

„LSCHONNOH HABBO!
NACH DEM SCHÖNEN MARIENBAD...“
ON THE AMBIVALENCE OF A MODERN SANCTUARY¹

Karlsbad ist ein noch größerer Schwindel als Lourdes und Lourdes hat den Vorzug, daß man seines innersten Glaubens wegen hinfährt.²

Franz Kafka, 2.2.1914

‘I see you don’t know anything about Marienbad. You think Marienbad is just Marienbad? Marienbad is Berdichev, Marienbad is Warsaw, Marienbad is the Nalevkis.’
Beltzi Kurlander from Marienbad to her husband, Shlomo Kurlander, on the Nalevkis in Warsaw.³

Sholem Aleichem, Marienbad, 1917

Beera shel Mirjam, an “other space”

It’s been twenty days that I am sitting on your land, drinking well-water and bathing in baths of manure. In this tit hayiaven⁴ I seek for the Holy Spirit that went away from me when I sunk in this tit hayiaven four years ago. Since then my spirit was tossed and I lost my vitality, my sleep was stolen from me and my veins refuse to rest, and the doctors would send me here to gain my fitness back and to renew my spirit in me. If I could reach to a complete healing, and the Shekhinah will come back to rest on me, this I cannot know, but for now I consider my pocket a sort of a sieve and I know that this is beera shel Mirjam [...].⁵

¹ I would like to thank Michael Brenner, Sander Gilman, Werner Lausecker, Stefan Haas and Noam Zadoff for helpful conversations and comments. – The words “next year in Marienbad,” paraphrasing the blessing “next year in Jerusalem,” conclude an article on Jewish life in Marienbad by the cantor of Eger/Cheb. In: *Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortzeitung* 1 (1929) 18, 1-2.

² *Kafka, Franz: Tagebücher. Kritische Ausgabe.* Eds. Koch, Hans-Gerd/Müller, Michael/Pasley, Malcolm. Frankfurt/M. 1990, 632.

³ *Sholem Aleichem: Marienbad.* Transl. Aliza Shevrin. London 1982, 85.

⁴ “Tit hayiaven” – the muddy pit – is mentioned in psalms, where it says: “He brought me up out of the muddy pit, out of the mire and the clay, he sat my feet on a rock and gave me firm footing and on my lips he put a new song, a song of praise to our god.” Psalm 40, 2-3.

⁵ “Beera shel mirjam,” Mirjam’s well, refers to the mystical well of the prophetess Mirjam that, according to the Aggadah, accompanied the people of Israel during the 40 years in the desert and saved them from death of thirst. After Mirjam had passed away the well disappeared in the Sea of Galilee and surfaced only from time to time. The Aggadah describes the well’s water as enforced with healing and mystical powers. Tosefta, Masechet Zota, Lieberman edition, Perek 11, Halacha 1, 8. – BaMidbar Rabba, Vilna, Parascha 1, Dibur HaMatchil Davar Acher Wa’Jiedaber. – BaMidbar Rabba, Vilna, Parascha 18, Dibur HaMatchil 22, Yitbarach Shmo. – Talmud Babli, Shabbat, 35:1. – Talmud Yerushalmi, K’tuvot, Chapter 12, 35: 2. – Gordon, Judah Leib: Letters of Judah Leib Gordon from

It's been twenty-one days that I have been sitting here, drinking well-water and bathing in baths of manure. All those days were rainy and windy and I have suffered so many sufferings from the ma'im hame'arerim⁶ that came into me to pinch my stomach, and when I went out of the bath a cold caught me once and I became ill; But now the skies have purified and the rain ceased, and also the well-waters started to have their beneficent affect and now this place is like heaven to me and I hope that my health will be soon back with me. Another ten days should I sit here and then I will go to the place the doctor will send me to empty the rest of my pocket [...].⁷

These two initial phrases originate from successive letters to friends by the "maskil" and Hebrew writer Jalag, Judah Leib Gordon. Unlike a reader's possible association the biblical terms tit hayiaven and ma'im hame'arerim in Jalag's depiction neither refer to a cultic ritual nor to the geographical realm they originate from. Yet, in the moment the perplexed reader's eyes fall on the upper right part of the letter, he or she will understand the cryptic procedures the writer went through: Jalag's "Beera shel Mirjam" was no place else but Marienbad/Mariánské Lázně, one of the three well-known West Bohemian resorts, where he spent several summers in the 1880s and from where he wrote letters describing the medical applications of his cure, taking spring waters and mud bathes.

The symbolic line the depiction draws between mantic rituals of healing and usage of water on the one hand and places of medical innovations on the other may be surprising, even when considering their ironic scent and "maskilic" background. Therefore it is the intention of this article to shed light on the place, which stimulated Judah Leib Gordon to integrate a capitalist and secular modern phenomenon into a familial relation with Jewish traditions.

Fin-de-siècle Europe regarded the yearly travel to a renowned spa as an expression of the modern bourgeois experience. The anticipation or the nostalgia towards a forthcoming or past journey appeared as integrated parts of urban everyday life as well as the diseases and weaknesses which legitimized such luxury. The image of the places promised rest from the strains of increasing class struggles in the metropolis and moreover opened possibilities of transgressing social borders.

The seemingly marginal experience of this yearly travel was of special significance for Jews and Jewesses within the logics of modernity. Extraordinary numbers of them considered a visit in these representative places as part of their rite de passage into European bourgeoisie. Yet, regarding the fact that many of the Jewish visitors originated from geographical and cultural backgrounds, which showed less attempts in advancement the monocausal argument of bourgeoisisation does not sufficiently explain the strong appeal of these places.

1858-1892. Ed. Weissberg, Yitshak Yaakov. Warszawa 1894. Vol. 2/3, 53 (Hebrew). – My translation. I would like to thank Jonatan Meir for drawing my attention to this reference.

