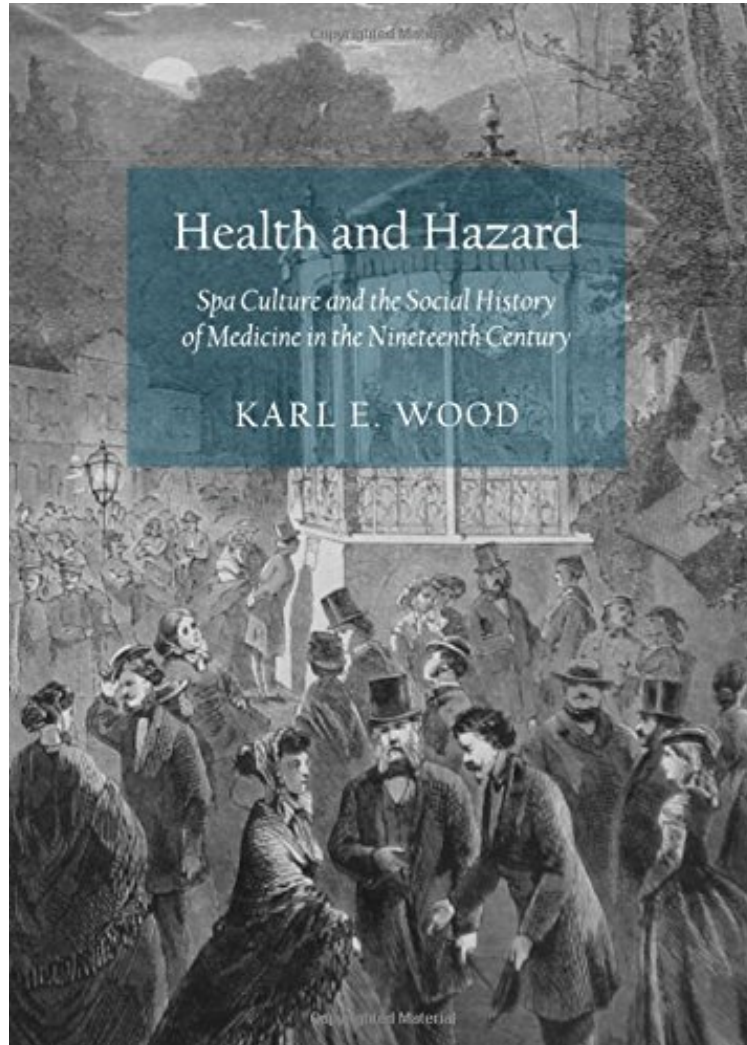


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Health and Hazard: Spa Culture and the Social History of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century

Karl E. Wood

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The spa in nineteenth century European society was a place of intersections: of social class and of ideas, of social and of scientific concepts. As the social showcase for 'polite' society, it embodied many of the desires and dreams of the

increasingly fashionable middle-class world. As a place prominent in the medical world of its day, the health spa contributed to the ongoing dialogue of the emergent science of medicine, where both mainstream and voices of medical dissent were to be heard. Thus, in the enclosed and limited space of a thermal health spa lie encapsulated significant historical trends and social dialogues. Over the course of the long nineteenth century, the doctor-patient relationship shifted from one in which the patient was the primary decision maker to one dominated by the order-giving professional physician over the compliant patient. This process could not have occurred without a significant change in the attitude of the patients themselves. The spa, a place containing diverse and competing strands of medical thought and a wide range of middle-class patients, offers a unique research opportunity for a focused social history of German medicine that reaches beyond the world of the spa or indeed of medicine into the darker chapters of the twentieth century and the turn from liberalism toward authoritarianism.

About the Author Karl Wood completed his PhD in History at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2004. He is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Modern Philology and Applied Linguistics at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland.