Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture (Jewish Culture and Contexts)

Mirjam Zadoff
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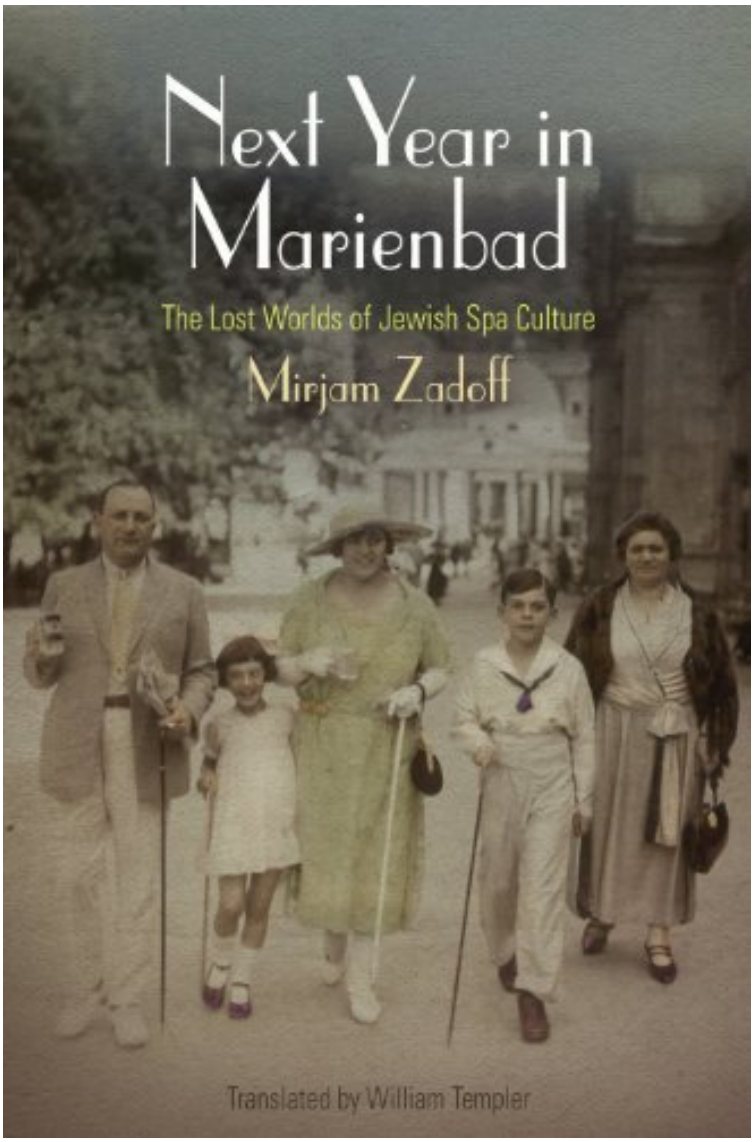

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Mirjam Zadoff : Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture (Jewish Culture and Contexts) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture (Jewish Culture and Contexts):

From the last decades of the nineteenth century through the late 1930s, the West Bohemian spa towns of Carlsbad, Franzensbad, and Marienbad were fashionable destinations for visitors wishing to "take a cure"to drink the waters, bathe in the mud, be treated by the latest X-ray, light, or gas therapies, or simply enjoy the respite afforded by elegant parks and comfortable lodgings. These were sociable and urbane places, settings for celebrity sightings, match-making, and stylish promenading. Originally the haunt of aristocrats, the spa towns came to be the favored summer resorts for the emerging bourgeoisie. Among the many who traveled there, a very high proportion were Jewish.In Next Year in Marienbad, Mirjam Zadoff writes the social and cultural history of Carlsbad, Franzensbad, and Marienbad as Jewish spaces. Secular and religious Jews from diverse national, cultural, and social backgrounds mingled in idyllic and often apolitical-seeming surroundings. During the season, shops sold Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers, kosher kitchens were opened, and theatrical presentations, concerts, and public readings catered to the Jewish clientele. Yet these same resorts were situated in a region of growing hostile nationalisms, and they were towns that might turn virulently anti-Semitic in the off season.Next Year in Marienbad draws from memoirs and letters, newspapers and maps, novels and postcards to create a compelling and engaging portrait of Jewish presence and cultural production in the years between the fin de sicle and the Second World War.

