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The Spa as Sociable Space: a Comparative View of Baden-Baden and Saratoga Springs.

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Among the many sociable spaces of the long eighteenth century, it may be safely said that the spa played a prominent role in the culture of sociability. Taking the waters at mineral springs, aside from the purported health benefits, was simultaneously a cultural practice of sociability. This was true of the spas of Europe as well as in emergent spas in European colonies or former colonies. Indeed, spas were important nodes in the flow of transnational culture¹. Fashion and forms of sociability, including the negotiation of class lines, the development of architectural spaces or of medical views and practices, not to mention the representation of spas in

1 BORSAY, Peter, 2016. "Georgian Bath: À Transnational Culture", in BORSAY, Peter and FURNÉE, Jan Hein, ed. *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe, c. 1700-1870: À Transnational Perspective*, Manchester : Manchester University Press, p. 93.

letters, literature, and even in popular culture to the present², speak to the breadth of the spa as a subject for study³.

As Jill Steward correctly points out, these spas, as one of many leisure settings, can be conceived as liminal or heterotopic social spaces, reflecting society at large in a confined and idealized space in which the shifting and still not entirely coherent boundaries of class identities were expressed and to an extent shaped⁴. In an atmosphere sometimes characterised by the German term *Badefreiheit* or “spa freedom”, patrons of different social classes and national or regional backgrounds mingled in a relatively free, if still scripted, dance of social interaction. Those who longed to rise in social status might have their ambitions at least partially realised, if nothing more than by association with the highest echelons of society in the same shared social space. At the same time, however, this apparent freedom could be deceptive, as social barriers and relative levels of inclusion emphasised the distinctions between those deemed respectable enough to belong and those excluded from polite society. This lower boundary, then, was also important for these middle-class patrons. While they themselves may not have belonged to the most rarefied of social circles, their status was enhanced by the drawing of clear lines between

2 See BORSAY, Peter, 2000. *The Image of Georgian Bath*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3 For an overview of some of the scholarship, see for example two fine collections of essays, WALTON, John K., ed., 2014. *Mineral Springs Resorts in Global Perspective. Spa Histories*, London and New York, Routledge, and COSSIC, Annick and GALLIOU, Patrick, ed., 2006. *Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

4 STEWARD, Jill, 2016. “The Role of Inland Spas as Sites of Transnational Cultural Exchange in the Production of European Leisure Culture (1750-1850)”, in BORSAY, Peter and FURNÉE, Jan Hein, eds, 2016. *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe, op. cit.*, p. 224-225.

themselves and those deemed too lowly for admission to the playground of the resort.

These boundaries, established in the eighteenth century, were then adopted and perpetuated in new spas in the nineteenth century. While national paradigms of sociability and class lines meant that different spas had their own particular iterations, the basic patterns of inclusion and exclusion, key to the spa experience, remained largely in place in an era of greater social mobility and blurring of class lines. The aim of this paper is to offer a comparative case study of the culture of sociability in spas through examination of Baden-Baden as an example of a clearly international central European spa and of Saratoga Springs, New York, as an emergent North American space in which class and ethnic identities were negotiated and enforced.

The choice of spas for study is not an entirely random one. Each is a spa which was unimportant or non-existent in the eighteenth century but became fashionable and grew rapidly after 1800. Prior to its gaining fashionable attention in the wake of the Second Congress of Rastatt in 1797-99, Baden-Baden was a local backwater and drew mostly a small local clientele; the first guesthouse in Saratoga Springs was only built in 1803. An investigation of these two 'new' spas can illuminate the way in which models pioneered in places like Bath and Pyrmont in the eighteenth century were reinvented in the nineteenth. Similarly, however, choosing one of the new nineteenth-century continental grand spas, located at the centre of spa culture in the period, as well as a peripheral one in a former-colonial hinterland that rose to prominence, at least in North America, allows a perspective on the diffusion of patterns and adaptations of spa sociability in quite different social and cultural contexts.

Widespread spa sociability was an element which drew the attention of visitors, and spa promoters were eager to emphasise the supposedly easy interaction between guests taking the cure from all social classes, from the highest of nobles down to the lowest of the commoners, who then tended to be local. Thus, we can read for example in Heinrich Marccard's 1784 German edition of his guide to Pyrmont, "... interaction is easy and unrestrained ... Without reservation one can address anyone to whom one had been introduced, or even introduces oneself; one can approach any circle one desires to take part in the conversation⁵". The much-abridged English edition of 1788 contains a similar passage, with phrasing one might imagine was meant for an English audience: "Pedigree here, contrary to the rules of most other parts of Germany, gives no exclusive privilege. People of merit, science, and good breeding, are indiscriminately admitted into any circle, and indeed ... are generally sought out without any reference to the number of their quarterings, or the antiquity of their family⁶". A similar sentiment appears in an 1816 article published in the *Morgenblatt für Gebildete Stände* which reported from Baden-Baden that "every difference of status disappears, a true equality emerges, and

5 MARCARD, Heinrich Matthias, 1784. *Beschreibung von Pyrmont*, Leipzig, Weidmanns Erben und Reich, Vol. 1, p. 74 [original : Uebrigens ist der Umgang leicht und ungezwungen ... Man redet ohne Bedenken jedermann an, in dessen Bekanntschaft man eingeführt ist, oder mach die Bekanntschaft selbst man nähert sich jedem Cirkel nach gefallen, um an der Conversation Theil zu nehmen].

