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Who's Switzerland?

Dirk Wittenborn

"Who's Switzerland?" This metaphysical question was posed by my daughter, Lilo, two months shy of her third birthday. It was at 7:43 in the morning of Friday, July 1, 2004, and we had twelve minutes to make the train that was to be the first leg of our 500-km journey from Marseilles to the Swiss village of Leukerbad, where I had been invited to attend the ninth Internationales Literaturfestival Leukerbad. There were several problems that morning, but the most pressing was I was hopelessly lost and my French was so faulty that every time I stopped the car to ask how to get to the train station, I ended up enquiring about the location of the nearest war and received a rant about America's imperialistic invasion of Iraq. After apologizing yet again for a president I, like most Americans, didn't vote for, I told my daughter "Switzerland's a place, not a person, honey." There was an artificial cheerfulness to my voice – I wasn't just worried about missing the train. Now at this point in my story I have to back up. Prior to this Friday in July, I had spent the last few weeks on book tour. Everyone from my therapist to my editor had told me bringing your wife and child on a trip of this kind "*might be stressful.*" And that attempting to toilet-train a not-yet-three-year-old as you hurtle from hotel to hotel in cars, trains and planes, was "*insane.*" Unfortunately, they weren't entirely wrong. My wife, Kirsten, had caught a terrible sinus infection and taken a series of Gaelic antibiotics that had rendered her so comatose in the seat next to me, you'd have thought she had purchased them from the French Connection. But the *pièce de résistance* in this Continental misadventure was that though my daughter had eaten vast quantities of cheese and *pâté* in the last week, it had been six days since

any of it had passed through her system. She wasn't just constipated; she was bloated as a tick. "*Will my tummy stop hurting in Switzerland?*" "*Everything will be good in Switzerland, I promise.*" The worst part was, I realized that our ill-advised efforts to toilet train her on the run had made her so paranoid of having an accident, she decided to do without going to the bathroom altogether. "*Is Pinky going to like Switzerland?*" Pinky was a stuffed elephant she carried with her everywhere who was, *quelle surprise*, pink. "*Pinky's going to love Switzerland, sweetheart.*" Between my wife's sinuses and my daughter's bowels, the three previous nights had netted us at best six hours of sleep. We were exhausted, sleep deprived, and I had been driving since six a.m. The good news was, we made the train. The bad news? Half of France went on holiday July 1. Canned sardines are not as tightly packed as the passengers were on our train. When we found three seats together, I thought my problems were over and I could finally sleep. Unfortunately, when the train made its first stop, three crazed alpine fun seekers tried to throw us out of our seats. Worse, when we called the conductor for help, he made us get out of our seats. Having failed to pay heed to the Leukerbad Literary Festival suggestion to make seat reservations, we were reduced to second class citizens, refugees, forced to pick up our three suitcases, stroller, child, assorted bags, and relocate every time the train stopped in France. Granted, it was my fault, but did they really need to call me "*un canard?*" When I found out the word didn't mean "duck," I took genuine offense. Burdened with a sick wife, a crying baby, and an overactive imagination, I passed the hours thinking of the Switzerland of my youth.

Like most American boys born in the fifties, I saw Switzerland as synonymous with Swiss Miss cocoa and multi-bladed knives with red handles. A puberty spent watching World War II movies transformed Switzerland into the place you tried to escape to to be safe. And even though somebody always got shot just before they crossed the border, Switzerland was still sanctuary for those who survived the trip.

The burning question for my wife and me was, would we last that long? A dozen seat changes on a shaky train, as many unsuccessful journeys with our daughter to the loo, a passenger with a boombox blaring Britney Spears, and every time my daughter asked “*Are we in Switzerland yet,*” we had to say no; the three of us came closer to tears. Finally forced to stand in the aisle next to the toilet, delirious with fatigue, my wife and I tried to cheer our daughter and ourselves up with talk of all the good things that waited for us in Switzerland.

“Lilo, do you know who lives in Switzerland?”

“My tummy hurts.”

“Heidi.” Whereas the Heidi of my youth was a black and white movie they showed on TV starring Shirley Temple, my daughter, like my wife, knew Johanna Spyri’s heroine from the Japanese cartoons.

“I’m hungry.”

“You can’t be.” Needless to say, nonstop snacking is not the doctor’s preferred method for dealing with constipation.

Desperate to distract my daughter from food, my German wife began to sing. *Heidi, Heidi, deine Welt sind die Berge*. People stared, but I didn’t care. By the second verse, I joined in. *Heidi, Heidi, denn dort oben bist du zuhaus...*

Once we crossed the Swiss border, our journey was even more torturous, because outside the window was a blurred, impressionistic promise of good things; fruit trees, snow-capped mountains, clean toilets. But inside that foul train, they still were making us switch seats. My legs ached from standing, my hands were blistered from carrying our suitcases from car to car. As we pulled into the Geneva train station I could put it off no longer: I had to have a taste of Switzerland now.

Swearing to my wife and child that we could rent a car at the train station, promising that our troubles would be over and the Helvetian good times would then roll, we got off the train. There was just one problem with my plan: you can’t rent a car in the Geneva train station. Before my wife could verbalize her desire for a divorce, I dropped my bags and ran out of the train station in search of transport.

Strange but true, but within a few blocks, my love affair with all things Swiss had begun. When I asked strangers directions in France, I was lucky to get a Frenchman to grunt and point. But in Geneva, an elderly gentleman actually took the time to draw me a map. Car rented, I collected my wife and child and started to drive. We were relieved to no longer have to change seats, but we were too shell-shocked from our journey to appreciate the first thirty kilometers of our Swiss experience. Strange, surreal, but true, it wasn’t until we pulled into a highway truck stop that we began to appreciate how close to paradise Switzerland is. Now, in America, highway rest areas are one step below bus stations in terms of amenities and ambience. But to this weary traveler, that Swiss highway stop had the feel of a Four Seasons. Not only were there pitchers of fresh-squeezed orange,





melon, and pineapple juice on ice, there was Mövenpick maple walnut ice cream and outside, a large pond/small lake with ducks for my daughter to feed. And windsurfers to remind us that life was a holiday.

And when my daughter asked, for the hundredth time, “Are we there yet,” the answer was still “No.” But it felt like “Yes.”

In terms of elevation, the next hundred kilometers were uphill, but it felt like we were coasting. Driving up through long, green valleys, we talked about the wonder of following the same path as Hannibal and his elephants – even my daughter’s stuffed pink pachyderm could relate. Windows rolled down, the air freshened by the Pfywald Forest’s evergreens, the altitude rendering the sky gentian-blue, we felt like we had arrived even before we got there.

Even for a traveler with my propensity for getting lost, Leukerbad was impossible to miss. It is the last and, in my opinion, most *gemütlich*, of all the villages in the Dala Valley – when you can drive no further, you are there.

I knew nothing about the Literaturfestival Leukerbad except that my understated editor at Dumont had said “It is not to be missed.” I saw part of what he meant when I pulled up in front of the Lindner Hotel, where the festival had arranged for us to stay. Not only did it have four stars, it was a spa. Within minutes of our arrival, my wife and daughter and I were frolicking in a steamy Olympian pool, fed by the very same thermal springs the Romans had bathed in two thousand years earlier. As to the curative powers of those waters, there is only one word: miraculous. Thirty minutes after immersing ourselves in Leukerbad’s healing springs, my daughter Lilo not only took herself to

the bathroom, she emerged a few minutes later, triumphant.

But this was just the first of a weekend’s worth of surprises that the Leukerbad Literary Festival treated us to. When we went to sleep, Leukerbad was a village of sensibly dressed, decidedly earthy, and delightfully outdoorsy Swiss. But by the time we rolled out of bed the next morning and stepped into the main square for the start of the festival, Leukerbad had been invaded by a cultivated army of urbane, citified book lovers from all over Europe and beyond. All hiply pale and uniformed in bohemian black, if everyone weren’t so cheerful, you would have thought you were at a mass funeral.

The mixmaster of this eclectic cultural cocktail was the boyish founder and director of the festival, Ricco Bilger. Ricco was that rarest of cultural phenomena, an unpretentious aesthete, a down-to-earth highbrow. Five minutes after we met, he had introduced me to writers from the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Germany, and invited me to a midnight champagne poetry reading on top of Gemmi Pass.