⁶ "Ma'im hame'arerim," the water of condemnation, is mentioned in the Bible: This water was part of a ritual in the temple that intended to find out if a woman was guilty of adultery or not. Terrible stomach aches after drinking the water of condemnation would proof her guilt. Numbers 5,11-26.

⁷ Gordon: Letters of Judah Leib Gordon. Vol. 2/3, 51-52 (cf. fn. 5).

The peculiarity of the modern resort consisted in its aim to preserve a theatrical public scenery of the 18th century within the framework of the political changes from imperial to nation states. What happened on the spa's stage, a peripheral experience limited in space and time, therefore appeared as oddly central: Like under the magnifying glass of a medical laboratory political and social developments were reflected enlarged – and somewhat distorted.

Under these circumstances the places' promise of equality in front of the springs and on the promenades could not be maintained for those who were regarded as “prototypical strangers.”⁸ In a realm which was mainly based on representation, the Jewish visitors' public appearance was put to a test of social completeness and acceptance – a test which implied the candidates' failure from the start. Within a Europe of nations the often-praised internationality one encountered on the resorts' promenades did not hide the deficiency of a “nation-less” minority, but put it on show by drawing an early connection between corporeal and social deviance and alienation. In this way the reality of the “mask” of assimilation⁹ seemed to become even more visible and Jews appeared more than ever as Jews.

Paradoxically the candidates' predicted failure represented partly the places' attraction, as I will argue from a micro-historical point of view. Focusing on the political tension and racial stigmatization, which followed the Jewish patients to the resort, it becomes evident that within a very short period of time Europe-wide codes were established to identify places as either “Jewish spaces”¹⁰ or anti-Semitic fortresses.¹¹ While the latter were mainly found in Germany, Austria or Poland, the West Bohemian spas Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary, Marienbad and Franzensbad/Františkové Lázně were often depicted as the most Jewish resorts among the “Jewish spaces” in Europe. Their specific location in a multiethnic scenery on the margins of Eastern and Western Europe enabled unusual encounters between a wide range of contemporary Jewish groups of different economic and religious backgrounds. Visiting patients would have discovered a broad Jewish infrastructure of hotels, restaurants, poorhouses, hospitals and synagogues, as well as cultural and social events, which were dimensioned to provide sufficient space for vivid urban communities: “In Karlsbad gibts mehr rituelle Küchen [...] als in den größten Weltstädten,” a contemporary appraisal on “das jüdische Karlsbad” claimed to know.¹²

⁸ Bauman, Zygmunt: *Moderne und Ambivalenz. Das Ende der Eindeutigkeit*. Frankfurt/M. 1992, 111.

⁹ “The value system they borrowed not only was never theirs in its entirety, but always contained elements inimical to them. The German always saw their adoption of it as merely a mask behind which glowered the unregenerate Jew. Sadly, for the German Jew the mask was the only reality.” Gilman, Sander: *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*. Ithaca 1985, 173 *passim*.

¹⁰ Brenner, Michael: Zwischen Marienbad und Norderney. Der Kurort als “Jewish Space.” In: *Jüdischer Almanach des Leo Baeck Instituts: Orte und Räume*. Frankfurt/M. 2001, 119–139.

¹¹ Bajohr, Frank: “Unser Hotel ist judenfrei.” Bäder-Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Frankfurt/M. 2003.

¹² *Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortezeitung* 1 (1929) 11, 4.

Reflecting the ambivalence of the modern Jewish experience at large, these places that originally promised approval to assimilatory attempts, suddenly enabled temporal shelters – identified with the symbolic meaning of a not closer defined “Jewish space.” Shelters, according to Michel Foucault, are not exceptional but necessary manifestations of modern society. These “other spaces” or heterotopian sites – as he named them in contrast to utopias – constitute

[...] real places – places that do exist and [...] which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.¹³

The “Jewish space” of the resort apparently facilitates what Foucault describes as crisis heterotopia, as a privileged, sacred or forbidden place, “reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc” and moreover, for those “whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm.”¹⁴

Did this temporal Jewish heterotopia moreover embody a sanctuary – sort of an actualized “Beera shel Mirjam,” sacred space preserved within a secularizing society, offering the illusion of healing and purification of social and racial stigmata? Or was it all a product of retrospective nostalgia and therefore just smoke and mirrors? Or did it even anticipate a dazing trap, as Aharon Appelfeld in his novel “Badenheim” puts it to the extreme, when the sheltering resort for its Jewish visitors turns into a waiting room for the deportation to Poland?¹⁵

“Böhmen liegt am Meer”¹⁶ Traveling, on the Stage of Alienation

When Josef K. in the penultimate chapter of “The Trial” enters the cathedral with a book in his hands, the priest, upon seeing him, asks about the nature of the book: “‘Was hältst du in der Hand? Ist es ein Gebetbuch?’ ‘Nein’, antwortete K., ‘es ist ein Album der städtischen Sehenswürdigkeiten.’”¹⁷

In an ironical way this dialogue juxtaposes the mundane and the sacred – and suggests that the travel book may be the remaining sacred text¹⁸ and traveling the remaining sacred movement. The secularized world in Kafka’s description appears as if the sacred is running through it like a gold thread through a fabric. In continuance to this image one could read Walter Benjamin’s comparison of train stations with cathedrals and train rides with mystical journeys under the supervision of pagan gods.¹⁹

¹³ Foucault, Michel: Of Other Spaces [1967]. Transl. Jay Miskowicz. In: <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html> (14.10.2005).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Appelfeld, Aharon: *Badenheim*. München 2001.

¹⁶ Bachmann, Ingeborg: *Böhmen liegt am Meer* [1964]. In: Idem: *Sämtliche Gedichte*. München, Zürich 1998, 177.