6 MARCARD, Heinrich Matthias, 1788. *A Short Description of Pyrmont*, London, Printed for J Johnson, p. 10. Marccard's description was first published in German, and a full edition was available in French; only an abridged short version was published in English.

7 *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* or "Morning Paper for the Educated Classes" (after 1837, *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* – "Morning Paper for Educated Readers") was a popular periodical for the German middle classes published by Johann Friedrich Cotta, Goethe's publisher.

yet nowhere is a sense of respect injured⁸”. Even from far away Saratoga Springs, New York, Elihu Hoyt wrote in his journal of a visit to the resort in August 1827 that “[t]here is the High & low, the rich & poor, the Healthy & lame, the white & the black⁹...”.

How idyllic it all sounds. Of course, the reality was not quite so simple. In Pyrmont and Baden-Baden, while the classes may have mingled, they hardly became equals. Certain turns of phrase are important here: in the case of Marcard, “to take part in the conversation” still does not mean a lack of proper deference to one’s social betters; the *Morgenblatt* formulation of “a true equality emerges” is immediately followed by “and yet nowhere is a sense of respect injured”, clearly implying that deference and not being offended by the impudence of a social upstart remained part of the equation; and while Hoyt’s “High & low, rich & poor . . . the white & the black” may have shared the same space, it seems necessary to state the obvious here that while for example, white and black may have been in the same large dining room, it was the well-to-do whites doing the dining, while the service staff in Saratoga Springs was overwhelmingly African-American men (waiters) or immigrant women (housekeeping)¹⁰. Occupying the same space, certainly; the same status, hardly.

What may account for these heady, even giddy accounts (even if some are transparently advertisements, as in the case

8 “Korrespondenz-Nachrichten aus Baden, 28. Juli”, 1816. *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* No. 186, 3 August, p. 744. [Original text: “Da verschwindet jeder Unterschied der Stände; es tritt eine wahre Gleichheit ein, und dennoch wird nirgendwo die Achtung verletzt.” All translations from German are by the author.]

9 HOYT, Elihu, 1827. “Journal of a tour to Saratoga Springs” 9 August, cited in CHAMBERS, Thomas E., 2002. *Drinking the Waters. Creating an American Leisure Class at Nineteenth-Century Mineral Springs*, Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, p. 81.

10 CHAMBERS, 2002. *Drinking the Waters, op. cit.*, p. 24.

of the *Morgenblatt* – Cotta also opened a swanky full-service hotel in Baden-Baden in 1808) is the relative proximity of the classes. In an era when class lines grew less rigid and the aspiring middle classes not only rose in wealth, but also sought a corresponding increase in status, simply sharing the same space on the promenade, attending the same ball, or perhaps even a chat in the pump room, a shared meal or hand of faro with members of the upper classes could seem quite an attraction, indeed. Similarly, the exclusion of others from those circles entailed a boost in esteem for those admitted. The boundaries of social class were not erased, but they did tend to be blurred, at least in comparison to the world outside of the spa.

A key attraction of the spa, then, which is apparent in both Baden-Baden and in Saratoga, was the ability to share the same space with the higher echelons of society and in some way to be able to socialize or associate with them. Each resort town sought to capitalize on this. The spa administration of Baden-Baden, starting in 1806, began to publish regular lists of visitors (with origin and often profession or status), arranged by hotel, both to make social calls easier and to establish a sense of prestige of what company one was keeping, as well as to raise the prestige of the spa by showcasing its distinguished visitors¹¹. This was an expanded and improved practice that had been pioneered in the eighteenth century in Pyrmont, which began printing guest lists as early as 1735¹². The press, none more eagerly

11 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 195/1061, “Oberamtsberichte über die in Baden angekommenen und wieder abgereisten Badgäste; die Badlisten (Reg.) 1806-1808”, point seven of a memorandum dated August 12, 1806.

12 DÜLL, Siegfried, 1995. “Einführung”, in DÜLL, Siegfried, ed., *Das Pyrmontener Brunnenarchiv von 1782: Nachdruck der Originalausgabe mit einer Einführung*, Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, p. 33. Lists were kept in Pyrmont as early as 1716, the year that both Peter the Great of Russia

than Cotta's *Morgenblatt*, covered the visits of nobles and notables alike, and so aside from visits of dukes and heirs to the throne, similarly one would read of the musicians, writers and artists taking up summer residence there. In a similar, and yet much less organized fashion, the owner of a reading room in Saratoga tried to assemble a similar list for the benefit of visitors (and no doubt to attract patrons to his own establishment)¹⁵, and reports appeared in the fashion pages of the press in particular about the lofty summer residents of Saratoga¹⁴.

