a refugee of Bosnian origin, would say in his south Slavic creole (Ugrešić 2008: 120, 2009: 213). Her book *Baba Jaga je snijela jaje* (2008, *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*, 2009) could well be called a pan-Slavic spa novel, bringing together people and languages from different Slavic countries and around the world. It combines a number of the motifs we have identified as typical of the resort narrative and alludes to iconic representatives such as Dostoevsky or Kundera, as we have pointed out in our introduction.

In *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*, a motley party assembles in a Czech health resort in post-socialist times: three old ladies from Croatia, intending to spend a wellness holiday in the traditional spa town; said Mevludin, a young physiotherapist who offers massages disguised as a Turk in order to meet the expectations of foreign health tourists; an American businessman with the telling name Mr. Shake, who wants to give his business a fresh impetus by selling health products in the new Old World and some 'New Russian' businessmen, re-occupying the Czech provinces not with tanks, but with money.

The three ageing women jeopardize the spa's order, representing different transgressions of the bodily norm, one (Beba) being enormously corpulent, one (Kukla) tall and athletic like a man and the eldest one (Pupa) already resembling rather a bird than a human, a small animal with claws. They do not want to self-optimize, but to enjoy the last pleasures in their lives, potentially also sexual ones. The trio stumbles awkwardly through a variety of luxurious scenarios, rather unwillingly enjoying stunning wellness applications such as 'Sweet Dreams' ('Slatki snovi', a bath in hot chocolate) or 'Turkish Delight' (Ugrešić 2008: 118, 2009: 285). Ugrešić's spa novel thus – quite typically for the genre, as we have seen above – is a satirical account of the sometimes amusing, sometimes heart-breaking endeavours of the individual on its quest for health and beauty.

The three women-witches (the allusion to mythology is present in the title, which invokes an ambivalent figure from Slavic folktales) are surrounded by male characters, who are staples of the spa setting. Among them are the Bohemian lover, the spa doctor (whose recipes for a long life the ladies despise) and the American investor Mr Shake. The spa doctor Mr. Topolanek embodies the change from the classic spa town to the new wellness business. Topolanek is a physician–philosopher, trying to metaphysically pimp up his rather absurd business ideas, as for example the launch of a beer bubble bath. He gives lectures on longevity and self-enhancement from antiquity to today's self-optimizing technology. These pseudo-philosophical expeditions allow the narrator to address issues of contemporary body politics. Thus, in his lectures, Topolanek talks in detail about the Soviet experiments to create the 'new Communist man' and to defeat death (Ugrešić 2008: 166, 2009: 145). He touches upon famous Soviet biologists such as Trofim Lysenko, Ivan Michurin or Aleksander Bogomolets

with their dubious endeavours to enhance longevity via blood transfusions or specific serums, which with hindsight nonetheless appear as first steps towards today's self-enhancement industries (Ugrešić 2008: 166, 2009: 146). (And indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 5, the film *A Cure for Wellness* turns on precisely such a serum.)

Juxtaposed with Topolanek's endeavour is Mr Shake, who represents 'those numerous prophets, swindlers and "designers" of our lives in whose power we choose to place ourselves' (Ugrešić 2009: 91; 'proroke, varalice i "dizajnere" naših života kojima se dobrovoljno stavljamo u vlast', Ugrešić 2008: 106). His nutrition drinks are an ersatz for the magical procedures of ancient times. He sells 'the hot air of metamorphosis' (Ugrešić 2009: 92; 'maglu metamorfoze', Ugrešić 2008: 107) in an era in which '[i]n the absence of all ideologies, the only refuge that remains for the human imagination is the body' (Ugrešić 2009: 93; 'U nestanku svih ideologija ljudskoj imaginaciji je kao jedino utočište preostalo tijelo', Ugrešić 2008: 109). The misshaped grotesque bodies of the post-communist, Eastern European subject seem predestined to be victims of Mr Shake and his ilk with their ambition 'to drive the "easterners", stodgy with beer, yellow with smoking and bloated with alcohol, to reshape their bodies from what had been commercially incompatible to what was compatible' (Ugrešić 2009: 93; 'da natjera "istočnjake" zadrigle od piva, požutjele od pušenja i otekle od alkohola da preoblikuju svoja tijela iz inkompatibilnih u tržišno kompatibilna', Ugrešić 2008: 109). The positioning of the body as the last territory of individual control ('The human body is the only territory which its owner can control', Ugrešić 2009: 93; 'Ljudsko tijelo jedini je teritorij koji njegov vlasnik može kontrolirati', Ugrešić 2008: 109) has echoes of Deleuze's 'control society'. But Ugrešić's interpretation of this contains a more positive connotation, with control being removed from the state and handed over to the individual.

In her 2019 photo essay *Tu nema ničega!* (2019, 'There's Nothing Here!', 2020), Ugrešić changes scene and genre. Here the author examines the cultural and political significance of health resorts in the post-Yugoslav era and region. Among writers with a penchant for these places, Ugrešić displays a particularly wide reading of relevant texts, and in the opening section of the essay outlines what David Blackbourn has called a 'continuous history' narrative (Blackbourn 2001: 436), linking today's spa culture back to ancient bathing traditions. For the twentieth century, this narrative is typically continued as a story of decline, decked out with the ruin aesthetics of abandoned places. And Ugrešić's essay is indeed illustrated with photographs by Davor Konjikušić, which reference the decay aesthetics – what Siobhan Lyons (2018) calls the 'ruin porn' – popular today among professional and amateur photographers:

> Under the roofs of spas, the old communist utopia (the dream of highly professional, well-lit, and modern sanatoriums for all) stagnates and mingles with a dose of postcommunist human despair, along with mildew festering on the tiles, and the yellowed hydromassage baths. (Ugrešić 2020: 182)

> U toplicama se – zajedno s gljivicama po rubovima keramičkih pločica i kada za hidro masažu – zapatila stara komunistička utopija (san o visoko profesionalnim,

> svijetlim i modernim lječilištima za sve) i suvremeni post-komunistički ljudski jad. (Ugrešić 2019: 37)

The text was published in English translation in 2020 in an essay collection with the title *The Age of Skin*. There the author widens her gaze and turns it from the individual (female) bodies to the collective body of European bathing culture:

> Why do I find myself drawn to hot springs? I enjoy playing the anthropologist on a clandestine mission: I watch the subtle flow of people and money where one least expects or notices it. (Ugrešić 2020: 182)

> Zašto me privlače toplička mjesta? U toplicama sam antropologinja na tajnom zadatku: promatram tanane migracije ljudi i novca na mjestima gdje se to najmanje očekuje i primjećuje. (Ugrešić 2019: 37)

Ugrešić derives her central analytical concept of 'flow' from the materiality of her object of study – water – and also makes it the poetic principle of her writing. She maps the flows of water, people and money, but also of the services offered in the modularized control society, and in this, her essay is reminiscent of Deleuze's *Post-scriptum* (1990):

> People in the know have realized that survival in Croatia, but also anywhere else in the world, lies in offering services. The whole world is connected by a single activity—the exchange of services. Most of us are servicing one another. Women and men working as dentists, hairstylists, pedicurists, cosmeticians, plastic surgeons, personal trainers, masseuses, therapists, waitstaff, hotel staff, sex industry workers, and many others, they are globally interlinked and networked, they are all givers and receivers of services. (Ugrešić 2020: 209)

> Pravi 'igrači' shvatili su da opstanak u Hrvatskoj, ali i posvuda u svijetu, leži u sferi raznoraznih usluga, da cio svijet povezuje – razmjena usluga. Većina ljudi na svijetu servisiraju jedni druge. Zubarice i zubari, frizerke i frizeri, pedikerke (i gotovo nikad pedikeri!), kozmetičarke (i rijetko kozmetičari), plastičari i plastičarke, treneri i trenerice, maseri i maserke, terapeuti i terapeutkinje, konobari i konobarice, sobari i sobarice, radnice i radnici u seksualnoj industriji, i mnogi drugi – svi su oni globalno ulančani i umreženi, svi su davatelji i primatelji raznovrsnih usluga. (Ugrešić 2019: 13)

The emerging map of European health services reveals more general geopolitical imbalances, as the flows of wellness tourism are counterpointed: with patients travelling from rich to poor countries, and staff in the other direction, from the 'periphery' to the 'centre'. 'Postcommunist Europe sees itself as a swanky wellness center' (Ugrešić 2020: 183; 'Postkomunistička Europa samu sebe, naime, doživljava kao poželjan wellness centar', Ugrešić 2019: 14). This counterpoint is reproduced at the level of the nation in the post-Yugoslavian region itself. For example,

Croatian spa-goers – Ugrešić coins the neologism 'hotspringers'; 'topličari'– visit spas in the Serbian part of Bosnia simply because they are less expensive (Ugrešić 2019: 12, 2020: 181). As a result, perpetrators and victims of the Yugoslav wars come together at the waters (Ugrešić 2019: 17, 2020: 186). And historical traumas are not healed but resurface (see also Chapter 6).

Ugrešić deliberately palimpsests – this is her own term – these health tourism dynamics with the recent migration flows and contrasts the health resorts with the refugee camps. In this, too, she is close to the sociological and philosophical tradition, which in the writings of Foucault, but also of Goffman, think together various 'total institutions' (Goffman 1961) such as sanatoria and health resorts, with prisons, monasteries and military camps in terms of their character as temporary (forced) communities. She captures the heterotopic, dual character of this special place in a highly suggestive bathing scene:

> In an attempt to process this tangle of meanings, staring at the *global eudaimonic well-being map* on my laptop screen, I begin to feel that places of memory are deeply bound to places of forgetting. And doesn't that make sense? The view from my room at the Top-Terme Hotel in Topusko over the outdoor pool in the morning mist – the warm steam billowing up from the water's surface, with the heads of the sparse swimmers only barely visible through the vapor – gave no hint as to whether the scene was of hell or of paradise. It could be both. Paradise, and hell. (Ugrešić 2020: 214, emphasis added)

> U pokušaju da procesuiram to mnoštvo značenja, zagledana u *globalnu eudaimoničku well-being mapu* na ekranu svoga laptopa, osjećam da su mjesta sjećanja duboko povezana s mjestima zaborava. I nije li to logično?! Pogled iz moje sobe u hotelu Top-terme Topusko na otvoreni bazen u jutarnoj izmaglici, s toplim parama koje se dižu nad površinom vode, dok se u isparenjima jedva naziru glave rijetkih plivača nije ničim odavao radi li se o paklu i raju. Moglo je biti i jedno i drugo. I raj, i pakao. (Ugrešić 2019: 17, emphasis added)

9.5 Health as a choice? Abi Palmer's Sanatorium

At around the same time as Ugrešić, the young British artist, performer and disability activist Abi Palmer put another iconic place of European bathing culture on this map of well-being, namely Budapest, the capital of thermal waters. In her experimental autobiographical prose *Sanatorium* (2020), Palmer, a queer young woman, describes how she had her chronic illnesses treated in a Hungarian resort with the help of the local springs. In her home country of England, the high-sulphur wells required for this are no longer accessible for therapy. The artist obtains a grant that enables her to travel and receive treatment in Hungary. The result of the grant is the published book. Art thus literally becomes therapy. In the book, the spatial poles of sanatorium geography are staked out. They are represented by the remnants of the old spa regime on the one hand – the Budapest

Grand Hotel Margitsziget, built in 1873 and one of the best of its time – and the increasingly rationalized and rationed offerings of the welfare state's health care system on the other. In Budapest, the protagonist moves past the luxurious façades of the imperial bathing culture (Palmer 2020:103); in London, she steps into the therapeutic pools of the municipal baths, which are shut down one by one, and whose zigzag tile patterns have nothing in common with the Orientalist opulence of golden age bath architecture (Palmer 2020: 219).

The author adds historical depth to her descriptions of both 'watering places' through her hallucinatory visions. Patients of earlier centuries float through the corridors. In both places, she meets soldiers from the past who haunt her (Palmer 2020: 104, 171–2). With their uncanny presence, they reveal that these places of healing were also places of trauma, where the injured of various wars cured their physical wounds, but not their psychological ones, as we have discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The European continent today, on the other hand, is characterized by the contortions of austerity politics that produce reverse mobilities: thus, the first-person narrator, who is representative of her fellow citizens, especially those in precarious working conditions and who can no longer afford the private treatments in the English capital, travels to Central Eastern Europe. In London itself, though, the majority of care work is outsourced to migrant women (Palmer 2020: 82). (This unequal dynamic in health tourism had already been highlighted by Dubravka Ugrešić.) A symbol of the privatization of health care is the blue inflatable plastic bathtub that the protagonist sets up on her own initiative in her London flat which is suitable for the disabled, yet, contrary to her needs (but in accordance with disability regulations) is equipped only with a shower (Palmer 2020: 9). The symbolic bathtub is imported from China, presumably produced under conditions as exploitative as they are unecological. In the Budapest sanatorium, meanwhile, rich Egyptian women arrive for their annual stint, combining health tourism with a visit to the opera (Palmer 2020: 32). The European spa landscape is being assimilated into global wellness worlds.