¹⁷ Kafka, Franz: *Der Proceß*. Ed. Pasley, Malcolm. Frankfurt/M. 1990, 288.

¹⁸ Zilcosky, John: *Kafka’s Travels. Exoticism, Colonialism and the Traffic of Writing*. New York, Hampshire 2003, 8.

¹⁹ Benjamin, Walter: *Kriminalromane, auf Reisen*. In: Idem: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. IV-1. Frankfurt/M. 1991, 381 passim.

Modern travel in its tendency to internalize aspects of pilgrimage uncovers the myth of secularization as a hermetic process and reflects its permeability. Remnants of the sacred constitute, following Foucault's theory of the heterotopia, spatial relations in the "epoch of space," which had followed the 19th century and its obsession with history:

[...] contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified [...]. To be sure a certain theoretical desanctification of space [...] has occurred, but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space. And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.²⁰

The first decades of the 20th century were an era of unparalleled middle-class tourism, which offered a temporary cure for modernity's "Heimweh nach der Fremde."²¹ This formerly romantic concept becomes modern in the constant attempt of re-locating "Heimat" and is therefore deeply nostalgic. Since nostalgia depends on a return home for its cure, modernism is melancholic, because the modern subject cannot accept the fact that home is hopelessly unattainable.²² If modern man was ill or alienated from the world, he went to travel elsewhere – may it be the promised land – the first extra-European Baedeker guide was about the land of Israel²³ – or the close-by famous resorts, Marienbad, Carlsbad or Franzensbad, which offered a most diverse variety of foreigners in the smallest place, and therefore a "Fremde in der Heimat".²⁴

As early centers of consumer and service culture the West Bohemian resorts advanced to meeting points for the seasonal migration of an international elite, which did not intend to earn but to spend money – to "empty one's pocket," as Judah Leib Gordon phrased it in the above quoted letters. The "paradisiacal" construction²⁵ of those islands of hedonism promised an illusion of a carefree life as commodity for the ones who could afford it. A little bad conscience, which accompanied the guest or patient in his wardrobe trunk, would lead to vivid charity and the foundation of poorhouses and hospitals for the so-called patients without means. Leisurely strolling in health-promising landscape gardens and an identical agenda for everyone and everyday would convey security and structure. For successful cure patients were strictly advised not to think about anything but their health during the stay.

"Aus der tiefen Ereignislosigkeit von Franzensbad," Theodor Herzl wrote to his mother, "Ich lebe wie eine Pflanze oder ein kleines Kind, den ganzen Tag im Park,

²⁰ Foucault: Of Other Spaces (cf. fn. 14).

²¹ Baedeker, Karl: *Palestina und Syrien*. Leipzig 1875. – Zilcosky: *Kafka's Travels* 7 (cf. fn. 8).

²² Kaplan, Caren: *Questions of Travel. Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham/NC 1996, 33 passim. – Zilcosky: *Kafka's Travels* 30 (cf. fn. 18).

²³ *Ibid.* 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Fuhs, Burkhard: *Mondäne Orte einer vornehmen Gesellschaft. Kultur und Geschichte der Kurstädte 1700-1900*. Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1992, 460.

lungere herum, denke nichts u. erhole mich."²⁶ The boredom he suffered during his unsuccessful heart cure made him comment the situation laconically, yet with humor. "Heute gab es für die sieben Kurgäste eine Zerstreuung," he wrote to his wife Julie, "der Kursaal ist abgebrannt."²⁷ Herzl, who died soon after his return from Franzensbad, seemed to express a characteristic attitude towards the cure, which consisted in sort of a double existence: vitality and *joie de vivre* on the surface, hiding his suffering from a deadly disease. The resort through its ritualized life allowed sublimating personal fears of suffering and death.²⁸

The promise of equality in front of the springs declared to integrate men and women of every social, national or religious background into an illusionary community of patients: " 'Wer früher kommt, trinkt früher' lautet der Grundsatz der Gleichberechtigung,"²⁹ was the contemporary saying, which one may put into question. Social, psychological and political conflicts were faded out of a city in small format; an arrangement of wildly eclectic palatial hotels, a Habsburg idyll surrounded by untamed forests.

In its artificiality and paradisiacal constructedness the resort seems to empty each winter like a stage after the last act, in order to be reoccupied in all kinds of practices in the coming spring: And once again, day after day in the same rituals, people were promenading, eating, representing, bathing and taking the waters. Like in a theater a new scenery was being pulled up and played by other actors, or the same ones. The anachronism of a romantic-bourgeois idyll preserved a public scene of the Ancien Régime and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's criticism of the latter may be applied here as well: The more people spent time on public amusements, the more they would depend on the view of the other and would pass one another the characteristic actor's disease. According to Rousseau the public would become a realm of self-loss and a person could invent him- or herself a place and identity as a stranger among strangers.³⁰

The spa town of late 19th and early 20th century appears as theater that conceals social and ethnic differences behind poses and masks. "Der gemeinsame Charakter aller dieser Menschen-Erscheinungen ist, dass sie nicht ihre wirkliche Eigenart gaben, sondern etwas darstellen wollen, was sie nicht sind." described Max Nordau the resorts' promenades in his controversial book "Degeneration":

So entstehen Köpfe, die auf Schultern sitzen, zu welchen sie nicht gehören, Trachten, deren Bestandtheile unzusammenhängend sind wie ein Traumcostüm, Farbengesellungen, die im

²⁶ Theodor Herzl to Jeanette Herzl, 17.5.1904. In: *Herzl*, Theodor: Briefe 1903-Juli 1904. Eds. Bein, Alex et al. Frankfurt/M. 1996, 587.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 582.

²⁸ Kos, Wolfgang: Zwischen Amusement und Therapie. Der Kurort als soziales Ensemble. In: *Lachmayer, Herbert/Mattl-Wurm, Sylvia/Gargerle, Christian* (Eds.): *Das Bad. Eine Geschichte der Badekultur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Wien 1991, 220-236, here 221.

²⁹ *Kisch*, Enoch Heinrich: *Blätter der Erinnerung an Marienbad und seine Umgebung*. Marienbad 1866, 19-20.

³⁰ *Sennett*, Richard: *Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens. Die Tyrannei der Intimität*. Frankfurt/M. 2001, 152 *passim*.

Dunkeln vorgenommen scheinen. Man hat den Eindruck, auf einem Maskenfeste zu sein, auf dem jeder in einer Verkleidung und mit einem Charakterkopf erschienen ist.³¹

For Nordau, who frequently traveled to Carlsbad and praised it in poems and essays, the emphasis on the public appearance and the seeming freedom behind the mask appeared as nothing but an expression of cultural decline and, moreover, a fraud.

“Frishe yidn” in Carlsbad, “700 000 Galician Jews” in Marienbad.

Since the turn of the century the West Bohemian resorts were situated in the very center of the Czech-German nationality conflict. During the early years of the new century a campaign against everything Czech had been carried out by German Nationals: As a result of this struggle, Czechs were vehemently expelled from schools, public positions, estate of houses and hotels. The role of the Jewish communities was the position of strangers who situated themselves outside the national conflict and questioned it with their presence. After World War I in an act of space occupation Carlsbad, Marienbad and Franzensbad were aggressively declared German cities. Paradoxically, this move was argued to maintain the places' internationality. Located in the heart of this conflict, the spa district embodied a realm seemingly devoid of politics, since during the summer any kind of political action was strictly prohibited.³²

In February 1923, the Zionist Organization's Central Office in London was taking into consideration to hold another Zionist Congress in Carlsbad. They had been quite enthusiastic about the city's support two years before at the 12th Zionist Congress. But shortly after the first contact with the town council, the Congress Office was informed that supposedly the municipality had integrated the swastika into the municipal coat of arms. Naturally the town council hurried to ensure the Congress Office that this was not the case and finally the Congress was held in Carlsbad.³³ Ambivalences, like this incident illustrates, were part of the daily politics, when intensions collided between a most successful economy on the one hand and the ideological positions of the German majority on the other. Even the city press, which hardly addressed patients and visitors, handled political incidents only vaguely. Although Jewish guests would be safe from anti-Semitism during their stays, the local specialty of the West Bohemian spas was a vehement off-season anti-Semitism, the so-called “winter anti-Semitism,” which was aimed at the local Jewish community.³⁴

Yet, during the summer the image of the spa district was popularized as a neutral space. The West Bohemian resorts had hardly ever been affected by any war, since

³¹ Nordau, Max: Entartung. Vol. 1. Berlin 1892, 16.

³² Státní okresní archiv Karlovy Vary [State District Archive, Karlovy Vary]. Am KV, A-I-18-1. Nationalitätenangelegenheiten.

³³ Státní okresní archiv Karlovy Vary, Am KV, C-VI-91, 1907-1938. Zionistische Kongresse.

³⁴ Triendl-Zadoff, Mirjam: “Die Bügelfalte des Antisemitismus.” Karlsbad, in der Sprache der Ambivalenz. In: Haas, Hanns/Hiebl, Ewald (Eds.): Lebenswelt und Politik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (forthcoming).

they used to declare neutrality,³⁵ and were often depicted as a realm to unite peoples. Referring to the historical mystification of resorts as holy places of healing and destination of hopeful pilgrimage, the soil of the spa was claimed sacrosanct and therefore a shelter within nation-building Europe, as the "Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortezeitung," a supplement to the Brünn "Jüdische Volksstimme", enthusiastically emphasized in its first issue:

Nicht will ich davon künden, dass in den westböhmisches Kurorten jene Epoche herangebrochen ist, von der der Prophet Jesajas weissagt, dass die Waffen zu Pflugscharen umgeschmiedet werden, das heißt, dass der Antisemitismus zur Gänze erloschen und erstorben ist – beileibe nicht! [...] Allein der Kurgast, mag er wer immer sein, ist in jenen Bädern heiliggesprochen. [...] Dieser Burgfrieden während der Kursaison hat es bewirkt, dass Juden aus allen Weltteilen nach den westböhmisches Kurorten gerne kommen.³⁶

Despite the paradoxical fact that year after year the "Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus" published a list of explicitly anti-Semitic hotels and an extraordinary number of anti-Semitic postcards was sent from the spas to all over the world,³⁷ the West Bohemian resorts were imagined as Jewish places by Jews and non-Jews alike. In the summer of 1922, Stefan Zweig vehemently refused an invitation to the North Sea island Langeoog with the following – and quite ambivalent – words:

Ich lasse mich nicht pardonieren und 'dulden', besonders dort wo ich bezahle. Lieber in ein Bad mit 700.000 galizischen Juden! Das habe ich nicht nötig – da lieber nach Marienbad [...], falls ich nichts Rechtes finde.³⁸

As juxtaposition to the nationalizing German resorts along the North Sea, Carlsbad, Marienbad and Franzensbad became known as places of encounter for Jews from all over Eastern and Western Europe – and even quite a number from "Erez Israel."³⁹

As Chaim Nahman Bialik reports, he just had to step out of the door of his hotel or into a coffeehouse to run into Jews, acquainted or not, with whom he could overcome the boredom of the cure. During one of his stays in the early 1930s he happily writes to his wife Mani, that he met "a por fayne maskilische un zionistische yidn"⁴⁰ among the guests and visitors. How dear this encounter was to him, he expresses a few lines later: "A glik, vos got hot mir tsugeshikt a por frische yidn."⁴¹

Such intended or accidental encounters did not only occur between intellectuals of different backgrounds, for example between Karl Marx and Heinrich Grätz during the summer of 1877 in Carlsbad,⁴² but also beyond social classes and religious

³⁵ *Kisch*: Erlebtes und Erstrebtes 250-251 (cf. fn. 29).

