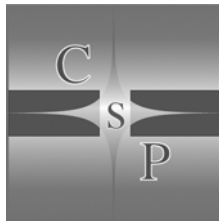


Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth
and Nineteenth Centuries

Edited by

Annick Cossic and Patrick Galliou



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PRESS

Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, edited by Annick Cossic and Patrick Galliou

This book first published 2006 by

Cambridge Scholars Press

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2006 by Annick Cossic and Patrick Galliou and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 1904303722

Table of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
------------------------------	-------------

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xii
-------------------------	------------

INTRODUCTION (Annick Cossic)	xiii
-------------------------------------	-------------

Part I: THE ORIGINS OF SPA CULTURE

1	Water, Water Everywhere... Water, Ailing Bodies and the Gods in Roman Gaul and Britain (Patrick Galliou)	3
2	Souvenirs de Baïes ou la construction littéraire d'un archétype de la ville d'eaux (Marie-Thérèse Cam)	13

Part II: BUILDING SPAS IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

3	Medicine, Alchemy and Architecture at Bath: A Study of Paracelsian Emblematics in the Work of John Wood (Jo. Odgers)	47
4	Les villes d'eaux en France (1850-1914): espaces urbains et architectures publiques (Bernard Toulrier)	69
5	Les stations thermales françaises: des villes idéales? (Jérôme Pénez)	95

Part III: THE SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS OF SPA CULTURE AND THEIR SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

6	The Female Invalid and Spa Therapy in Some Well-Known 18 th -Century Medical and Literary Texts: From John Floyer's <i>The Ancient Psychrolousia</i>	
---	---	--

	<i>Revived</i> (1702) to Fanny Burney's <i>Evelina</i> (1778) (Annick Cossic)	115
7	Les eaux et les bains dans la thérapeutique française des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles (Alain Caubet)	139
8	Accommodating the Poor: The Role of the Voluntary Hospital in Nineteenth-Century English Spas (Jane Adams)	161
9	Les villes d'eaux françaises, reines du thermalisme européen à la Belle Epoque? (Carole Carribon)	193

Part IV: SPA LIFE AND THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

10	Deux philosophes aux eaux: de Voltaire à Diderot (Jean Balcou)	227
11	The Saga of Lisdoonvarna—from “Queen of Irish Spas” to Modern Matchmaking Mecca (Irene Furlong)	239
12	Writing Letters from Georgian Spas: The Impres- sions of a Few English Ladies (Alain Kerhervé)	263
13	Thermalisme, tourisme et folklore dans les Pyrénées vers 1860. La famille de la Villemarqué aux Eaux- Bonnes (Fañch Postic)	297

Part V: REPRESENTING SPAS

Literature:

14	Seeking Health: The City of Bath in the Novels of Jane Austen (Anita Gorman)	315
15	Architecture et littérature: à propos de <i>Mont-Oriol</i> de Guy de Maupassant (Juan Calatrava)	335

The visual arts and the press:

- 16 L'image de Vichy sous le Second Empire : la ville d'eaux et son expérience thermale (Cécile Morillon) 351
- 17 Spa Culture in the Nineteenth-Century British Media: Publicity, the Press and the *Villes d'eaux* (1800-1914) (Jill Steward) 375

The new media:

- 18 Hypermedia Navigation in an Eighteenth-Century English Spa: Bath (Liliane Gallet-Blanchard, in cooperation with Marie-Madeleine Martinet) 411

Part VI: THE SHIFT FROM SPA CULTURE TO SEASIDE CULTURE

- 19 Unfulfilled Promise: The Spas of Scotland in the Later Nineteenth Century (Alastair Durie) 433
- 20 La Rochelle, One of the First French Nineteenth-Century Seaside Resorts: A Dream That Failed to Come True (Nicolas Meynen) 455
- 21 Spa and Seaside Cultures in the Age of the Railway: Britain and France Compared (John K. Walton) 475
- 22 Modern Thalassotherapy in France (1964-2004): From Health to Pleasure (Nicolas Bernard) 499