Abi Palmer literally navigates these critical zones of European and global health architecture. Having been confronted with a variety of chronic illnesses since her youth, which among other things lead to symptoms of paralysis and limit her mobility, the protagonist uses an e-scooter on which she glides through the corridors of the Budapest sanatorium whose swinging doors she sets in motion in a whimsical ballet. At the centre of this curious choreography between bed and bath lies the question: who 'deserves' health, in both an existential and economic sense:

> On [my] research trip to a private Sanatorium in Budapest, I was fascinated to see how wealthy elderly women with arthritis related to their disability. Time and time again they explained how they 'deserved' to be here, in this healing luxury resort, having saved their money successfully throughout their life. In contrast, during a medical stay at an NHS-based rehabilitation facility in London, I encountered many people who felt they 'deserved' to be disabled for having made poor choices in life: damaging their joints by working in the cold freezer section in Tesco, or having had a baby. (Palmer, *Crip Casino*)

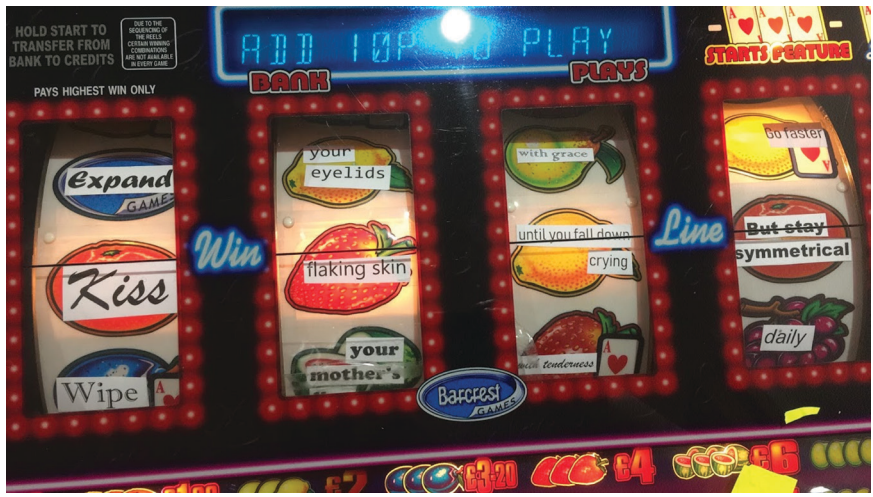


Figure 9.3 Abi Palmer's game of chance as a game of health. Part of the installation *Crip Casino* (2018–22).

Being a performer and not just an author, Palmer addresses the issues of health and illness not only in her autobiographical prose, but also in her artistic performances. In *Crip Casino* (2018–22), 'an interactive gambling arcade parodying the wellness industry' (Palmer 2020: blurb) displayed at the Tate Modern among other places, she retrofits slot machines, adding wellness slogans to their winning fields, and lets chance decide who in society receives the best possible medical care ('whether health and physical capacity, financial security and status are the result of luck, chance or hard work; whether any of us truly "deserve" the role we are given', Palmer, *Crip Casino*). She thus brings together two central motifs of classic spa culture and literature: the casino and the treatments (Figure 9.3).

The emphasis in *Sanatorium*, however, is not on gambling and thus loss of control, but rather on self-discipline, that is, the programmatic opposite of wellness. The contemporary self-optimization mantra of 'Pushing Me Too Hard™' is embodied by an over-motivated physiotherapist who is committed to an incurable optimism (Palmer 2020: 44). It fails because it does not take into account the narrator's connective tissue disorder. The disabled body is thus both a victim of, and a resistance to, the impositions of the wellness society. We can observe a parallel both to the academic critique of the 'wellness syndrome', which positions illness as a resource of resistance directed against neoliberalism, and to other artistic performances, such as Ferdinand Schmalz's programmatic Spa'tan Revolt discussed above, where the body at the public bath (unlike the body at the wellness centre) becomes grit in the gears of the beauty industry. The legal scholar Carrie Basas (2014: 1037) draws an explicit connection between disability studies and the wellness society: 'People with disabilities make an excellent lens through which to consider the potential discriminatory effects and intents of wellness.'

Abi Palmer accordingly extends her sanatorium project into the realm of social media, particularly via her Instagram account @abipalmer_bot. Here she posts pictures and videos from her stay at the hotel and sanatorium and makes her texts and art part of the discourse of disability studies.

In her artistic self-inquiry, alongside her physiotherapist in 'Pushing Me Too Hard™' mode, Palmer chooses a further, at first glance, quite unexpected companion and mentor for her taking of the waters: the Christian mystic Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–82). Teresa's spiritual path and autobiographical writing are characterized by the relationship between illness and mystical experiences. Of weak physical constitution, she had developed psychosomatic complaints connected to crises of faith and religious struggles. At one point, things got so bad that her wealthy father took her out of her Carmelite convent and sent her to a healer. The fact that her stay lasted three months creates at least some level of similarity between it and a spa visit. And as with Abi Palmer, Teresa can be said to have fallen victim to the 'Pushing Me Too Hard™' brigade. Her diet, which consisted entirely of liquids accompanied by an arguably excessive reliance on laxatives, also reminds us uncannily of modern-day detox cures. But the effect was a shrinking of the nerves, which caused her great pain similar to that felt by the narrator in Mircea Cărtărescus *Solenoid* (2015, see Chapter 5) and left her in a state of health which was worse than it had been previously, prompting her father to put her back in the hands of traditional doctors, who diagnosed tuberculosis and declared her to be incurable. The implicitly expensive stay at the spa turns out to be worse than useless, the equivalent of the spa doctor a charlatan, the regime adopted closer to torment than to treatment which led to a death-like paralysis. At the same time, transcending the body in illness and near-death experiences evokes pronounced mystical experiences. The narrator of *Sanatorium* glides through the days of the cure in loose conversation with the mystic (Palmer 2020: 11, 143, 145). The explicit sexual nature of this meeting of the minds between the contemporary performance artist and the medieval nun is a provocative one. However, the provocation is not an end in itself, but an attempt to overcome the limits of physical gravity – the burden of the body – in water, air – or love.

Palmer's linking of the physical and mystical components of healing water evokes the religious component of spa culture that we touched upon in Chapter 2. Sanatorium and convent converge in the floating experiences of the protagonist: in the sulphur-smelling thermal waters on the one hand and in the hallucinatory out-of-body experiences on the other. This is astonishing at first glance and logical at second, because both – spa and monastery – are 'spaces of enclosure' (Deleuze 1990: 293, cf. Goffman 1961: 5; Barthes 1975: 39). Their inmates are separated from 'normal' society, even if entry is semi-voluntary. The separation from the outside world is more permeable than in prison or psychiatry, but within the communities, rigid rules and regimes are to be observed. Faced with the highest and the last, with life and death, they form communities of destiny. This makes it is less surprising that Saint Teresa of Ávila hovers over the pools of Budapest and London.

