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Travels Abroad

Taking the Waters



Our routine is this. Up a little before six and after tub and toilet out on the promenade. There drink the sparkling water and lounge in the sun listening to the tolerable band performing overtures, movements from Beethoven, and Haydn's symphonies, pot-pourris and waltzes. Nine-thirty we start for our ramble often with our books, oftener not. We walk and talk, sit and muse or read, listen to the birds and watch the mystery of light and shade in beech and fir woods.

—George Henry Lewes, *George Eliot Letters*, 1 July 1866

Between 1866 and 1868 George Eliot and George Henry Lewes were, quite deliberately, building a social circle that eventually matured into the guest list for Sundays at the Priory. In several cases, their annual travels had already resulted in new or enhanced friendships. In 1860 they had become acquainted with the T. A. Trollopes in Florence, and the following year journeyed with Tom Trollope to the remote monasteries of Camaldoli and LaVerna where George Eliot had the opportunity to talk about monasticism with an actual Catholic monk and to see an entire building fitted out with every religious subject (Annunciations, Crucifixions, Nativities) all done by the Della Robbias in the same medium of ceramics. In 1864, they shared their Italian time with Frederic Burton, depending on his taste as an artist to enhance their enjoyment of Luini, Titian, Veronese, and the Bellinis, especially in Venice.

During 1866, the Leweses established their routine of visiting European spas, always with the primary goal of better health for one or both of them. At the same time, such venues lured many well-off English travelers to a non-English environment likely to encourage the loosening of

social prohibitions. In 1867 they made their daring journey through Spain, a project that depended on encouragement and advice from friends who had gone before. Their route helped fortify their relationship with Robert Browning since choosing Biarritz as one of their stops followed his recommendation.

After Biarritz, on their way to Spain, they solidified their acquaintance with the Frederic Lehmanns by detouring to Pau, a Pyrenees mountain spa, where Nina Lehmann was seeking therapy. In 1868, the couple visited Baden Baden, their first highly fashionable spa stop, and, afterward, even the journey to the small and remote Sankt Märgen yielded a new titled acquaintance, the Countess Ida Von Baudissin, who attended a Sunday on 19 June when she visited London in 1870.

During all their travels abroad, the Leweses were likely to encounter both old and new friends, but the health-seeking habits of the Victorians meant that the spas provided especially frequent points of intersection. By the end of 1868, George Eliot was expressing satisfaction with the success of their effort: “We have made some new friendships that cheer us with the sense of new admiration of actual living beings whom we know in the flesh, and who are kindly disposed toward us ” (H&J 134). The following January 1869 brought the serious launch of Sundays at the Priory.¹

Spas

The couple began their systematic routine of hydropathy at European spas in 1866, a routine that ultimately resulted in *Daniel Deronda*'s opening setting and also in details in several poems along the way. But both George Eliot and Lewes were long used to seeking health at watering places: at seashores and the towns surrounding inland springs in England, and at mountain spas abroad. The couple began resorting to watering places for health improvement at the same time they began their courtship. The summer of 1853 began with an interval at Tunbridge Wells for Evans but concluded with a period at St. Leonard's during which Lewes most likely joined her, partly to participate in the therapies available at the facilities of Spa Cottage, supervised by Dr. Emil Grosslob.² But Lewes's health did not improve in St. Leonard's, and, after their return to London, he again departed for a watering place, this time to Malvern, a visit which provided him with material for two periodical pieces written in his Vivian persona,

¹ Nancy Henry (*Life of George Eliot*) concurs that the salons began in the “late sixties” (154).

² See McCormack, *George Eliot's English Travels*, 44–47.



Figure 9

Baden Baden. Author's collection

“Douche the First” and “Douche the Second.” In 1854 their momentous elopement, which included their quest for material for Lewes’s biography of Goethe, took them to German destinations, notably their first home together in lodgings in Weimar. Excursions from their headquarters there on the Kaufstrasse included destinations, notably Ilmenau and Bad Bercka, that offered hydrotherapy, providing an incidental but desirable occupation with which to vary Lewes’s Goethe research.

Despite the brevity of the couple’s side trip to Ilmenau, it formed one of the most memorable interludes of the couple’s early life together, so much so that they returned thirteen years later for a sentimental revival. By 1867, the train had reached the town. Nevertheless, on that occasion they switched to an open carriage at Arnstadt, a transfer that permitted them to reminisce in fuller detail, “so that at particular turns in the road we could say—Here we plucked the plumes from the roadside trees—Here I saw

such a dog, or told such an anecdote—Here we rested & had coffee &c” (*GHLL* 2:122). At the same time, the railways, along with the expanded bathing facilities, meant that Ilmenau had lost a good deal of the quiet isolation they had enjoyed on the earlier visit.

In September of 1854, the lovers spent five happy days in this out-of-the-way spot.³ They launched this phase of their continued pursuit of Lewes’s subject on the twentieth, traveling by railway and post-wagon. Later they blamed their headaches and upset stomachs on the long, jolting journey. But the headaches faded, and they soon found themselves wandering in the pleasant meadows by the River Ilm.

In Ilmenau, they climbed the mild hills extending to the south and west, sometimes as pure refreshment, at other times with specific Goethe-related destinations in mind. Their excursion to the rustic Goethehäuschen auf dem Kickelhahn, despite a long period of fruitless wandering until set on the right path, they nevertheless called “a merry walk!” (*H&J* 232). The impressive bathhouse, including “a douche lofty and tremendous enough to invigorate the giant Cormoran” (*Pinney* 122); the fresh food; the beeches and the pines; the rich eggy colors of the buildings in the valley all contributed to the memorable joys that the illicit honeymooners shared during their watering-place experience in Ilmenau.