CONCLUSION (Patrick Galliou) 511

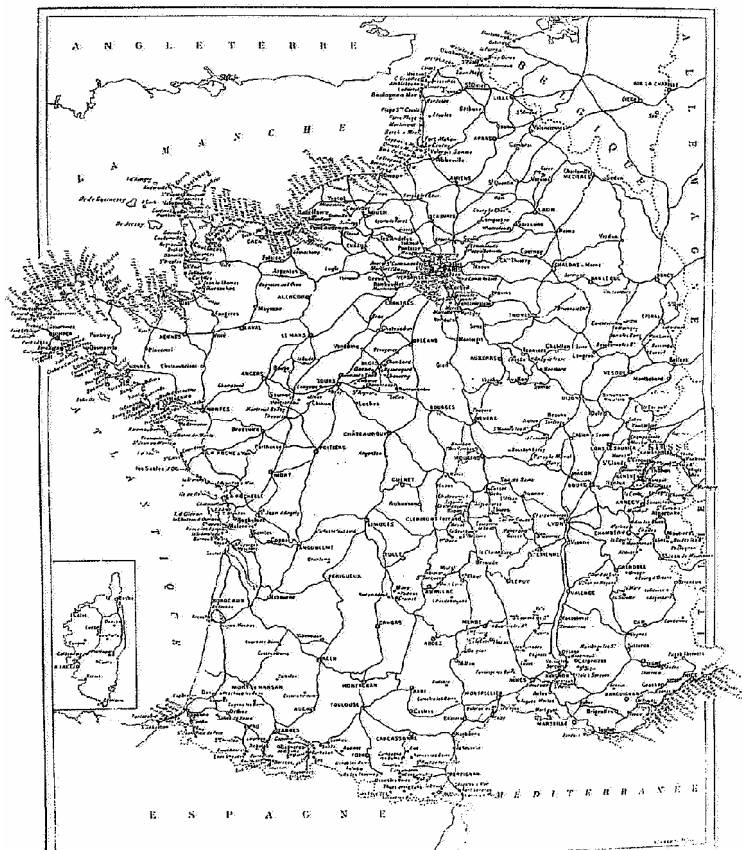
INDEX OF PLACES 515

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 519

List of Illustrations

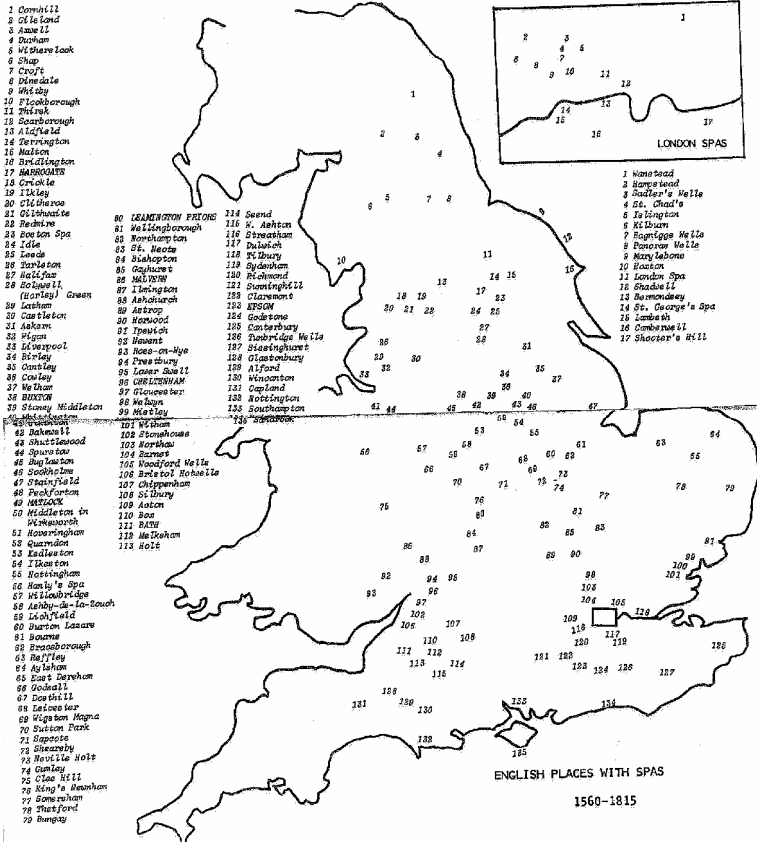
-An accurate Plan of Bath 1776	47
-Plan of Wood's reconstruction of Stanton Drue	50
-Plans from Wood's <i>Description of Bath</i> ,	
a)- Queen's Square	
b)- St. James' Triangle	53
-Alchemical symbolism in Paracelsian texts	
a)- From Robert Fludd	
b)- From Oswald Croll. (Both illustrations are reproduced by kind permission of the Wellcome Library.)	55
-Wood's restored plan of Stone Henge	59
-The Monas Hieroglyphica of John Dee	60
-The King's Circus as it stands today and Wood's survey of Stone Henge overlaid on a twentieth century survey	62
-La Bourboule, panorama	70
-Vittel, étapes de l'urbanisation	75
-Vichy, plan 1856	76
-Vichy, galerie promenoir	77
-Vichy, kiosque à musique	78
-Vichy, projet thermes	81
-Le Mont-Dore, établissement thermal	82
-Chatel Guyon, thermes intérieur	82
-Vichy, casino	86
-Cransac, Hôtel Roques	87
-Chatel Guyon, Hôtel Continental	89
-Vittel 1884 après travaux. Charles Garnier	90
-"Tabitha in a Bath Chair." G. Cruikshank (Illustrated edition of <i>The New Bath Guide</i> , 1832	126

--“The Doctors Flying from their Own Physic.” G. Cruikshank (Illustrated edition of <i>The New Bath Guide</i> , 1832)	127
-Paxton’s plan for the development of Buxton Park redrawn and printed in W.H. Robertson, <i>Handbook to the Peak of Derbyshire or Buxton</i> , 1854	174
-Map of Leamington Spa showing the Royal Pump Rooms and the site of the future Warneford Hospital. Adapted from <i>Ground Plan of Leamington in 1818</i> printed in <i>Spennell’s Directory</i> , 1883	180
-The sulphur well at Lisdoonvarna. Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland	250
-Musicians at the spa wells in the 1890s. Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland	256
-Boulevard Napoléon	359
-Allégorie	371
-From John McPherson. M.D. (1873). <i>The Baths and Wells of Europe</i> . 2 nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1873, p.189. Courtesy of the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne	390
-From Frank Burnard (1890), <i>Very Much Abroad</i> . London: Bradbury. Agnew, 1890. Author’s own	392
-The Study: Number 1, Royal Crescent in Bath	415
-Fashion in Bath	426
-Spas of Scotland	454
-Plan of La Rochelle and its three zones under military control. Last quarter of the nineteenth century	456
-The Baths at La Rochelle	460
-Sea bathing at la Rochelle, with a frontage overlooking the Mail (1841), a lithograph by Charpentier	460
-Map 1. Dates of the opening of thalassotherapy institutes across France	503
-Map 2. Total number of customers in the French thalasso- therapy centres (2005)	504



Map n° 1: French Resorts (*The Bottin Mondain*, 1908)

Source: Bernard Toulhier, *Villes d'eaux: architecture publique des stations thermales et balnéaires* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale/Dexia Editions, 2002).