Sanatorium is an autobiographical experiment, an interrogation of one's own existence in the face of physical disability, and a record of the development of a queer identity and sexuality. (After all, Abi's patron saint Teresa of Àvila not only revolutionized the religious order of her time, but she is also the founder of the genre of female autobiography.) Palmer thus continues a tradition of autobiographically based social criticism that is not only reminiscent of Dubravka Ugrešić's literary anthropology of the health resort, but also points back to the satirical reports from the European sanatorium at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Franziska von Reventlow's *Geldkomplex* (1916), a witty critique of both developing capitalism and psychoanalysis. But in Palmer's *Sanatorium*, the turn to autobiographical writing also inspires the narrative mode, which chronicles the spa regime in the form of a diary, following the pace of the ten-minute treatments (Palmer 2020: 17, 38, 39). In the process, the author also has recourse to her smartphone, which is used here not to monitor physical performance, but to record her thoughts. This change of media adds to the fragmentary nature of the entries and the inconsistent writing styles. The constant repetition of 'I begin' / 'I start to' (32, 46, 51, 58, 126, 135, 219), moreover, conveys the experience of the chronically ill person who never fully recovers but recurringly has to return to the waters.

9.6 Liquid activism

The prose texts, plays, graphic novels and art installations presented in this chapter depict a change of setting, from the classic spa to today's wellness oasis. In Schmalz's satirical play, wellness trends and treatments infiltrate the traditional bath. In Svetoft's uncanny graphic novel, this process has already been completed and the readers find themselves locked in one of the ubiquitous wellness hotels. (However, its spa facilities cannot be protected against the germs of the past). In the course of her spa trips and research, Ugrešić (2019: 17, 2020: 214) draws up a 'global eudaimonic well-being map' of these new resorts, at the same time documenting the unequal and unjust flows of health and wellness tourism. And Abi Palmer asks where on this map there is still space for the really sick people, who need treatment and who can no longer afford to pay for it themselves. At the same time, it is precisely their bodies that appear as a resource of resistance to the actual 'illness' of the contemporary condition itself, which suffers from the 'wellness syndrome' (Cederström and Spicer 2015) and its optimizing itself into the 'burnout society' (Han 2010). These bodies are ill or disabled (Palmer 2020), too old, too fat or too thin in relation to the 'norm' (Ugrešić 2019) or they simply indulge in leisure for longer than the meritocracy allows (Schmalz 2016).

This change of setting from the classic spa to the wellness centre is as decisive as the one we outlined in Chapter 3, where in the first decades of the twentieth century, the former was replaced by the sanatorium. Then as now these changes are linked to tectonic shifts in the social structure as a whole. While the rise of the

sanatorium went hand in hand with the industrialization of European societies and the associated fears of social isolation, nervous stress and unhealthy living in cities (see Chapter 3), the wellness trend is an expression of the dynamics of privatization and self-optimization in late capitalism and its increasingly digitized and globalized life worlds (especially among the elites). Or in terms of our theoretical framework of 'biopolitics' (see introduction), the literary and artistic works considered in this chapter use the example and setting of the health resort to diagnose a profound cultural shift in the field of European body politics: namely, the transition from a disciplinary society (Foucault) to a society of control (Deleuze). The fixed spaces of the spa, resort and sanatorium (even when they were only visited temporarily) are dissolving into the wellness offers of hotels and urban spas; the figure of the doctor (once a 'miracle worker' in the words of Roland Barthes, 'thaumaturge', Barthes 2018: 64, 2015: 87) has been degraded to the physiotherapist 'Pushing Me Too Hard™' (Palmer 2020: 44) or even completely outsourced to digitalized apps. The chronotopoi of the 'open spa' and the 'closed sanatorium' (see Chapter 3) are being replaced by modular health services. (Needless to say, individual literary works occasionally deviate from this schematic account.)

The texts are thus not only closely interwoven with the European resort narrative, especially in the case of Dubravka Ugrešić, but they represent a form of artistic research, an intervention into public discourses and policies. Quite logically then, the authors do not restrict themselves to the topic of the health resort in the narrower sense. Instead, they take this place as a starting point for a more fundamental questioning of the constitution of European society, as the spa literature of the nineteenth century had already done, with other priorities of course, such as the development of a bourgeois public sphere or the relationship between nation-statehood and cosmopolitanism after the end of the great empires. Their contemporary successors pose questions about the connection between wellness tourism and labour migration, open and closed borders for health tourists, migrant labour or refugees.

In terms of genre, the works assembled here are very diverse and include drama, novel, autobiographical prose and essay. This diversity illustrates once again that the resort narrative spreads across genres. It is particularly striking to observe that the boundaries between literature and life are consciously expanded: when the confines of the book and the stage are left behind, when spa life inscribes itself into the contemporary media worlds, when the resort becomes an area for social activism (comparable to Chapter 8, except that in the case of popular imagination, the boundaries are crossed in the direction of marketing and branding). At the same time, however, the topic and its 'medium' – the water – influence the aesthetic constitution of all the texts presented here. In Schmalz's play, the medium, though not actually present, influences the movements of all the characters. Ugrešić makes the flow of water the organizing principle of her text, and Palmer incorporates the specific time regime of the cure into the narrative rhythm of her prose.

Notes

1 A cursory trawl through the intenet throws up performances in Berlin, Bolzano, Graz, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Munich, Salzburg, Stuttgart and Vienna.
2 The original quotation reads: '[war] sowohl wissenschaftstheoretisch als auch gesundheitspolitisch absolut innovativ' (Heise 2015: 355).
3 The original quotation reads: 'traditionellen, pathogenetisch orientierten Gesundheitssystem der USA' (Heise 2015).
4 Since verbal language is secondary to visual language in this book, we will be quoting only from the English translation.

10

Conclusion: The phantasmatic power of the European resort narrative

Europe is like a spa.[1]
Javier Pradera

The health resort is omnipresent in European literature. Having featured in artistic and literary works throughout its existence, the classic spa town began to appear very prominently in literary productions from the mid- to the late eighteenth century onwards. And while the first titles of spa literature that come to our readers' minds might still be those of some nineteenth-century classics, we hope to have demonstrated in this volume the considerable spread the health resort in general enjoyed as a topos, and continues to enjoy, throughout history and across Europe.

This includes all the forms of resorts that have evolved historically, the mineral and thermal spa as much as the seaside resort, the climatic resort and the sanatorium. In all these places, people gathered to promote or regain their health, and by doing so, formed temporary societies. Consequently, the resorts earned a reputation as places of intense social gathering. The forms of social interaction they produced combined seclusion from the outside world and connectedness with it. This is why they functioned, and were seen, as both social microcosms and social heterotopias in the sense of Foucault's 'other places' (Foucault [1967] 1994). In their very specific ways, they were intensely bound up with all the major transformative processes that constitute European history, and the literary discourses surrounding them reflect this.

