

# **Topographic Transmissions and How to Talk about Them: The Case of the Southern Spa in Nineteenth-Century Russian Fiction**

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[A] satirical description of society at the watering-place ... a notorious cardsharp and daredevil ... a duel ...<sup>1</sup>

This article attempts two things at once. I offer a brief history – anchored in spa stories by Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Aleksandr Druzhinin and Lidiia Veselitskaia ('Mikulich') – of representations of the Caucasian watering place in Russian literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the turn of the twentieth. In doing so I want to shed light on how the narrative craft of topography – literally, the writing of place – intersects with the highly complex, transpersonal and diachronic process by which literary tropes and conventions move within and between literary cultures. I use the case of the southern spa to ask which theories and vocabularies – the standard division is between those accenting 'influence' and 'intertextuality' – are best equipped to describe the dialectic of heteronomy and autonomy, or patterning and discontinuity, that drives the development of a spatial theme in discourse.

Two general observations are worth making at the outset. First, an irony: as the water cure truly took off in the Russian empire, fiction writers began to look abroad when representing it. The Caucasian spa is an important setting in Russian literature of the early and middle nineteenth century. Yet hydrotherapy emerged as a popular medical phenomenon – rather than an elite leisure pastime – only after 1860. In the 1870s and 1880s candidates for medical degrees at St. Petersburg University wrote dissertations on such topics as 'The Effect on Blood Pressure of Baths and Showers at Different Temperatures', describing the results of douching experiments on livestock and large dogs (Revnov 2). By the 1890s almost every southern town of note – not just Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk but Slaviansk and Borzhom too – offered spa bathing or drinking facilities. Yet with these innovations came complaints about how Russian 'underdevelopment and ignorance' ('nasha men'shaia

zazhitocnost' i nekul'turnost'') stood in the way of a respectable cure culture (*Katalog essentukskoi biblioteki* 10). Fiction writers seem to have felt similarly. When canonical texts from the second half of the nineteenth century – I am thinking of Tolstoi's *Family Happiness* [*Semeinoe schast'e*] and *Anna Karenina* and Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* [*Igrok*] – send their protagonists to spa resorts, they send them to German ones. And when southern spas turn up in *fin-de-siècle* narratives – as in Veselitskaia's 'Mimi at the Waters' ['Mimochka na vodakh'] – comparisons with (better developed, more fashionable) foreign resorts are seldom far from hand.

By contrast, a characteristic of Caucasian spa stories that remains fairly constant throughout the century is the tendency of narrators and protagonists to supply metafictional commentary on the watering-place theme. I will note how writers from Lermontov to Veselitskaia invoke the impact upon diegetic action of prior fictional representations of southern spa culture. Discursively-derived information about watering places is frequently exposed as erroneous and even harmful to those who receive it. Writers thus invite the reader to look askance at their own topographies and, by extension, to question the idea that fiction's relationship to its real-world referents is above all a constative one.

### Spa Intrigue from Shakhovskoi to Lermontov

Russian watering places of the Romantic period usually generate sexually transgressive plots. As its title suggests, Aleksandr Shakhovskoi's play *A School for Coquettes, or the Lipetsk Waters* [*Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody*, 1815] – about the spa escapades of furloughed soldiers – is full of amorous indiscretion. Shakhovskoi's *risqué* caricatures sparked a polemic referred to by contemporaries as the 'Lipetsk flood' (Rak 353) and *A School for Coquettes* helped cement a sardonic association between water therapy and sexual healing. As Richard Stites suggests, the Shakhovskoyan spa serves as a 'potential curative site for romantic [and] matrimonial [...] needs as well as medical ones' (213).

In the 'Princess Mary' ['Kniazhna Meri'] chapter of *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1840], Lermontov – like Shakhovskoi, and as Pushkin intended in the spa novel he never wrote – depicts the Caucasian spa as a hotbed of high-class intrigue. As Robert Reid notes, Piatigorsk functions in Lermontov's novel as a 'microcosm or quintessence of the metropolitan sociotope'. But as Reid further observes, the waters are not *quite* like home: spa social life – leisured, transient, leniently deracinating – is 'steeped in teleological and motivational ambiguities absent in the capital' (50–1). *A Hero of Our Time* holds with the notion, floated across an international range of nineteenth-century

spa narratives, that there was always something more than a little euphemistic about the claim to be taking a cure.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, *A Hero of Our Time* trots out a number of plotlines that were on their way to becoming commonplaces by the end of the 1830s. Pechorin and Grushnitskii come to pistols over an overblown flirtation, perpetuating the Shakhovskoyan idea that southern resort culture was sexually permissive. They fight their duel on a narrow mountain ledge, a sublime topographical provision that neither Moscow nor Petersburg could have made. But *A Hero of Our Time* is not only Russian romanticism's paradigm text, crystallizing its fascination with exotic landscapes and mores. It also represents the high watermark of its reflexivity. Pechorin's Byronism is exquisitely self-conscious and he has nothing but disdain for what might (anachronistically) be called his rival's Bovarism.<sup>3</sup> Grushnitskii aspires to be the hero of Lermontov's – Pechorin's – novel ('Ego tsel' – sdelat' sia geroem romana'). His very presence in the Caucasus evidences a 'Romantic zeal' ('romanticheskii fanatizm') which, unleashed without discrimination, swiftly becomes ridiculous (Lermontov 64). Grushnitskii's expectations of Piatigorsk have everything to do with storytelling and very little to do with real life. Pechorin, by contrast, is redeemed, at least in his own eyes, because he never loses sight of the fact that he is playing a part.

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Might we – pausing to take up the question of conceptual tools – talk about the evolution of the southern spa *sociotope* in Russian literature? I would suggest not. For one thing, the term's overtones are sociological rather than narratological. Reid defines it as 'the relationship between a social group and [...] the environment it inhabits' (e.g. the peasant and his village; or high society and its metropolis, for which the spa, in both Shakhovskoi and Lermontov, serves as a surrogate) (45). In any event, sociotopic theory must contend with the increasing difficulty, as modernity advances, of pinning down stable relationships between social groups and environments. Shakhovskoi's Lipetsk of the 1810s and Druzhinin's Piatigorsk of the 1850s, for example, do not stage the same class-space relations. I will go on to show that the latter was a destination within the reach of middling gentry in a way that the former was not. (By the 1850s the children of those who vacationed at Lipetsk in the 1810s were more likely to be found at Wiesbaden.)

When discussing the southern spa as a *narrative* rather than a social space, Reid employs the familiar term *topos*, popularized in English-language literary studies by Northrop Frye. A *topos*, of course, is literally a 'place'. But the term more properly connotes 'rhetorical commonplace' and thus strikes me as something of a false friend. To speak of both a southern spa *topos* and, say, a forbidden love *topos* would seem to blunt the tool.

The (appealing) notion of a southern spa *chronotope* presents comparable problems. Joe Andrew uses Bakhtin's term for the historically grounded configuration of time and space in narrative in the course of a discussion of Tolstoi's *Family Happiness*, a story whose defining moment is Masha's near-loss of innocence at Baden-Baden (Andrew 85–104). But Andrew, whose analysis invokes both the chronotope of the 'protective' house (87), represented by Masha's ancestral home at Pokrovskoe and the chronotope of the threshold (91), wisely stops short of proposing a *chronotope of the spa*, despite the scope that Bakhtin's theory offers for the innovation of such 'micro' chronotopes.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Andrew echoes Reid, referring to the watering place as 'a well-established (if not a little passé) [...] topos of the society tale' (94). For Andrew, the narrative significance of Baden-Baden in Tolstoi's novella is not predicated upon the historical and cultural specificity of resort culture, but derives from the spa's *negative* status as – here Andrew makes use of Iurii Lotman's binary narratological schema – a deracinating 'anti-home' (96).