Map n° 2: English Places with Spas (1560-1815)

Source: Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa (1560-1815): A Social History* (London: The Athlone Press, 1990).

Acknowledgements

The Conference has been organized with the financial support of the BMO (Brest Métropole Océane), the Conseil Général du Finistère, the Conseil Régional de Bretagne, the Université de Bretagne Occidentale and the Faculté des Lettres Victor Segalen (Université de Bretagne Occidentale, UBO).

Introduction

Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries was the subject of an international conference organised by the CEIMA, an English Studies Department research group with a decidedly multidisciplinary approach. The conference held at the Faculté des Lettres Victor Segalen, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, in May 2005, gathered some twenty-two researchers from different parts of the world, France, Britain (England, Wales, Scotland), Ireland, The United States and Spain.

The speakers, all of them university professors, senior lecturers—some of whom are also heads of departments—, research fellows, came from various universities and faculties, namely Departments of English Studies, of History, Geography or French Literature, Medical Schools, Centres for the History of Medicine, Schools of Arts and Social Sciences, Schools of Architecture; quite a few belong to research groups affiliated to the CNRS, the French National Centre for Scientific Research; one is currently working for the French Ministry of Culture.

Spa culture in both countries, whose manifold aspects are explored in this collection of essays, originated in Antiquity. In his article, “Water, Water Everywhere... Water, Ailing Bodies and the Gods in Roman Gaul and Britain,” Patrick Galliou traces the beginning of the cult of water in the western world, showing how purpose-built bathing structures were “Roman imports,” but that the association of water with healing, a process inextricably bound with believing, goes back to the “second millennium BC.” If the Romans were largely responsible for the spreading of a spa culture, they were not the discoverers of the medicinal properties of thermal water, whose “earliest use” dates back to the Middle Bronze Age (1400-1250 BC).

Marie-Thérèse Cam, in a paper entitled “Souvenirs de Baïes ou la construction littéraire d’un archétype de la ville d’eaux” recalls how the Romans initiated the trend and developed Baïes as a seaside resort and a watering place whose heyday lasted from 60 BC to the third century. The different aspects of spa life conducive to the making of a

literary myth, its several dimensions, political, economic, and aesthetic—Baïes being turned into “a laboratory where experiments were carried out,”—are forerunners of future European spas, the Romans exporting their know-how and faith in the healing virtues of water to France and Britain where they built *Aquae Sulis*, the Latin name of Bath during the days of their colonization of the country (41 BC-c.410). Both cities, which have a generic name, prided themselves, at different times of history, on being the best, “*principes Baiiae*,” “the Queen of Watering Places,” in the same way as nineteenth-century Vichy called itself “Reine des Villes d’eaux.”

The eighteenth century was in Britain the golden age of spa culture and was called by R.B. Mowat in his book, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (1932), “the age of watering-places.” As a matter of fact, the sheer number of spas was quite impressive, as well as their dissemination all over Britain, seized by a rage of building; yet a few names stand out, Bath, the Somerset spa, Cheltenham, Tunbridge Wells, Harrogate, Scarborough, Buxton or Leamington. Jo Odgers, in her paper “Medicine, Alchemy and Architecture at Bath: A Study of Paracelsian Emblematics in the Work of John Wood the Elder,” revisits some of the famous architect’s masterpieces in the light of the Alchemical tradition that “informed both his work and the medical theory of his contemporaries.” She demonstrates that Wood’s architectural achievement should be read as a fusion of a traditional apprehension of the world represented in the mythical figures of Bladud and Moses and a new modern method based on observation.

In France, the heyday of spas was the nineteenth century, a phenomenon that started during the *Restauration* and the *Monarchie de Juillet*, a period of renewal for spa treatment, gathered momentum during the *Second Empire* and the *Belle Epoque*, and reached a climax before the 1929 crisis. French spas were all designed along the same lines, as emphasized by Bernard Toulhier in his paper “Les villes d’eaux en France (1850-1914): espaces urbains et architectures publiques;” they formed a network mainly located in the mountains which favoured the experience of the sublime and were built around a *griffon*, or mineral water spring, whose presence was the *sine qua non* condition of their growth. Bernard Toulhier examines their “founding trilogy,” i.e. the baths, the hotel and the casino. They participated, as in Britain a century earlier, in a trend towards the commercialization

of leisure, and, in a context of rapid industrialisation as well as greater accessibility of resorts thanks to the Railway and the improvement of the road network, were meant as “places of utopia,” in sharp contrast with the then proliferating industrial towns. The issue of the building of ideal cities or model cities is raised in “Les stations thermales françaises: des villes idéales?” by Jérôme Penez who reviews the creation of a number of French watering places like Vittel, Argelès-Gazost or Vernet-les-Bains, among others, and opposes the spa, “an urban anomaly,” both to the industrial town and to the surrounding villages, thus exploring the relationship of the health resort with its natural environment where water played a key role.