Time and again, the health resort in its various manifestations has also served as a grand metaphor for Europe in and of itself, as we have shown in many of our examples throughout the chapters of this book. The motto we chose for this final chapter is just one case in point, another one would be the title of a 2017 radio play, *Sanatorium Europa*, by Mariola Brillowska and Günter Reznicek. None of this is new: already Augustus Bozzi Granville (see Chapter 1) declared Carlsbad to be the 'l'Hôpital des Grands de l'Europe' and Baden-Baden its 'salon' (Granville 1837: vol. 2, 81–2). In this strikingly functional approach, the individual spa towns were assigned distinct roles and capacities for an (imagined) overarching transnational European society. The very fact that for Granville they were all located on

German soil, illustrates the inherent (Western) Eurocentrism of the phenomenon. That Carlsbad today is Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic, may sharpen our awareness of how the European resort landscape has changed historically through the emergence and dissolution of imperial and national borders. Moreover, it is not incidental that in his time, Granville also drew on feudal metaphors for the comparative spa matrix he developed and spoke of its 'queen' (Baden-Baden) and 'monarch' (again: Carlsbad, Granville 1837: vol. 1, 7). Another characteristic we have noted is that the resorts constituted a transnational network, aware of each other, referring to each other and vying to outdo each other. And the European resort narrative is generally characterized by a rhetoric of comparison, which, in addition to the aforementioned imagery of political status or governmental function, is largely based on the geographical denominations of the resorts. Thus, Zakopane gets called the Polish Davos (Tanya Malyarchuk), or the Soviet Yalta the red Nice (Sławomir Mrożek). It is true that a geopolitical inequality is written into this comparative matrix of places: what is unknown and peripheral is usually compared with what is well known and (considered) central. Nonetheless, these mental maps have a pan-European dimension and point to a shared cultural heritage. The health resort as a public place and imaginary entity – as microcosm and metaphor – is thus shaped in the confrontation with the respective political forms of society, from aristocratic to bourgeois society in the nineteenth century, to the systemic competition between capitalism and communism in the twentieth and the succession of welfare capitalism by neoliberalism in the twenty-first.

However, the literariness of health resorts, as it were, is not just due to their specific spatio-temporal structure, social character and political history, but equally much bound up with their being places of medicine. According to Clark Lawlor and Andrew Mangham, literature has not only 'been a key vehicle for advertising and critiquing medical … treatments' – and we have seen this inter alia in Chapters 1, 2 and 6 – but it was also 'a means of shaping social understanding of, and behaviour towards, medicine' and as such a form of intervention (Lawlor and Mangham 2021: 3, 5). It is, therefore, not surprising that health resorts are closely linked with the 'biopolitical turn' that has characterized the humanities since roughly the 1960s (see our introduction). Central aspects and terms of Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopower' feature repeatedly in the literary works we have analysed, as when the spa suddenly appears as a prison-like panopticon (Gabriel Chevallier) or the sadistic staff in a sanatorium replaces care with control in a completely unmasked way (Mircea Cărtărescu). Some of our texts can be read as 'biopolitical' manifestos *avant la lettre* (such as Mary Shelley's descriptions of her stay in Kissingen), while contemporary authors make explicit reference to the relevant theoretical literature (such as Ferdinand Schmalz). We have shown that, in addition to Foucault's seminal works, other theoretical approaches and concepts such as Erving Goffman's 'total institution' or Roland Barthes's conceptual approach to the sanatorium society are recurrent in our text corpus and can find a theoretical and methodological application in resort research beyond this book. This is especially true of their function as public places and a kind of public sphere (see introduction). The special structure of the resort makes it an arena in which to

explore the nature of societies and communities and their relationship with other social bonds such as friendship, partnership or family (see Chapter 3). But we can also recognize how resort literature as a subject of the medical humanities connects to contemporary theories and discourses such as disability studies. Abi Palmer, for example, examines the place that disabled bodies are given in increasingly wellness-orientated spas and the extent to which they have the potential to turn them into more inclusive places. Thus, what Susan Anderson and Bruce Tabb say about spa towns in particular, holds true for resorts of all kinds: they have been situated 'within a web of interconnected medical, philosophical, aesthetic, social and religious discourses' (Anderson and Tabb 2002: 3).

10.1 The transnational European health resort trajectory at a glance

The corpus we have worked on for this volume not only portrays the health resorts' international clientele, but it also meanders through the languages, literatures and epochs of European (and world) literature and forms a network of interdependencies that becomes denser over time. This does of course incorporate national narratives (see, for instance, the Russian narrative as outlined in Chapter 4 or references to a French narrative in Chapters 2 and 5), as well as cross-national counter-narratives (see, for instance, Tanya Malyarchuk in Chapter 6), but it is essentially transnational. Looking at the ways in which the European resort narrative developed over roughly the last two centuries, we can make out the following overarching trajectory:

By around 1800, spa towns and seaside resorts had become an integral part of the social discourses and cultural imagination in many European countries. Resort literature, be that in the form of guides, reports or fictional accounts, was booming. Indeed, these different genres were interacting with, and influencing, each other, with repercussions also for the places they referred to and the practices of health tourists. And just as the places themselves served as venues for the formation and transformation of social opinion, so, too, were the stories set in them. Many of them were infused with Enlightenment thinking. The German author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, for instance, whose *Gespräche für Freimaurer* (1778, *Dialogues for Freemasons*) appeared just before the time in which our enquiry starts, sets these in Bad Pyrmont and utilizes the different degrees of privacy, semi-privacy and publicity offered by the various spa spaces (promenade, gardens, table d'hôte, private room) to shape a dialogue that culminates in the decision by one of the interlocutors to become a freemason in order to counteract the evils of the state. Following this example, we find stories in the following decades in which feudal hierarchies and the societal rules coming with them are subverted (see Köhler 2015). The space of the resort had an enabling character: enabling experiment at a societal and an individual level. There is, of course, a fine line between social experiment and role play, on the one hand, and contravention for selfish ends, on the other, and many a spa yarn, pretty much throughout the nineteenth century, is spun around the

dealings of impostors and cheats (see Chapter 1). Likewise, the 'freedom of the spa' also includes the freedom to lose oneself (one's money, social standing and way of life) by way of gambling in the many casinos to be found in the resorts. The famous Russian take on this, Dostoevsky's *Igrok* (1866, *The Gambler*) might still be the best known in that regard, but as we have also shown in Chapter 1, the subject was clearly a transnational one, featuring prominently in French, English and German language literatures, for instance.