"Next Year in Marienbad offers a fascinatingly erudite glimpse of the joys and sorrows of well-to-do Jews on holiday over a century ago."The Forward"A charming, highly readable, and scholarly contribution to the cultural history of the Jewish bourgeoisie of central and eastern Europe. With wit and learning Mirjam Zadoff has elevated Marienbad to the rank of a Jewish 'lieu de mmoire.'"Saul Friedlander, University of California, Los Angeles"A rich tale beautifully told, Mirjam Zadoff's evocative study introduces us to the single most important recreational activity for modern Jews in Central Europe: their annual summer pilgrimage to take the waters at their favorite spa resorts. Zadoff's remarkable history of Jewish sociability introduces us to a Chaucerian parade of characters and transports us back to those spas, reanimating for the reader their long-gone social and cultural life and making it clear why Jews so eagerly looked forward to spending next year in Marienbad."John M. Efron, University of California-Berkeley"A very engaging, interesting, suggestive, and important book. Next Year in Marienbad deals with three famous international spas and skillfully uses evidence from each of them to paint a broader picture of 'Jewish space' in European life between 1870 and 1938."Marsha L. Rozenblit, University of MarylandAbout the AuthorMirjam Zadoff teaches Jewish history and culture at the University of Munich. William Templer is Chief Translator at the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture, University of Leipzig.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.IntroductionThe (Mirrored) PlayroomDeparting for ParadiseBut oh, Kitty! Now we come to the passage. You can just see a little peep of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room open: and it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond.Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There (1872) "So Isaac lay and looked at the firmament. And since the stars that illuminate the sea are the same stars that illuminate the land, he looked at them, and thought of his hometown, for it is the way of the stars to lead the thoughts of a person as they are wont." After setting out for Eretz Israel, Isaac Kummer had spent many days and nights in crowded trains that had carried him westward from his town in Galicia: through Lemberg, Tarnow, Cracow, and Vienna to Trieste. Now he was lying alone on the deck of the ship readied to depart the next morning for Jaffa. He thought of his family and friends back in Galicia. A sense of bitterness entered his mind as he thought of the Zionists back in his hometown. Of course, many liked to talk about Palestine, but they never journeyed any further than their regular summer trip to a European spa: "They'll give you prooftexts from the Talmud that the air of the Land of Israel is healing, but when they travel for their health, they go to Karlsbad and other places outside the Land of Israel." In his novel Only Yesterday, the classic Israeli writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon narrates the life of a young Zionist from Galicia who leaves Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century as part of the Second Aliyah to Palestine. About the same time elsewhere in Eastern Europe, in the world that Yitzchak Kummer had left behind, there was another fictional departure. In his Yiddish novel The Brothers Ashkenazi, Israel J. Singer vividly describes a lively scene at the train station in the Russian industrial town of Lodz. As Chassidim, farmers, and emigrants crowd together in front of the third-class coaches of a train about to leave for the West, beside other, better coaches, the wealthier bestow flowers and sweets on their departing friends and family:Before first-class and second-class wagons, well-dressed, self-assured passengers were gathered. . . . Porters struggled under mounds of trunks, valises, hatboxes, traveling cases, and portmanteaux filled with enough dresses and accessories for two weeks at a fashionable resort. Dressed in their long gowns and huge plumed hats, the ladies minced along, conversing in German, even though they were still miles from the German border. Fleeing the oppressive summer heat in Lodz, the prosperous Jewish middle class was, as every year, leaving for a stay at a spa in the West. In but two short generations, Singer's protagonists had climbed the social and economic ladder into the middle and upper classes of the city, although they still lived a largely Orthodox observant Jewish life. And so they traveled to a health resort that could offer a Jewish ambient and the necessary Jewish infrastructure. People gathered in the Austrian Kurort of Carlsbad.In these two very different tales of departure, the western Bohemian watering place of Carlsbad embodied the image of a place of powerful attraction for European Jewry around 1900. Carlsbad and its nearby sister towns Marienbad and Franzensbad were a veritable