Spa culture cannot be separated from the medical literature which, from the seventeenth century onwards, attempted to give it scientific credentials which took over from ancient popular beliefs and practices—linked with the age-old cult of water with its celebration of fountains and springs endowed with healing virtues—that nonetheless survived well into the nineteenth century. Medical treatises had a decisive impact on the popularity of watering places and were both a cause and a measure of their success. The fastest-developing spas in both countries were those that provided the right combination of therapy and leisure through, in a great many cases, regulations enforced by the medical profession and in Britain, in fashionable spas, by a Master of Ceremonies. This duality of the cure, mixing therapeutic water-drinking and bathing with entertainment, could be experienced along different lines according to gender. The issue is examined in “The Female Invalid and Spa Therapy in Some Well-Known 18th-Century Medical and Literary Texts: from John Floyer’s *The Ancient Psychrolousia Revived* (1702) to Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* (1778).” In this article, I have tried to assess the contribution of spas to the construction of femininity through an analysis of female ailments that called for spa treatment, of the female spa invalid’s manifold roles and of her attempt at empowerment, as can be inferred from a close scrutiny of, on the one hand, medical treatises by John Floyer, George Cheyne, Richard Russell and Tobias Smollett and, on the other hand, four works of fiction.

The difficulty of eradicating popular beliefs and establishing a rational classification of the waters and of their medicinal properties is underlined in “Les eaux et les bains dans la thérapeutique française

des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles” by Alain Caubet who refers to the “sponge-like representation of the human being,” to the “spontaneous *humoralism* of Western populations” and to the belief in the necessity of bringing about a crisis. The growing medicalization of water treatments calls for an examination of the status of the spa doctor bent on furthering his own interests, but also aware of the nationalistic aspects of spa culture that blossomed in a competitive environment.

This political dimension of spa culture is underlined in several essays. Jane Adams, in her paper “Accommodating the Poor: The Role of the Voluntary Hospital in Nineteenth-Century English Spas,” and through two case studies, those of Buxton and Leamington, the latter being “one of the most fashionable spas in the country along with Cheltenham,” shows how the spa participated in the building of the town’s self-image by enforcing social mechanisms which fostered the visibility of charity, as in the voluntary hospital, while simultaneously pandering to the aspirations of a fashion-conscious clientele. Her examination of voluntary hospitals in spas reveals the implementation of strategies of control underpinned by “social planning” and inducing “social segregation.” The politics of spa culture involved the pursuit of excellence, against a background of fierce competition that could be national and international, especially in the nineteenth century when French spas competed against their British, German and Austrian rivals, in a bid to establish their therapeutic superiority, a contention made by Carole Carrion in “Les villes d’eaux françaises, reines du thermalisme européen à la Belle Epoque?” The desire to turn French spas into model spas took on nationalistic undertones in a context of European wars and raises the issue of the criteria of excellence which are both related to number—France, in the early nineteenth century could boast 1,500 springs and 100 spas, around 392 at the end of the century—that is to say to quantity, and to quality, of the waters and of the amenities.

Underlying this spa frenzy is a quest for happiness in which Jean Balcou sees a “key idea of the Enlightenment” (“Deux philosophes aux eaux: de Voltaire à Diderot”). He compares the experience of Voltaire in Forges, Passy and Plombières with that of Diderot in Bourbonne-les-Bains through a study of their letters, and considers the impact of their stays in watering places in terms of personal initiation

and well-being, but also in terms of their literary production. The growing importance of this quest for happiness is emphasized by Irene Furlong in “The Saga of Lisdoonvarna—from ‘Queen of Irish Spas’ to Modern Matchmaking Mecca,” in an analysis that traces the shift from a therapeutic approach to the water cure to a festive one, via the predominance of a single function, matchmaking, where love trails are set in a romantic scenery.

Alain Kerhervé, for his part, in an essay entitled “Writing Letters from Georgian Spas: The Impressions of a Few English Ladies” demonstrates that the quest could be unsuccessful, most particularly in the case of members of the aristocracy who were likely to be extremely demanding. Through a wide cross-section of letter-writers, he measures the impact of the stay on letter writing, the success of the cure, records the fluctuations of fashion, and tries to assess the degree of satisfaction derived from the visit to the spa, which nonetheless cannot be always estimated as a result of the interplay of clear-sightedness and self-delusion at work in some of the letters. Such accounts are comparable with the impressions of a French lady in the nineteenth century, Clémence de la Villemarqué, who was seriously ill and had mixed feelings when making several visits, accompanied by her family, to the French spa of Les Eaux-Bonnes, in the Pyrenean mountains from 1863 to 1865. The positive and negative aspects of spa life for an aristocratic French family in the middle of the nineteenth century are reviewed by Fañch Postic, who emphasizes the attraction of the surrounding landscape, in “Thermalisme, tourisme et folklore vers 1860. La famille de la Villemarqué aux Eaux-Bonnes.”

The diversity of spa life lent itself to representation in literature, the visual arts, the press and, more recently, the new media. Anita Gorman in “Seeking Health: The City of Bath in the Novels of Jane Austen” exposes the fallacy of the Bath social scene and explores the way Jane Austen represented it in her fiction, using the watering place as a means of expression of her beliefs about “physical and mental health.” The socio-economic aspects of the spa craze are investigated by Juan Calatrava in his analysis of Guy de Maupassant’s novel, *Mont Oriol*, (1886-1887), whose plot hinges upon the creation of a spa in Auvergne: “Architecture et littérature: à propos de *Mont-Oriol* de Guy de Maupassant.” The intricate connections between architecture and

the new capitalist economy are probed as well as the disruptive effects of spa building on the environment and the people.