Partly linked to the casino topos and partly to the historical fact that the nineteenth century saw a steep rise in the number of resort creations across the continent (see Chapter 2), another trope comes to the surface: that of the health resorts as institutions which are merely or predominantly concerned with making money. Health, sociability and cultural enrichment seem to no longer be their primary objectives, but rather the baits used for attracting an ever larger and more solvent clientele. And yet, as Guy de Maupassant's Monsieur Andermatt Mont-Oriol (1887) would insist, financial success depended on fully understanding and serving the audience's hunger for culture, entertainment, health and healing. In these and other stories, we can see that towards the end of the century, the potential of the health resort as a place for negotiating social and moral values, with social change and cultural enrichment is being infused with capitalist beliefs and practices. Health resorts seem to have been incorporated into the system of bourgeois society, functioning at best as valves to let off steam and measured foremost against their commercial viability. It is also noticeable that the resort literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries increasingly mirrors the competition between national cultures rather than highlighting their contact and mutual enrichment. These tendencies are of course part and parcel of European culture and politics generally at the time: a war is looming, the old Enlightenment values deteriorating, the decline of the Western world predicted. Disease – of the society as well as the individual – is becoming an increasingly important part of the cultural imagination.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that for the decades around 1900 we observe a paradigm shift in our corpus: the traditional spa town and seaside resort as literary setting are widely replaced by the sanatorium. Two basic premises of the functioning of the sanatorium are the spatial isolation from the outside world and the strictly regulated life inside. This has decisive aesthetic implications for their use as a literary setting: instead of the relaxed social atmosphere and the variety of spaces that characterized the older spa narratives, the sanatorium setting afforded uniformity, isolation, control and the exertion of (medical) power. Whilst Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*) might be regarded as the quintessential sanatorium novel, it was only the tip of a huge iceberg, and exceptional in many ways. It has, however, attracted countless literary responses from across the continent and as such exercised a far-reaching and almost incalculable influence. In a way that befits the historical situation in the mid- to late twentieth century, the systemic competition between the capitalist and communist systems is also written into some of these narratives (see Chapters 3 and 5). Thus, the sanatorium novel is a European phenomenon, too, has an even

wider geographical spread than the classic spa novel and reaches chronologically into the twenty-first century. The discussion of questions such as the meaning of – individual and societal – illness and health, and the justifiability of the means to achieve the latter also extends beyond fiction into such genres as the philosophical and sociological essay (see Chapter 3).

Starting slightly later, but from then on in parallel with the 'wave' of sanatorium literature, we find authors returning to the setting of the old spa towns, yet this time decidedly in retrospect. Working with Svetlana Boym's concept of 'reflective nostalgia' (Boym 2007) helps make different paradigms of looking back apparent, which apply different historical perspectives and literary techniques to assess more or less recent European history, and in particular, the traumatic events of the twentieth century, through the prism of the health resort. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the retrospective view expanded to include the experiences – hitherto almost completely overlooked – of members of the lower classes working in the resorts – women in particular – and the ethnic identities of the local population in, for example, Eastern European resorts, inviting postcolonial readings. Finally, the transnational resort text constructs a constantly evolving mental map of Europe. And some of the places on it, such as Estoril or Yalta, Jáchymov or Görbersdorf (Sokołowsko), are inscribed in it primarily through their literary representations.

A relatively recent development is marked by works that scrutinize the contemporary 'wellness' spa as a place of individual self-optimization in a neoliberal setting, and even play out some forms of resistance against such trends. One example is the play *Der thermale Widerstand* (2016, The Spa'tan Revolt) by Ferdinand Schmalz, discussed in Chapter 9, which also testifies to the last development we wish to draw attention to here: genre diversification and the expansion of the resort narrative into public spaces: the play is performed in a swimming pool, with the bathers as spectators. Health resorts have by now become a popular setting in all kinds of entertainment and popular literature – be that costume drama or historical fiction, detective story or thriller, romance or horror fiction, immersive multi-media games or interactive fiction online. In each case, the attraction exercised by the setting would seem to be bound up with one or more of the salient features of the resort that we have outlined in this book: its special spatial structure, the tension between heightened life experience and death written into it, or the place it occupies symbolically and geographically within and outside the (rest of the) world.

This can be seen at a glance in the covers of two graphic novels published in the early 2020s. The Austrian illustrator Lukas Kummer recently recast the autobiographical sanatorium story *Die Kälte: Eine Isolation* (1981, 'In the Cold', see Chapter 3) by his Austrian compatriot Thomas Bernhard in the form of a graphic novel (Bernhard/Kummer 2023). The 'closed world of the sanatorium' ('geschlossene Welt des Sanatoriums'), of which the blurb speaks (Residenzverlag 2023), is presented in the monolithic depiction of the building, in the radical verticalization of the perspective, which makes rocks and mountains tower above the reader and viewer, and not least in the black-and-white drawing that

conveys the eponymous cold. The health resort that made Bernhard 'one of the twentieth century's greatest writers' ('eine[n] der größten Schriftsteller des 20. Jahrhunderts') looks like 'the coldest circle of hell' ('der kälteste Kreis der Hölle', Residenzverlag 2023).

This brings us back to Eric Svetoft's graphic novel *Spa,* with which this volume began. On its cover we look *inside* the resort, in its guise as the thermal spa colonized by the worlds of wellness. The atmosphere is just as eerie and purgatorial as on the snow-covered sanatorium precipice, but tinged with the classic red flame style of the religious inferno. With their titles and cover designs, the two graphic novels demonstrate the characteristic antithetical tension of the resort narrative, emphasizing rather the hellish as opposed to the paradisiacal aspect. There is not much left of the pleasure it promised as an open place of hedonism and self-realization (see Figure 10.1.a and b).

In the twenty-first century, then, the European resort in its typological quadrilateral of thermal baths, seaside resorts, climatic resorts and sanatoria is fully and richly narratized. Paradoxically, this coincides with a development whereby its institutions have become medically almost irrelevant, or consigned to history. The death knoll for the sanatorium was sounded with the invention of the tuberculosis medication streptomycin in the 1950s (with significant deviations in some (post) socialist countries). The traditional spa cure became obsolete as a bourgeois concept in parts of Eastern Europe in the second half of the last century and has been phased out in the West since the late 1980s as part of the privatization of the healthcare system.

Figure 10.1 The resort narrative in its entire spectrum from spa to sanatorium (and back). The covers of current graphic novels by (a) Lukas Kummer (based on Thomas Bernhard) and (b) Erik Svetoft.

Its often mothballed remnants keep being threatened by wellness practices that are increasingly detached from local remedies and specific therapeutic landscapes. The particular popularity of the resort narrative in contemporary European literature thus contrasts with the decline or actual disappearance of the phenomenon itself. Its phantasmatic power stands in inverse proportion to its lost medical and social significance. In a new twist, it has been the Covid-19 pandemic that has given the ailing resort and spa culture a new conceptual and medical impetus, based on the understanding that conventionally untreatable diseases require a holistic approach such as a classic cure, but also on a re-evaluation of cures as a general health prophylaxis to strengthen the immune system. We will see how this will be reflected in the literary resort narrative of the future.