For a novelist, the wonderful thing about all literary festivals, and particularly the Leukerbad festival, is that for a few days, you live in a universe where everyone not only reads books, but loves books. In Leukerbad, we left behind the tedious talk of the day-to-day world where people discuss grocery lists, deadlines, taxes, the weather and, worst of all, television. In Leukerbad, you shared gossip at the neighboring café table about unknown poets about to be translated into German, French, and English, early romances with French Mannerist fiction, and the end of many a long love affair with postmodernism. Writers

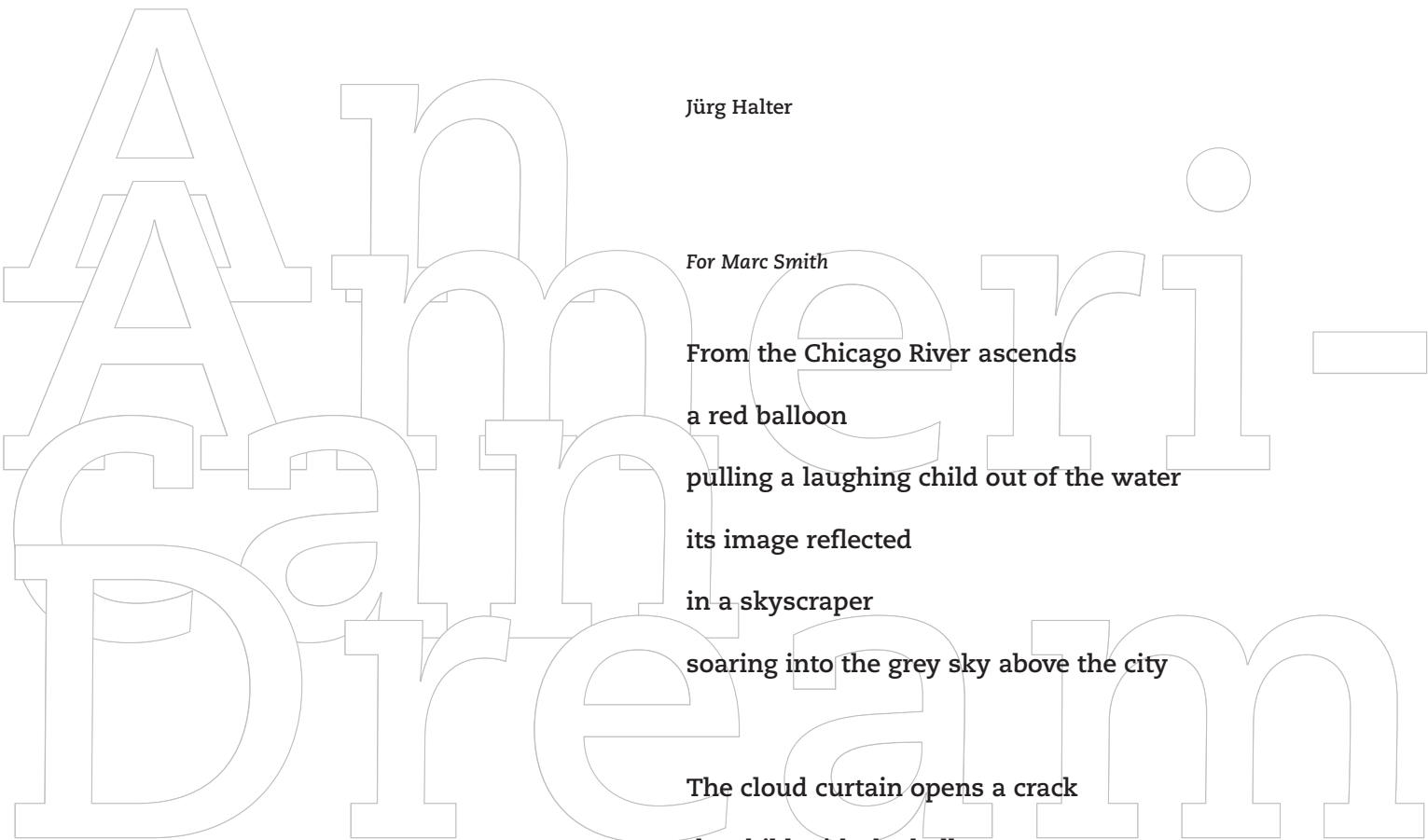
spend most of their time alone in a room. In Leukerbad, there was a spirit of camaraderie and celebration that made you feel not only appreciated, but that you were not alone. Strange but true, I attended readings in languages I couldn't speak a word of, feeling moved just by the sound of the author's voice.

I couldn't have been given a more comfortable place for my first reading of my novel *Fierce People* – the bar of the village's five-star hotel. When I heard that James Baldwin had checked in with his love in the fifties in the hopes the waters of Leukerbad would help get the monkey off his back, I knew it was my kind of place. I don't know if it was the unfiltered cigarette, the glass of local wine, the altitude, or James Baldwin's ghost, but as I began to read, I did something that I have never done at any other reading in my whole life. I felt so un-nervous that my eyes/mind seemed to be able to scan ahead on the page. As I read aloud, I was also reading ahead. Stranger still, I began to see little changes I would have liked to have made if I had a second crack at *Fierce People*. Suddenly, without thinking about it, I began to improvise; a different adjective, an additional line of dialogue... no one noticed, not even my wife. But if I had to give an explanation, I would say I felt free and inspired by Leukerbad. I did the same thing at my reading the next afternoon.

The last night of the festival, after treating an international brigade of writers to a farewell dinner, Ricco, who grew up in Leukerbad, took us to a backstreet bar where the locals were watching the Euro Cup Finals. Video games, pizza, loud music. It was as unpicturesque as Leukerbad gets. But even there, the spirit of festival prevailed. Poets, novelists, busboys, and chambermaids took turns

buying one another drinks. Best of all, everybody seemed to be cheering for both sides. As to my daughter's original question, "Who is Switzerland?" That is Switzerland. ─

Dirk Wittenborn is a screenwriter and novelist whose books have been published in more than a dozen countries. He wrote the screenplay and is the executive producer of the film adaptation of his most recent novel, *Fierce People*, starring Diane Lane and Donald Sutherland. Early in his career, Wittenborn wrote for "Saturday Night Live." Over the years, he has written articles and essays for such publications as *The London Observer*, *The Independent*, *Vogue*, *W*, *Blackbook*, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*. More recently, he was nominated for an Emmy for his HBO documentary, "Born Rich." Wittenborn is currently developing an hour-long TV drama for Touchstone. In Spring 2006, Dumont will be publishing his new novella *Bongo Europa: Memoirs of a twelve-year-old Sex Fiend*. He lives in New York.



Jürg Halter

For Marc Smith

From the Chicago River ascends
a red balloon
pulling a laughing child out of the water
its image reflected
in a skyscraper
soaring into the grey sky above the city

The cloud curtain opens a crack
the child with the balloon
floats into the blue sky
in the clarified gaze of a
daydreaming passerby
the curtain closes again

The river carries an orphaned shoe
gently out of the windy city
in a cradle of waves

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Jürg Halter was born in Bern in 1980 and studied at the University of Arts of his native city. A poet and rap artist today, he lives and works in Bern (he raps under the name of Kutti MC). Numerous appearances at major international literary festivals in Europe, Africa, and the U.S. In August 2003 Halter was invited by Marc “Slampapi” Smith, legendary inventor of the poetry slam, to take part in the American National Poetry Slam in Chicago as a guest and representative of the European spoken-word scene. As Kutti MC, Halter won the title of Champion 2003 in the American National Hip-Hop Slam category. Halter made his final appearance as a poetry slam artist in Stuttgart in 2004. He has recently published a much-noted volume of poetry entitled *Ich habe die Welt berührt* (Ammann Verlag, 2005) and, as Kutti MC, has brought out a frenzied hip-hop album called *Jugend & Kultur* (Musikvertrieb/MUVE).

Links: www.art-21.ch/halter, www.kuttimc.com

“He Who Is Lucky Finds Gold Here”

Migration scholar Leo Schelbert traces Swiss in the U.S.

Ines Anselmi

Few are as familiar as he is with Swiss migration history. The historian Leo Schelbert, himself a species of the genus Swiss abroad, was a professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago for almost thirty years. This portrait shows what kept him busy there and what keeps him on the move to this day |

To leave the familiar behind, to set out into the unknown – the promise of lands uncharted has always captivated the imagination of Western people. But no event has spurred the pioneering spirit of Europeans as powerfully as the ‘discovery’ of America. Legions of emigrants, among them quite a few from Switzerland, have followed the call of freedom, adventure, and unlimited opportunity. How did they get to the New World? Were they welcome? How did they live? What joys and miseries awaited them?

Letters, diaries, and other personal accounts offer a livelier picture of what motivated Swiss emigrants in America one, two, or three hundred years ago than historical treatises and statistical figures. With the acumen of a scholar and the tenacity of a gold digger, Leo Schelbert has uncovered hidden treasures in archives on both sides of the Atlantic and deciphered hundreds of more or less awkwardly written manuscripts. Having selected, transcribed, and interpreted them, he has made them available to readers in a diversity of publications, thereby revealing a hitherto largely unexplored aspect of migration.

The crossing – long and harsh. Today it is hard to imagine how tedious and taxing the Atlantic crossing once was, how many passengers succumbed to typhus, smallpox, cholera, or another such ‘ship fever.’ Just to reach their port of departure – Liverpool, Le Havre, Nieuwediep, or other cities on the Atlantic – emigrants had to spend hours waiting at toll barriers and dealing with countless other time-consuming obstacles, not to mention the hardship of the crossing by sailing vessel.

*Joggi Thommen, Conestoga, Pennsylvania 1736: We had to endure nearly every kind of sickness on the ocean. Eating and drinking is no fun. And the crew of the ship does not live up to what they promised. One must provide oneself with bread, wine, flour, dried stuff, and sugar. ... I cannot encourage anybody to come because of the many troubles of the journey.**

In the nineteenth century technological change brought about a quicker and more pleasant mode of travel. In 1864 travelers could reach Le Havre from Basel in forty hours, a trip that once took twenty to twenty-five days. Although the first steamboats began to ply the Atlantic as early as 1820, they did not fully replace sailing vessels until after 1870 with the construction of ships built specifically for passenger transport. By the 1880s the average time needed for the journey had shrunk to eight, and by 1900 to a mere five to six days. Not only was the journey shorter, but hygiene and food improved as well. Sleeping and eating arrangements became roomier, and life on board generally more pleasant, at least for first- and second-class travelers. However, up until the turn of the century, passengers of the middle deck had to make do with overcrowded, stifling and dark cabins.