Meanwhile, their travels in Germany in 1854 brought them new friends and also confirmed relationships with some old ones. Haight’s account of George Eliot’s elopement includes a long list of both the Weimar and the Berlin acquaintances whose visits constituted the apparent social normalcy of their first months together, emphasizing the importance of its members and their acceptance of the unmarried couple. Gerlinde Röder-Bolton provides a wealth of material to demonstrate that in Weimar the couple suffered little or no ostracism, indeed moved in a stimulating artistic milieu.

Only one domestic circle from their German trip did not appear to welcome Evans. On Thursday, 7 December, in Berlin, Lewes set out with “Magnus the chemist” (as opposed to his brother “Magnus the painter” [*H&J* 424]) for a Sitz bath, when a spontaneous invitation from Ignaz Olfers, director of the Neues Museum, diverted him from his purpose. Evans reports the event in a generous tone. Lewes returned to Dorotheenstrasse to dress “having wisely given up the Sitz in favour of a party at Prof Olfers” (37). His partner settled down for an evening alone in Berlin.⁴

³ Ashton, erroneously, reduces the holiday to a single afternoon (*George Eliot: A Life* 71).

⁴ According to Röder-Bolton, also puzzled by this single social exclusion, Evans wrote about her evening alone “claiming that it was the first night she spent *alone* [her italics] in Berlin . . . though Lewes had been out on his own alone” (159).

Two weeks later, Lewes again went to Olfers', while she worked on her Spinoza translation and again on 25 January, while she read Adolf Stahr. On the other hand, Hedwig Olfers attended Henriette Solmar's salon on Friday, 9 March, where she apparently had no objection to meeting Evans. It was a small foretaste of the routine but variable and sometimes unpredictable ostracism awaiting them in England, where Lewes frequently responded to dinner invitations addressed solely to him. Their relationships in Weimar included the Adolf Schölls, a happy family of five; the Sauppes, who, with the Schölls, joined them on an excursion out of town to the Tiefurt Schloss; and the French ambassador, the Marquis de Ferrière, no less. English friends in town included S. D. Williams, "an agreeable, unaffected young man" (H&J 25), Thomas Wilson who was in Weimar as an English teacher (H&J 446), and James Marshall who was serving as secretary to a Duchess (425). As in the months at Berlin that followed, their social relations in Weimar had an ease that they had to surrender entirely when they returned to England early the following spring. Without question, Franz Liszt issued the most important social invitation of their stay. The breakfast party in the vine-covered garden adjoining his lofty house, the Altenburg, initiated friendly relations that persisted until the end of the Leweses' stay.

A few days after returning from Ilmenau, the Leweses received an important English visitor, Arthur Helps, future Clerk of the Privy Council. He would remain Lewes's friend through the troublesome days to come. After they returned home to England, Helps facilitated Lewes's writing projects and invited him down to Hampshire over Christmas. Until 1857, when they finally announced their situation to the Evans family back in Warwickshire, Lewes left Evans home on Christmas day to go to Vernon Hill. Afterward, he waited until Boxing Day to leave her on her own in Richmond.

In Weimar, things went well with Helps. Evans reports that he and Lewes talked together all morning long, after which the three met for coffee, and the conversation concerned travels abroad: "In the evening we drove to Ettersburg, and he entertained us with charming stories about his Spanish travels" (H&J 23). The morning-long talks could not, however, have settled all the issues relevant to the couple's circumstances. In the middle of October, Lewes sent out two letters "explaining his position" (27), one to Helps and one to Thomas Carlyle. The importance of Carlyle stemmed from the people Lewes expected to meet at his next stop, Berlin, people who also knew the Sage of Chelsea: Varnhagen Von Ense, Otto Gruppe, Christian Rauch. He did not want his anomalous living arrangements to disqualify him from the company of the Berlin residents

he needed to interview about Goethe. And, in the end, they did not. He dedicated the biography to Carlyle. During the 1870s, Helps's daughter Alice eventually became a regular Sunday guest at the Priory.

Meanwhile, the Leweses found a nearby watering place to which they returned several times. Bad Bercka lay only a few miles from Weimar, but it offered in miniature the usual spa amenities: comforts for the body such as garden walks and restaurants, as well as the baths and the waters in which they placed their hopes of health. George Eliot, in "Recollections of Weimar," catches the spirit of joy they found there: "One of our visits to Bercka is individualized in my memory. . . . We set off in a high wind which was very perturbing to G. It softened a little as we went on, but was still violent enough to blow G's hat off. He ran in pursuit of it and so entirely lost the sense of annoyance in that of the comic, that he began to run with squared legs and arms, making a perfect Töffler sketch of himself. When we set out home a shower came on to which we were indebted for the said rainbow. We had neither of us before seen a rainbow thus springing from the ground, and we eagerly watched it till it faded away" (H&J 229). When the time came to move on to Berlin, their social acquaintances would become even more important, especially to Lewes's Goethe biography. But, although walks in the Tiergarten and along the Unter den Linden pleased them very well, they had left their watering-place joys behind. The honeymoon, though by no means over, had changed.