Andrew's reading of *Family Happiness* illuminates some of the fundamental problems of interpretation presented by Bakhtin's original essay on the chronotope. Granted, the chronotope fuses space and time, postulating a direct relationship between lived experience (a historicizable phenomenon) and the narrative forms and worlds that arise out of it; but Bakhtin offers no generalizable guidance on precisely how chronotopic analysis might be expected to square history and poetics. Michael Holquist has written that '[the] chronotope remains a Gordian knot of ambiguities with no Alexander in sight' (19); and not the least ambiguous thing about Bakhtin's theory is the relation that narrato-spatial universals (thresholds, homes) bear to chronotopic settings that seem to belong exclusively to particular times and cultures (salons, parlors). As a phenomenon of late-imperial health and leisure culture, and, as I will maintain, colonial conquest, the southern spa is a social and historical space that fulfills a distinct function in those narratives in which it appears but it is hardly a locus of transcendent semiotic resonance.

### **The (Post) Colonial Spa: Bestuzhev–Marlinskii's 'Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824' and Aleksandr Druzhinin's 'A Russian Circassian'**

In 1855 the poet and critic Petr Viazemskii wrote the following from the German resort of Wiesbaden in 1855:

[I hear] that a Russian cemetery is intended [here]. The idea is an excellent one [...]. It is a joy to each of us to think that if he is destined to die in a foreign land, then it will be in a hospitable spot, consecrated by an

Orthodox service, and where he will be able to rest, as at home, together with his fellow countrymen, and where prayers will be said for him in his native tongue.

Слышно, что [...] предназначается устроить русское кладбище. Мысль прекрасная [...] Отраднo каждому из нас думать, что если суждено ему будет умереть на чужбине, то есть в ней гостеприимный уголок, освященный Русским богослужением, где можно будет отдыхать, как дома, вместе с родными земляками, и где на родном языке будут молиться [...] (vol. 7; 5)

The mid-century ‘colonization’ by Russian elites of German health resorts in many ways replicated their colonization – the term’s resonance is less figurative here – of Caucasian resorts in the decades following the defeat of Napoleon. By the same token, the question of how and whether Russians made themselves at home in Western Europe finds a useful analogue in the question of how completely they took literal and imaginative possession of their empire’s southern borders as Russian territorial ambition grew from the 1820s onward. Besides sex and scandal, the Caucasian spa in Russian literature hosts the twin themes of conquest and cultural liminality. As Louise McReynolds has written, the establishment of water resorts in the Caucasus represented ‘a rearguard action of cultural appropriation in the long and costly conquest of [the] region’ (172–3). Several southern spas began as garrisons or army convalescent homes; and two very different short stories – taking on Shakhovskoi’s evocation of Lipetsk’s military aspect – unfold imperial themes at the waters.

In a story called ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ [‘Vecher na kavkazskikh vodakh v 1824 godu’, 1830], the writer and Decembrist Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii portrays the resort of Kislovodsk as a venue for martial male sociability (yarn-spinning rather than Shakhovskoyan matchmaking). Drawing from a broad gothic palette and the generous mythopoeic allowance of the Romantic travelogue, ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ is a frontier narrative in an extended sense of the term.

A frame story, the narrator’s arrival at the spa on a Bulwerian stormy night and immediate recourse to a drink-soaked card table, opens out upon multiple, frequently abortive tall tales, recounted by a motley assortment of furloughed officers. All of the stories are motivated by anxiety with regard to a threatening Other (Chechen or Georgian, Polish or English, female or supernatural). Each is met by its auditors with the kind of incredulity that betokens at least a modicum of belief. The *krasnobaistvo* – grandiloquent or ostentatious storytelling – of Bestuzhev’s speakers blends the language of the bivouac and the language of high society: their narratives are by turns intricate and lustful, proverbial and direct. On a both thematic and linguistic level, ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ dwells in the unclaimed spaces between cultures, subjects and cosmologies. ‘External frontiers’, writes Franco Moretti, ‘easily

generate narratives'; and the wider Morettian principle that 'space acts upon style' finds confirmation in Bestuzhev's story, as the borderline dynamics of an encampment on hostile ground stimulate an engagement with the more intermediate aspects of experience and its narration (Moretti 37; 43).