Vinzenz Godt, Philadelphia 1807: As clean as the travelers in steerage might be, usually a strong crew of lice moves up from the ship’s bottom; against them the following home remedy has shown itself miraculously effective, that is as much quicksilver as possible crushed in a glass, ground with pig grease, and the whole body weekly rubbed with it. Before disembarking, the ship’s crew uses



Leo Schelbert
Photo: Ines Anselmi

*urine to clean the clothing recovered from the ship's bottom, and it shows that it is the strongest solution by which all vermin and spots are driven out.**

News – long-delayed. It often took a year for news from America to reach Switzerland, and vice versa, so that up to two years might pass between the mailing of a letter and the receipt of an answer from home. People who decided to emigrate because of encouraging news from the New World sometimes found conditions wholly different from those featured in the letter. At times the authorities intervened. In 1752, for instance, the City Council of Bern empowered the police to open and copy letters sent from Pennsylvania before they were delivered to the addressee. On occasion bad news was printed in the calendar to deter people wanting to emigrate.

*From an unsigned letter from Pennsylvania, printed in the Hinckende Bott [Limping Messenger] 1753: Besides, this country is not as good as the Neuländers [emigration agents] said. What is good has already been taken, and furthermore everything is dear in price: for one gets nothing for free here, same as in Switzerland. He who was good for nothing in his homeland, will do worse here in Pennsylvania; but there is good and bad among us.***

Reports that Swiss in America sent home sometimes even sound like passages from a mystery story:

*Auguste Lenz, Spring, Texas, 1877: 13th May. Our Negro woman has just come in, totally disturbed and as pale as her dark skin allows. She was in the yard to fetch wood. "Oh Master, please come, have you seen the dogs?" "No, what is wrong this time?" "Oh Master, come and look at poor 'Fine'!" I ran out to the yard and found both our dogs lying lifeless; they had been poisoned.***

Expansionist Europe. The historian Leo Schelbert, a citizen of Canton Schwyz who went to the United States in 1959, views the history of Swiss emigration to the United States as an integral part of what he calls European expansion. No matter what happened in Europe or through Europeans elsewhere, Swiss people were always involved. The circumnavigation of Africa in 1488, subsequent access to Asia by sea, and above all the discovery across the Atlantic of a double continent previously unknown to Europeans initiated a gigantic process of expansion. Some seventy million people of European origin moved into the new continents. By 1900 the reach of Western Europe – still of marginal importance in 1450 – touched every corner of the globe. This was an in-

credibly creative, but also incredibly destructive process; Leo Schelbert calls the price of that invasion the decimation of indigenous peoples by wars and germs.

By 1790 about 25,000 Swiss had settled on the east coast of North America and about as many more arrived between 1790 and 1860. They also moved to the big cities. In 1890, 6355 Swiss lived in New York City, 2262 in Chicago, and 1696 in San Francisco. In 1920 the Swiss presence reached its peak, numbering some 376,000 persons, of whom 257,000 were born in the United States.

The cliché of the poor emigrant. Schelbert views the claim that poverty motivated people to emigrate as a widespread and, in fact, false cliché. The world of emigrants includes rich and poor, the powerful and the powerless, those who had to flee and those who embarked on careers. To illustrate the latter, he mentions the engineer Othmar Ammann from Feuerthalen, Canton Zurich. In New York City Ammann not only built five internationally acclaimed bridges, but also designed a traffic system to accommodate the automobile, thus leaving his imprint on New York's cityscape. The reasons for emigration varied substantially and from region to region. Thus, the sudden rise of emigration from the Glarus valley after 1840 was a direct consequence of industrialization. Machine-made textiles flooded the market and the home industry collapsed in the valley's back regions. It is astonishing that the Glarnese emigrants of 1845 were able to reach North America almost entirely on water, that is via the Linth Canal, Lake Zurich, the Rhine River, the North Sea, and over the Atlantic to Baltimore. Not all immigrants sought a new home in the United States. A third to a half eventually returned to their country of origin. Many went in the hope of finding lucrative work and making a quick fortune to secure a future free of worry in the homeland. Those who served as common soldiers abroad earned little respect.

*Schweizer Bote, 4 March 1824: Enlistments for military service abroad are far more harmful than emigrations of families. ... The fewest bring barely their life home. ... And those who return, what do they bring? Mostly poverty, lame limbs, laziness, mischief. An old warhand has forgotten how to work.**

Four types of emigrants. Leo Schelbert distinguishes moves relating to military, professional, or religious tasks as well as settlement migrations. Swiss were present in all four groups. Dozens of officers and a good many soldiers from Switzerland served, for instance, in the Royal

American Regiment, which in 1756 had been formed by the British for the defense of the North American colonies. The regiment defended British-controlled regions against the troops of France and Spain, against the indigenous peoples, and against rebellious white colonists. One of the most prominent officers of this regiment was Henri Bouquet (1714-1765) from Rolle, Canton Vaud. Even George Washington, commander of the forces of the Virginia colony and, in 1789, the first president of the United States, served under his command, Leo Schelbert notes. Bouquet's leadership included a decisive victory over American Indian fighters and opened the path for white settlers over the Appalachians to Ohio's fertile regions.

Swiss settlers made a living in a variety of other occupations. They made tools, worked as shoemakers, carpenters, innkeepers, washed gold in California's rivers, worked in the northern copper mines, or were traveling salesmen. Still other groups went to the United States to escape persecution, which threatened certain religious groups at home, or to establish, as missionaries, new communities of their persuasion.

Father Martin Marti, St. Meinrad, Indiana 1861: *It was only natural that new immigrants as well as Catholics of longer residency in America's towns were turning to a place where a religious order seemed to safeguard their most precious possession for them and their descendants. Thus within a short time the local land prices rose significantly; the number of farmers and tradesmen grew from day to day, commerce became livelier, and general prosperity increased to such an extent that the entire area of our mission district must be regarded as forever and entirely won over to the Catholic Church.***

Settlers – the gravest threat for American Indians. In Leo Schelbert's view settlers were the most effective and also the most destructive group of immigrants in the process of establishing European hegemony. In contrast to the French, who established a trading empire reaching from Quebec to New Orleans, the British opted for the creation of a settlement empire.

*From a Petition to the Queen of England of 1709 by von Graffenried and Michel from Bern: We are at your service to improve this land by the labor and industry of our good workers to such an extent that the crown will derive from it significant advantage while at present nothing can be gained from it.**

A small elite would purchase thousands of square miles of land, from which the indigenous peoples had been removed. But land is only valuable if it

is settled, and the large landowners therefore rented or sold it in parcels. The white use of land as private property clashed fundamentally with the American Indian understanding that humans have only the right of usage. "Indian troubles" was the name settlers gave to the armed confrontations caused by the expulsion of the indigenous inhabitants.

Kaspar Köppli, New Switzerland, Illinois 1831: *So that in the future farmers are not disturbed anymore in their work on their fields, many voluntary troops have been formed last fall for one year in order to protect the frontier against the savage riff-raff (Indians).**

The emergence of the American nation has always been described as one great march of triumph. When Leo Schelbert studied American history in New York City, this was still true. In the huge textbook he had to master, the American Indians received little more than a page and a half. The reverse side of that emergence, the destruction of the indigenous peoples, was ignored. Before the Europeans arrived, some eight million, according to others even twelve million people lived in North America, organized into over one hundred commonwealths. By 1890 some 220,000 are estimated to have survived, among them quite a few of mixed blood.

From 1971 to 1999 Leo Schelbert – named full professor in 1979 – taught immigration history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The story of Swiss immigrants, although of marginal importance in his courses, has been of continuing significance for the testing of his theses.

Migration history in a different perspective. For more than thirty years Schelbert taught college and especially graduate students. He offered them a counter-model and, looking back, appreciates the intellectual freedom that he, the foreigner, was granted. As he sees it, American history involves three totally different realities that need to be explored on their own terms: the world of the American Indian peoples, the world of the European invaders, and the African world of those deported as slaves to the Western Hemisphere.

Guillaume Merle d'Aubigné, Charleston, South Carolina 1816: *The only thing that shocks me is the slavery, which is quite common here. ... They are displayed here on a table where everybody can examine them and are put for auction, often together with horses – oxen and other cattle.***

The Asian world played a part as well when in the nineteenth century thousands of Chinese were brought to the United States to build the





transcontinental railroad and other projects. It is imperative, Leo Schelbert holds, to become aware of the premises underlying our understanding of history and to address the perspectives of all groups involved.

Instead of immigration history, he prefers to use the term migration history. Emigration, immigration, and internal migration are, to his mind, all interwoven phenomena. His country of origin is no exception. In addition to a Fifth Switzerland, the world of emigrants, there has always been a Sixth Switzerland as well, the world of immigrants to Switzerland. Between 1850 and 1914, a phase of intensive emigration, some 410,000 persons are estimated to have left the Swiss Confederation. In the same time span some 409,000 foreign-born lived there. New today is only that many immigrants to Switzerland come from non-European cultural and religious traditions.

Leo Schelbert has been Professor Emeritus since 1999, but there is no shortage of work for the 77-year-old. At present he is working on a *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, to be published by Scarecrow Press. It contains sketches of all the cantons and some two hundred entries on major Swiss institutions and historical events. It also offers short biographies of some one hundred Swiss personalities ranging from the seventeenth-century scientific draftswoman and insectologist Maria Sybilla Merian to the present-day Genevan philosopher and scholar of Islam Tariq Ramadan. ─

Translated from the German by Catherine Schelbert

Leo Schelbert, born 1929 in Kaltbrunn, Switzerland, went to the United States in 1959, where he received his Ph.D. in American history from Columbia University, New York, in 1966. From 1963 to 1969 he taught at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey, then pursued research on emigration in Switzerland. From 1971 to 1999 he taught American immigration history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The author and editor of numerous books and articles, he has just won the 2006 Swiss expatriate prize.