The difference in approach to name-dropping is indicative of the overall approach to organization and regulation of sociable space in both resort towns. In Baden-Baden and Saratoga Springs, these lines were drawn, defined, and enforced differently, which can be linked back to their respective eighteenth-century antecedents. Baden-Baden was a new incarnation of a continental tradition, in this case drawing on the pattern of Pyrmont, in which the spa was in essence the summer court of the ruling house of the local principality (in German lands, this would be an elector, a margrave, possibly a Duke, somewhat different again in the Habsburg lands), hence an object of prestige to receive lavish state support. Socially, while an atmosphere of leisure and relative ease prevailed in this 'summer court' open to a wider range of 'respectable' visitors, the court

and King George I of England (and Elector of neighbouring Hanover) visited the spa, and were printed after 1735. On the visits of King George and other luminaries, see ALFTER, Dieter, 1994. "Die Pyrmonter Badegesellschaft. Berühmte Badegäste des 18. Jahrhunderts", in ALFTER, Dieter, ed., *Badegäste der Aufklärungszeit in Pyrmont*. Bad Pyrmont: Museum im Schloß, p. 18-33.

13 CHAMBERS, 2002. *Drinking the Waters*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

14 STERNGASS, JON, 2001. *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 20 ff.

itself might still be relatively strict and prescribed rules of ‘proper’ behaviour applied. Saratoga, for its part may have aspired to be an imitation of Bath, and may have inherited some social practices and uses of spaces, not to mention the model of private investment, but the American resort town had a relatively more open social structure with unspoken codes carried over from the old colonial elite. This took place within the more experimental social fabric of a budding republic and produced a more ad hoc approach to sociability and sociable spaces. At Saratoga, there was no equivalent of Beau Nash, Master of Ceremonies at Bath and Tunbridge Wells, and the institution was quite rare in American spas generally¹⁵. Nevertheless, it is striking how quite similar social aims were pursued, namely elevation of those in the middle to hobnob with the elite, while drawing clear boundaries to exclude those who were seen as not appropriate for the society of the spa.

Those spaces, whether in Central Europe or in North America, were built in clear reference to patterns established in fashionable spas in the late eighteenth century, whether in Britain or on the Continent. Phyllis Hembry nicely enumerates what she called the “spa’s apparatus” which consisted of “several drinking or bath centres, assembly rooms, libraries, a theatre, hotels and lodging houses, and a pleasure garden¹⁶”. All of these were to be found in both Baden-Baden and Saratoga, naturally, and to a great degree each was pursuing a commercial impulse, but the two spas followed distinct modes of development of these spaces. Baden-Baden, clearly following in the model of the extension

15 CORBETT, Theodore, 2001. *The Making of American Resorts. Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George*, New Brunswick, NJ and London, Rutgers University Press, p. 25-26.

16 HEMBRY, Phyllis, 1997. *British Spas from 1815 to the Present. A Social History*. Ed. and completed by COWIE, Leonard W. and COWIE, Evelyn E., London, Athlone Press, p. 2.

of the court, witnessed a vast expansion of its infrastructure starting at the turn of the nineteenth century – when the Margrave of Baden was first elevated to Elector (1803), and then to the Grand Duke of Baden. Clearly, this increase in status meant that the new Grand Duke had to have an appropriately prestigious watering place, and so a massive and rapid expansion plan was undertaken, much under the direction of the court architect, Friedrich Weinbrenner, who himself had been influenced by English Palladianism. A central elegant social centre was essential, and so first the former Jesuit College was requisitioned and converted into the “Promenade House” [*Promenadenhaus*], soon to be replaced in 1821 by an appropriately grand yet tastefully restrained neoclassical Conversation House, which housed ballrooms, salons, reading rooms, and the indispensable casino. Simultaneously, the town witnessed the construction of a theatre, a Pump Room and Spring Pavilion for taking the waters, bathing facilities, and of course, a number of luxury hotels, most notably, Cotta’s *Badischer Hof*. By 1825, all the key elements were in place, neatly clustered around the promenade or spa gardens.

From its beginnings also in the first years of the century, Saratoga Springs grew somewhat more slowly. Where Baden-Baden could reap the fruits of governmental planning, regulation, administration and financing, Saratoga was a collection of private enterprises, pioneered by the town founder Gideon Putnam and his sons, who first opened a tavern near the newly-discovered springs ca. 1803¹⁷, and later, after selling town lots for development, began building the first large hotel in 1811. Correctly sensing the potential to rival the nearby Ballston Spa, other entrepreneurs followed, and by 1825, Saratoga could boast a number of hotels including three grand ones, the Congress, the Union, and the United

17 CHAMBERS, 2002. *Drinking the Waters*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

States¹⁸, whose massive scale and spacious verandas “sought to impress its wealthy urban visitors with its grandeur and sophistication¹⁹”. These hotels themselves were the main stage for social life in Saratoga – the main promenade was the central artery through town, Broadway, along which the hotels were clustered. Each was equipped with its own ballrooms, salons, and the like (like their counterparts in Baden-Baden), but without anything like the state-sponsored Conversation House to act as a central gathering place, each hotel became a hub in its own right. Gardens and springs were generally attached to a particular hotel, the most important of these being perhaps the Congress Spring, located in Congress Park, linked, naturally, to the Congress Hotel and, of course, the Congress Springs mineral water bottling company.

While boosters and promoters made much of the ease and openness of life in these spa towns, part of their appeal lay in their claims to exclusivity and the corresponding prestige. This meant that a delicate balance had to be found in attracting enough paying visitors (in different price ranges) to make for a successful commercial enterprise (whether for private entrepreneurs or a Grand Duke, a successful, fashionable spa was a lucrative affair). This primarily meant middle-class visitors, while still maintaining enough exclusivity not to dull the lustre of high society.

That was, after all, an important element of the appeal of elite spa towns like Baden-Baden. The hope of many bourgeois visitors, fuelled by the spas’ reputation for open sociability, based on the relatively free access to shared cultural and leisure spaces²⁰, was that they might have a chance to

18 RICHARDS, T. Addison, 1867. *Miller’s Guide to Saratoga Springs and Vicinity, Illustrated*, New York, James Miller, p. 21.

19 CHAMBERS, 2002. *Drinking the Waters*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

20 This reputation of spas as spaces in which sociability was relatively open and free was in part a result of the commercialization of leisure

make the acquaintance of someone high-born and powerful, or at least, to enjoy being near them. The *Morgenblatt* wrote for example in 1825 that a middle-class visitor strolling along the promenade, orbiting at some distance from the high nobles gracing it with their presence, “might be fortunate enough to be spoken to by a monarch or high noble²¹”. Rahel Levin Varnhagen²² remarked in a letter to a friend from

within the consumer revolution as described in MCKENDRICK, Neil, BREWER, John, and PLUMB, John H., 1985. *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. However, the notion of “spa freedom” does predate the eighteenth century, at least in Central Europe, when there were in some ways greater opportunities for mingling among members of different estates. Access to these spaces without a doubt meant much to the aspiring classes, but it is important to remember that this freedom was relative and must be seen in context. In his recent study on “new free spaces” in the Baltic region, Matthias Müller has observed that “The institutionalization of a recreational or sociable space is automatically accompanied by processes of inclusion and exclusion [...] The exclusion of certain groups made some freedoms possible for the people present that were inconceivable outside of this space. Those present also made an effort to maintain a common ideal of behaviour, which they sought to impose with particular regulations and their own mechanisms of control” [Original: Mit der Institutionalisierung eines vergnüglichen oder geselligen Raumes an einem Ort gehen automatisch Prozesse der Inklusion oder Exklusion einher. (...) Der Ausschluss gewisser Gruppen ermöglichte den anwesenden Personen einige Freiheiten, die außerhalb dieses Raumes nicht vorstellbar gewesen wären. Dabei bemühten sich die Anwesenden darum, ein gemeinschaftliches Verhaltensideal aufrechtzuerhalten, das sie mit einer gesonderten Ordnung und eigenen Kontrollmechanismen durchzusetzen suchten]. MÜLLER, Matthias, 2019. *Das Entstehen neuer Freiräume. Vergnügen und Geselligkeit in Stralsund und Reval im 18. Jahrhundert*, Wien, Köln, Weimar, Böhlau Verlag, p. 13.

21 “Korrespondenz-Nachrichten. Baden bey Rastadt”, 1825. *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* No. 195, 16 August, 780 [Original text: “...und Manchem, dem das Glück zu Theil geworden von einer Majestät oder Hoheit bemerkt und angesprochen zu werden”].

22 Born Rahel Levin to a prominent Jewish banking family in Berlin, she was a prominent salon host and epistolary writer. Her story and the story of Jewish visitors to spas in spa sociability is a fascinating and important

Baden-Baden in 1818 that the King and Queen of Bavaria had been there, and that their daughter and her husband, Eugène de Beauharnais (Napoleon's stepson and the former Viceroy of Italy) had even stayed next door²³. A fortunate few from the most elevated circles, those who like Varnhagen could navigate the "rigidly applied etiquette"²⁴, might do a bit better. On another occasion in another spa (Teplitz, present-day Teplice) she shared the company of a countess and a Belgian prince²⁵. Yet such encounters were generally only possible for members of the most refined bourgeois circles, and even for them, most of their social interactions were with other members of the bourgeoisie. Varnhagen, for example, makes no mention of meeting any members of the Bavarian royal entourage in 1818, and instead discusses the time spent with wealthy middle-class new acquaintances from Strasbourg. For most, it seems, spatial proximity itself, the ability to see and perhaps be noticed and spoken to, was what was remarkable more than any real interaction with the high-born.

Yet the promise of prestige by proximity seems to have fuelled, at least among some, hope of something more. Another letter Varnhagen wrote in 1815 tells of how she made the acquaintance of a fascinating Austrian who in Baden-

one. For a good treatment, see NAIMARK-GOLDBERG, Natalie, 2010. "Health, leisure and sociability at the turn of the nineteenth century: Jewish women in German spas", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 55, p. 63-91.

23 VARNHAGEN, Rahel, letter to Pauline Wiesel in Murten (No. 25), Baden, 1 August 1818, in KEMP, Friedhelm, ed., 1979. *Rahel Varnhagen, Briefwechsel, Vol. 3 Rahel und ihre Freunde*, München, Winkler-Verlag, p. 242.

24 KUHNERT, Reinhold, 1987. "Badereisen im 18. Jahrhundert. Sozialleben zur Zeit der Aufklärung", *Journal für Geschichte* 1, p. 18.

25 VARNHAGEN, Rahel, 1861. *Briefwechsel zwischen Rahel Levin und David Veit*, Leipzig, Brockhaus, vol. II, p. 161, cited in NAIMARK-GOLDBERG, 2010. "Health, leisure and sociability...", *op. cit.*, p. 72.

Baden was first “ennobled, then made a baron²⁶”, something she clearly found admirable, possibly enviable. The fantasy of the spa as an environment for social advancement from bourgeois to noble is made more explicit decades later in the memoirs of the sculptor Josef von Kopf. He writes of the good fortune he had in the 1870s, when the German Kaiser addressed him on the promenade in Baden-Baden and even invited him to take a place at his grand table that evening, and then breathlessly tells a story of a man, who thanks to his stepmother’s making the acquaintance first of the Grand Duchess, and through her the Empress, finds favour and is himself elevated into the nobility²⁷. Whether true or apocryphal, the tale speaks of an aspiration that women’s sociability and networking at the spa might lead to social betterment, even ennoblement for men.

Whatever opportunities there may have been for a select few, spa society was hardly egalitarian: the bounds of class and station clearly mattered, and the rules of the social hierarchy still had to be respected. While such boundaries obviously mattered to the upper classes and the *haute bourgeoisie*, the observance of rules of respectability may have been especially important for those who might not have had the opportunity to hobnob with the nobility, yet still sought to elevate their own status through being ‘members of the club’, so to speak, emphasizing the difference between themselves as respectable and those who were not. Those invited to the ball, or even fortunate enough to be introduced to royalty could comfortably bask in the glow of luminous company; those not invited to the dance, but who could wait in the hall

26 KEMP, ed., 1979. *Briefwechsel, op. cit.*, p. 312 [Original text: “Der Mann ist geadelt und dann baronisiert worden”].

27 KOPF, Josef von, 1890. *Lebenserinnerungen eines Bildhauers*. Stuttgart und Leipzig : Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1890, p. 461, 465.

outside had the most gain by drawing the distinction between themselves and those outside of the Conversation House.

Baden-Baden, predictably perhaps, took an administrative approach to maintaining this social pecking order and, to recall the words of the *Morgenblatt*, so that “nowhere is a sense of respect injured”. The Grand Ducal Spa Commission, formed at the beginning of the century as a subsection of the Ministry of the Interior, oversaw nearly all aspects of the spa, from hotels and their prices, the standards for bathing cabinets, and, for our purposes most significantly, the *Promenadenordnung* or the “Promenade Ordinance” with its origins in the 1808 *Badepolizeyordnung*. One of the most important elements of this Ordinance was the regulation of ‘proper’ behaviour in the resort district, and so it established norms for acceptable appearance and manners, and those failing to exhibit the behaviour or wardrobe of a proper lady or gentleman were to be summarily ejected from the grounds and possibly banned for the season. A cadre of bailiffs were on hand to see that the rules were respected. Evidently the rules of proper behaviour were clear enough to those in the know as to not require explanation, and those who sought to belong could always consult their *Knigge* for advice to at least appear respectable²⁸.

The attempt to enforce behavioural norms alone, however, was insufficient to create the atmosphere of a well-managed and exclusive gated community. Other provisions and efforts applied to who was to not be permitted on the premises in the first place. According to an 1805 executive order, admission both to the Promenade House and the promenade itself

²⁸ KNIGGE, Adolf Freiherr von, 1788. *Ueber den Umgang mit Menschen*, Hannover, n.p.. *Knigge's* book is not simply a mere guide to etiquette, but rather a treatise, derived from courtly behaviour, on how to interact with people of all sorts (by station). In colloquial use it came to be seen as a guidebook solely to etiquette, but it is indeed more.

was to be viewed as the exclusive privilege of guests paying the *Kurtaxe* (a precursor of the contemporary tourism tax) and entered by name into the official registers (*Kurlisten*)²⁹. Local residents (especially tradespeople or also journeymen) were on principle not to be permitted (with certain notable exceptions made, of course). The truly poor seeking a cure, who despite efforts to keep them at bay by regulation remained a visible part of the spa landscape in the eighteenth century³⁰, were segregated off spatially and conceptually into a separate “Poor Bath” (*Armenbad* – a kind of early public health facility), relocated far away from the main curing district in an act of gentrification, and not included on the lists of respectable guests (but their numbers duly noted)³¹.

29 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 195/294, “Bemerkungen des Obervogts zu Baden zu nochmehreren Emporbringung den dortigen Bäder. 1805”.

30 Pyrmont, for example, attempted to regulate the visibility and presence of the poor through ordinances in 1715 and 1719 with limited success. By the end of the century, a fund was established to provide public alms for beggars, evidently to discourage panhandling. See KUHNERT, Reinhold P., 1984, *Urbanität auf dem Lande. Badereisen nach Pyrmont im 18. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, p. 138-139.

31 “Badlisten bzw. Verzeichnisse über die in Baden sich aufhaltenden Fremden (Badgäste) 1810.” Letter from Amtmann Schnitzler to the Ministry of the Interior, Police Department from June 28, 1810; response from the Ministry, dated August 15, 1810. Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 195/1065. Schnitzler, the publisher of the lists, was upset by a local order to include only “the wealthy and noble guests in the lists” and exclude the “poor and people of the modest class, who in the esteem of those on high are of interest to no one” [nur die reichen und vornehmen Curgäste in die Badeliste ... die Armen und Leute aus der minderen Klasse aber, welche nach dem Ermessen jener hohen Stelle Niemanden interessieren], whom he had been including. He partially succeeded, in that the Ministry of the Interior agreed that bourgeois and peasants could be included, provided they were paying customers. The poor in the Poor Bath were to be listed only by their number. This practice continued through most of the century.

These restrictions were, of course, not airtight, and exceptions were always made, perhaps with a wink and a nod. In the 1820s, for example, there were repeated complaints to the administration about “inappropriate people” in the casino, and – perhaps haphazardly, given how lucrative the casino was – efforts were made repeatedly to ban journeymen and especially students from the University of Heidelberg³². The *Morgenblatt*, echoing Varnhagen’s observations of several years before, commented on the 1822 season, discussing at length how the King of Bavaria and his entourage graced a common ball with his presence and example of gentility, but this, in a dispatch for educated middle-class readers, was the sole highpoint of the season. In much of the rest, the easy sociability sought by the author (and presumably their middle-class readers), which included “shared excursions in the countryside, balls, friendly games and the like [so as to] bring people together³³”, was subject to the moral corruption of the casino and most especially, the fact that the wrong element – including journeymen and coachmen without their coaches! – was frequently to be found outside of the Conversation House, evidently spoiling the pristine gentility the author would expect.

Saratoga, as a physically more open and republican space, not surprisingly also had a more open atmosphere. Lacking anything like the *Promenadenordnung*, in Saratoga the rules of sociability were largely an unwritten, ad hoc affair, regulated

32 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 339/954, “Vollzug der Verordnung wegen dem Hazard Spiel, insbesondere das Verbot des Spielens hiesiger Einwohner, Handwerksburschen, Studenten und anderer Personen. 1767-1864”. See for example a letter from the mayor’s office and the city council to the Grand Ducal Police in Baden, February 1, 1820.

33 “Korrespondenz-Nachrichten. Baden Baden”, 1822. *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* No. 200, 21 August, p. 800 [original : Eine solche Geselligkeit, wo man sich zu gemeinsamen Landparthien, zu Tanz, freundlichen Spielen und dergleichen vereinigt].

by the proprietors of individual properties and by unwritten conventions and, of course, by the ability to pay. Generally, speaking, this seems to have been based more on cutting a fashionable figure than on codes of behaviour or demeanour, pressures that applied to a much greater degree to women (a tendency which had been lampooned in the neighbouring Ballston Spa as early as 1807). Women, it seems, were much more expected to follow the dictates of fashion, especially in regard to proper attire for various activities at different times of the day. Elsewhere, another guide suggests sarcastically that freedom for women at Saratoga would consist in being able to wear the same dress twice, and it is no coincidence perhaps that large travel trunks were known as Saratoga trunks. Word of such conventions had spread even as far as Baden-Baden, with a comment appearing in the *Morgenblatt* that Baden-Baden could be a refuge for those “driven away from Saratoga by the rigid compulsory rules of toilette³⁴”. This evidently did not apply equally to everyone, however. As one guidebook writer put it, “breakfast over, one may do as he pleases, with the most refreshing freedom – that is, if you are a man³⁵”.

No one perhaps has better described this than Henry James in his essay on Saratoga (first published in *The Nation* in 1870). He writes of what he perceives as a general coarseness and lack of refinement, yet one with a certain ambivalent appeal. If, as he put it, “Gentlemen at Saratoga are at a much higher premium than at European watering-places”³⁶ this was

34 “Bilder aus Baden-Baden”, 1847. *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* No. 244, 12 October, p. 975 [original: “Leute ... die der steife Toilettenzwang der freien Amerikaner aus Saratoga vertrieb”].

35 TAINTOR, Charles Newhall, 1875. *Saratoga Illustrated: The Visitor's Guide to Saratoga Springs*, New York, Taintor Brothers, p. 91.

36 JAMES, Henry, 1885. “Saratoga”, *Portraits of Places*, Boston, James R. Osgood, p. 332.

also a part of a “democratization of elegance”³⁷ characteristic of the place. While the enormous front porches of the grand hotels were the best people-watching places, nowhere was this more visible than at one of the hotel’s balls, which were an “instance of the wholesale equalization of the various social atoms which is the distinctive feature of collective Saratoga. A man in a ‘duster’ at a ball is as good as a man in regulation-garments; a young woman dancing with another young woman is as good as a young woman dancing with a young man; a child of ten is as good as a woman of thirty; a double negative in conversation is rather better than a single³⁸”. Admission to the ball, and indeed, to most of Saratoga society, was open to anyone able to afford the price, which could be indeed rather modest. Open sociability in terms of access to sociable spaces seems to have been more or less the order of the day, but it seems doubtful that it would have brought the kind of social edification that the readers of the *Morgenblatt* would have had in mind.

Yet it would be erroneous and premature to conclude that Saratoga was a stage for completely open and free sociability. The men whom James describes on Saratoga hotel porches are reminiscent of Horatio Alger tales – self-made, rough, experienced, rising in wealth and social status through hard experience – and many of the women seem to be seeking to emulate a refinement entirely alien to most of the men. Seen together with the scene from the ball, it would seem that social acceptability and prestige were mostly a question of wealth – an aristocracy of the pocketbook more than of the sword or even of the robe.