Setting the Pattern

After returning from Berlin to Britain in 1855 the Leweses did not travel beyond its borders for several years. Their journeys took them to seaside resorts to accommodate research for Lewes's *Sea-side Studies* project, which required waterfront destinations: Ilfracombe, Tenby, and the Scilly and Channel Islands. They then returned to Germany, although not to a watering place per se. Instead George Eliot chose Munich and Dresden as the main locations to write the later chapters of *Adam Bede*. After the publication of George Eliot's first full-length novel, they remained at home in England until the completion of *The Mill on the Floss*, whose publication called for a celebration. The Leweses chose Italy and mounted a three-month simulation of a Grand Tour that reached as far south as Paestum. *Romola* kept them visiting Italy as George Eliot pursued her research both on-site and in the Maglibecchian Library. Only after publication of another

English novel, *Felix Holt*, did the Leweses initiate the series of interludes at mountain spas that they continued till their dying days.⁵

At Schwalbach and Schlangenbad in 1866, the couple established the mountain-spa routine they followed ever after. They drank the waters at the various springs and had their showers and wraps and baths. They listened to the music that often played all day long, from the first glass of water before breakfast through the evening coffee. They drank chocolate at outdoor cafés while reading the London *Times*, and they strolled the promenades and parks, as well as pursuing more active walking excursions or, later, drives, into the nearby hills. They generally retired for the night at 9:00 or 10:00 P.M.

The layouts of the various spas the Leweses visited most often contained similar components that helped govern and cater to the activities favored by the guests. The Kursaals housed spaces for gambling, eating, drinking, reading, writing, smoking, and conversing, all usually contained within a lavish or at least eager display of architecture and ornament. The tree-lined promenades offered shady walks and the diversion of encountering acquaintances. Some Kurpark walks followed the boskiest paths along shallow swift-running little rivers such as the Oos at Baden Baden and the Ilm at Bad Bercka, while paths taking other directions reached the various springs. The hotels, broad low buildings limited by the absence of lifts to a manageable height of four or five stories, provided comfort and often elegance, as well as food for the body. And there was always a chance of improved health from drinking the waters and taking the baths.

Despite the sameness of the facilities among the many German spas, they differed in the treatments they advised, the composition and temperature of their waters, and the theories of hydropathy held by the individual physicians practicing there. Thomas Madden lists the possible varieties of spring: “Chalybeate, sulphurous, salines (simple alkaline, muriated, and acidulous), bitter waters, iodated, earthy, and chemically indifferent mineral spring” (6). Differences in the chemical composition of the waters meant that the various spas addressed differing maladies. According to Madden, the waters of Schlangenbad “are employed in rheuma-

⁵ Otherwise, as the Leweses proceeded to the main destinations, they stopped at such places as Plombière, Chaudfontaine, and Bonn for brief periods of taking the waters for just a day or so. They also availed themselves of the baths situated in places on itineraries composed without particularly health-seeking motives in mind. In Rome, for example, in 1869, they enjoyed their baths on the Via Barberino (GHLJ 7 April), and in 1870 George Eliot remedied an attack of unwellness with a visit to Charlottenburg, on the edge of Berlin. See the Appendix, a chronology of “The Leweses’ Travels Abroad,” which includes the longer stays at European spas.

tism, rheumatic arthritis, impeded menstruation, and neuralgia,” while in Schwabach, “three quarters of visitors have anemia, also dyspepsia and constipation” (13). Although Madden attributes efficacy with chronic indigestion and “cartarrh of the respiratory organs” (140) to Baden Baden, he qualifies these with his own opinion of the Baden Baden waters in general, which he finds rendered ineffective by the area’s climate. On the subject of the effectiveness of drinking and bathing, authors often warn against excess. According to Madden, the thermal baths can kill as well as cure.⁶

Mary Ann Evans’s experience with spas began as a young woman in Warwickshire with Leamington, where she hoped to remove from Coventry during the 1842 quarrel with her father she called the Holy War. It went on until after her 1880 marriage to John Cross, when the newlywed Mary Ann Cross hoped that the therapy at Bad Wildbad would help her new husband recover after his sudden onset of mental illness in Venice. In between, although she sometimes sent Lewes off alone to try his luck at English spas, from the time they began their regular visits in the 1860s, they generally traveled together to or through the Schwarzwald.

In addition to the hope of health that served as the primary attraction for the sickly couple, the beauty of the mountainous scenery surrounding the Black Forest spas vastly appealed to the Leweses. Although the gambling put them off, they also enjoyed the sociability, the concerts, and the availability of long walks. Regarding the medical care, they had uneven experiences that yielded uneven opinions. In an 1861 letter to Theodosia Trollope, who was considering trying the regimen at Malvern, George Eliot describes James Gully, one of the most famous spa physicians, as “a quack” (*GEL* 3:472). On the other hand, George Eliot so admired the St. Leonard’s spa physician, Emil Grosslob, during the summer of 1853, that the Leweses called on him on their return south-coast visit in 1861. In general, the Leweses’ frequent returns to watering places at home and abroad suggest a confidence that could not have entirely excluded the men who practiced there.

The spas of both England and the Continent reached many of the works George Eliot produced after she began her visits, including “Agatha,” *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda*. A side trip from a mainly spa journey in 1868 yielded the first, a poem about an aged woman intending a religious pilgrimage. Although George Eliot set her long poetic drama *Armgarth* in Berlin (with a side reference to the spa at Charlottenburg), she conceived the idea as she and Lewes pursued one of their lengthy walks toward the

⁶ See *George Eliot and Intoxication* about the ambiguity of drugs that can either kill or cure, presented in the context of Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of the Platonic Pharmakon.

soaring viaduct outside of Harrogate Spa in 1870.⁷ George Eliot made some use of her growing experience in such venues subtly in *Middlemarch*, primarily in the Finale's description of Lydgate's fate as watering place physician. But the major impact reached *Daniel Deronda*, and it all began, not in Bad Homburg in 1872, where George Eliot famously wrote home about her impressions of Byron's gambling grandniece, but four years earlier when Lewes first introduced George Eliot to the action at the roulette table at Baden Baden during their 1868 summer visit.