mineral springs magnet, attracting the Jewish middle classes as well as Zionists and Chassidim; this even while others, as Singer commented with a touch of irony, "had previously avoided the resort because it had become too Jewish." According to an anecdote from the 1920s, Carlsbad was an iconic image of the spa as such among Eastern European Jews: if you asked a fellow passenger on the train, "Are you going to Carlsbad?" he would answer in the affirmative even if his destination was another spa.In actual fact, during the summer season, an unusually large number of trains from Europe both East and West regularly stopped at Carlsbad Central Station. In the 1870s, the spa was connected up with the continental rail network, thus eliminating the need for the difficult journey by postal coach. As a result, the popularity of the spa soared, and with it the rapidly mounting number of visitors. The railroad train, as a democratic and affordable means of transport, transformed the structure of the spa public. Now, aside from the old elites, it also brought the broader middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie, blue-collar workers as well as penniless patients, to Carlsbad to "take the cure." Its popularity soon made Carlsbad Central Station an attractive destination for the luxury trains of the Compagnie Internationale de Wagon-Lits et des Grands Express Europens: after the number of spa guests had almost doubled in the period from 1880 to 1895, the South Eastern Railway decided to launch a direct line from London to Carlsbad. During the summer, there was a daily through-carriage of the Orient-Express (Oostende-Vienna/Istanbul) to Carlsbad, and due to great demand it soon became a luxury train of its own. In the summer of 1900, the Karlsbad-Paris Express was launched, and passengers from Russia arriving with the Nordexpress in Berlin had a direct connection from there to the spa. After World War I, the Paris-Prague-Warsaw Express was also routed through Carlsbad as a central East-West railway line.Once disembarked at the Carlsbad station, travelers had a short journey to the spa area, either by horse-drawn cab, sulky, omnibus, or on foot. Situated in a long, narrow valley on the Tepl River, surrounded by heavily wooded hills, the town greeted guests on arrival with a memorable cityscape: a dense assortment of historical promenades, lobbies, and monumental buildingsan exuberantly eclectic clutter, a multi-story, gaily colored "rendezvous of the cream gteaux." In the last third of the nineteenth century, far removed from the everyday hustle and bustle of the metropolis, distant from poorhouses and factories, a tourist and medical center had developed here. Once an exclusive space of retreat for the nobility, it had become a magnet for all those who could afford its amenities.If the geographical space that was Carlsbad, situated snug in its narrow valley, presented one and the same vista of entry for all who arrived, extending from the station through the commercial center to the district of the spa, the historical place is multifaceted. It offers numerous channels of access. These led into a literary space, an imagined place, a locality of nostalgic memory, a place of encounter, a site of illness and health, a habitat of pleasure and amusement, a feminine space, a Jewish place, a German place, a Czech one.Of the possible channels of access, the present study focuses on the above-mentioned and widespread imagination of Carlsbad as a Jewish place, with different sides and protagonists, infused with connotations both positive and negative. There were other spas popular with a Jewish clientele, such as Bad Kissingen, Bad Ems, Wiesbaden, or Oostende, and there were summer resorts, such as the small Styrian alpine village of Altaussee in Austria or the Catskills in New York frequented in particular by a large number of Jewish tourists. But if we wish to sketch a Jewish topography of spas in Central and Eastern Europe at the fin de sicle, then doubtless the "spa triangle" of Carlsbad, Marienbad, and Franzensbad lies at its center.Summertime TopographyIt's hard to write about Carlsbad. Not because there's nothing to talk about, but because there's just too much there.Zevi Hirsch Wachsman, In land fun maharal un masarikEvery summer, a network of destinations promising recreation and recuperation were offered anew to an international middle-class spa public. An "imaginary archipelago" of spas extended across the breadth of summertime Europe, which aligned Oostende, Carlsbad, the Semmering, and the Riviera; in a fanciful geography, they were aligned one almost next to the other. This impression of proximity was intentionally generated by the creation of direct rail links between the large spas, and by international spa newspapers and spa directories as social platforms that were readily available not only locally but likewise in the library rooms and entertainment halls of the competing spas. The fact that the daily programs in all spas were virtually identical in structure awakened a sense among spa guests of an encounter with familiarity. This was heightened by the similar architecture everywhere and the kindred aesthetics of the gardens and spa hotels in most localities. Quite a few guests spent the entire summer traveling from one spa to the nextsome for their amusement, others in search of a healing therapy for an incurable affliction.Ever since the middle classes began in the last third of the nineteenth century to create a new form of mass spas, Jewish spa patrons had played a central role in the summertime experience as a key middle-class group. On the one hand, trips to the spa were considered a representative element in the process of bourgeois socialization for both Jews and non-Jews; on the other, spas as modern medical and tourist centers attracted innovative physicians and entrepreneurs, as well as representatives of urban everyday cultures. International spas, which held out the promise of urban anonymity and diversity, were quite naturally more popular among Jewish spa travelers and patients than intimate spas and mineral springs in the countryside, where they frequently could encounter expressions of anti-Semitism. Their extraordinary attachment to the spas in western Bohemia derived from the interplay of various favorable circumstances, among which the central location between Western and Eastern Europe was a key factor. Not only were Carlsbad, Marienbad, and Franzensbad easy to reach from all points of the compass. Another important element was that their geographical location provided travelers with a sense at the same time that they had not even left Europe's East or West. In geographical imagination,