It is fair to ask if this state of affairs was a recent development in the era of mass tourism. James himself

37 JAMES, 1885. “Saratoga”, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

38 JAMES, 1885. “Saratoga”, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

cautions that his observations only regarded the Saratoga Springs of his day, and that once, in “[t]he good old times (...) it was the chosen resort of none but ‘nice people’”,³⁹ reflecting what seems to be a nostalgia for an antediluvian ideal before the arrival of the railroad and with it, apparently, large numbers of people classified as not entirely “nice”. Yet Saratoga had long been open to large-scale tourism: the railway reached Saratoga in 1831 (as a comparison, a spur line to the cosmopolitan Baden-Baden was only opened in 1845), and prior to that the resort had been served by regular steamship service up the Hudson River, bringing large numbers of guests to the very type of verandas and vast ballrooms at the grand hotels where James keenly observed the social scene. While ‘new money’ may have become more salient in the later period, it is difficult to assert that large scale tourism and the arrival of people seen as vulgar by ‘old money’ were a new phenomenon in Saratoga when James visited⁴⁰.

39 JAMES, 1885. “Saratoga”, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

40 CHAMBERS, 2002. *Drinking the Waters*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 7, p. 184-225, discusses the increase in the arrival of larger numbers of people regarded as nouveau riche as a phenomenon which took off in the 1860s. However, this was not related so much to alarm over the type of rugged self-made men James seems to describe, but rather his analysis aptly focuses on the Seligman Affair, a notorious incident of antisemitic discrimination in 1877, pointing out that “[t]here is little evidence of anti-Semitism at Saratoga Springs before the Civil War” (p. 219). Much of the negative attention to ‘new money’ in this period was shorthand for the question of whether to admit or exclude Jewish guests. While one might think that James was using a similar shorthand in his observations, this does not seem likely from the remaining context (e.g. he chooses to mock the use of double negatives, an indicator of a lack of education, rather than the more typically antisemitic stereotype of an accent). The rise of antisemitism in spas is an important phenomenon that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter, and merits dedicated study in a transnational context. German spas of the period, for example, also witnessed a rise in similar debates over whether to ban Jewish guests in the 1870s and beyond (generally the larger grand spas did not, while some

The fact that access to sociability in Saratoga had long been largely a function of wealth, without formal regulations or even a formal mechanism to enforce norms of behaviour made it all the more important to define the bounds of respectability informally. Saratoga had its mechanisms for defining insider and outsider status that far exceeded monetary considerations or merely cutting a fashionable figure. Some were simply not considered acceptable in this American version of ‘respectable’ society.

No episode better illustrates these boundaries than one told in the reminiscences of William Leete Stone Jr., a lawyer, writer, and scion of a long-established Saratoga family. Originally published as a “series of sketches of ‘Saratoga in ye Olden Time⁴¹’” in the *Daily Saratogan*, the town newspaper in 1874 and 1875, Stone’s account sought to bring to life anecdotes of the old days that he knew of personally or had heard from “many octogenarians”. These stories must be taken with a grain of salt and may well be apocryphal. But even if individual and collective memory are both unreliable – as is well known in memory studies – how things are remembered is quite significant as well, sometimes more so than the facts themselves.

Stone tells the story of a known figure in Saratoga, Eliza Jumel. Jumel’s biography is too interesting and complex to discuss within this short work, but suffice to say hers could be in some ways described as a female Horatio Alger story – born into poverty and raised in a brothel, she went on to become one of the wealthiest women in New York and a fixture at Saratoga, owning a summer residence there. A

smaller, more regional spas did). This, however, is linked to the rise of modern antisemitism in the West, a phenomenon of the later nineteenth century, which has its own rich literature too extensive to discuss here.

41 STONE, JR., William Leete, 1875. *Reminiscences of Saratoga and Ballston*, New York: Virtue & Yorston, p. 1.

controversial figure, she does not seem to have been fully accepted in Saratoga society, despite her wealth. As Stone tells the story, one day in 1849 Mme Jumel's coach and retinue arrived in front of the grand United States hotel to take her to the lake – the Saratoga version of excursions into the countryside. As it was “the custom of Madam Jumel, before going out of the village, to drive slowly through Broadway, that the unsophisticated inhabitants might have a proper sense of their own insignificance”, this was seen as a fine opportunity and – the passive voice is important here – “it was therefore determined to administer to her a lesson⁴²”. In Stone's telling, a local African-American man, “Tom Camel” (likely Campbell) – as he puts it “a ‘fellow of infinite jest’ and withal of great shrewdness ... in his simplicity, a perfect specimen of the Southern negro⁴³” – unbeknownst to Mme Jumel was placed in a carriage behind her, with a full retinue, in drag, mocking her movements, gestures and demeanour as she rode through town. When she at last noticed she was being mocked, she “threatened, and pleaded, and offered bribes⁴⁴” to no avail. Stone continues to speculate that on account of the humiliation this may have been Mme Jumel's last visit to Saratoga, but that he may have been mistaken. He was: Eliza Jumel continued to visit Saratoga each year until 1859⁴⁵.