Schwalbach and Schlangenbad

The Leweses' first large-scale period at a Black Forest spa began in 1866 with Schwalbach and Schlangenbad, followed by more bathing in Bonn, Louvain, and Chaudfontaine. The journey started and ended with strenuous touring of Belgium and the Netherlands, including stops in Rotterdam, The Hague, Leyden, Amsterdam, Cologne, and Coblenz on the way out and Bonn, Aix, Liège, Chaudfontaine, Louvain, Ghent, Bruges, and Ostend on the return. Along the way they had to avoid a troublesome war, which crowded the cities disagreeably with soldiers, but they took a certain pride in their ability to do so.

At first, the experience in Schwalbach delighted them. They had privacy, superb walks, their work, their reading, and the satisfaction of at least taking action against their physical ills. From their hotel, the Duc de Nassau, they could step right outside the door onto the hillside promenade. Picturesque half-timbered houses lined the principle street, while gift shops displayed Schwalbach souvenirs: "pretty trifles in Bohemian glass; carvings in horn, wood, and ivory; jewelry; prints and books; and children's bravery" (Wilson 111). Because of the hilliness of the town itself, more challenging excursions than the promenade also began at the doorstep of their rooms (*GHLL* 2:96). They found the water "delicious" (2:96), the music "tolerable" (2:98), and the regime strengthening.

Three springs feed the baths at Schwalbach, which in the 1850s immersed or sprinkled 350 people a day (Madden 137). Once Madden found his visit coincided with that of the Empress Eugénie and contrasted the sumptuous baths reserved for royalty with the "lofty and airy [but] in no wise handsome" facility for ordinary people (137). Schwalbach's physician was Dr. Gentpath, who treated the majority of the visitors primarily for anemia but also for dyspepsia and constipation.

⁷ Bodeneheimer overlooks Dr. Grahn's reference to Charlottenburg when she identifies the setting of *Armigart* as "an unnamed European capital" (179), rather than Berlin.

Authors suspicious of the effectiveness of hydrotherapy conclude that regardless of its efficacy the spa routine often facilitated recovery not only through its walking and water drinking components, but also in interrupting harmful habits maintained at home. Madden, for example, believed in the superiority of hydrotherapy to drastic draughts of strong drugs. But authors also warned of the importance of the correct length of treatment. Too long, they believed, could render the treatment deadly.

While the Leweses took the waters conscientiously, the crown to their joy in Schwalbach was the privacy they found in the walks among the pinewood-covered hills that crowded closely around the town. According to Lewes, their fellow guests, the majority of them women, made “expeditions in carriages & on donkey to distant spots & points de vue, but the varied and indescribable beauties lying immediately within reach are left unvisited” (*GHLL* 2:98). The Leweses took full advantage of the forest solitude. In a letter to his son, Lewes compares himself and the “mutter” to Adam and Eve: “I wonder whether they stopped to kiss as often?” he asks (2:98) about their own walks. Within the privacy of the empty woods, in a post-Eden Eden, they liked to take interludes of rest lying supine under the trees while gazing upward at the filtered, leafy light.

In Schwalbach, the couple discovered that they could shape their days to insure the desired proportions of work, exercise, privacy, therapy, and company when they wanted it. They took particular pleasure in their freedom to dine independently. Ever since the gustatory tyranny of the table d’hôtel in Berlin in 1855, with its financially obligatory attendance and its call for participation in polite conversation, they tried to avoid this dining arrangement, and they did so successfully in Schwalbach.

Driving through the Rhine valley on the way to this satisfactory destination, the coach had passed through the nearby spa town of Schlangenbad. From his perch on top of the omnibus, Lewes made a mental note of its attractive appearance. This came in handy when several factors prompted them to move on from Schwalbach. Laughing at the slapstick fears of other visitors who ran here and there to escape the threat of a Prussian invasion of the militarily irrelevant mountain spa town, they became caught in their own snare and developed their own anxieties on the subject. Their pleasure in Schwalbach also diminished partly because of a rainstorm. Since Lewes had liked the look of Schlangenbad when he viewed it from the omnibus, they followed their original intention to move there after Schwalbach.

Despite the proximity of the two spas, Schwalbach and Schlangenbad differ in their size, their styles, and the composition of their waters. According to Madden, “From Schwalbach to Schlangenbad, the transition

is easy and natural, for only five short miles separate them and yet how different are these Spas" (142). For one thing, Schlangenbad had a milder climate: "Being situated on the southwestern slope of the Taunus range, and well protected from harsh wind by the hills, it enjoys a much milder and more genial climate than Schwalbach" (142). This author finds additional advantages in its quietness, despite his positive evaluation of its band (143).

Despite Schlangenbad's comparative plainness, the Leweses secured luxurious accommodations at the Hotel Palntz, in a suite complete with a balcony. Madden describes a typical evening in Schlangenbad: "As usual the band was playing after dinner, and all the visitors were assembled, the ladies plying their never-ending embroidery, the children playing around them, and the men all sending up volumes of dense smoke, like so many ambulant factory chimneys" (143). This cozy family scene emphasizes the less fashionable small-spa atmosphere, so different from Baden Baden or Bad Homburg, and different, as well, from Schwalbach just down the road.

The waters at Schlangenbad, which rise from thermal springs, receive praise from both the guide books and from Lewes. According to Madden, the Schlangenbad waters "afford peculiarly agreeable sensations to the bather and render the skin soft and white" (143). Lewes concludes that "we like this place better than Schwalbach, partly because of the Schwimm Baths which are incomparable luxuries—water as clear as crystal and soft as milk" (*GEL* 4:284). When they moved on by boat, they had reason to regret it because of a "bad dinner on the Rhine" (*GHLJ* 22 July 1866). Lewes "was violently sick on arriving at Bonn," and the sulphur waters there pleased him only when he was fully immersed: "the most luxurious and soothing of baths" (22 July). On getting out, however, he found the evil sulfur smell unpleasant.

Both Schwalbach and Schlangenbad turn up in *Daniel Deronda* in a single character name: the shared surname of the Baron and Baroness von Langen, Gwendolen's companions in Leubronn. Frequently prefaced in the guide books with the description "Langen" (long), Schwalbach suits the adjective because of the shape created by its location in a deeply carved mountain valley. Schlangenbad encloses the same word within three-letter sets at either end of the name. The Von Langens in *Daniel Deronda* have hardly any identity beyond their existence at Leubronn and their unanticipated and highly fortuitous invitation that provides Gwendolen her opportunity, after meeting Grandcourt's former mistress at the Whispering Stones, to find escape from England and her problematic suitor's attentions at a distant spa. Reduced to little other than their convenient

association with this setting, they carry a name adapted from two of the Black Forest watering places George Eliot visited in 1866: Schwalbach and Schlangenbad.

The stays at Schwalbach and Schlangenbad set a lifelong pattern. The Leweses continued to frequent the spas of Germany, varying them with English, French, Belgian, and Swiss watering places, for the rest of their lives. They believed in the effectiveness of change of air and experimented with the various bath and shower possibilities. They drank the waters, which sometimes seemed to help. They enjoyed the concerts and some of the luxury. Consistently, at the Kursaals and along the walks, they met people and went to places that contributed to George Eliot's creativity.

“Agatha”

Two years after Schwalbach, the Leweses were back in the Schwarzwald, again seeking health and relaxation, and, as it turned out, finding more material to encourage a creative imagination, if not permanent good health. They made a substantial stop in Baden Baden and then headed for the more remote Bad Peterstal where they lingered three weeks, before beginning a quicker itinerary through Switzerland. The journey included two stops that stimulated George Eliot: the village of Sankt Märgen, the setting for “Agatha,” and its neighboring town of Freiburg, which George Eliot mentions in widely scattered but always positive connections in several of her works.

In July of 1868 the Leweses had a ten-day stay in Freiburg, made “memorable” by much “lionizing” (*GEL* 4:458) of George Eliot. Then they drove out from Freiburg to seek refuge, health, and solitude in a village to the east of the town. One of George Eliot's most direct adaptations of a European site as a setting occurs in “Agatha,” where all the topographical and architectural details of this small hilly and remote location match the setting in the poem. Advancing toward Sankt Märgen, George Eliot expressed her hopes of wrapping herself warmly and sitting out of doors where the best views look southward toward Switzerland and France.

George Eliot wrote enthusiastically of Sankt Märgen. The scenery pleased her: “A region of grass, corn, and pine woods, so beautifully varied that we seem to be walking in a great park laid out for our special delight” (*GEL* 4:457). In a letter to John Blackwood, she creates an evening scene at their hotel: “Last night as we were having supper in the common room of the inn we suddenly heard sounds that seemed to me like those of an accordian [*sic*]. ‘Is that a zittern?’ said Mr Lewes to the German lady by his

side. 'No, it is prayer.' The servants, by themselves—the host and hostess were in the same room with us—were saying their evening prayers, men's and women's voices blending in unusually correct harmony. The same loud prayer is heard at morning noon and evening from the shepherds and workers in the fields" (*GEL* 4:457). The pretty music at dinner promised well for their stay.

But the inn itself, despite its charming introduction to local religious life, offered the Leweses only inadequate shelter against the mountain weather. One day they did brave the temperature and attempted to make themselves comfortable in the sun. But the following day they gave up. Meanwhile, in the company of another guest, the Grafⁱⁿ Ida von Baudissin and her eighteen-year-old daughter, Agnes, George Eliot made the visit on which she based her 1868 poem, "Agatha." The voice of the poem describes her character Linda as a young noblewoman whose philanthropies include keeping a school. This figure probably combines the Grafⁱⁿ and her daughter, who eventually, like Linda, came to head a school in Freiburg (*GEL* 4:459).

In "Agatha," the details of Sankt Märgen, which George Eliot selects for attention, help establish the merits of the pious Catholicism practiced by Agatha and her neighbors, a religion that brings together members of the community in loving mutual concern. The poem renders Catholicism in almost exclusively female terms. In the first hundred lines, George Eliot merges characters and settings in maternal/Madonna images, including the earth, Agatha, the cows, and the visitor from Freiburg, Countess Linda. The action occurs "where the earth spreads soft and rounded breasts / To feed her children" (11.3–4). The Madonna image on the cottage wall is made diminutive and domestic, smiling on "home things" (1.24). Pictures of mostly female saints associated with marriage and maternity, Ursula and Ann (supplemented by the mild St. Francis of Assisi), ornament the walls of Agatha's cottage. The water of the tiny brook running past the cottage is like laughing children. Agatha's stream turns a sawmill and also "feeds the pasture" (1.58) for the "matron" cows (1.60), named individually: *Blanchi*, *Nägli*, and *Veilchen*.