³⁶ *Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortezeitung* 1 (1929) 1, 1.

³⁷ *Dipper*, Rachel: "Einmal muss der Mensch ins Bad!" Grüße aus Karlsbad und Marienbad. In: *Gold*, Helmut/*Heuberger*, Georg (Eds): Abgestempelt. Judenfeindliche Postkarten. Frankfurt/M. 1999, 194-204.

³⁸ Stefan Zweig to Victor Fleischer, June 6, 1922. In: *Zweig*, Stefan: Briefe 1920-31. Eds. *Beck*, Knut/*Berlin*, Jeffrey B. Frankfurt/M. 2000, 70-71.

³⁹ *Bialik*, Chaim Nachman: Letters to his Wife Mani. Jerusalem 1955, 213 passim (Hebrew). – *Gordon*: Letters of Judah Leib Gordon 213 passim (cf. fn. 5).

⁴⁰ "A few nice mascilic and zionist Jews." *Bialik*: Letters to his Wife Mani 241 (cf. fn. 39).

⁴¹ "Fortunately god had send me a few fresh Jews." *Ibid.* 242.

⁴² *Baron*, Salo W.: History and Jewish Historians. Philadelphia 1964, 266 and 447.

backgrounds. Bourgeois Jews and Jewesses, after expressing a first displeasure, often described their fascination with the present Eastern Jewish oligarchy. What at first glance was experienced as an encounter of foreignness, as memoirs portray, was integrated into a family relation among all Jewish cultures. Within the limitedness of the stay and the smallness of the place, it occurred that a wealthy and assimilated Berlin banker family, who stayed in the famous Pupp Grand hotel, spent Friday evenings in a small Hassidic restaurant – or that the son of the same family caught his grandfather in an exceptional moment:

Suddenly, I saw on one of the benches a familiar figure. There sat my grandfather, tall and erect in his well-tailored suit, with his dignified, starched, wing collar, pearl gray tie and matching homburg hat. Next to him on the same bench sat several bearded Jews in their caftans and round fur hats, while others were standing around the bench. The bearded men were actively talking to each other, obviously deeply involved in a heated argument, and completely oblivious to my grandfather, to the 'jecke' sitting next to them, who, they must have thought, could not understand a word of Yiddish. [...] Whatever it was, my grandfather was sitting there, his steel blue eyes gazing forward into the void, and gave no sign that he was following the conversation around him. Yet, looking at his face which I knew so well and in which I was able to recognize the reflections of the debate of which, this time, he was a listener only, I, for one, knew that he was nevertheless an alert though silent participant.⁴³

Apart from these encounters, a sort of Jewish folklore was part of everyday spa life, when Jewish writers or theater groups came to town, or when the spa orchestra on a sunny afternoon intoned the “Kol Nidre.”⁴⁴ As temporary Yiddish-speaking enclaves the West Bohemian spas became spaces to express Western Jewish longing for an authentic Eastern Jewish folk culture. At the time the glance to the East, to Yiddish as a national Jewish language, was a central interest and the relation to a “viable,” authentic Jewish folk culture in Eastern Europe was a familial one. The foreignness in the perception of the “other” was experienced as foreignness in the perception of the self: Embracing the “Ostjuden” stood for the embrace of an original self in the “other.”⁴⁵

In Eastern Europe, a contemporary saying claimed to know that among the Jews “Carlsbad” was the overall synonym for a resort. “Fahrt Ihr auf Karlsbad?,” was the common question and the answer would have been “Yes,” even if the destination had been elsewhere.⁴⁶ The presence of Eastern European Jews in the West Bohemian spas was strong and sometimes even dominant – as the article “Orientalisches Intermezzo im westlichen Böhmen” on the Friday evening atmosphere in Marienbad illustrates:

Das ist eine kleine Gasse in Marienbad, dort weht um die Gestalten der Schreitenden der dunkle östliche Kaftan, lange oft wundervoll silberweiße Bärte umrahmen ehrwürdige Patriarchengesichter, selbst der kleine Junge, der seltsam still und scheu ernsthafte Spiele spielt, trägt runden Hut, Schläfenlocken und Kaftan. Es ist ein freundliches, vom großen Zug der

⁴³ Leo Baeck Institute, Archives New York, Samuel Echt-Bernhard Kamnitzer Collection MF596, Folder 35. Meyer, Gerald: Sprudel, Strudel & Chassidim. Manuscript 29-30.

⁴⁴ Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortezeitung 1 (1929) 15, 1.

⁴⁵ Spector, Scott: Prague Territories. National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2000, 160 passim.

⁴⁶ Jüdische Volksstimme 29 (1929) 28, 4-5.

internationalen Welt umbrandetes Ghetto dort oben, aber ein Ghetto der freien Wahl, ein selbstgewähltes Beisammensein der Ostjuden, also der frömmsten europäischen Juden, das der näheren Umgebung ruhig, aber entschieden den Stempel jüdischer Eigenart aufdrückt.⁴⁷

Famous Hassidic Rebbes traveled westwards and attracted hundreds of followers on their way to join them for Carlsbad, Marienbad or Franzensbad. Accompanied by their whole courts, with numerous kitchen staff and a "shokhet"⁴⁸ the "Rebbes fun Belz, Munkacz, Aleksandrov, Vishnitz" and "Ger," and many more came to take the waters, bathe and walk the woods. In their wake a lot of needy Jews arrived from the eastern provinces of the Habsburg monarchy, who were drawn by the hope of charity from wealthy patients. According to a report by the Jewish community of Carlsbad, it was the community's responsibility to take care of patients without means and regulate their presence in the spa. For that reason, the Jewish community decided around the turn of the century to expand the "Kaiser Franz Josefs-Regierungs-Jubiläums-Hospiz für arme Israeliten", a foundation of the 1870s, in order to accomodate around 150 patients monthly.⁴⁹

While secular Jews, mostly urban "Geistesmenschen," followed modernity's faith, the sciences, pious Jews from Eastern Europe would regard this travel as "Pikuakh nefesh," as preservation of life.⁵⁰ What they had in common were the indications for a cure – of new diseases, like neurasthenia and neuropathologies, diseases of affluence, mostly concerning the digestive system – many of them in these times diffuse or incurable.