The literary representation of spas was matched by their representation in the visual arts and in the press. Cécile Morillon, “L’image de Vichy sous le Second Empire,” reconstructs Vichy life from the testimonies of artists like Hubert Clerget whose lithographs illustrated Charles Braine’s *Vichy sous Napoléon III* (1863) and Albéric Second’s *Vichy-Sévigné Vichy-Napoléon* (1862), the photographer Paul Coustem, the Neurdein brothers or the cartoonist Théophile Villard, thus providing the reader with new images of Vichy, its buildings, rituals, its curists and its industrious classes. Jill Steward in “The Representation of Spa Culture in the Nineteenth-Century British Media: Publicity, the Press and the Villes d’Eaux: 1800-1914” analyses the emergence of new trends in the spa trade and health tourism with the setting up of “overlapping regional and national networks of spas” with their concomitant networks of physicians; simultaneously “new mechanisms” were designed for the circulation of documentation, which entailed the “dissemination of publicity.” In her paper, she endeavours to uncover the reasons for the selection of specific destinations, and traces the birth of fashion and of competition between resorts which, at times, could come close to nationalistic propaganda as part of “thermal nationalism.” She thus confronts the issue of the shaping of communities of readers—those of *Queen* for instance—who were also prospective customers, likely to follow new patterns of behaviour dictated by the media which thus actively contributed to the emergence of new lifestyles.

The reconstruction of spa life has been undertaken in an innovative way by a group of French researchers, coordinated by Liliane Gallet-Blanchard, who have produced a CD-Rom in a wider attempt at “reconstructing urban culture.” In her paper entitled “Hypermedia Navigation in an Eighteenth-Century English Spa: Bath,” written in cooperation with Marie-Madeleine Martinet, the project director lists the different opportunities for teaching and research provided by the new media and demonstrates how “hyperlinks” operate as “chains” between “various branches of knowledge” that range from architecture, medicine, social history to religion and music.

In view of the fecundity of spa culture one can wonder about its decline in twentieth-century Europe. In his article on Scottish spas,

“Unfulfilled Promise. The Spas of Scotland in the Later Nineteenth Century,” Alastair Durie addresses the issue of classification, putting in a sort of “top league” or “premier division” Vichy, Baden and Marienburg and reiterates the importance of “context and culture” as predictive of success or failure. Among the reasons for the poor performance of Scottish spas, he mentions a European decline of watering places and the emergence of new patterns of leisure fostered by the growing popularity of the seaside. Yet the sea per se was not enough to guarantee success as analysed by Nicolas Meynen in “La Rochelle, One of the First French Nineteenth-Century Seaside Resorts: A Dream That Failed to Come True.” For La Rochelle, one of France’s first seaside resorts, success was short-lived, but the attempt unearths the prerequisites for success as well as the sociological implications of the venture, with its differentiation of baths according to class and gender.

A systematic comparison of both spa culture and seaside culture as well as of the French experience with the British one leads John Walton in his essay “Spa and Seaside Cultures in the Age of the Railway: Britain and France Compared” to draw a number of conclusions after dealing with the questions of class and patronage, of the “management and marketing of natural resources,” and examining the implications of a shift from therapy to leisure, from health to pleasure. Like Carole Carribon, he provides figures that show France’s numerical superiority as far as spas were concerned, but inferiority in seaside development: “150 thermal establishments in 1857, 392 in 1893 and 96 seaside resorts” versus “92 spas but 177 seaside resorts” for Britain. Yet numerical superiority does not automatically imply qualitative superiority, as is demonstrated in the rest of the paper which also considers the “imbalance in tourist traffic flows” between the two countries.

If France initially lagged behind Britain, it was quick to foster the growth of a new tourist industry built around the exploitation of sea resources. France’s twentieth- and twenty-first-century approach to water has favoured the development of thalassotherapy, or healing from the sea, a practice as old as the thermal water cure, since sea water is believed to have been used for therapeutic purposes as early as 3000 BC. This is the object of Nicolas Bernard’s paper “Modern Thalassotherapy in France (1964-2004): From Health to Pleasure.” Nicolas Bernard traces the origins of thalassotherapy in France and

analyses the latest transformations of thalassotherapy institutes, the process of generating custom and the economic spin-off from the industry, demonstrating that thalassotherapy participates, in its own way, in a general quest for happiness whose avatar is here a quest for purity, actuated by the need to rediscover one's body. The growth of French thalassotherapy may be seen as providing a recipe for success thanks, as was the case in traditional health resorts, to the right combination of health-oriented activities and leisure-oriented ones.

Annick Cossic

Part I

The origins of spa culture

CHAPTER 1

Water, Water Everywhere... Water, Ailing Bodies and the Gods in Roman Gaul and Britain

Patrick GALLIOU

A visitor from outer space, landing in rural western Europe in the early years of the 21st century, would undoubtedly wonder at the number of elaborate fountains, bearing all the signs of age-old devotion, scattered among the lanes and fields of what is, to all extent, a fairly wet countryside, with no apparent lack of good quality water. His puzzlement would even grow if he chanced upon a procession, complete with crosses and flying banners, fervently chanting hymns to some obscure saint as it marched towards the waterhead dedicated to that half-forgotten figure and graced with putative oracular or curative virtues. He would of course have no inkling that such rites and ceremonies, one generally associates with arid or semi-arid countries,¹ are the last remains of a once widespread devotion to the most common liquid element, i.e. water, as a life-giving and life-preserving force and medium. Oozing or spurting from rocks or sands, babbling quietly or bubbling ferociously in natural pools, spring water was credited with an even higher potency, as, coming from the depths, it was believed to be an offering from the deities inhabiting such nether regions, which, if correctly propitiated, could and would cure ailments and diseases and right torts and personal misfortunes.

¹ During a long visit in the Brazilian Nordeste some ten years ago, I once went to mass in a Catholic church where the congregation prayed for rain, and I spent several months in an inn overlooking a large reservoir, where young people came honeymooning, hoping that that stretch of water would bring fertility to their couple.

A hard day's night

In its plain, ordinary form, water was commonly used for daily hygiene throughout the Iron Age world, as the Celtic nouns *sapo* (soap) and *lautro* (hot bath)² make it abundantly clear. Structures built for that purpose and the custom of regularly visiting baths were, however, Roman imports, and the pursuit of health and fitness, as well as mere personal cleanliness, were quintessential elements of the new Roman way of life in the western imperial provinces. No town would be complete without at least one set of public baths, some being of exceptional size and magnificence, like the Cluny baths, in Paris,³ the Kaiserthermen in Trier,⁴ or the Jewry Wall building in Leicester,⁵ others, like most private bathing suites, being of a simpler and more modest nature, though all were run on the same basic principles, similar to those of contemporary Turkish baths. The number and layout of rooms might vary, but a typical arrangement would include a courtyard or a hall for exercise (*palestra*), an anteroom (*apodyterium*), where visitors undressed and left their clothes, a succession of cold (*frigidarium*), warm (*tepidarium*) and hot (*caldarium*) rooms, to which were sometimes added cold and hot plunge baths. Bathers were free to use whatever amenity they wished, but the standard run involved physical exercise, a massage, a dip in hot and cold water and some much-needed rest. As both men and women visited the baths but were not meant to use them simultaneously, the larger establishments had two sets of rooms, with separate entrances, or different visiting times were ascribed to the two sexes.

Besides being necessary amenities at a time when personal hygiene was the best—and often the only—remedy against endemic diseases, bath-houses played a major role in the life of cities, acting as meeting places or clubs in which, while they took a rest or were being massaged, people of consequence would discuss business or political matters and thus gradually absorb the mores and habits of the

² Paul-Marie Duval, *La vie quotidienne en Gaule pendant la paix romaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1952), 106 (*sapo*), 293 (*lautro*).

³ Paul-Marie Duval, *Paris antique, des origines à la fin du troisième siècle* (Paris: Hermann, 1961).

⁴ Heinz Cüppers *et al.*, *Trier: Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1984), 199.

⁵ Kathleen Kenyon, *Excavations at the Jewry Wall Site* (Leicester/London: Society of Antiquaries, 1948).

imported culture. Bathing habits, being a major element of the latter, also spread to the most Romanized milieus of the Gallo-Roman and Romano-British countryside and many *villas* were provided with a bathing suite, situated at a safe distance from the living quarters, in which the owner's family could disport itself and relax after a hard working day. Good examples of these many small rural bath-houses were excavated at Le Valy Cloistre (La Roche-Maurice, Finistère, F.)⁶ and Rockbourne (Hants. G.-B.).⁷ Both had a limited range of rooms, but were fully equipped to offer a limited number of people physical and mental relaxation in homely surroundings.

Healing is believing

The earliest unequivocal evidence of the development of water cults in western Europe may be ascribed to the Middle Bronze Age, i.e. to the second millennium BC, a time when various votive offerings, ranging from metal weapons and pieces of personal ornament to the remains of animal and human sacrifices began being deposited in watery places, bogs, lakes, rivers and springs.⁸ A good example of such early sites is the 30-metre deep pit at Wilsford (Wilts., G.-B), with a radiocarbon date of 1390 BC; it had been dug down to the water-table and contained an ox skull, a Bronze Age pottery vessel and a variety of amber and jet artefacts.⁹ The numerous finds of massive bronze trumpets (*lurs*) and of bronze chariots¹⁰ made in the bogs of southern Scandinavia probably belong to a similar religious environment, being in all likelihood offerings made to placate or propitiate the deities believed to reside in these wet environments. It is likely that most such rites were performed in the open, but a small number of wooden structures, discovered in the bogs

⁶ René Sanquer, Patrick Galliou, "Une maison de campagne gallo-romaine à La Roche-Maurice," *Annales de Bretagne* 79, n°1 (1972): 216-51.

⁷ Keith Branigan, *The Roman Villa in South-West England* (Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1976), 82, fig. 37.

⁸ Jacques Briard, "Les cultes des eaux et des marais," in *Catalogue de l'exposition: Avant les Celtes. L'Europe à l'âge du bronze, 2500-800 avant J.-C.* (Daoulas: Abbaye de Daoulas/Musée départemental breton, 1988), 116-7.

⁹ Peter Ashbee *et al.*, *Wilsford Shaft: Excavations 1960-62* (London: English Heritage, 1989).

¹⁰ The best known of them is the "sun chariot" dug up in 1902 in the Trundholm bog, Odsherred, Denmark.

of Northern Europe, point to the existence, in some areas, of free standing temples, built over or next to “sacred” springs or water pits (e.g. Bargerosterveld, Holland, c. 1250 BC). Additional proof of the existence of such beliefs may be found in the rising number of bog deposits dated to the first half of the first millennium BC (Late Bronze Age and Hallstatt), a time of climatic deterioration, during which the relatively warm and dry conditions of the Sub-Boreal period gave way to a cooler, wetter phase, conventionally known as the Sub-Atlantic period. As Barry Raftery has pointed out:

During periods of increasing rainfall bogs, too, began to spread, putting further pressure on agricultural land. A drop in temperature [...] would have affected the length of the growing season and placed restrictions on the altitudinal limits of agriculture [...] With waterlogged and ruined crops, with rivers bursting their banks and weeks of leaden skies and unceasing rain, Ireland’s Late Bronze Age farmers—soaked, cold and hungry—could have felt themselves on the brink of Armageddon.¹¹

The advent of the late phase of the Iron Age, conventionally called La Tène, brought no major change in this trend, except perhaps in the growing range of evidence available to the archaeologist. On many sites, distributed all over Europe, from La Tène itself (Marin-Epagnier, Switzerland) to Scandinavia and Central and Northern England, proofs of the widespread use of human sacrifices testify to the continuation of such practices among La Tène tribes. Some of the human skulls found in the Thames, for instance, may indeed relate to Iron Age sacrifices, though the context of their deposition remains obscure.¹² Much more assurance attaches, however, to the body found in the peat bog at Lindow Moss (Cheshire), now exhibited in the British Museum.¹³ The young man laid in a pool of stagnant water had first received a severe and probably fatal blow on the head, his throat had been then cut and a thong tied around his neck to garrotte the last of life out of him. Various elements of the death scene show this was

¹¹ Barry Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 36-7.

¹² Richard Bradley, Keith Gordon, “Human skulls from the River Thames,” *Antiquity* 62 (1988): 503-9.

¹³ Ian Stead, John Bourke, David Brothwell, *Lindow Man. The Body in the Bog* (London: British Museum Press, 1986).

no common murder but part of an elaborate ritual, similar to that applied to the well-known “bog bodies” of Denmark and northern Germany.

Less gruesome offerings to the deities of the Underworld included high prestige bronze weapons—swords, shields and helmets—thrown into or carefully deposited in rivers, small and large, like the Saône, the Thames, the Witham or the Trent,¹⁴ and elements of personal ornament, such as the some two thousand brooches, bracelets and rings contained in a bronze cauldron found in the Riesenquelle thermal spring at Duchkov (Bohemia).¹⁵ What was obviously essential, for the Late La Tène communities of western Europe, was not so much the genuinely curative properties, chemical or otherwise, of running water, but the aura of sanctity attached to it, expressed by the therapeutic and/or intercessory qualities of its topic deity. Most of the latter, like Icovellauna (“the Good Water”) at Sablon/Metz (France) or Divona (“the Divine Water”?) were female, and Barry Cunliffe has rightly underlined that they were “a manifestation, in various guises, of the Earth Mother. A spring, after all, flows through a fissure which joins the underworld with our world and through that fissure we may communicate.”¹⁶ While such elemental sacred springs, involving no major architecture, were probably thick on the ground in the whole of western Europe in the last millennium BC and early first millennium AD,¹⁷ the great “curative” sanctuaries well attested in the Roman period did not develop until the very end of the Iron Age (1st century BC). Standing out among these by their sheer size and their architectural complexity, the *Fontes Sequanae* (“Sources de la Seine,” near Dijon, F.), the Sanxay sanctuary (Vienne, F.), the Altbachtal near Trier (Germany), the *Aquae Sulis* complex (Bath, G.-B.), or, to a lesser extent, Coventina’s Well, near Carrawburgh (Northumberland,

¹⁴ G.A. Wait, *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1985).

¹⁵ Venceslas Kruta, *Le Trésor de Duchkov dans les collections tchécoslovaques* (Ústí nad Labem: Severočeské nakladatelství, 1971).

¹⁶ Barry Cunliffe, *Fertility, Propitiation and the Gods in the British Iron Age* (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1993).

¹⁷ For Roman Gaul, see: Claude Bourgeois, *Divona. 1 Divinités et ex-voto du culte gallo-romain de l'eau* (Paris: de Boccard, 1991); 2 *Monuments et sanctuaires du culte gallo-romain de l'eau* (Paris: de Boccard, 1992).

G.-B.)¹⁸ certainly drew more than purely local visitors, pilgrims coming to them from afar to find temporary relief or a final cure to their ailments. At *Fontes Sequanae*, like at Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme, F.), devotees to the local deity offered wooden models of themselves or of the afflicted part of their bodies, hoping that the deity would reciprocate with a healthy liver, arm or leg,¹⁹ while, on other sites, they tried to propitiate the topic deity with less obtrusive offerings, such as dedicatory altars, coins, bronze statuettes or various other artefacts.²⁰ Though the reconstructed process can only be largely conjectural, it is likely that devotees drank from the sacred spring and/or had a dip in tanks or large pools filled with its water, but the highest moments of the cure probably took place elsewhere, in the temple where sacrifices were offered to the god(dess) or in the neighbouring theatre, where special shows were given, perhaps recounting the miracles former visitors had experienced and trying to convince the pilgrims thronging the benches to part with yet more *denarii* and *sestertii* for the benefit of the deity... After a long and exerting day, visitors would retire to special dormitories where they hoped to see a vision of the god(dess) and be cured by this nightly visitation. In most of these sanctuaries, where the water had no specific curative quality, healing depended much on believing. This is, again, borne out by the fact that, at Bath, in the Roman period, pilgrims wishing to call up the power of Sulis/Minerva to bring vengeance upon some wrongdoer simply had a message written to the goddess on a piece of metal and threw it into the spring, being confident that Sulis would read and take good note. Many of these messages come from simple folk and refer to the theft or loss of

¹⁸ *Fontes Sequanae*: Simone Deyts, *Les Bois sculptés des Sources de la Seine* (Paris: CNRS, 1983); *Sanxay*: Pierre Aupert *et al.*, *Sanxay, un grand sanctuaire rural gallo-romain* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992); *Altbachtal*: Edmund Gose, *Der gallo-römische Tempelbezirk im Altbachtal zu Trier* (Mayence, 1972) (*Trierer Grabungen und Forschungen II*); *Aquae Sulis*: in part. Barry Cunliffe *et al.* *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath* (Oxford: Oxford Committee for Archaeology, 1988) (2 vols.); *Coventina's Well*: L. Allason-Jones and B. Mackay, *Coventina's Well. Reassessment of the 19th Century Finds from a Shrine on Hadrian's Wall* (Clayton, 1985).