Bestuzhev's polyphonic spa story also gives voice to the idea, axiomatic in later writing on resort culture, that visitors to spas generally arrive with an ulterior motive:

'[W]hy are we all here? [...] Everyone will say: to take a cure. But aside from this many have incidental or even primary aims. Some come to dissipate themselves in love affairs; some to make themselves respectable through marriage; others to redeem the injustices of fortune at the card table'

Зачем мы все здесь? [...] все скажут: лечиться, но, кроме этого, есть побочные или главные цели у многих. Одни приезжают рассеяться любовными связями; другие - остепениться женитьбой; третьи - поправить картами несправедливость фортуны [...] (139)

This passage recalls Stites's reading of Shakhovskoi's *A Lesson for Coquettes*: each of the three ulterior motives invoked by Bestuzhev refers to a prospect of relief (erotic, status-related, or economic) that burlesques the ostensibly paramount medical aspect of the cure.

Aleksandr Druzhinin's 1855 story 'A Russian Circassian' ('Russkii cherkes') also stages tall tales and dubious witness in a colonial spa setting. Displaying a Lermontovian taste for metafictional irony, Druzhinin presents prior representation as a jagged prism distorting the identity of the Caucasian spa resort. Matvei Kuzmich Makhmetov, the 'Russian Circassian' of the title, is a retired collegiate assessor whose shrewish wife scorns and impedes his inchoate Romantic sensibilities. Beguiled by a chance visit from a 'relative', Aslan Makhmetov, who brags of the dagger-wielding exploits of yet further Circassian namesakes, Matvei Kuzmich begins to imagine himself a warrior in the mould of the legendary guerrilla leader Shamil.<sup>5</sup>

After racing through the Caucasus tales of Lermontov and Bestuzhev-Marlinksii in his library, Matvei Kuzmich procures himself a beshmet and sword-belt and sallies forth to Piatigorsk. Upon arrival, he leaves his daughter at the baths and volunteers for a perilous military expedition. Predictably, his bookish reveries fizzle out into humiliation. All who meet him at the spa take him for the tourist he is. (Piatigorsk is shown to already have a flourishing souvenir industry.) The soldiers who encourage his zeal to enlist are only enjoying themselves at his expense, while his 'brother' Aslan turns out to be a fraud and a coward. In a final, proverbial moment of shame, Druzhinin's 'Russian Circassian' – an onomastic impossibility in the ethical economy of the text – is ripped off by a local money changer.

As Susan Layton has observed, Druzhinin's narrative can be read alongside Tolstoi's 'The Raid' ('Nabeg', 1853) and *The Cossacks* (*Kazaki*, 1863) as a parodic mid-century treatment of Romantic fascination with the alien landscapes and cultures of the Caucasus (Layton 56–71). Druzhinin, a deft satirist, evinces disenchantment with the culturally appropriative narrative tendencies of previous Russian writers: Matvei Kuzmich's gauche idealization of 'Circassian' valour and simultaneous desire to join a Russian imperial campaign devoted to stamping it out figure literary simple-mindedness about the complexities of Transcaucasian affairs. 'Russkii cherkes' also implies that neither liberal-cosmopolitan idylls of mutual adulation ('Russia is good, but the Caucasus is even better' ('Rossiia khorosho, a Kavkaz luchshe') (200) nor appeals to a common origin represent satisfactory solutions to the psychic and diplomatic challenges thrown up by Russia's southward expansion. Matvei Kuzmich's gullibility is piqued by a common surname and he couches his growing conviction that the Caucasus is his 'motherland' (*rodina*) in references to his Circassian 'blood' (199); such bases for identification are made to look ridiculous in Druzhinin's watering-place text.