Such incurable diseases were the reason why places like Carlsbad also facilitated medical laboratories, places of scientific innovation and popularization at the same time. Diabetes for instance was one of the main indications for the West Bohemian resorts and therefore in the center of medical examination. Its story reflects the ambivalent role of Carlsbad in terms of a "Jewish space": By the turn of the century Diabetes was known colloquially as the "Judenkrankheit," the Jew's disease.⁵¹ Around 1870 Joseph Seegen, professor at Vienna University and spa doctor in Carlsbad was the first to discover a predisposition of Jews to diabetes.⁵² Further and more precise research at the turn of the century showed that most of the former test results had been taken in resorts and sanatoria which at the time were frequented in high numbers by Jewish men and women.⁵³ How such ascriptions were inscribed in the self-depiction of visiting patients is illustrated in a joke, as a memoir recalls:

Thirty-five years ago, when I was a boy in Berlin, the saying was common among the Jews there, that if a Gentile is thirsty, he gets drunk and beats up his wife, but if a Jew is thirsty, he

⁴⁷ Jüdische Bäder- und Kurortezeitung 1 (1929) 7, 1.

⁴⁸ *Kisch*: Erlebtes und Erstrebtes 266 (cf. fn. 35).

⁴⁹ Festschrift zur 74. Versammlung Deutscher Naturforscher und Aerzte. Karlsbad 1902, 482-483.

⁵⁰ Jüdische Volksstimme 29 (1929) 26, 2.

⁵¹ Efron, John: *Medicine and the German Jews. A History*. New Haven, London 2001, 132.

⁵² *Ibid.* 133.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 137.

would diagnose his thirst as a symptom of imminent diabetes and would go to Carlsbad to take the waters and regain his health at the celebrated spa.⁵⁴

“Weg-von-hier, das ist mein Ziel”⁵⁵ *A Patient's Perspective*

Liebe Felice,

Karlsbad ist recht angenehm, aber Marienbad ist unbegreiflich schön. Ich hätte schon viel früher meinem Instinkt folgen sollen, der mir sagt, dass die Dicksten auch die Klügsten sind. Denn abmagern kann man überall auch ohne Quellenanbetung, aber in solchen Wäldern sich herumtreiben nur hier. Allerdings ist jetzt die Schönheit gesteigert durch die Stille und Leere und durch die Aufnahmebereitschaft alles Belebten und Ungelebten; dagegen kaum beeindruckt durch das trübe, windige Wetter. Ich denke, wenn ich ein Chinese wäre und gleich nach Hause fahren würde (im Grunde bin ich ja ein Chinese und muss nach Hause fahren), müsste ich es doch bald erzwingen, wieder herzukommen. Wie würde es dir gefallen! Herzlichst Franz.⁵⁶

In 1916, about a year before his tuberculosis broke out, Kafka went on a business trip to Marienbad, from where he wrote this postcard to his former and future fiancée Felice Bauer. A Chinese would have struck the other guests as an exotic and possibly most alien being, even in the internationality of Marienbad. The comparison seems to play with both the abovementioned “Heimweh nach der Fremde” as well as the “Entfremdung von der Heimat” – since it’s a long way from Carlsbad to China.⁵⁷

As John Zilcosky emphasizes, for the protagonists of Kafka’s stories, “Heimat” is not assumed, even as a lost object, but unhinged. Kafka’s nostalgia, as the nostalgia of a Jewish German-speaking writer in the Czech lands, transcends a general modern nostalgia. Kafka’s cultural homelessness does not lead to the discovery of a second “Heimat in der Fremde,” nowhere but in the utopia of his writing.⁵⁸ “Bedenken Sie auch Milena, wie ich zu Ihnen komme,” Kafka writes years later, in 1920 during a health cure in Meran, “welche 38jährige Reise hinter mir liegt (und da ich Jude bin, eine noch viel längere).”⁵⁹

After the short trip to Marienbad in his character as an employee of the Prague Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt Kafka expressed the wish to come back and stay for a few months alone, “um zu sehen, wie es mit mir steht.”⁶⁰ He returned to Marienbad soon after, where he met Felice and they unofficially decided to become engaged for the second time. “Bleibt nur das Rätsel zu lösen, warum ich in Marien-

⁵⁴ Leo Baeck Institute, Archives New York, Samuel Echt-Bernhard Kamnitzer Collection MF596, Folder 35. Meyer, Gerald: Sprudel, Strudel & Chassidim 29-30 (cf. fn. 43).

⁵⁵ Kafka, Franz: Der Aufbruch. In: *Idem*: Sämtliche Erzählungen. Ed. Raabe, Paul. Frankfurt/M. 1990, 321.

⁵⁶ Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, May 1916. In: Kafka, Franz: Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit. Frankfurt/M. 1967, 657.

⁵⁷ As Marthe Robert suggested, the Chinese in the novel “Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer” may represent the Jewish experience: If so, the “Chinese” facilitates a similar metaphor like the “dog” or the “mice” in Kafka’s other writings. Robert, Marthe: Einsam wie Franz Kafka. Frankfurt/M. 1985, 25-26.

⁵⁸ Zilcosky: Kafka’s Travels 35-36 (cf. fn. 18).