¹⁹ *Fontes Sequanae*: see above; *Chamalières*: Simone Deyts, "Ex-voto en bois de Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme) et des Sources de la Seine," *Gallia* 44 (1986): 65-89.

²⁰ See for instance: Barry Cunliffe, *The Temple of Aquae Sulis, op. cit.*, vol. 2.

simple, basic objects of their everyday lives. On one such, Exsuperius asks the goddess to wreak vengeance on whoever had stolen his iron pan (?): “Exsuperius gives an iron pan (?). (The person) who... innocence for him... of (?) Sulis, whether man (or woman), whether slave or free,... this and... have stolen his... whether man or woman, is to have given satisfaction with their blood. You are to reclaim (?) this (if) anyone has stolen the vessel from me.”²¹

Thermal waters

Though Iron Age and Roman communities had no means of assaying the chemical qualities of spring water, it is highly likely that the genuinely curative qualities of a number of springs were discovered empirically, either because attention was drawn to their temperature or their strong sulphurous smell, or because people, after using their water, time after time, either internally or externally, had become aware of their idiosyncratic properties.

The earliest use of thermal water in the countries of central and northern Europe is dated to the Middle Bronze Age (1400-1250 BC). Chance discoveries, in 1907, proved that the carbonated water of the Mauritius spring, at Saint Moritz (Switzerland), had been channelled into wooden tanks, the associated offerings showing that pilgrims had come a long way to drink this slightly fizzy beverage.²² A few centuries later, Early Iron Age visitors patronized the Fontaines Salées (Yonne, F.) springs for their salty water, with a high nitrogen and helium content, which was also channelled into a large oval wooden structure.²³ The latter site, with its massive Roman reoccupation and architectures, including a temple and a large bath-house, is a good example of the way old thermal springs were reused in the Roman period, while new ones, often called *Aquae*—and listed in the Peutinger Table and the Antonine Itinerary—, appeared and prospered in the quiet decades of the *pax romana*. Among those, the best known are *Aquae Calidae Salluviorum* (Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône, F.), *Aquae*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 200-1, n°66.

²² Calista Fischer, “The Secret of the Mauritius Spring,” *European Heritage* 2 (1994): 15-22.

²³ René Louis, Bernard Lacroix, *Les Fontaines Salées. Notice archéologique* (Sens: Société des Fouilles Archéologiques et des Monuments Historiques de l'Yonne, 1960).

Calidae (Vichy, Allier, F.), *Aquae Bormonis* (Bourbon-l'Archambault, Allier, F.), *Aquae Convenarum* (probably Capvern-les-Bains, Hautes-Pyrénées, F.), *Aquae Nerii* (Néris-les-Bains, Allier, F.), *Aquae Nisincii* (Bourbon-Lancy, Saône-et-Loire, F.), *Aquae Segetae* (Sceaux-en-Gâtinais, Loiret, F.), *Aquae Siccae* (Cazères, Haute-Garonne, F.), *Aquae Tarbellicae* (Dax, Landes, F.), *Aquae Sulis* (Bath, G.-B.) and *Aquae Arnemetiae* (Buxton, Derbyshire, G.-B.), but one may readily admit that many lesser ones were also active, both in Britain and France.²⁴ Some of them are named after Celtic deities, like Sulis or Borvo—"bubbling water"²⁵—or sacred sites—the name *Arnemetiae* derives from *nemeton*, i.e. "sacred grove"—but the above—mentioned *vici* have yielded no unequivocal trace of a pre-Roman thermal activity, though scientific excavations in the modern towns masking their remains have admittedly been very few.²⁶ Little is known, similarly, of their thermal structures and buildings,²⁷ but most of them, like the sanctuaries described above, seem to have possessed several sets of bath-houses, temples and a theatre. The large tanks and pools visible in the bath-houses undisputedly show that the water treatment given to curists hinged on a partial or total immersion of the ailing body in thermal water, but a few documents, like a sherd of *terra sigillata* found at Vichy, depicting a naked god seated on a rock and holding in his hand a cup of liquid bubbling over the brim, would tend to indicate that the sacred and precious water was also consumed on the premises... It is altogether clear, however, that, like in the major water sanctuaries of *Fontes Sequanae* or Sanxay, no full cure could be expected without direct intervention of the local deity(ies), whose benevolent dispensations would strongly supplement the frailties of human care and medicine.

From this brief excursion into the vast realm of water cults and thermal treatments in Gaul and Britain one may conclude that the ritual and medicinal use of water goes a long way back in the

²⁴ See in part. for Gaul: Louis Bonnard, *La Gaule thermale* (Paris: Plon, 1908).

²⁵ Paul-Marie Duval, *Les Dieux de la Gaule*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Payot, 1976), 32.

²⁶ See for instance: Jacques Corrocher *et al.*, *Carte archéologique de la Gaule: L'Allier* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1989), 33-6 (Bourbon-l'Archambault), 138-63 (Vichy), 165-84 (Néris).

²⁷ With the notable exception of Bath, see above.