Finally on 'A Russian Circassian', it is worth noting that here, as so often in accounts of Caucasian *and* Continental resort culture, the spa qua spa, and Matvei Kuzmich's daughter with it, swiftly recedes into the diegetic middle distance.<sup>6</sup>

### **Expectations Dashed: Lidiia Veselitskaia's 'Mimi at the Waters'**

'Mimi at the Waters' ('Mimochka na vodakh', 1891), by the popular *fin-de-siècle* writer Lidiia Veselitskaia ('Mikulich'), is a chronological outlier when it comes to Russian writing on southern spas. Arriving at a time when European resorts had usurped the Caucasian spa's place as a stock setting in fiction, Veselitskaia's story – one of three she wrote about the coming of age of a young bride – unites the two traditions: her heroine visits both the French spa of Vichy and the Caucasus resorts of Zheleznovodsk and Kislovodsk.

'Mimi at the Waters' makes much of the differences between Russian and European spas. Mimi's mother worries, when a course of hydrotherapy at Zheleznovodsk is broached, that the resort's facilities will be 'primitive and uncomfortable' ('primitivno, ne ustroeno') by comparison with Vichy (Veselitskaia 58). Her anxieties are somewhat soothed by the mental image of resort culture conjured by her daughter's much older husband, and this image owes much to the spa fiction of Bestuzhev and Lermontov: ('[s]hashlyk [a rustic kebab], Georgian white wine, narzan [Caucasian mineral water] and cavalcades on moonlit nights' ('[s]hashlyk, kakhetinskoe, narzan i kaval'kady v lunnye nochi')) (66).

Throughout the story, indeed, Veselitskaia portrays the southern spa as a venue onto which cure seekers project fantasies of liberation and rejuvenation. Mimoschka's reveries of resort life, like her husband's, hinge on the promise of unconstrained sociability, and, we might infer, sexuality:

[Mimoschka] like[d] the prospect of going to the Caucasus. [Her friend] Netti had spent a summer at Kislovodsk and returned with very pleasant memories. Most of all, she seemed to have been emancipated there.

[Мимочке] хочется ехать на Кавказ. Нетти провела лето в Кисловодске и вернулась с очень приятными воспоминаниями. Там она, главным образом, и эмансипировалась. (59)

In Bestuzhev's Romantic spa narrative, Kislovodsk is an authentically emancipatory space: demobbed, far from home and lubricated with alcohol, the male speakers in 'Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824' give free rein to their passions and anxieties. By contrast, Veselitskaia's *fin-de-siècle* spa narrative takes pains to undermine the expectations of release it engenders, pointing up (in the manner of Druzhinin's 'A Russian Circassian') a yawning gap between reputation and reality, signifier and signified. Late-century spa social life turns out, for young women at least, to be regimented and repetitious:

Mimi and [her cousin] Vava would rise at seven and by eight they would already be at the early concert, where they would drink the waters and walk about until it was time for tea; then it was time for a bath; then dinner, followed by more waters; then another walk; then music again; and water again; and a walk again; and so on until evening [...]

В семь часов, Мимочка и Вава вставали и в восемь были уже на утренней музыке, где пили воды и гуляли до чая; потом ванна; потом обед, и еще воды, и еще прогулка, и опять музыка, и опять воды, и опять прогулка, и так до вечера [...] (87–8)

Discursive mediation gives Mimi quite the wrong idea of Zheleznovodsk, whipping up speculative desire that spa social life cannot satisfy. Her dreams crash against mundane, medicalized reality. An amorous atmosphere ('atmosfera vliublennosti') surrounds her ('Kislovodsk, as Lermontov says, hosts the denouement of all the love affairs conceived at the foot of the Beshtau' ('V Kislovodske, govorit Lermontov, byvaet razviazka vsekh romanov, nachavshikhsiia u podoshvy Beshtau') (99–101)). But this is 'atmosphere' in a strikingly literal sense of the word: pervasive but insubstantial. Veselitskaia's heroine remains 'romanceless' ('bez romana'). The story ends back in St. Petersburg, with Mimi fielding questions from maiden aunts about whether Caucasian spas are really such hotbeds of flirtation as they have been led to believe. The party then look at stereoscope images of dramatic mountain scenery



that Mimi, to general surprise, never got around to visiting. Even for those who have been, it seems, the southern watering place's simulacral aspect stubbornly conceals its core.