⁵⁹ Franz Kafka to Milena Jesenská. In: Kafka, Franz: Briefe an Milena. Ed. Brod, Max. New York 1952, 42.

bad 14 Tage glücklich war,"⁶¹ Kafka asks himself in retrospective, shortly before his death. After Felice had left, he spent three more weeks alone in Marienbad to cure his nervous condition, "mein Nervenleiden."⁶² The headaches and insomnias disappeared throughout the stay but returned soon after his arrival in Prague,

[...] immer noch, 4 Tage seit der Ankunft, habe ich noch irgendwie in mir die Nachwirkung der innern und äußern Ruhe, die ich in Marienbad mit Deiner und der großen Wälder Hilfe haben durfte. Sie wird schon schwächer, die Nachwirkung, Kopfschmerzen, Angstträume, die alten Schlafunterbrechungen wagen sich wieder vor, immerhin habe ich doch einiges Vertrauen hinzugewonnen, daß ein wenig Reisen und viel Ruhe und Freiheit meinen auseinandergehenden Kopf noch vielleicht zusammenfassen könnten. Es müßte aber bald sein.⁶³

The woods of Marienbad granted Kafka another and entirely different experience. The way Kafka describes an unusual encounter when walking the woods of Marienbad expressed a melancholic nostalgia to a seemingly lost Jewish "Heimat." An evening walk among the followers of whom he called "den höchsten Kurgast von Marienbad, d. h. denjenigen, auf den das größte menschliche Vertrauen gerichtet ist,"⁶⁴ made a deep impression on him and Marienbad appeared to him now as "eine Art Mittelpunkt der jüdischen Welt [...], denn der Belzer Rabbi ist hier."⁶⁵ In a long letter to his friend Max Brod, Kafka described his encounter with Issachar Dov Rokeach:

Der Rabbi kommt [...]. Er sieht aus wie der Sultan, den ich als Kind in einem Dorée-Münchhausen oft gesehen habe. Aber keine Maskerade, wirklich der Sultan. Und nicht nur Sultan, sondern auch Vater, Volksschullehrer, Gymnasialprofessor u. s. f. Der Anblick seines Rückens, der Anblick der Hand, die auf der Hüfte liegt, der Anblick der Wendung des breiten Rückens – alles das gibt Vertrauen. Auch in den Augen der ganzen Gruppe ist dieses ruhige glückliche Vertrauen, das ich gut ahne.⁶⁶

Repeatedly Kafka's diaries and letters mention meetings with Jews from Eastern Europe – just like the Yiddish theater in Prague or a summer camp close to Berlin⁶⁷ – as important and existential experiences. "Wir kennen doch beide ausgiebig charakteristische Exemulare von Westjuden," he writes to Milena,

[...] ich bin, soviel ich weiß, der westjüdischste von ihnen, das bedeutet, übertrieben ausgedrückt, daß mir keine ruhige Sekunde geschenkt ist, nichts ist mir geschenkt, alles muß erworben werden, nicht nur die Gegenwart und Zukunft, auch noch die Vergangenheit, etwas das doch jeder Mensch vielleicht mitbekommen hat, auch das muß erworben werden, das ist vielleicht die schwerste Arbeit, dreht sich die Erde nach rechts – ich weiß nicht, ob sie das tut – müßte ich mich nach links drehen, um die Vergangenheit nachzuholen.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, probably May 14, 1916. In: *Kafka: Briefe an Felice* 655-656 (cf. fn. 56).

⁶¹ *Kafka: Tagebücher* 896-897 (cf. fn. 2).

⁶² Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, probably May 14, 1916. In: *Kafka: Briefe an Felice* 655-656 (cf. fn. 56).

⁶³ Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, July 28, 1916. In: *Ibid.* 672.

⁶⁴ Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, July 1916. In: *Ibid.* 665-666.

⁶⁵ Franz Kafka to Felix Weltsch, July 1916. In: *Kafka, Franz: Briefe 1902-1924*. Ed. Brod, Max. New York 1958, 146.

⁶⁶ Franz Kafka to Max Brod, July 1916. In: *Ibid.* 141 passim.

⁶⁷ Franz Kafka to Milena Jesenská. In: *Kafka: Briefe an Milena* 268 (cf. fn. 59).

⁶⁸ Franz Kafka to Milena Jesenská. In: *Ibid.*

Kafka's idiosyncratic position seems to be variedly connected to the position of a German-speaking Jew in Prague, one of the central points in his "Brief an den Vater". According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's analysis, Kafka's father is being depicted in the letter as an image of a whole generation of Jews, who had left the relatively conservative Czech-Jewish countryside for the German city. There they were bending their heads under a reterritorialising major German culture. In his letter Kafka is projecting the father's image on the world's map. By doing so, the two philosophers argue, he is constructing an idea of Oedipus, which he blows up, until the father appears like under a magnifying glass. And finally it becomes evident that his aim is not to liberate himself from the father but to find a way out of the situation in which his father failed. Therefore his attempt led to total deterritorialisation in his language and literature, since, as Kafka emphasizes, it is not a matter of freedom, but of a way out, "ein Ausweg."⁶⁹

When projected onto the map of the imagined Jewish "topos" – place/location – Carlsbad, where does this argument lead us? It was the generation of Kafka's parents, who had made their way from the Czech village up to the German city in the hills, as they were in the middle of the 19th century finally permitted to do.⁷⁰ There they founded a Jewish community – in order to bend their heads and become strangers, in Georg Simmels definition of

[...] der Fremde nicht [...] als der Wandernde, der heute kommt und morgen geht, sondern als der, der heute kommt und morgen bleibt – sozusagen der potentiell Wandernde, der, obgleich er nicht weitergezogen ist, die Gelöstheit des Kommens und Gehens nicht ganz überwunden hat.⁷¹