* Leo Schelbert, *Einführung in die schweizerische Auswanderungsgeschichte der Neuzeit*. Zürich: Verlag Leemann, 1976.

** Leo Schelbert and Hedwig Rappolt, eds. *America Experienced. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Accounts of Swiss Immigrants to the United States*. Rockport, Maine: Picton Press, 1996, 2004.

The ethnologist Ines Anselmi is a project manager at Pro Helvetia. She is the coordinator of the *swiss roots* cultural program, with events scheduled throughout 2006 in many cities across the United States.

Zurich – Manhattan – Long Island Making art by the beach

Sacha Verna in conversation with Garance

Swiss artist Garance has been living and working in the United States for twenty years. Our interview ranges from rats in Manhattan to Swiss chocolate and money on the street |

Garance lives in New Suffolk, Long Island, with her husband, Vadoo Werthmüller, a dog, and three parrots. Her house is only a few steps away from the beach. The rooms of the former supermarket that Garance and her husband converted with their own hands are bright and airy. There are guest beds, which are almost always occupied, and a huge kitchen, where meals for the numerous people who gather round the table are regularly prepared. The many windows in Garance's spacious studio look out on the garden, which must be as luxuriant as a jungle in summer. Garance, who is discreetly closed-mouth about her age, was born and raised in Zurich. A trained actor, she has been showing her paintings, works on paper, and objects in exhibitions at galleries and institutions in Europe and the United States since the early seventies.



Garance
Photo: Werner Gadlinger

Sacha Verna: *Why did you move to New York in 1985?*

Garance: I was living in Zurich, having just returned from a stay in Paris, when I received the news that I'd won a scholarship to spend half a year at the City of Zurich's New York loft. Naturally, I was overjoyed. But I was a little apprehensive as well. I'd never been that far away before. When I told that to a collector friend of mine, he invited Vadoo, who was my boyfriend at the time, and me to sail to New York on a liner.

So you could approach the big foreign city gradually?

Exactly. The crossing on the Queen Elizabeth took five days, complete with a tremendous storm. That was enough time to take a look at everything on the ship. I'm not ordinarily the cruise-taking type. Our entrance into New York harbor was spectacular. We were by the railing on a high

deck and had the Statue of Liberty and World Trade Center practically in front of our noses. But as soon as we were on firm ground, we noticed how gigantic the buildings really are.

Was anyone there to pick you up?

No, we didn't know a soul in New York. All we had was the address of the studio. We didn't even have a key. We found the loft on West Broadway and rang all the doorbells. Ultimately the owner of the wine store on the ground floor gave us a key and told us to try the fifth floor. We took the elevator up, tried the key, the door swung open, and we were inside. Fantastic.

What were your first impressions of New York?

Unfortunately, people are influenced by all the things they've heard about New York. Some say it's the greatest city in the world. Others say it's the most dangerous city in the world and you always have to be on your guard. That's why we started out from home base and expanded our territory bit by bit, like animals. First we advanced as far as Houston Street, then moved on to Little Italy and Chinatown. We discovered bars and restaurants, got to know people, and experienced New York as an absolutely unaggressive city.

What was the Soho district like at the time?

It was an area full of young people with good ideas. The craziest things were tried out, which sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. There were a lot of clubs, big and small, you were always out until four in the morning. We were there when Andy Warhol and Miles Davis put on a fashion show for a Japanese fashion designer. There was enormous energy around.





The Swiss art scene you left behind, where you'd already made a name for yourself, was relatively small and manageable. Didn't big, wild New York come as a shock?

On the contrary. I like challenges. It's easy to become complacent in Switzerland, to get into a rut. You have your gallery, your collectors, your exhibitions. I found it fantastic that no one in New York knew me. I looked for a gallery and found one right away. Things went extremely well for me from the start. I managed to establish new contacts and sold work not only to people who came from Switzerland to visit me, but also to all the ones I got to know here. Of course, there's one thing we shouldn't forget: it was the eighties. Money was practically lying around on the street. Most people were doing well, especially in the cities. They bought and bought and bought.

Is that why you decided to stay in New York?

We threw our return tickets to the winds shortly after we arrived on West Broadway – in the hope that someone who wanted to see Switzerland would find them. We had no intention of staying here, but we knew we didn't already want to return to Switzerland after half a year.

Did you seek out other Swiss artists here in New York?

As a new arrival, you don't feel like doing that. You don't go to New York to congregate with the Swiss. Mind you, the Swiss consulate really puts itself out for you if you want it to. Or, at least, it did in the past. It used to put on a big dinner four times a year, to which it invited Swiss business people and artists. Sometimes good contacts were made at these events. The ambassador used to visit the studio regularly, too.

Was being Swiss a particular advantage or disadvantage to you as an artist in New York?

Neither, nor. There are at least twenty-seven na-

tionalties living here side by side and with each other – that teaches you tolerance.

Did being Swiss ever affect the way people treated you?

No. Most people say "Ah, Sweden!" anyway. And the rest think of chocolate and cheese – and what's wrong with that. After all, the fact that I was born in Switzerland doesn't have much to do with me as a person or with my work. I've always taken my inspiration from human beings, and certainly not from the mountains. Nationalities and borders don't matter to me.

What prompted you to move from Manhattan to Long Island in 1995?

I'd had enough. We'd lived in various lofts, big lofts, that were affordable for a while. The last one was in Chinatown, an area I basically like. But it's full of rats. When a neighbor told me that a huge rat had attacked her cat, I told Vadoo: that's it. The rents are constantly going up anyway, I want to move out to the country. I knew this area because I often spent the summer with friends in the Hamptons. I found the house we live in today by pure accident. It was an empty supermarket. Converting it took three years. I spent two of them on an artistic break.

What was different for you after this break, apart from your surroundings?

I started working three-dimensionally. Making paper objects and sculptures. The urge probably came with building the house. Then the garden. Gardening is like painting. I've conjured up a paradise out of nothing here – banana trees, hundreds of lilies. I view the garden as part of my work.

How has staying in the U.S. altered your relationship to Switzerland?

I continue to have exhibitions in Switzerland and the rest of Europe, about every two years. And there

are other projects, too – stage sets in Vienna, for instance. One of the highlights of recent years was being invited to exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in Salvador di Bahia – a tremendous experience. It gave me a chance to get to know Brazil, a country I found incredibly fascinating. When we were still living in Manhattan, I naturally sold most of my things there. But I've never lost my collectors and customers in Europe. It even seems to be a good thing to make yourself rare. In any case, my last exhibition in Zurich, at the Galerie Esther Hufschmied, practically sold out.

What is your present contact with the New York art scene like?

Present? I'm present, too!

Yes, but there are galleries in Chelsea, there are auctions that get enormous publicity, there are stars and starlets. To what extent do you participate in this 'art industry'?

Not at all, actually. These days most of the Chelsea galleries are exhibiting installation art and videos. And so are the museums. I quite like looking at these things. But they hold no appeal for me as an artist. I continue to do my own thing without being distracted by the hype. I try to be as honest as possible and not let some sort of trends determine my work. My work is me and not what happens to be 'in' at the moment.

Can you live on it?

In Manhattan I could live on it very well. Out here it's a little different. Now my husband earns the money we need to pay the bills. But I'm frequently asked to exhibit in the area. And I get commissions from New York. Last summer I did a set for Shakespeare in the Park. I also give workshops on monoprinting. Almost everyone who makes art in the U.S. has a 'day job' as well.

Is the U.S. different from Switzerland in that respect?

No. Young people today are already taught at school how to sell themselves. Someone who wants to make a career as an artist goes to a design school or art academy in Germany, where they teach the business of art like any other business. That's exactly the same in Europe as here in the United States. Successful young people know exactly what they want and how to get it. All the rest need a job or have a husband to support them.

In all the years you've been here, have you ever thought of returning to Switzerland?

No. It's a country I know. I spent long enough there, after all. But it's not as if I didn't like Switzerland anymore. I like to visit my friends there and I love good chocolate. In fact, the longer I'm away, the more I appreciate Switzerland. But I'm also happy when I can leave and return here again. If I'm homesick at all, then for Italy or France. And if ever I really should emigrate again, then to South America. Brazil or Mexico.

Is there any chance you will emigrate again?

Why not? As long as I have a studio somewhere, I'm happy. Where it is doesn't matter. I just don't want to go north. It's too cold for me there. I need sun and warmth. ─

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Sacha Verna is a cultural journalist. She lives and works in New York.

www.garancestudio.com

“Get Your F***ng Hand Away from Me”

Looking for Thomas Pynchon, Jean Seberg, and Hedy Lamarr

Jean Willi

For years now, the brothers Fosco and Donatello Dubini have been traveling the world, making their films. Their work as documentarists has often taken them to America, through its underground of obsessions and myths. The writer Jean Willi now follows in their footsteps, discovering in their films a world view shaped by Thomas Pynchon's novels: one in which reality and fiction seem to merge |

A Journey Into the Mind of (P.). New York, a street, the stump of a tree trunk. A man dressed in gray crossing from right to left, wearing a red baseball cap. The figure walks out of the frame, the tree trunk vanishes, the gray of the street grows wider. Parked cars. The faded yellow dotted line in the middle of the road. Now sunlight strikes the lens. The camera captures the man for a split second. A pale face, a mouth wide open in shock, opalescent eyeglasses. And then, just as suddenly, he's gone. “He was clearly aware that if he hid himself away from the world, somebody might try to find him,” says Richard Lane, webmaster and NBC editor.