Two clear lines are being drawn here. Let us begin with Mme Jumel. Regardless of whether or not the story is apocryphal, it celebrates the attempts to publicly humiliate and drive away a woman of independent wealth and ambition, whose origins

42 STONE, 1875. *Reminiscences, op. cit.*, p. 219.

43 STONE, 1875. *Reminiscences, op. cit.*, p. 218.

44 STONE, 1875. *Reminiscences, op. cit.*, p. 219.

45 OPPENHEIMER, Margaret A., 2016. *The Remarkable Rise of Eliza Jumel. A Story of Marriage and Money in the Early Republic*, Chicago, Chicago Review, chapter 35, para. 1.

and liaisons were considered disreputable – among other things she married the notorious Aaron Burr late in life; in Stone’s account she is called his mistress. Told as a humorous anecdote in a section entitled “Queer People”, it suggests a darker side to the supposed openness of Saratoga society. While clothing and manners may not have been the ultimate arbiter, especially for men, neither was it simply a question of money. Acceptance and status were a complicated matter in a republican society in which the lines of social class were more fluid, and yet notions of respectability prevailed.

The figure of Tom Camel is significant as well. To humiliate Mme Jumel not only with a man in drag, but a clownish African American man, was clearly intended to further reduce her status, while simultaneously being indicative of the low status of African Americans in the resort town. As Myra Young Armstead has argued in her study of Saratoga Springs and Newport, such portrayal of blacks as “flamboyant and ridiculous at worst, fun-loving and comical at best, but always as a quizzical species of humanity” was commonplace and part of “northern ‘romantic racist’ thought⁴⁶”. James rather blithely mentions how guests were “lounging with the negro waiters⁴⁷” on the porches, almost as if to suggest in an ambiguous phrase that they, too, could be lounging, but in the next paragraph negates this with the phrase “the shuffling negro waiters, the great tawdry steamboat-cabin of a drawing room⁴⁸” much more evoking servitude. Thus James, like the society around him, rather casually, almost imperceptibly links laziness and servitude in the figure of the African American waiter in a way that seems offhand, in need

46 YOUNG ARMSTEAD, Myra B., 1999. “Lord, Please Don’t Take Me in August.” *African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs, 1870-1930*, Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 28.

47 JAMES, 1885. “Saratoga”, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

48 JAMES, 1885. “Saratoga”, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

of no explanation. This stands in opposition to the assumed ennobling work and labour of the white self-made men.

This fits into a pattern that Young Armstead found in the elite resorts of Saratoga and Newport, whereby African American experience stands as a counterplot to the American success story. She writes, “nowhere was this more true than in American resort towns in which the presence of black servants solidified the middle- and upper-class status of a white element anxious to affirm its social attainments⁴⁹”. This status anxiety could be assuaged through highlighting the outsider status of others they considered beneath them. Clearly this applied to African Americans, who were allowed to serve at, but not to sit at the table. It also seems to have applied to those deemed morally lacking in some regard, who regardless of wealth also faced opprobrium and exclusion. By examining such examples, we gain some insight into how the lines may have been drawn in Saratoga.

This was hardly unique to Saratoga or the United States when setting the boundaries for inclusion or exclusion from a society of supposed equals, but, like spa sociability itself, it was part of a transnational phenomenon. An example taken from the context of another multiracial society might prove illuminating. As Miles Ogborn has observed regarding the establishment of rules for inclusion in debate in the assemblies of Jamaica and Barbados, “Overall, the rules aimed to ensure decision making through debate among ‘equals’ – an equality achieved by excluding anyone from the assembly who was not free, white, male, Anglican, and with sufficient property – and via the rule of the majority after proper deliberation⁵⁰”.

49 YOUNG ARMSTEAD, 1999. “*Lord, Please Don’t Take Me in August*”, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

50 OGBORN, Miles, 2019. *The Freedom of Speech. Talk and Slavery in the Anglo-Caribbean World*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, p. 80.

Similar statements could easily be made about the political foundations of the United States, as well. Of course, a legislative assembly in a slaveholding society in the Caribbean and a spa town in New York are hardly the same, nor are politics and sociability. Nevertheless, this foundation of ‘equality’ on exclusion seen across different contexts suggests that, at very least in colonial societies shaped by slavery, the creation of a society of equals, or even sociability among near-equals, is quite a bit simpler when it is already decided *a priori* who cannot belong⁵¹.

This distinction could be literally a matter of life and death in a slaveholding or in a settler-colonial society. Nonetheless, in a far less extreme form a similar phenomenon can be observed in the heterotopic microcosm of the spa. In both Baden-Baden and Saratoga Springs, two seemingly disparate examples of spa sociability, a pattern does seem to emerge. Certainly, basking in the glow of high society and, to a certain extent, emulating their manners and lifestyles were important for shaping class identities and provided a sense of relative equality – this is a well-known element of spa sociability. Operative here, however, is relative equality. For middle-class spa patrons in particular, what appears to be the essential counterpoint to defining oneself by association with the upper echelons of society is making clear distinctions regarding those who did not, and indeed, could not belong on the socially blended stage of spa sociability. In Baden-Baden, these lines were largely drawn along the lines of social class; in Saratoga, social class seems to have been replaced by a far less clearly defined, yet still present notion of ‘respectability’, as well as more clearly defined racial and ethnic lines. These

51 I am indebted to Miles Ogborn for this insight in a transnational context from his keynote address “Caribbean Slavery, Political Speech and ‘Sociable Spaces’” at the conference *Sociable Spaces in the Long Eighteenth Century from Present-Day Perspectives. Europe and its Imperial Worlds*. Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, 24 May 2019.

lower fringes seem a significant and defining element of spa sociability, well deserving of attention and further examination.

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