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Nineteenth-century Russian writers, like topographers of all kinds, ground their representations of the southern spa upon existing models, which they reshape to their particular narrative purposes. For the most part they 'challenge' topographical conventions only inasmuch as they ironize or invert them. Only rarely, after all, does writing about a place or a kind of place read like a foray into uncharted territory, a pure phenomenological act. Where no domestic precursor exists, transnational contacts come into play. *A Lesson for Coquettes* is an Urtext for the resort theme in a Russian context, but – coming from the pen of a writer and stage director who had adapted Molière and Shakespeare – the play had models enough for its portrayal of a raucous elite playground. There is no question of mutual influence, but Shakhovskoi's play might also be read alongside Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), set partly at Bath, and Walter Scott's *St. Ronan's Well* (1824), set at a fictional Scottish spa, for comparative insight into the role of the watering place in the social and psychic life of Europe's post-Napoleonic leisure classes.

Assessing the southern spa theme in Russian literature diachronically, it is hard to escape the sense of literary topography as a dematerialized exercise in the renovation of tropes and codes. At opposite ends of the nineteenth century, both Shakhovskoi and Veselitskaia's portraits of Caucasian watering places privilege the discursive over the empirical, mediation over presence. The difference is that Veselitskaia's spa text, like Druzhinin's before it, wears its metafictionality on its sleeve, introducing the Baudrillardian problem of the copy directly into the diegesis. Unlike Shakhovskoi's characters, Mimi lives the waters first and, arguably, last through the eyes of others, and it is this experiential feature of modernity that degrades her capacity for all but vicarious excitement.

### **Late Twentieth-Century Intertextual Theory and the Southern Spa**

Topos, chronotope: these terms predate both structural poetics and intertextual theory. Here I would like to briefly test, against the moving target of the southern spa in Russian fiction, the conceptual apparatuses of two late-twentieth-century pioneers of the study of literary transmissions: the French structural narratologist Gérard Genette and the Russian scholar and semiotician Vladimir Toporov.

Genette's *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* [*Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, 1982; translated into English, 1997] offers a pragmatic retooling of the concept of intertextuality that Julia Kristeva, working from Bakhtin's dialogic theory, unveiled in *Séméiotikè: Researches for a Semioanalysis* [*Séméiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, 1969; parts translated into English as *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, 1980]. *Palimpsests* describes how what Genette calls transtextuality (*transtextualité*, broadly synonymous with Kristeva's *intertextualité*) operates at the level of real literary relations. The book identifies five principal kinds of transtextual relationship: intertextuality, which Genette defines much more restrictively than Kristeva as 'the actual presence of one text within another' (e.g. in the form of a quotation or direct allusion) (Genette 2); paratextuality, describing the relations between a text and the textual elements that frame it (e.g. title, preface, epigraph, and typeface); metatextuality, which refers to one text's 'commentary' upon another (4); hypertextuality – the rewriting of a 'hypotext' (e.g. *The Odyssey*) by its 'hypertext' (e.g. Joyce's *Ulysses*) (5); and architextuality, a transtextual relation that is usually 'completely silent' (4) and which describes a text's obedience or otherwise to narrative codes and conventions (e.g. a work describing itself as a novel always enacts an implicit relationship to previous works describing themselves as such).

How well does Genette's schema describe the relationships between the southern spa stories discussed in this paper? (I will omit from consideration paratextuality, a pet project of Genette's with limited relevance to the relations between distinct works of fiction on a similar theme.) Hyper/hypotextuality is not, I would suggest, at play in the development of the southern spa theme: the transformations that take us from, say, Lermontov's Piatigorsk to Druzhinin's do not involve the re-working of a master plot. Rather, setting Grushnitskii and Pechorin's authentic (if hackneyed) bravado against Matvei Kuzmich's discursively fed fantasia of peril, we uncover a metatextual commentary by Druzhinin upon the difference between the narrative life-worlds of Romantic and broadly realist fiction. (Note also the differing life-worlds of the authors themselves: Lermontov famously lived high and, like Grushnitskii at Piatigorsk, died in a duel; Druzhinin, like his hero in 'A Russian Circassian', was a civil servant with a large library.)