Even the Augustinian monastery on the other side of the hollow participates in a feminized, domesticated community religious ritual. Its bells unite the people dispersed among the mountains, hollows, and valleys by calling them to pray the *Angelus* at the same intervals several times a day. As they all respond together to the ringing by participating in the same act of devotion, the people unite themselves to one another.

But though the monastery bells ring out a command responded to throughout the area, the poem's voice points out that they no longer issue

from a community of monks whose “shadows fall no more / Tall-froked and cowed athwart the evening fields” (11.34–35). As at the monastery in the nineteenth century, working families have replaced the holy brothers in the cloisters: “Their silent corridors / Are turned to home of bare-armed, aproned men, / Who toil for wife and children” (1.37). The peasants also honor a highly domesticated Mary “dear / As all the sweet home things she smiles upon” who “puts her crown away / And with her little Boy wears common clothes” (11.29–30).

As anchorite, mystic, and pilgrim, the central character, Agatha, like the religion she practices, in turn unites the community members, who all recognize her virtue in caring for her dim-witted cousin. They also appreciate her willingness to pray for them when needed. For their part, the villagers provide the inhabitants of the one-room cottage with food and clothing. At the cottage, the garden gate and the front door stand open because, like Mary (as depicted in ubiquitous paintings of the Annunciation), Agatha receives visits not only from needy neighbors but from a specific angelic character: “One long summer’s day / An angel entered at the rose-hung gate, / With skirts pale blue” (11.87–89). The voice, embodied as another visitor to the cottage, introduces Countess Linda, who, clad in blue, holy in her saintly philanthropy, has hair like Rosamond Vincy’s, “soft and blonde as infants” (1.90), but appears as a “mamma” to the orphan children she patronizes in Freiburg.

With Linda’s arrival, dialogue between her and Agatha replaces the observations of the narrative voice (so vaguely drawn as to lack even an identifiable gender), who participates in the poem’s action by going along on the cottage visit. The dialogue reveals another community function of the devout cottager. By herself making a pilgrimage to Einsiedeln, the massive Benedictine abbey south of Zurich, Agatha will represent all the villagers, whose agricultural tasks keep them from doing it themselves. Hence, Agatha, among the most impoverished of George Eliot’s characters, is nevertheless herself a traveler. She has already made one pilgrimage to the Benedictine shrine; she anticipates a return in the future.

Agatha’s pilgrimage destination could not form a more dramatic contrast with her surroundings in Sankt Märgen. The monastery at Einsiedeln is of enormous size, with high towers flanking its entrance and interlocking quadrangles housing the church, the monks’ residences, and the lodgings for pilgrims. A pilgrimage site since the fourteenth century, its central location in Switzerland made it an attraction for Swiss Catholics both before and since the Reformation.

The monastery attracts devotions to two figures, its founder, the Benedictine hermit St. Meinrad, and the Black Madonna, so called because

of the coal-darkened visage on her ornately dressed statue in the chapel. The construction of the Abbey celebrates both of these objects of devotion because the shrine to the virgin stands on the location of the saint's first refuge, a small chapel, complete with door and windows, enclosed within the abbey church itself.

Despite the distance of geography and circumstance, when Agatha draws near her goal, the tiny chapel housed within the massively frescoed larger building, she sees a structure not very different in its proportions from her own cottage in the hollow. Though the black marble of the chapel and its ornament are more sumptuous, both are small in scale, just one room. Both, in addition, are full of devotional iconography: Agatha's pictures of her favorite saints and the chapel's frescoed walls. The chapel extends George Eliot's comparison between Agatha and the Madonna she worships. Indeed, the similarity between the two one-room buildings, one the residence of Agatha, the other of the Black Madonna, suggests that George Eliot was including in her poem a little reward of recognition for the well-traveled reader, the possibly rare reader who would appreciate the improbable similarities between cottage and chapel.

But for all the celebration of Agatha's Catholicism, nearing the action at the end of the poem, the persona reintroduces peasant superstition into the plot. Returning home drunk after a celebration, a group of peasants sings the song that concludes the poem. The singers concede that when they reach Agatha's cottage they "go and shake the latch," but accompany this with a wish that the three residents "sleep on till morning beams, Mothers ye who help us all" (11.56–57). In this concluding song, Agatha, the epitome of Catholicism, shares attention with Toni, a neighbor crushed to death by a wagon. The villagers believe that Toni lingers in Sankt Märgen in the shape of a ghostly white cow that wanders about the village in the mist, and, like Agatha, contributes to its neighborliness. The conclusion of the poem thus presents an unanticipated, rawly superstitious, male-dominated scene that contrasts with the female saintliness gone before in Agatha's cottage.

The experience in Sankt Märgen, for the Leweses, however, was both too rustic and insufficiently independent. Lewes tired of making conversation with the other guests, whether saints or sinners, including the mother/daughter models combined in the Countess Linda. And so the couple moved on, back to Freiburg, and then on to Switzerland.