the western Bohemian spas were in fact not situated either in Western or Eastern Europe: they were in Central Europe, that construction of a uniform area that connected the two sides of Europe with each other, following the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A related, powerful factor also served to draw Jewish spa guests from different cultural and national backgrounds to these three spas: a dynamic interplay of local Jewish Communities (Gemeinden), spa patrons and physicians, businessmen, and office workers who were resident there for the season. Over the years, this interaction generated functioning multifaceted Jewish networks and infrastructures.The upshot was that during the summer season, Jews constituted a dominant population group in the spas in the western reaches of Bohemia. Their presence left its stamp on the thriving watering places, serving to shape and constitute their nature. But that presence was not conspicuous in official census figures and registers. Rather, as a loose association, their number, the diverse protagonists and their articulation, were constantly changing. Another factor was that this transient community turned out in practice to be largely heterogeneous and disconnected, because spa guests, doctors, and entrepreneurs from all across Europe differed from the local Jewish Communities and from one another, not only by dint of their nationality but also their differing cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. Yet in the easy-going atmosphere of their spa experience, circumscribed and compacted in space and time, they developed a communicative space for observation and encounter. It imbued the spas not only with the image but the reality of being Jewish places, and indeed concrete counter-worlds of Jewish modernity. Situative repertories for behavior, which found expression in practices such as consumption, folklore, and nostalgia, created temporary connecting links and levels of contact bound up with the special modes of sociability in the spa ambient and the nature of a visit to such a health resort.An important prerequisite for this perspective is to conceptualize the individual Jewish groups as "cultures" and not as static units. It is necessary to examine the supposed homogeneity of these cultures, pinpoint their differences, and interrogate their discourses of self-assertion and their strategies of self-demarcation and distanciation. Thus, the basis for this study is the ensemble of all types of cultural production surrounding the spa stay as an annual recurrent experience: along with the small extant corpus of documents from the local Jewish Gemeinden, there are the regional and trans-regional print media from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Palestine, plus an array of travel guides, city maps, address books, and books and articles on popular medicine. Other materials encompass novels, picture postcards, the lyrics of popular songs of the day, entertainment magazines, couplets, jokes, satirical magazines and papers, as well as personal reflections, including correspondence, diaries, and memoirs. In order to combine the kaleidoscopic insights these source materials provide, the best methodological approach needs to be in a space where microhistory and discourse analysis are combined. Such a vantage on the data makes it possible to comprehend the quite different images and texts as evidence of the same history. They gain special relevance from their literary, anecdotal, satirical, or subjective nature; but at the same time this makes it necessary to focus thematically on these special properties of the material.More recent research on everyday Jewish life and inquiry on the middle classes have also contributed to new core understandings of this complex, along with research in recent years on the history of medicine and tourism. These latter studies go beyond a micro-historical perspective and examine the cultural-scientific relevance of spas, balneology, and spaces for recreation and recuperation.The time frame for this study covers a long period of some seventy years. My intention is to look in depth at the genesis, transformation, and dissolution of the Jewish places: it extends from the beginning of mass middle-class spa tourism in the last third of the nineteenth century, ending with the events in the late summer of 1938. Since Jewish places existed in the three spa centers Carlsbad, Marienbad, and Franzensbad largely in parallel, both in terms of time and content, lines of development in one locality can exemplify similar patterns in another. If there were significant differences in the local realities, I make explicit reference to them.Congruent with the spatiality of the topic, the text is structured in circles; as a result, particular content is not just discussed in one place but may be touched on again in other contexts. At the same time, the individual sections, and sometimes whole chapters, are narrated chronologically in order to remain cognizant of the temporal sequences in the spatial structures examined, and indeed to emphasize their relevance. Accordingly, the architectonics of the study is structured with the intention to arrange the dialectic between the spatial and temporal narrative strands in such a way as to facilitate multidimensional insights into the topic.Part I of the study describes the local factors that formed the background for the