Druzhinin's 'A Russian Circassian' also makes obvious *intertextual* – in Genette's sense – use of both *A Hero of Our Time* and Bestuzhev's 'Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824'. The not merely allusive but also *material* presence in the text of both stories complicates 'A Russian Circassian's' honorific dynamics. Among the questions raised is one of agency. The art historian Michael Baxandall has observed that '[i]f one says that X influenced Y it [...] seem[s] that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did

something to X [...] But [...] the second is always the more lively reality' (58–9). When Matvei Kuzmich falls for both the mercenary lies of Aslan Makhmetov and the literary 'lies' of Lermontov and Bestuzhev, *who is doing what to whom?* Can narrative tradition be blamed for aiding and abetting the foolishness of innocents and the triumph of charlatans? After all, a cliché self-consciously deployed is still a cliché; and fiction (the peculiar truth standards to which it appeals notwithstanding) was an increasingly important means by which nineteenth-century subjects discovered their world. I would suggest, however, that Druzhinin mirrors Baxandall in placing responsibility for the ramifications of influence at the feet of the reading subject. It is Matvei Kuzmich's own failure to modulate between epistemological wavelengths, not Lermontov's glamorization of Piatigorsk, that turns his trip to the southern spa into a travesty.

The vaguest, and for that reason most intriguing, of the terms in Genette's transtextual apparatus is *architextuality*. We might unpack it with reference to 'Mimi at the Waters' (and vice versa). Veselitskaia is not herself slavishly obedient to the narrative codes and conventions she invokes in her representation of the southern spa. In marking the difference between what Mimi expects and what she gets – between stereoscopic images of sublime landscape and the tedium of spa social life at ground level – the story undermines the 'silent' agreement that sustains architextual relations. (It can, of course, always be argued that to oppose an aesthetic tradition is effectively to re-confirm it). It is rather Mimochka herself and her husband and aunts who cling to the architextual edifice erected by prior representation; like Druzhinin's Matvei Kuzmich, Veselitskaia's heroine is doomed to disappointment by her reluctance to privilege the empirical.

### A 'Single' Southern Spa Text?

Genette's intertextual schema divides and ramifies. A plausible *unifying* model for the study of how nineteenth-century stories about the southern spa pooled sentiments and tropes is Vladimir Toporov's 'single St. Petersburg text' (*edinyi peterburgskii tekst*).

In developing the idea of a single St. Petersburg text, Toporov drew on a book called *The Soul of St Petersburg [Dusha Peterburga]* by Nikolai Antsiferov, an early twentieth-century historian and author of excursion primers (Johnson 201–13). Like Antsiferov, Toporov was interested in the role of literary texts in establishing a place's identity. But he drew fresh conclusions about the relationship between St Petersburg and the classic works of Russian literature that represent it.

In Antsiferov's *The Soul of St Petersburg*, likenesses in the way literary texts mediate their object – in this case, Russia's imperial capital – are taken as confirmation of that object's essential qualities. Antsiferov subscribes to the classical notion of a *genius loci* (*dukh mestnosti*, or *dukh mesta*). His chief concern in discussing literary representations of his home city is for 'what literature can tell [him] about St. Petersburg'.

Toporov, a scholar of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics, largely discarded this charismatic conception of the city's impact on texts in favour of a view of St. Petersburg as a phenomenon of human communication. In a famous work, *Russian Literature's St. Petersburg Text* [*Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury*], he argues that the city's social and cultural identity can be viewed in terms of a mythopoetic [*mifopoeticheskii*] dialogue between literary works by Pushkin, Gogol', Dostoevskii and Belyi, among others. Without neglecting the significance of St. Petersburg's physical, climatic and other extra-discursive endowments – he refers to the St. Petersburg text as a 'nature-culture synthesis' [*prirodno-kul'turnyi sintez*] (28) – Toporov shows the city to be the overdetermined product of narratives as well as a potent force in them.