For up to that moment only "wandering Jews" had come to Carlsbad – namely patients and visitors, traveling salesmen or beggars. But now there was a community with a vivid interest in reterritorialisation. But, as Simmel continues, "verschärft sich die Position des Fremden [...] für das Bewusstsein, wenn er, statt den Ort seiner Tätigkeit wieder zu verlassen, sich an ihm fixiert."⁷²

In the temporal and artificial topography of the spa district a symbolic occupation of space may seem easier. But in my opinion it is even more illusionary than elsewhere. For in Carlsbad a sort of foreignness was part of daily life: it was being put on show on the narrow, crowded promenades, where different national groups had observed each other closely, yet from a distance. In this specific foreignness the alienation of the "wandering Jew" is not abolished, on the contrary, it is experienced

⁶⁹ Deleuze, Gilles/Guattari, Félix: Kafka, für eine kleine Literatur. Frankfurt/M. 1976, 15 passim.

⁷⁰ The local Jewish communities were not even small during the Winter season: In 1900 1405 Jewish inhabitants lived in Carlsbad, around 9,6 % of the whole population. In 1919, at the time of its 50th anniversary, the Carlsbad Jewish community was the fourth biggest in Bohemia. Ziegler, I[gnaz]: Zum 50jährigen Bestand der jüdischen Gemeinde in Carlsbad. In: Dr. Bloch's Wochenschrift: Zentralorgan für die gesamten Interessen des Judentums 36 (1919) 41, 659–660.

⁷¹ Simmel, Georg: Exkurs über den Fremden. In: *Idem*: Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung. Berlin 1908, 509–512, here 509.

⁷² *Ibid.* 510–511.

more intensively. In an atmosphere of "equality, harmony, vicinity" as Simmel follows up his argument, the relation to the "others" adopts a character of coldness that results out of the accidental and interchangeable nature of the encounter.⁷³

In this situation the present national groups would imagine Jewish alliances and construct proximity between the local and the temporally present Jewish groups. The variety of Jewish cultures had been disregarded under the assumption of inter-nationality and seeming unity among Jews. They all were being imagined into a familial relation: the local Jewish community, mostly merchants and hotel keepers, wealthy patients and visitors from all over Europe, as well as patients without means and quite a number of beggars and peddlers from the Eastern provinces of the Habsburg monarchy.

This chance society of Jewish groups, members of a minority in a state of crisis, created for limited periods of time heterotopian sites, seemingly exterritorial Jewish spaces – different from what Deleuze and Guattari claimed on Kafka's constant and bare deterritorialisation, yet related to it. For, as Kafka argues, it was not a matter of freedom, but of a way out, "ein Ausweg," – or if to use the pun – a matter of a last resort.

*An "imaginary home"*⁷⁴

While historical analyses mostly seek to locate places in time, it was the intention of this article to describe the timelessness of a place. Over a continuous period, from the 1870s to the late 1930s, the West Bohemian spas offered Jewish visitors a limited rest from sorrows and constraints of everyday life back home. Such an experience was always, as described in the above-mentioned theory of the heterotopian site, "linked to slices in time [...]." Temporality, as Michel Foucault argues, is essential for the creation of a heterotopia, as it begins to function at full capacity only "when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time."⁷⁵ The "other space" of the spa island would therefore not only exist by virtue of its extraterritorial character, but also and more so of its extra-temporal condition. Within its spatial isolation the place inscribed its own rhythm and specific perception of time on the visitors, who accepted the local rules according to socio- and biopolitical agreements.

In this text, the temporal dynamics within the place have been in the foreground, while the chronological developments from without entered only fragmentarily. Although political changes had great impact on the character of this "elsewhere," their influence was reflected only in a distorted way. The central interest was to maintain the continuous experience of a timeless and stable island, conveying security and structure. The changes which came in the wake of World War I and the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, must not be ignored, but be traced with precision and in great detail. The radical transformation of the Jewish society within nationalizing Europe redefined the "Jewish place" Carlsbad, when it began to

⁷³ *Ibid.* 511-512.

⁷⁴ Aharon Appelfeld used the expression "imaginary home" when he described the meaning of spas for Jewish visitors. Interview with Mirjam Triendl-Zadoff, Jerusalem, March 21, 2005.

⁷⁵ *Foucault: Of Other Spaces* (cf. fn. 13).

facilitate a Zionist venue after World War I.⁷⁶ A decade later, after the Nazi rise to power, German Jews came in big numbers to rest from the growing insecurity in Germany and radiated an atmosphere of a refuge.⁷⁷ Yet, the main purpose of the visit remained the same throughout these different periods of time: creating a temporal “imaginary home.”

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- ⁷⁶ Státní okresní archiv Karlovy Vary, Am KV C-VI-91, 1907-1928. Zionistische Kongresse. – Makkabi Weltverband. Karlsbader Tagung, Berlin-Schöneberg [s.a.]. – The WIZO Conferences [1935], Zionist Archives Jerusalem, F 49/3062. – *Holitscher*, Arthur: Karlsbad vor Palästina. In: *Die neue Rundschau* 32 (1921) 11, 1164-1165. – *Triendl-Zadoff*, Mirjam: Herzl im Kurbad. Über Karlsbad und Tiberias, Projektionsräume der Diaspora und der zionistischen Utopie. In: *Hähner-Rombach*, Sylvelyn (Ed.): “Ohne Wasser ist kein Heil.” Medizinische und kulturelle Aspekte der Nutzung von Wasser. Stuttgart 2005, 119-135.
- ⁷⁷ *Scholem*, Betty / *Scholem*, Gershom: Mutter und Sohn im Briefwechsel 1907-1946. München 1989, 430-434. – *Kohl*, Christiane: Der Jude und das Mädchen. Die wahre Geschichte zum Film “Leo und Claire.” München 2002, 66.