The search lasts forty years, until James Bone, New York correspondent for the *London Times*, finds Thomas Pynchon and takes the elusive writer's picture. Bone had concealed his wife's camera, and waited. “It was a sunny day on the Upper West Side,” he says. “Suddenly there was this sixty-year-old man, tall, angular, almost pantomimesque, his arms gesticulating like windmills.”

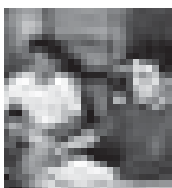
Bone sees this encounter as the end of a long story, the climax of a game that had gone on for years: the chase to take Thomas Pynchon's picture, and Pynchon's attempt to prevent it. Bone does not want to miss this unique opportunity to hear Pynchon's side of the story. He puts away the camera and holds out his hand for the man to shake, as one might do at the end of a sports match. “Get your f***ng hand away from me,” the man says. “I hate people taking my picture.”

The blurred photo shows an elderly man wearing the hood of his parka over his head. There is a

boy beside him, holding his hand. Jules Siegel, a former friend of Pynchon's from their student days in Ithaca, who broke the silence in 1977 by publishing an article about Pynchon in *Playboy*, expresses doubt that the man in the photo is really Pynchon. Richard Lane, however, is convinced. Especially when he compares the picture with film footage shot by a CNN crew after James Bone led the way and broke the taboo.

Lane's detailed viewing of the film produced by CNN is part of another film: *Thomas Pynchon – A Journey into the Mind of (P.)* by Fosco and Donatello Dubini. The film-within-the-film serves as its conclusion. The title refers to an article published in the *New York Times Magazine* on June 12, 1966, about the race riots in Watts: “A Journey into the Mind of Watts.”

The Swiss filmmakers Fosco and Donatello Dubini, born in 1954 and 1955 respectively, are the descendants of an Italian-speaking family from Ticino. They attended school in Zurich and in Canton Schwyz. They belong to a generation strongly influenced by German and American culture. The films they watch are mainly American ones; they read American writers, listen to American or English music. “Our parents didn't even speak English,” says Fosco Dubini. “But we defined ourselves by it.” Linking the trivial with elite art forms, blending reality and the creative process, quoting the mass media and advertising, pure Pop Art: these were the brothers' reference points, from an early age. American culture occupied a central position in their lives and, increasingly, in their work. This is



Fosco and Donatello Dubini
Photo: F. & C. Dubini

reflected in their films, one third of which treat American themes.

Their preoccupation with Pynchon goes back a long way. For one thing, there was Tyrone Slothrop. The main character of Pynchon's novel *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) spends time in Zurich, lives in the Old Town, visits the Kronenhalle and the Odeon, and munches on bread and bratwurst at Café Sträggeli. Then, in the late 1970s, while they were doing research for a film (*Blindgänger*, 1983) on the NATO dual-track decision, they took a closer look at the Pynchon novel, literally reading the book from back to front. The NATO dual-track decision involved stationing mobile American mid-range missiles in Europe, thus restoring the nuclear balance of terror through arms proliferation. Besides his wanderings in Geneva and Zurich, Slothrop mainly roams through bombed-out Germany looking for the famed V-2 rocket ("Retaliation Weapon 2"), which was manufactured toward the end of the war in the Mittelwerk underground rocket factory. The novel is peopled by hundreds of strange characters who appear, disappear, and unexpectedly turn up again – or maybe not. They have names like Rippenstoss (poke in the ribs), Achtfaden (fading concern), Ochsenaugen (ox-eyes), and Sanktwolke (St. Cloud); Colonel Enzian (gentian flower) and his half-brother Vaslav Tschitscherine; and the van der Groov brothers. It would hardly be a surprise to find the Dubini brothers listed among them.

"Every weirdo in the world is on my wavelength," says Pynchon.

The writer's mysterious anonymity means that anyone who takes up the topic of Pynchon and his books becomes a character in a story in which the unseen Pynchon seems to be pulling the strings. Because he never provides any answers, everything that is said about him becomes part of a megastory composed of his own themes – paranoia, secret services, Cabbala, Pavlovian condi-

tioning, conspiracy theories, and the Wizard of Oz – and a blend of names like Orwell, Rilke, Joyce, and the Simpsons. It is a story extending far beyond the pages of Pynchon's novels, one in which fiction and reality have become indistinguishable.

"Donatello believes he saw Pynchon while we were shooting in New York," says Fosco. "One turns around, stares after passersby, follows rumors about a delicatessen where Pynchon is supposed to shop, waits there. Is he the one who just slipped around the corner?"

Paranoia can lead the paranoid person to experiences called coincidences. These are chance happenings that create links, or make them visible as such. In September 1963, Thomas Pynchon and Lee Harvey Oswald traveled to Mexico City. Pynchon was coming from the wedding of his friend Richard Fariña and Mimi Baez, which took place on August 24 in Joan Baez's house in Portola Valley. He goes home; Oswald goes to a meeting with the Cuban secret service G-2 at the Cuban embassy, where, according to Wilfried Huismann's *Rendezvous mit dem Tod* (Rendezvous with Death) he receives the assignment to shoot John F. Kennedy. Did Pynchon and Oswald take the same bus?

"Is this the secret we don't know about?" asks Richard Lane. "Did they strike up a conversation?"

In the mid-sixties Pynchon lived in Al Porto in Manhattan Beach, a small Pacific town near Los Angeles. Chrissie Wexler, Jules Siegel's ex-wife, was romantically involved with Pynchon at that time. She remembers: "When he woke up in the morning, he would come down here to the beach in the summer time and stay here for two or three hours. But the crazy thing about it is, his skin was always white. We would sit out here on the beach and talk about the war in Vietnam."

Jean Seberg – American Actress. "It's a strange coincidence," says Fosco Dubini, "that at that same time,

another two of our film protagonists were living in the area: Jean Seberg and Hedy Lamarr.”

Jean Seberg – American Actress, by Donatello and Fosco Dubini (Germany/Switzerland, 1995), depicts the tragedy of a life in which fiction and reality can no longer be told apart. On September 8, 1979, the Paris gendarmerie found the actress in a white Renault 5, dead, pumped full of Nembutal and with a blood-alcohol level of 7.94. An autopsy established that she had taken pills and drunk whisky. She was poisoned by the deadly cocktail she’d mixed herself, declared the doctor. Ten days earlier she had left her apartment at night, and disappeared. No empty bottles were found in the car. Some suspected she might have been injected with the alcohol. Romain Gary, her former husband, accused the FBI of being at least partly responsible for her death. Another theory held that she was murdered by French secret agents because of her contacts with the Algerian resistance. It is the perfect recipe for creating a legend, based on a conspiracy theory so plausible that Pynchon himself would have dismissed it as fiction.

It is a fact, however, that in 1970 the FBI launched a smear campaign against the actress and, with the help of *Newsweek*, spread the rumor that she had been made pregnant by one of the leaders of the Black Panther Party. Jean Seberg had a nervous breakdown and lost her baby. At the funeral the dead child is displayed before the public in a glass coffin: the baby is white. The actress was considered an enemy of the state for harboring black civil rights activists. Her telephone is wire-tapped, she is under surveillance day and night, a 300-page file about her is compiled, under the code name Arisa. All of which explains why, in this case, a conspiracy theory is not necessarily a

paranoid fantasy. And why it might make sense for the author of books about totalitarian systems and their methods to take the precaution of going underground.

Hedy Lamarr – Secrets of a Hollywood Star, by Donatello and Fosco Dubini and Barbara Obermaier (Germany/Switzerland/Canada, 2006) is the portrait of an actress who became famous as the first nude in film history. As “the most beautiful woman of the century” she rose to meteoric stardom in Hollywood, but died lonely and forgotten. She was born in 1914 in Vienna, a banker’s daughter. At nineteen she married the industrialist Fritz Mandl, a Jew who did business with the Nazis and forbade her to act in films. After four years of marriage she left Mandel and fled to Paris, after drugging him and the French chambermaid assigned to spy on her. Louis B. Mayer discovered her and changed her name, Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler, to Hedy Lamarr, in homage to the film diva Barbara La Marr, who had died of a drug overdose in 1926.

In the summer of 1940 she got to know one of her neighbors in Hollywood: the composer George Antheil, whose concerts often ended in brawls. Antheil, who moved in the Parisian circles around Satie, Cocteau, Joyce, and Picasso and called himself the “bad boy of music,” was to advise her on glandular matters and breast enlargement. His book *Every Man His Own Detective: A Study of Glandular Endocrinology* attracted her attention and led to their meeting. In the course of their conversation the subject turned to the war and weapons systems. Hedy Lamarr mentioned that she was thinking of leaving MGM and moving to Washington, D.C., to join the National Inventors Council.



Little Switzerland, North Carolina, U.S.A.

Arlesheim, Canton Basel-Land, Switzerland

This encounter and their ensuing collaboration led within a very short time to an astonishing invention: a radio control mechanism for torpedoes which transmits signals at varying frequencies, thus preventing them from being jammed by enemy signals. The invention anticipates technologies such as mobile telephone and satellite communication. In 1962 the system was used during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Hedy Lamarr acted in over thirty films, including *Tortilla Flat*, *Algiers*, and *White Cargo*. Her most successful: Cecil B. DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*. Her last film: *Instant Karma*. She turned down the leading role in *Casablanca*. "As 'white cargo' Hedy Lamarr was, in life and on screen, a Hollywood-manufactured vehicle for wishes, dreams and erotic projections. She constantly blends fiction and reality, her roles and her life, as a perpetual sleight of hand," explains Barbara Obermaier, co-director of the Lamarr documentary.