realm of possibility of Jewish places: the modernized spa as a place for medical promises of healing and innovation on the one hand, and a space of bourgeois, middle-class conceptions of representation, aesthetics, consumption, health, and sickness on the other.Part II describes the relations between the different Jewish cultures that constituted the image and reality of the Jewish places Carlsbad, Marienbad, and Franzensbad. This world existed in timeless repetitions, changing only in respect to some details. In its basic contours, it appears as virtually static, until the rupture of World War I triggered the demise of cosmopolitan illusions, thus also significantly changing the associated Jewish places.Part III deals with the local Jewish Communities as constants in Jewish life and their increasingly insecure position against the background of the German-Czech conflict over nationalities.The final part of the study explores the changed Jewish places as they presented themselves under the impress of disillusionment and nationalization in the wake of World War I, when the spatial sanctuary of the prewar era was unexpectedly transformed into a meeting point of self-confident Jewish cultures.Elements of TransitionWe know full well that the insertion of new habits or the changing of old ones is the only way to preserve life, to renew our sense of time, to

rejuvenate, intensify, and retard our experience of timeand thereby renew our sense of life itself. That is the reason for every change of scenery and air, for a trip to the shore: the experience of a variety of refreshing episodes.Thomas Mann, The Magic MountainSpaces stand at the heart of this study. This is why the key questions explore cultural practices bound to spaces, the utopian potential of spaces and strategies of emplacement within their framework. One of my assumptions is that spas had a specific function and meaning in their positioning vis--vis everyday life. In part, I orient my thinking along the lines of the fragmentarily developed Foucauldian concept of "other spaces" (des espaces autres). In two lectures Foucault gave in 1966 and 1967, he formulated his first thoughts on a theory of heterotopias, but he never developed further his call for a "heterotopology" as a science of these "other spaces." Nonetheless, these fundamental structures sketched by Foucault provide a basis for introductory exploratory thoughts on the character and function of spas as heterotopias of modern Jewish cultures.At the beginning is the supposition that spas around the turn of the century, as destinations of temporary mass flight, had a special value for the society of the time then in flux. As social groups that tended to be in an exposed position in society, Jewish cultures were intensively engaged in seeking out these protective spaces and idealized counter-worlds of everyday life. In Foucault's perspective, this cultural strategy was not unusual, since he hypothesizesthat in all societies, there are utopias that have a precisely determinable, real space that can be located on the map, and a time that is precisely determinable, which can be established and measured according to the daily calendar. Probably every human group excises from the space that it occupies, in which it concretely lives and works, utopian places. And from the time in which it develops its activities, uchronian moments.These worlds were significantly constituted and shaped by their binding to temporal ruptures and temporary limited experiences that were repeated every summer in a ritualized form. A system of openings and closures did not make entry and participation in these experiences impossible, but clearly demarcated and isolated them from the rest of the world. Within the system of different heterotopias that Foucault ascribes to social groups and necessities, the spa could be described as a "compensatory heterotopia." That is because it constitutes "another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled." The spa as an ordered and idyllic spacein which everything would seem to have its place, structure and formfunctioned in these terms as a kind of mirror, which serves to make the modern everyday world and everything that constitutes it seem out of place, destructured and deformed. Foucault's heterotopias, as counter-sites of the real world, "ritualize and localize gaps, thresholds and deviations." At the same time, they also reflect the multifarious close-knit ties between secularization and sacralization as characteristics of modern spaces, if we assume that modernity has brought with it a "certain theoretical desanctification of space," but wemay 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.Thus, the ritual character of a trip to a spa may have reminded people of the religious connotation of pilgrimages, of spas as mystical places for healing, even though they long since had been transformed into secular medical centers and health resorts. Applied to the Jewish places Carlsbad, Marienbad and Franzensbad, this cognitive paradigm allows us to situate there multifaceted, intertwined, sacred, desanctified, and resanctified levels of modern Jewish life. In this sense they represent liminoid threshold spaces imbued with a potential to ritualize aspects of transition and to offer Jewish cultures in the process of change a temporary space.The summertime idyll of the trip to a spa, outside everyday horizons of space and time, appears against the backdrop of these reflections as a sensitive and sometimes distorting mirror of societal changes. Accordingly, such reflections address as many aspects of modern Jewish experience as those arriving there left behind in their daily lives back home.