Journeying in Switzerland George Eliot was revisiting a country which formed one of her destinations when, in 1849, she undertook her first European travel in the company of her Coventry friends, the Charles Brays. After wintering in Geneva at the home of the family of François

d'Albert-Durade, she returned to Warwickshire, and the head of the family traveled with her, thus giving her brother Isaac, universally accepted as the model for Tom Tulliver, the opportunity to see and judge their relationship. D'Albert-Durade became first (and forever) her friend, then her portraitist, then, years later, her translator, as well as an often-mentioned model for Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*.

George Eliot's second journey to Switzerland (1859) centered on two goals: rendezvousing with the Richard Congreves in Lucerne and the revelation to Lewes's sons of his new familial relationships.

George Eliot's friendship with Maria Congreve revived an acquaintance from her girlhood, for in 1849, as a young Coventry resident, Maria Bury accompanied her father, Dr. John Bury, on a professional call on Robert Evans. She and the novelist met again when they became neighbors in Wandsworth in 1859. The relationship survived after the Leweses moved to their series of residences in the Marylebone/St John's Wood area through shared meals and exchanges of overnight visits. When George Eliot married John Cross in 1880, one of the few announcements to friends that she wrote herself, rather than entrusting to Charles Lewes, required braving the Congreves' Positivist belief in permanent widowhood and/or the suspicions that she was either defying or trivializing what she had required others to acknowledge as her own marriage to Lewes.

In 1859, the Congreves supplied valuable companionship for George Eliot during Lewes's delicate journey to visit his sons at school. While he was away she passed the days at the comfortable and "charming" (H&J 78) lakeside Schweizerhof, strolling and chatting and waiting for Lewes to return with news of how his sons had welcomed his news. The delicacy of his mission as he advanced from Zollikoffen to Hofwyl called on him to equip himself with gifts, tact, and support as he approached the pleasantly situated school which provided benches overlooking a gentle valley, benches that Lewes took advantage of in his serious talks with his sons. Evans remained in Lucerne near the Congreves, not venturing even as far as a hotel in Berne, lingering instead in the harborside hotel that commanded a view of all the nautical traffic on the busy lake.

Lewes's satisfaction with his completed mission in Zollikoffen called for celebration when he returned to George Eliot in Lucerne. Accordingly, the following day they embarked on a river steamer for a cruise all the way down the lake and back again. The scenery edging Lake Lucerne, like a neat narrative, begins gently with a series of pleasant villages and rises to an impressive climax supplied by the spectacular Alps rising at its distant southernmost point. Generally, the sightseeing boats zigzag from one village to another: Bauen with its small, white-sided churches; Rutli,

where greenery reaches all the way down to the lake; Treib with its colorful chalet and boats docked ready for use below the landing. The view gathers impact as the lakeside altitudes increase, with the Massif rising off to the right. The trip also included poetic resonances from the story of William Tell and from the monument to Goethe situated on a tip of land off to the starboard side of the southbound steamer.

This lake route brought the Leweses closer to Einsiedeln than they had ever reached before or since. But to visit the monastery as a detour from the cruise in 1859 would have required a circuitous land journey physically impossible on a day with hours occupied by the length of the lake and a leisurely lunch at the town, Fluellen, where the steamer turned back toward Lucerne. Nor did their 1868 Swiss journey provide the opportunity to duplicate Agatha's pilgrimage. To be sure, they started out as she does with a stop in Freiburg before they proceeded from Sankt Märgen to Basel, which would lie along Agatha's planned route south on the way to Einsiedeln. But, although they were following Agatha's projected route to start, no evidence indicates that the Leweses completed the journey to Einsiedeln. Instead, they turned south toward Thun and Interlaken (H&J 132). Meanwhile, the guide books on Switzerland describe all the details included in the poem, in particular the custom of sending just one villager on pilgrimage for the spiritual benefit of his or her neighbors unable to travel themselves. George Eliot's nineteenth-century guide books, with all the abundant background and detail they contained, provided her more than tips on traveling well and cheaply. She was not above depending on them for descriptions, anecdotes, and ideas she gathered from the ample narratives that accompanied information on hotels, railways, and sights.

Leubronn

The two most fashionable nineteenth-century German watering places, Baden Baden and Bad Homburg, both contribute to the settings and characters for the key chapters in *Daniel Deronda*, which establish and carry forth the novel's important gambling motif. Although the incident usually described as the "germ" of George Eliot's last novel, the view of Lord Byron's grandniece gambling recklessly at roulette, occurred in Bad Homburg in 1872 (Haight, *Biography* 457), it was at Baden Baden four years earlier that Lewes first drew George Eliot's attention to the activities in the casino.

The Leweses arrived to sample the luxury of Baden Baden in June 1868. They stopped at the Hotel de Russie, which provided "everything

we could wish except in price" (GHLJ 3 June). In Baden Baden, life centered on the Kursaal, the nearby trinkhalle, the gardens behind, and the promenade in front. Their first two days, the rain prevented their usual walks, so Lewes found himself lounging in the Reading Room sampling the latest *Pall Mall Gazette*. Then, momentarily for George Eliot's fiction, "at two-o'clock I looked into the Conversation Haus & watched the gambling" (GHLJ 4 June 1868). Impressed in spite of himself, he immediately "fetched Polly to see." They stood observing the action under the cherubs and scrolls of the ceiling decoration, horrified and fascinated by the greed and compulsiveness shown by the afternoon rainy-day crowd. They remained watching until the "excellent" orchestra began its performance and lured them outside to listen, despite the chilly wind sweeping across the lawns and promenades in front of the Kurhaus.

The next two days of sunshine permitted the Leweses to pursue their more usual out-of-doors activities. On Friday they drank their water, heard the band, and "looked in at the Reading Room" (GHLJ 5 June 1868) yet again. On Saturday, they had a lengthy and healthful day climbing the hills toward the Altes Schloss. During their periodic rests, they read William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* in the woods along the way. Altogether, they spent nearly five hours out of doors on the hill. The contrast between nature's and society's haunts could not have been stronger when they revisited the Kursaal after dinner to have another look at the roulette. By the time they left Baden Baden, George Eliot had had her first encounter with serious gambling, an activity that she develops as one of her metaphors for disruptions to causality, fellow-feeling, and narrative itself, to a slight degree in *Middlemarch* in Fred Vincy's plot, and as the dominant metaphor, as well as an important plot element, in *Daniel Deronda*. The aversion to gambling embodied in both plot and metaphor in *Deronda* had already begun to grow four years before the 1872 Bad Homburg trip usually regarded as pivotal to the composition of George Eliot's last novel because of the casino visit on which they watched with sorrow the gambling of young Geraldine Leigh.⁸

After Baden Baden, the Leweses found their Paradise in Bad Peterstal, little more than twenty kilometers south of Baden Baden but situated in very different terrain. Indeed, the move there from Baden Baden has the aspect of a retreat. Lewes mentions both high prices and "stupid" gambling as reasons for their departure (*GEL* 4:450). But the Leweses also enjoyed the remoteness because it distanced them from the reviews of *The Spanish Gypsy* currently appearing in London, and about which they both had some nervousness.

⁸ See chapter 5 concerning the 1872 Bad Homburg journey.

Baden Baden and Bad Peterstal could not contrast more vividly. Baden Baden's fancy buildings, broad promenades, active spielbank, and busy shops hosted well-heeled visitors and provided them the usual spa therapies. Bad Peterstal provided similar therapies, primarily baths, showers, and drinking waters, but in a far different setting: simpler and more dramatically mountainous. While Baden Baden sits on the edge of the increasingly high hills that rise from the Rhine plain, Peterstal lies deep within one of the twisting valleys that penetrate these ever steepening hills.

The couple made their approach along the road that begins at the railway station at Appenweier and rises in altitude from village to village as the range itself gets higher. Among the Peterstal hills that plummet so steeply down from their heights into the valley, the couple found themselves nestled almost face to face with walls of green grass or shoulders of dipping and swirling, nearly vertical meadows reaching upward toward the patches of mountain forest. The chalet architecture of its homes and gasthauses, with their sloping roofs and flower-filled balconies, made Peterstal appear more like an Alpine village than an overdecorated spa town.

Like the scenery, the small scale, the excellent food, and the preservation of anonymity, the waters again seemed to offer comfort to the health-seeking couple. According to George Eliot, they drank "diligently," and they bathed "at due intervals" (*GEL* 4:454). She describes the water as "nectar-pearly with carbonic acid, and rich in iron and palatable salts" and concludes, "We are both wonderfully stronger, but poor little Pater still pays tribute to his enemy King Liver in the form of headaches that linger on to the second day" (4:454). On the other hand, palpitations such as Lewes had experienced during a climb at Bonn, had disappeared.

Bad Peterstal also had the remoteness desirable to a nervous poet awaiting the reception of her daring departure from writing the novels that, even before *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, had already made her famous and beloved. The most important news from home, news of the reception of George Eliot's major venture into poetry, *The Spanish Gypsy*, came as if swirling up the deep valley of the River Rensch as Lewes and Blackwood corresponded about the questionable reviews. The reviews were indeed mixed, but the remoteness of the town "unknown to Murray" helped dilute their effects. George Eliot wrote to Blackwood on 24 June that "I think we have hardly ever, except in Spain, so long ignorant of home sayings and doings, for we have been chiefly in regions innocent even of Galignani" (*GEL* 4:459-60). The distance between London and the watering place where they had a "life all peace and poetic suggestion" distanced them as well from professional critics of poetry as penned by one of the public's favorite novelists.

As usual they bragged about their superiority to the more pedestrian visitors who are “almost without exception lingering the live-long day about the precincts of the ‘Bad’” (*GEL* 4:454). They sustained a nodding acquaintance with the British community, from which they successfully hid their identities until the very end of their stay, one explanation for its unusual duration. When queried at the table d’hôtel, Lewes pretended to be his own brother, and he deflected curiosity effectively for three weeks before one exceptionally “pretty” and “cultivated” guest beguiled him out of his incognito. The news spread through the hotel, and provided them a departure suitable for a Corinne at the Capitol: “The Landlord seemed overwhelmed with the ‘honor his establishment had received’; several gentlemen and ladies came to express their enthusiasm and to beg my card; and all the guests assembled to see us off, waving handkerchiefs and bowing. It was very pleasant” (*GEL* 4:458).

Just as their joy in Bad Peterstal did not abate for a full three weeks, the mixed reviews of *The Spanish Gypsy* did not deter George Eliot from continuing to write poetry. At their next mountain stop, Sankt Märgen, she did not find the surroundings as beguiling as at Bad Peterstal. But she did gather material for her most direct adaptation of the mountain village as the setting for “Agatha.” Meanwhile, George Eliot, poet, with her editor/consort, undertook to stabilize Sundays at the Priory into an arena where Lewes could tout her poetry and further his studies of physiological psychology. When Sunday at the Priory became a regularly mounted, numerously attended institution starting in 1869, poetry absorbed much interest.