Coincidence and synchronicity. This is precisely the mix of fiction and reality that Pynchon takes to an extreme: reversing roles, misleading the public. The collage technique the author uses in his novels, combining references in order to create or reveal the links between them, examining what lurks behind the visible: all of this has shaped the methods of the Dubini brothers. As a result, their films become independent works which extend and transcend their subjects, rather than simply commenting on them.

Their three film protagonists have something in common; something that would astonish any friend of coincidences, who might suspect John C. Lilly's *CCCC* or *Cosmic Coincidence Control Center* behind it. By seeming coincidence, each of the protagonists discussed here is connected with a color, which in reality is not a color at all, but the sum of all colors: white. Chrissie Wexler remembers – and finds it crazy – that Pynchon's skin remained white in spite of daily visits to the beach. At her baby's funeral, Jean Seberg feels compelled to reveal the sad proof that the child was white. Hedy Lamarr's contribution to this synchronicity – C. G. Jung's name for the phenomenon – is her role as Tondelayo in *White Cargo*. The Swiss psychoanalytic theorist Jung used the term synchronicity to refer to events that share no causal connection but nevertheless are experienced by the observer as significantly linked. Thus it should come as no surprise that Pynchon's next novel is said to be about the Russian mathematician Sofia Vasilyevna Kovalevskaya, about nonlinear dynamics in condensed matter, and about the Weiss-Tabor-Carnevale algorithm. Weiss: the German word for white. A topic, perhaps, for the next Dubini film as well? ─

Translated from the German by Marcy Goldberg

Fosco Dubini (author/director/producer) was born in 1954 in Zurich. He studied drama, film, and television at the University of Cologne, graduating with a Master of Arts (thesis on the development of Swiss documentary film). He has been a lecturer at the ESAV/ESBA art college in Geneva since 1991. He received the Fellowship Award of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1987 and the Bavarian Film award in 1991. He lives in Cologne and Geneva.

Donatello Dubini (director/producer/cinematographer) was born in 1955 in Zurich. He studied at the film academy in Vienna (1975–1977) and drama, film, and television at the University of Cologne (1979), graduating with a Master of Arts (thesis on the documentary filmmaker Richard Dindo). He received the Fellowship Award of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1987 and the Bavarian Film Award in 1991. He lives in Cologne.

Selected filmography

2005 *Hedy Lamarr - Secrets of a Hollywood Star*
Germany/Switzerland/Canada, documentary, 85 min., distributor
Real Fiction

2001 *The Journey to Kafiristan*
Germany/Switzerland/Netherlands, feature, 100 min.,
www.diereisenachkafiristan.de

Int. Film Festival Locarno "Piazza Grande", Filmfest Hamburg,
Montréal

2001 *Thomas Pynchon — A Journey into the mind of P.*
documentary, 90 min., distributor: Real Fiction, int. sales: Media
Luna

1995 *Jean Seberg — American Actress*
documentary, 82 min., distributor: Real Fiction / Der andere Blick

Jean Willi (b. 1945) lives on Ibiza. In 1989 he published the novella *Der Tag von Santa Inés*. In 1994 he collaborated with Martin Suter on the scripts for three episodes of the television series *Die Direktoren*. Between 1993 and 1996 he edited four volumes of texts by Werner Helwig. In 1999 he published the novel *Sweet Home* with the Ricco Bilger Verlag; in 2005 *matar* (same publisher).

Sister Republics

The American view of Switzerland

Alfred Defago

America's interest in Europe is waning, but plenty of common ground remains. Are new convergences arising?

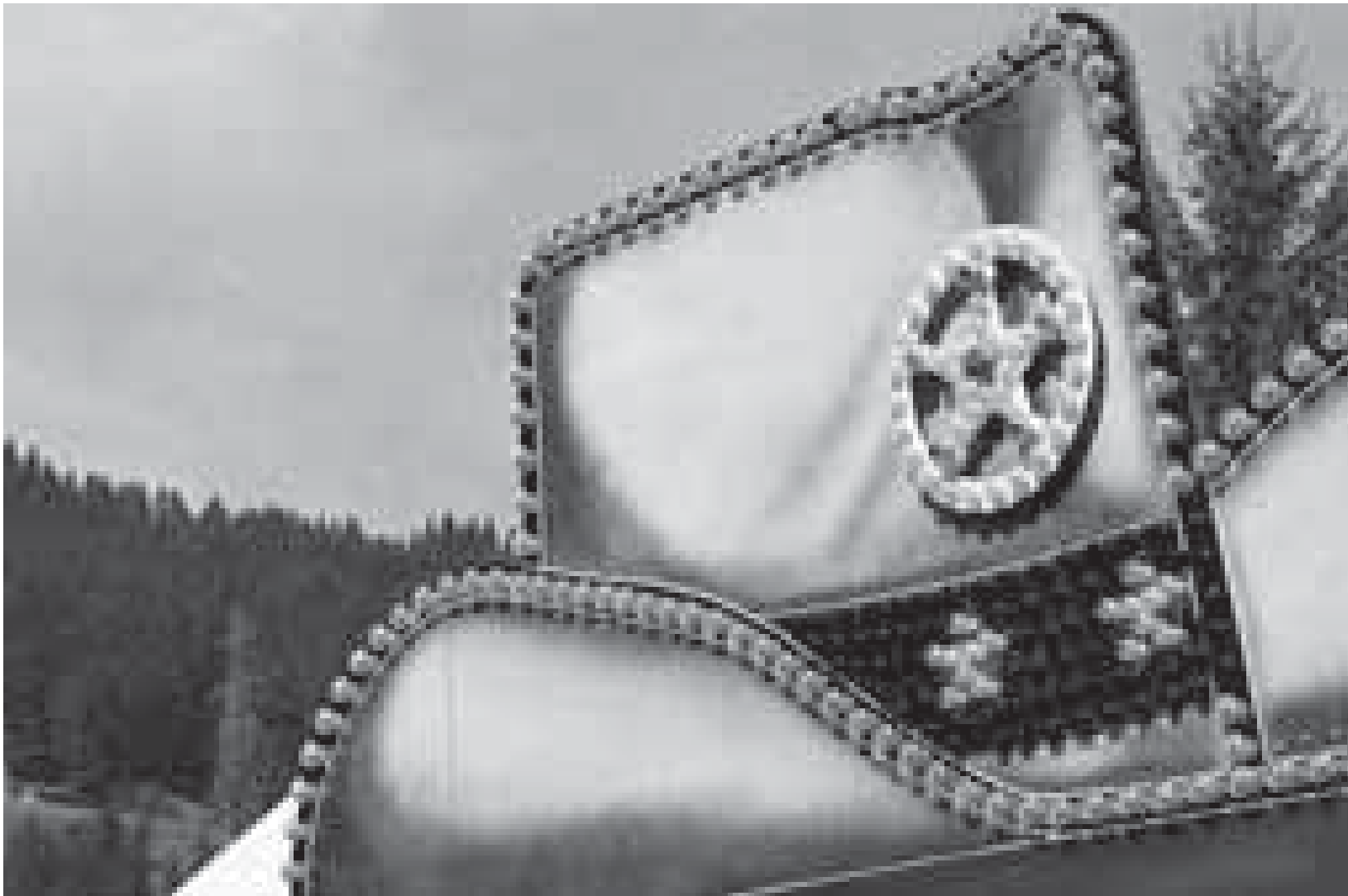
Alfred Defago goes in search of a transatlantic balance I

The gaffe. It was May 14, 1997. Punctually at 2:30 a black stretch limousine sent by the United States Department of State pulled up in front of the Swiss Ambassador's residence in Washington, complete with police escort and blue light. My wife and I were scheduled to be picked up and taken to the White House, where I would officially present my credentials to President Clinton. Everything had been prepared in meticulous detail by American protocol, the timetable was planned down to the minute. We were to engage in some protocolary small talk with two State Department representatives at our residence and then drive off at 2:45. But as we approached the limousine, it happened: "I think there's something wrong," whispered my wife, pointing discreetly to the hood of the State Department limo. And indeed: there it waved, the national flag with a white cross on a red field. But unfortunately not the Swiss flag: what the Americans had mounted was very obviously a Danish flag, the Dannebrog. When we informed the accompanying American protocol officer of the error we had detected, there was an embarrassed silence. Then a despairing "Oh my god!", followed by a nervous telephone call with the Protocol Section of the State Department. We ultimately set off under the Danish flag, which, a mile from the White House, was replaced by a Swiss flag hurriedly brought over from the State Department by police car. When we finally drove past the honor guard at the White House gate, it was the Swiss cross on a red field that was waving proudly in the breeze. I wisely kept from relating this episode until several years after the incident occurred. In May 1997, when tempers were still running high over Switzerland's role in World War II, a gaffe of this

kind would have become an explosive political issue in Switzerland. All the more so as the limousine's arrival at the White House was being filmed by a camera crew for the Swiss evening news.

Most of the Swiss I told this little story to later on simply shook their heads. They considered the incident 'typically American,' in other words, a clear indication of American arrogance, ignorance, and, in the last analysis, total lack of sensitivity to the outside world. How can anyone mistake the Danish flag for the Swiss? But that wasn't the end of the confusion: more than once my Swedish counterpart in Washington and I were forced to forward each other letters from American senders (including senators and congressmen) that had obviously been addressed to the 'wrong' ambassador.