10.2 The poetics of the European resort narrative

In a 'discreet wink to [her] potential literary interpreters', the health tourist, writer and scholar Dubravka Ugrešić asserts that

> the hot springs are a literary device, a source of defamiliarization: the shift of the ordinary into an out-of-ordinary environment where heroes, their actions, and words, acquire a new, 'dislocated' significance, a different hue and tone. (Ugrešić 2020: 187)

> I evo diskretnog, iako možda nepotrebnog, miga književnim interpretatorima: toplice su književni postupak, očuđenje, defamilijarizacija, izmještanje uobičajenog u neuobičajeno okružje, u kojemu junaci, njihovi postupci i replike dobivaju novo, 'pomaknuto' značenje, drukčiju boju i ton'. (Ugrešić 2019: 17)

In a way, Ugrešić combines the roles of proponent and analyst of the transnational resort narrative in one person. And in this she is not alone: as we have demonstrated in Chapter 4, one of the most salient features of resort texts is the extent of their awareness of, and willingness to, refer to other resort texts. In the process, they often point out each other's blind spots, open the genre up to new discourses and make the reader a participant in knowing games of allusion. And the more the intertextual entanglements intensify over the decades, the more prominent grows the aspect of the meta-level, of citationality and self-reflection.[2] By the same token, the longer the transnational resort text develops, the more generic barriers are relaxed. That Tokarczuk's *Empuzjon* (2022, *The Empusium*) should draw on elements of the popular thriller genre while also re-writing Thomas Mann's canonical classic and addressing the topics of gender and colonialism is paradigmatic in this respect.

Ugrešić's thesis that the resort is not primarily a literary setting or motif, but a literary *device* is as provocative as it is convincing. She correlates the philosophical and sociological concepts of the resort as heterotopos with its literary qualities. As we have shown repeatedly, the resort might decidedly *not* be the world at large, but is a particularly suitable locus to interrogate, assess, understand it, precisely

because of its character as 'other place'. The health resort as heterotopia, combined with the presence in it of sickness, death and hence eschatology, is ideal as a place for reflection, a source of inspiration and a subject for writing.

Conversely, from the vantage point of modern consciousness, certain prior ages seem to have an aura that makes them a place of longing, a utopia, especially if we can anachronistically fit them out with achievements of our own – such as a feminist consciousness, for instance – that they notably lacked. Writing *after* the twentieth century however, also has more than enough horror and trauma to draw on for the elaboration of dystopias behind any idyll.

At the same time, Ugrešić's 'wink' sharpens our awareness of the fact that the resort narrative not only participates in, and generates, the social and political discourses outlined above. It also has poetic specificities. Because it follows the course of Western European history, in our case from the Enlightenment to the uncertainties of postmodernism, it is not surprising that we have been able to see how the literary techniques associated with the stages along the way have also been applied to the resort narrative. Some of these fit perfectly into the paradigm of defamiliarization: namely, when deliberately confusing, digressive, fractured narrative styles and perspectives are chosen to express the specific dimension of space and time, or when disconnected monologues are used to express, say, the symptomatic isolation that patients in institutions share with modern man generally. This is particularly true of sanatorium novels (see Chapter 3), but it is also valid for stories set in spa towns, which express the continent's traumatic experiences of war and totalitarianism (see Chapters 5 and 6). Conversely, not least because many of those who write about spas and sanatoria had intense personal experience of them, the literature they produce is often profoundly realistic in mode. (It is no accident that autobiographical writing methods and genres such as diaries and letters become central narrative modes of fictional works too.) At one extreme, we find resort texts functioning as a means of coming to terms with, or conveying trauma (see Chapter 6); at the other, they direct a gaze at the resort that is highly critical and satirical (extreme examples would be Friedrich Dürrenmatt, David Schalko and Ferdinand Schmalz, see Chapters 7 and 9). Indeed, both because the resorts present an instantly recognizable form of society and because people die there, there is a very widespread (and variegated) application of humour in the texts they give rise to.

Time and space constellations in the resort – the chronotopoi (Bakhtin) of openness and closure – also have specific poetological consequences. A relatively obvious example in the wake of Mann's *Magic Mountain* is the tendency to equate unchanging time with interminable discussion. Another is the way in which crime, thriller and horror stories are inspired by the unique architecture with its labyrinthine interiors, corridors and treatment rooms, and its hidden, subterranean realm. Equally, the space of the resort has something inherently theatrical about it, resulting both from the intensified life conducted there and the variety of rooms in which this can happen. The rhythm that links boredom with drama, which to an extent is the rhythm of all resort life, is often rendered explicit in these texts – both in prose fiction (think of the strictly timed sequences of resort

life in Mary Shelley or Abi Palmer) and perhaps especially in the poems discussed in Chapter 4. And as these poems also demonstrate with exemplary clarity the central aspects of the resort – such as the water as its soul and *raison d'être*, the forces of nature that are at once benign and threatening, the relationship between height and depth, and the many dichotomies or paradoxes that it incorporates – all have powerful metaphorical potential. More broadly, the resort itself, as a space, place, institution, heterotope and chronotope, offers instructing and illuminating analogies to other forms of social co-existence, many of which, not accidentally, recur in the theoretical writings of Barthes and Foucault.

It should not be forgotten, though, that, just as the resorts are to a large extent places of enjoyment, huge swathes of literature devoted to them are specifically designed as entertainment. And this applies no less to Dostoevsky than it does to Sarah Pearse. For this reason, indeed, Karolina Watroba (2022), in her book on Mann's *Magic Mountain*, insists on foregrounding what she calls the 'immersive' reading experience. As many of the examples in Chapter 8 show, there are numerous immersive modes of reading experiences, especially in the texts and cultural practices of the popular imagination, such as the many regional sanatorium thrillers or spa romances. However, a certain self-referential effect emerges here too, in that the place and object of the reading collapse.

10.3 No end in sight

Our text corpus for this volume encompasses some 230 texts by 120 authors from 20 languages and literatures. For each of our chapters and the trajectories they trace, we could have found more texts – in some cases many more – had time and linguistic competence permitted. Such an expansion, however, only makes sense where and when it offers new insights. We are, for instance, fully aware that the number of non-fictional texts considered is rather smaller than the number of fictional ones. The former would undoubtedly repay greater attention. With regard to the interaction between life writing accounts of visits to the resorts and fiction set in them, we can confirm the thesis put forward by, inter alia, Morgan (2014: 75, 89) and Soroka (2019: 427) that there is no necessary congruence between autobiographical and fictional accounts – even where these are based on essentially the same experiences. However, the nature of, and the reasons for, the discrepancies are not as clear cut as research literature has so far proposed. In the case of Mary Shelley, for instance, we found indications that a political agenda may have influenced the disparate descriptions she gave within her travel-writing. This suggests that the whole complex of fact – life-writing – fiction within resort literature invites more in-depth exploration. Moreover, we have noted throughout the book the ineluctable interdependence of resort fiction, fictions of advertising and the advertising of fictions. This, too, would warrant a closer look. We have also only scratched the surface of the media-driven forms of interaction between