Acknowledging that literary representations of a place by no means always coincide or reach for the same emphases, Toporov nonetheless observes a transtextual tendency toward harmonization that justifies the idea of a 'single' city text:

St. Petersburg [frequently] emerges as a singular and self-sufficient object of artistic perception, as a kind of holistic unity [...] This is possible not least because the idea of 'all-unity' generates such an energetic field so strong that all "multiplicity", everything "variegated", everything individual and subjective is drawn in to it, subsumed and, as it were, transfigured by it into the flesh and spirit of the single text.

[...] Петербург [часто] выступает как особый и самодовлеющий объект художественного постижения, как некое целостное единство [...] это становится возможным не в последнюю очередь потому, что обозначенное „цельно-единство“ создает столь сильное энергетическое поле, что все „множество-различное“, „пестрое“, индивидуально-оценочное вовлекается в это поле, охватывается им и как бы пресуществляется в нем в плоть и дух единого текста [...] (9)

The idea of a 'single' southern spa text is less straightforward than the idea of a single St. Petersburg text. Unlike 'St. Petersburg', the designation 'Caucasian watering place' denotes a socio-spatial typology rather than a stable point in space. Zheleznovodsk is not Piatigorsk, as Veselitskaia acknowledges in sending Mimi first to one and then to the other. But something of the spirit of 'holistic unity' invoked by Toporov also prevails in the watering-place narratives discussed above. Moreover, as I have already suggested, the southern spa

and Russia's 'other' capital have overlapping symbolic resonances. St. Petersburg frequently stands in narratives for a particular species of geographical and ideological alterity (that represented by post-Enlightenment Western European civilization), thus entering into a kind of imaginary alignment with Continental resorts like Baden-Baden (Dostoevskii's 1876 essay 'A Little Something About Petersburg Baden-Baden-ness' ['Nechto o peterburgskom baden-badenstve'] illustrates this point). Southern resorts are popular with nineteenth-century Russian writers perhaps, above all, because they unite, upon a notionally single plane, both this modality of difference and another, equally ambivalent kind: the apparent predominance of the passions that made the Caucasus region imperial Russia's heart of darkness.

### Conclusions

Topographic transmissions of the kind discussed in this paper are difficult to map, not least because the intertextual migration of tropes is a highly complex phenomenon involving both conscious and unconscious agency and a broad range of transpersonal forces. Resorts like Piatigorsk derive their shifting identities in culture from the combined and frequently conflicting input of a changing roster of people and practices, none of which can satisfactorily be dissolved in text. The Caucasian spa, like any fictional setting originating in the world of extra-diegetic experience, is best viewed as both subject and object of the narratives in which it appears. Genette's divagating transtextual apparatus and Toporov's sense for the sometimes overpowering appeal of consensus help toward an understanding of the intriguing *pas de deux* that individual topographies dance with the ghostlier image of place handed down by representational tradition. A mixed bag of intertextual terms and tools seems to offer the best hope of mapping as fully as possible the curious fate of a place that becomes a literary commonplace.

### Notes

- 1 From a précis of the plot outline for 'Roman na kavkazskikh vodakh', an unwritten prose work by Aleksandr Pushkin. Pushkin got no further with his spa novel than a roughly drafted opening. Cited in Debreczeny (143-4).
- 2 Among English novelists Anthony Trollope (in *The Small House at Allington*, 1864) and George Eliot (in *Middlemarch*, 1874) encourage this idea.
- 3 After Flaubert's *Emma Bovary*.
- 4 Incidentally, the spa can hardly, as one might assume, be linked to Bakhtin's 'chronotope of the provincial town' because its social climate is rather

metropolitan than parochial; a fashionable resort like Baden-Baden can more easily be related to the chronotopes of the parlor and salon that Bakhtin associates with the French realist novel.

- 5 Iman (or 'Sheikh') Shamil (1797–1871) fought the Russians in the North Caucasus during the long Caucasian War (1817–1864).
- 6 I am not aware of a single nineteenth-century fictional narrative set at the spa and written in English or Russian in which the 'cure' itself – bathing or drinking – is described in any detail.

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