Switzerland has no distinct image in the United States. Anyone intending to write or talk about the relationship between the United States and Switzerland is well advised to keep these episodes in mind. Authorities on Switzerland do, of course, exist in the New World. In the business sector, in the world of politics, and of course at the country's many top-flight universities. It is, for instance, truly astonishing that the University of Wisconsin-Madison regularly schedules courses on twentieth-century French-Swiss women's literature or that not only one but several top institutes run seminars on Switzerland's system of political consensus. However, the majority of Americans know little about Switzerland – which, for once, does not render Switzerland a special case. Images of Denmark, Sweden, Slovakia, or Holland are equally vague. Anyone who does not





make a point of seeking out Swiss clubs or Swiss specialists in business, politics, or culture will find it difficult to discover more than the standard clichés about high mountains, sparkling lakes, peacefully ruminating cows, cheese, chocolate, watches, or banks.

I recently read that there is a chance American interest in Switzerland and other European countries will grow again. I have my doubts. That comes, first of all, from the fact that although most Americans are immigrants in one form or another, they are immigrants who left their old homeland and found a new one. It is true that some of them are proud to be Swiss-Americans, Italo-Americans, or Irish-Americans. But ultimately the important thing is that they are all Americans. Irish-Americans or descendants of Sicilian immigrants may wax enthusiastic and glorify their ancestral home in Cork or Palermo. But there is little reason to assume that they would have a particular interest in Switzerland. Why should they?

From Atlantic to Pacific. Add to that the fact that the United States is still the country of immigration *par excellence* and has, since the mid-sixties, experienced a massive wave of immigration from Latin America, the Caribbean, and South and East Asia. On the other hand, over the past few decades immigration from Europe – at least from Western Europe – has practically ground to a halt. That has, and must have, consequences for American curiosity about Europe (including Switzerland). It is unlikely that millions of newly naturalized American citizens from Mexico, India, China, or Vietnam will take a particular interest in Europe. And so the United States is – slowly but surely – turning towards Latin America and Asia. Even if many Europeans (the Swiss prime among them) do not really want to accept it: today – more than ever – the United States is far more than just a cultural appendix of Europe, an outpost of Western-Atlantic civilization. In contrast to Europe, which has always found immigration difficult to deal with, the United States is integrating non-European immigrants in large number, despite the many problems. And the country is changing with them, ethnically, socially, and culturally – with the focus moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific in the process.

And yet, Europe and the United States still have a great deal in common in terms of cultural and intellectual values. Europe has had a considerable influence on political and cultural thought in the United States – an influence that continues to resonate strongly down to the present day.

That is where the small country of Switzerland comes in, and very prominently so. Swiss polit-

ical thought and Swiss political practice have exerted a major influence on the development of American democracy. Even today, their effect on day-to-day politics remains palpable. It is one of the ironies of history that this truly significant Swiss contribution to American history is not as well known in Switzerland as in the United States itself.

Sister Republics. From the late eighteenth until well into the nineteenth century, little Switzerland in distant Europe served as a kind of role model for the young American republic. That the Americans' gaze happened to fall on Switzerland is not surprising. The Old Confederation was one of the few republics in a sea of more or less rigorously organized monarchies. Soon a close partnership was being hailed, both in Switzerland and the United States. The phrase 'Sister Republics' began making the rounds. When the first republican constitution was being framed in the United States in 1787, the Swiss model was discussed almost passionately. Should the nation be constituted as a loose confederation like the Old Swiss Confederation? Or should the founding fathers venture something totally new? They decided for a federalistic structure but – unlike the weak Diet system of the thirteen-member Swiss Confederation – with a relatively strong central government.

A little more than half a century later, it was the Swiss who wanted to take a constitutional lesson from their 'Sister Republic' across the Atlantic. The liberal-radical founding fathers of the new Switzerland of 1848 did not have to search long for possible models for their federal constitution. There was virtually only one option open to them: the American Constitution. This was not surprising considering that even in 1848 a republic proclaiming the sovereignty of the people was still an almost exotic exception. Closely following the American model, Switzerland became a federal state with a bicameral legislative system. The *Nationalrat*, or National Council, which represents the people, was modeled on the House of Representatives; the *Ständerat*, or Council of States, which represents the cantons, was in many ways a copy of the American Senate. These and many other facets of the Swiss Constitution of 1848 prompted Jean-François Aubert, an expert in constitutional law from Neuenburg, to make the acerbic observation that this almost qualified as plagiarism.

But apart from obvious similarities, there are also significant differences. The Swiss Constitution of 1848 recognizes the tripartite separation of powers (legislative, executive, judiciary). But although

it adopted the American bicameral system virtually as is, it diverged conspicuously from the American model with respect to the executive. Where the US Constitution literally demands a strong president with leadership qualities, the Swiss constitution typically enough divides executive authority among a body of seven Federal Councilors. Although the Swiss Constitution provides for a president, his/her powers remain largely ceremonial in nature down to the present day. And the fact that the president is allowed to hold office for only one year is just a further indication that – unlike the United States – politically, linguistically, and culturally multiplicitous Switzerland does not want strong ‘leaders.’

Initiative and referendum. The reciprocal influence of the two political systems did not come to an end in 1848. While the radical founding fathers of the new Switzerland had taken much of their intellectual impetus from the United States, towards the end of the nineteenth century it was once again the Americans who were importing Swiss constitutional law to their own country. Suddenly the typical Swiss instruments of direct democracy, the initiative and the referendum, began gaining appeal. The late 1880s and 1890s saw the publication of countless books and even more newspaper articles in the United States about the right of initiative and referendum in the Swiss Confederation in far-off Europe. Suddenly initiative and referendum were seen as cure-alls for political cronyism and the corruption rampant in various states of the union. The people needed to be granted a chance – as they had in Switzerland – to give politicians a rap on the knuckles: that was the American populist rallying cry. Success

was not long in coming. Between 1890 and 1912, eighteen states introduced the right of initiative and/or referendum.

Meanwhile Americans in twenty-six states already enjoy these rights. And the movement for direct popular rights seems to have gathered even more momentum in recent years. As a result, millions of voters, from California to Florida, are now called to the ballot boxes every year, according to the Swiss pattern, to decide on dozens of issues. It is not rare in these instances for controversial decisions of a state legislature to be repealed or for new provisions to be written into a state constitution against the governor’s will. The introduction of the right of initiative and referendum in more than half the states of the United States would have been inconceivable without Switzerland. Both advocates and opponents of this – not uncontroversial – institution frequently refer explicitly to the Swiss model in their debates. That, at least, is something. But when it comes to the exasperating question of what the Americans think about us, what kind of image they have of us, it would be best to let it lie. Asking it doesn’t get us anywhere, any more than it would in the case of Denmark, Sweden, Slovakia, or... (the list could go on and on). —

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Alfred Defago, Ph.D., has been teaching international relations at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 2001. Prior to that he was Swiss General Consul in New York and Swiss Ambassador in Washington, D.C. In the 1980s and 1990s, he served as Editor-in-Chief of Swiss Radio DRS and Director of the Federal Office of Culture.





When You Wish Upon a Star

A fictitious conversation with Renée Zellweger

Milena Moser

We would have loved to print a genuine conversation with Renée Zellweger, but actors are busy people. And why should a Hollywood star make time for us simply because her father was born in Switzerland? So San Francisco-based author Milena Moser had no choice but to imagine what might have happened if Ms. Zellweger had agreed to talk to her |

The joys of Swiss cuisine. “I love Switzerland,” says Renée, scrunching up her face. “I owe Switzerland everything.”

“Mm-hm,” I nod. “Go on?”

Conscientiously she lists all the typically Swiss virtues that have made her life easier, that, come to think of it, she actually owes her success. Punctuality, cleanliness, she counts them off on the fingers of her snow-white hands, which look as if they’d always done the dishes in rubber gloves, another picture-perfect Swiss ritual. “Loyalty,” she continues, “reliability, total reliability.”

She’s been cutting cheese into little squares as she speaks and now she pushes the Farmer’s Platter towards me. “Help yourself,” she says politely, “*grüefed nume zue!*”

I respond to her admirable Bernese accent with a smile. I’ve read that her father came from the St. Gallen area, but why quibble. Renée is doing what she can, especially considering that she’s jetlagged. I take a pickle and a piece of cheese. Renée’s chewing on some cured bacon. She nods earnestly, contemplating the flavor and texture, which are unlike anything she’s encountered before. We’re sitting outside at one of a number of red metal tables, in front of us a meadow, a playground, cows. Birds are singing and bees humming in the warming rays of the sun. Other guests look over at us, but don’t say anything; if they’ve recognized Renée, they don’t show it. She leans over to me: “See, that’s what I love about Switzerland!”

“I know,” I reply, “I saw Udo Jürgens at Migros* on Stadelhoferplatz once. He was buying shaving cream and toilet paper and was standing in line at the register just like everyone else.”

“Udo Jürgens? Migros?”

Renée frowns, this time a confused frown. She bends over, tugs open the zipper of the brand-new backpack under the table, and pulls out a notebook. The little notebook (like her backpack, pencil, and the newsboy cap on her childlike blond hair) is red, with Swiss crosses printed on it. No one could fault Renée with not taking her role seriously.

A true professional. Everyone agrees. Nothing is too much for her. For Renée Zellweger.

“Migros,” she looks up earnestly. “How do you spell that?”

I dictate it to her. She looks up earnestly again.

“And Udo Jürgens? A famous Swiss?”

“Yes, pretty much.”

She sighs.

“I still have so much to learn, don’t I?”

“You’re doing well,” I say, “very well, in fact!” and signal for a ‘Halbeli’ of wine.

“Halbeli,” repeats Renée. “Haa-ubeli?”