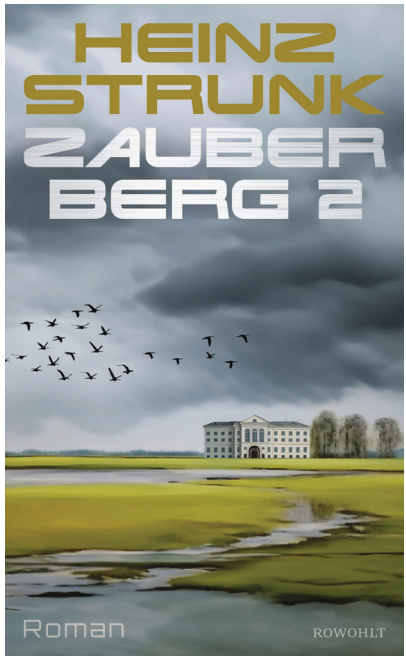
resort fiction and the lives of (real and virtual) resort visitors as outlined in Chapter 8.

And whilst we have started to use methods of mapping as suggested by Franco Moretti, our analyses remain within the framework of extensive close reading. Methods of distant reading (see Moretti 2000; Kulishkina and Poluboyarinova 2023) would have offered the chance to look at a larger corpus and its historical and geographical spread. By the same token, going beyond Europe – which would have exceeded the scope of our project by far, and which we have done only extremely selectively – will no doubt shed an interesting light on the network of texts we have assembled here.

Part of the transformation narrative concerning the enabling nature of the resort has historically pertained to the emancipation of women. The medical indication of the cure granted the first freedom to undertake independent travel as well as the opportunity to stroll unaccompanied along the promenades or converse in the salon. Despite this, the canon of resort literature remained largely male or was received as such. We have paid programmatic attention to female authorship and feminist counter-narratives in all the chapters in this book. It has to be said, though, that the gender matrix of the contemporary – but also the historical – resort text is much more diverse than this. In our corpus, queer and trans identities manifest themselves in two of the most recent texts, Tokarczuk's *Empuzjon* and Palmer's *Sanatorium*. A targeted look from the perspective of queer studies could bring further material and insights to light.

So, there is no end in sight, either with regard to the material or to theoretical readings of it: just as we were in the throes of preparing our script for publication, a new Swiss-German TV series entitled *Davos 1917* hit the screens, making intensive use of the specific infrastructure of the sanatorium and the climatic resort. This is hardly a coincidence, since in 2024, world literature is celebrating the centenary of Thomas Mann's sanatorium epic. With his Mann-sequel *Zauberberg 2*, the Hamburg pop writer Heinz Strunk is exploiting this event most brazenly for marketing purposes (see Figure 10.2). But the English translation of Tokarczuk's feminist re-reading of the same novel has also been published just in time for the jubilee and the publisher's announcement explicitly establishes this context: 'A century after the publication of *The Magic Mountain*', the Polish author 'revisits Thomas Mann territory and lays claim to it' (Penguin Random House, no date).

But the reason the resort topos in all its breadth is so prevalent in contemporary European literature is not only due to the *Zauberberg* anniversary and the intertextual furor that goes with it. It is also related to the fact that the topos ties in with historical and current experiences of crisis – the latter including the contemporary nervous states of late capitalist Modernity with its dialectic of self-optimization, burnout and wellness – for which it sought to propose remedies. The pleasure, with which the health resort is also widely associated, seems for the moment to have slipped out of the plots and into the process of reading.



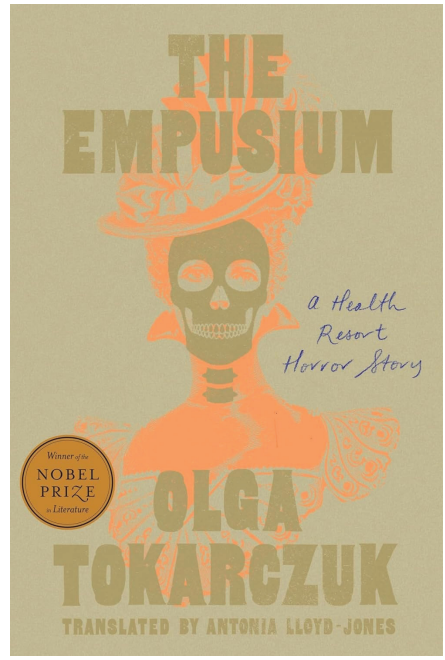


Figure 10.2 The *Zauberberg* anniversary in 2024 casts its shadow ahead. New interpretations of the classic between (a) pop literature (Heinz Strunk), and (b) Nobel Prize–winning narrative prose (Olga Tokarczuk).

Notes

1 The original sentence reads: 'Europa es como un balneario en el que nunca pasa nada.' (Europe is like a spa in that nothing ever happens.) Quoted from Manuel Vazquez Montalbán (1992).
2 Ugrešić's essay 'Tu nema ničega!' (2019, 'There Is Nothing Here!', 2020) is one prominent example of this; Schmalz's play *Der thermale Widerstand* (2016, The Spa'tan Revolt) is another.

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The following bibliography consists of two parts. The first part gives details of all the sources that make up the corpus on which we base our account of the 'transnational European health resort narrative'. These include literary texts, films, TV and radio broadcasts, media projects as well as medical treatises or resort advertisements. In the second part, we list all the other sources that are cited in the book, without further distinction between primary and secondary literature. This division of the bibliography into two parts serves the purpose of bibliographically underpinning the central thesis of our book, namely that there exists a network of texts and artworks devoted to the topos of the health resort, closely linked, both discursively and intertextually, and spreading across languages, cultures, epochs and genres. In addition, the separate identification of the sources dedicated to the health resort in a multitude of European literature serves to facilitate further research on the topic.

Where the original was in a language other than English, we have also, wherever possible, listed a published translation (see 'Note on texts and sources'). Because the reference list is in strict chronological order, the original generally appears before the translation. For the sake of simplicity, we have not used any non-Roman alphabets in our reference list. For languages written in the Cyrillic alphabet, we rely on the Library of Congress transliteration (without diacritic signs). For commonly known Cyrillic geographical, historical names and terms, we use their anglicized forms (e.g. Fyodor Dostoevsky instead of Fedor Dostoevskii). A great deal of the material we used was accessed in digital form. In some cases, there is no other source; in others, the same material is available both in print and in digital form. In the reference list we have made a distinction between these two cases by adding the words 'available online' to cases where both versions are available. Where we are only aware of a print edition, we have given the necessary bibliographic information. Where we are only aware of a digital one, we have given only the DOI or, failing that, the URL. Given that the purpose of the former is to ensure continuous availability, we have not thought it necessary to give the date on which we accessed that material. URLs, of course, are a different matter.

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