I nod at her pronunciation. Very good.

The committee. It didn’t take long to decide. The woman who was to symbolize Switzerland (on stamps, coins, and official letterheads, at conferences and worlds fairs, maybe even as a statue in wax) was to be modern, but Swiss through and through. Pretty, but not overwhelmingly beautiful, modest, but not poor, though not really rich either, restrained but not weak, someone who was, well, self-sufficient. Someone like that would be the ideal symbol of Switzerland. Someone like Renée Zellweger. Exactly.

“Renée Zellweger,” said someone, “but she lives in the United States.”

“Not only that, she was born in the United States. Does that even count?”

“You must be kidding!” A member of the committee stood up, a no longer very young man in a gray suit, who had been asleep for a very long time, at least twenty years, but something about the idea of a woman symbolizing Switzerland had woken him up. “With a name like Zellweger? Is there a more Swiss name? A name she could have discarded any time she liked. But did she? No, she did not. On the contrary, she’s made this epitome of a Swiss name world famous.”

“True, but look how they pronounce it,” someone whispered.

“Isn’t it her very loyalty to this almost unpronounceable name that proves her Swissness – and wouldn’t you agree, honored committee, that the very fact we can’t find a Swiss-German expression for ‘Swissness’ already speaks for choosing a Swiss-American to embody the concept?” The man was working himself up to a frenzy. His right hand tensed up in his jacket pocket, as if he were about to ball it into a fist, pump it in the air, and shout “Zällwäger forever!” Instead, he said: “And may I remind you, ladies and gentlemen, that Swiss Roots is an English expression, too.”

Other members of the committee suspected – and rightly so – that the gentleman was voicing his views so passionately because he already envisioned himself standing next to dainty Renée, introducing her to Swissness, helping her across mountains and waterfalls – always gallant but unobtrusive, dependable and strong. They had nothing with which to counter his enthusiasm.

The next question on the agenda was how to find this symbol of Switzerland in a big country like the United States, let alone catch her and bring her back. The gray suit would have loved to offer his services, but in the end his fear of failing, of making a fool of himself (a typically Swiss fear), won out.

And that was when I got up. “Ladies and gentlemen of the Committee for the Symbolization of Switzer-

land," I said, "I happen to live in the United States, too. I'll bring you Zellweger. Dead or alive!"

I was referring to myself, of course, not to Renée, because it was high time I made a sacrifice for my country. That's the kind of thing you learn in the United States, hand on heart and Switzerland forever.

Thorns and treadmills. Getting in touch with Renée required the skills of a fairy-tale prince, a role I had no previous experience of. I'd been more of a Sleeping Beauty up to then: give me cable TV and enough snack food and I'll manage quite happily by myself for at least a hundred years. But now I had a task, a task that was important to me, I was going to provide my native country with a symbol. I alone could make that happen. And the committee was forced to agree once all their attempts via the official channels had failed, stymied by the triple hedge of thorns that surrounded Renée. Personal assistants, press advisors, managers, business managers, agents, body guards, personal trainers, and a hairdresser. And that was just the inner circle. It took me weeks to breach it. Weeks of lies and trickery. I had to flatter, fawn, bribe, tell more lies, crawl, climb, and use a credit card as a key, which isn't as easy as it looks on television. Once I even tripped the chauffeur. When I finally met Renée face to face, she was running on a treadmill, tiny, childlike, sweaty. "Just another ten miles," she said. "Hop on," she said, and I had no choice but to climb onto the treadmill next to hers and start walking slowly.

"Renée," I said, "Switzerland needs you."

"Switzerland? Which Switzerland?"

"Your fatherland, Renée!" I said fatherland because, in her case, that was even accurate. With a father from Switzerland and a mother from Norway, Renée should have been the last person to make that oh-so-common error, but she did:

"Oh, sure," she said, "I was in Stockholm last year, midnight sun, super!"

"Not Sweden, Renée, Switzerland! Where your father comes from. Where people have names like Zellweger. That's the Switzerland I mean."

"Your treadmill isn't switched on!" She reached over without slowing down. "Here, honey." She pressed the red button and the belt began moving, and soon I couldn't remember why I was there and who the blurry pink shape next to me was. Next thing I knew, I was on the floor, thrown from the treadmill, a face scrunched up with worry floating above me.

Renée Zellweger is a people pleaser, I'd read that when I was preparing for our interview. That means she likes to say what you want to hear.

That's why she needs all the hundred-year-old thorny hedges around her. As much as I could empathize, this was a time to be unscrupulous. Maybe because of the fall I'd taken.

"You have to come with me," I said. "To Switzerland. Renée, if you don't come with me, I'm lost, I'll be the laughing stock of the country and people will pelt me with potatoes!"

"Potatoes?" Her narrow eyes grow big and round. I'd actually meant to say tomatoes, but in the heat of the moment, the word potatoes had slipped out. "I haven't eaten potatoes for years!"

But I couldn't claim success yet: Renée had never packed a suitcase, bought a plane ticket, or sat in economy class. But she was brave.

"It's a role," she said. "And I'm an actor. Whatever it takes! Would you like me to put on a few pounds for Switzerland? I can do that. No problem."

Red and white all over. And now, here we sit in the Swiss sun, in an outdoor restaurant with a name like Alpine View or maybe Blüemlisalp, Renée all in red and white, all of it bought at the airport, the one with the English name, Zurich Unique. The waitress brings the Halbeli and refills our glasses. Renée sighs. "I can't remember the last time I was as happy as this," she says. "No, not happy: content. Is that a Swiss thing?"

"Absolutely. You're a quick learner."

"I have to remember this: this exact moment. I can work with it." She shuts her eyes and leans back. Look who's coming up the hill. A gray suit is making his way towards us through the flower-strewn meadow. ▢

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Milena Moser was born in Zurich in 1963. Her first book, *Gebrochene Herzen*, was published by Krösus Verlag, a publishing house started by friends specifically for the purpose. Her best-known books are *Die Putzfraueninsel*, *Blondinenträume*, and *Schlampen yoga*. She moved to San Francisco with her husband, the photographer Thomas Kern, and their sons Lino (18) and Cyril (11) in 1998.

*one of Switzerland's largest supermarket chains

Chicago Blues

Lakeside saxophone sounds

Sam Burckhardt

Basel native Sam Burckhardt has lived in Chicago since 1982. A musician and composer, he plays jazz and blues, and sometimes freely improvised music. He tours Europe twice a year. How did he become a musician and what took him to Chicago? Here's his story |

Recorder, percussion, saxophone. I was born in Sursee on July 7, 1957, the youngest of four children. I grew up in Basel, where I went to grade school and high school. Music played an important role in my life from the start. My mother made sure that, at the age of six, each of us took solfège – where my recorder teacher, Beatrice Ganz, taught me the rudiments of music. I joined the Knabenkantorei (boys' choir) the same year; we rehearsed every Saturday afternoon and often sang in a church on Sundays. When I was about seven, my mother suggested I should take up the violin and sent me to the Basel Academy of Music. Soon, I felt miserable about going to my weekly lesson. Time and again, I had to listen to the teacher telling me that I didn't practice enough and wasn't making much progress. At the age of ten I switched to percussion – a big step. I had the opportunity to study with Chester Gill, who was from Barbados. I still remember my first lesson. I showed up with a pair of drumsticks under my arm. He explained the elements of a drum set and taught me a simple rhythm. Forty-five minutes later the doorbell rang and I got up to leave, but he told me to sit down again. His next student was a trombonist. Chester sat down at the piano, told the trombonist what piece to play, and asked me to play the rhythm we'd practiced before. He counted us in – one, two, three, four – and off we went. And after just one lesson, mak-

ing music instead of simply playing notes was a new and phenomenal experience. When I was about sixteen, I switched to the saxophone. I did it because the saxophone was a melody instrument comparable to the human voice; it was easier to move around than a drum kit; and it gave me a chance to join my brother's band, which already had a drummer. Playing, making music together – in a group – that was what appealed to me about music.

Sunnyland Slim. His real name was Albert Luan-drew and he was born in Vance, Mississippi, on September 5, 1907. He was fifty years my senior. His grandfather, who had been born a slave in Kentucky in the early 1860s, had moved to Mississippi, where he bought a plot of land. He cut down trees and made them into railroad ties, which he sold to the burgeoning railroad lines. A photo of Sunnyland at the age of about twelve shows him sitting on the steps of his grandfather's porch with his grandparents, father, step-mother, and two cousins. He's wearing a white shirt, tie, jacket, trousers, knee socks, laced boots, and has a cap resting on one knee. There's a lace curtain at the glass window of the front door. Not the picture one imagines of a black family in Mississippi shortly after World War I. Sunnyland's grandfather became a huge force in his life: he idolized him. But that didn't stop him from running away from home when he was a boy. His



Sam Burckhardt
Photo: Eileen Ryan

mother died when he was eight. His stepmother didn't like him and bullied him, constantly giving him new chores to do. He got his first job as a musician when he was about fifteen, playing in a movie house during the breaks when the reels were being changed. He got the nickname Sunnyland from a song he wrote about the "Mean Old Sunnyland Train," a railroad line on which a black family and a white family had been run over within a single week. The "Slim" seemed a perfectly natural addition for an almost seven-foot-tall man with long arms, big hands, and long fingers. He came to Chicago at the end of the 1940s and gradually became the patriarch of Chicago blues musicians.

One night in a club. I met Sunnyland in Grenzach near Basel on April 22, 1975. My brother had told me he was playing there. That night I saw Sunnyland sitting at the bar in the club. By eight o'clock he still hadn't sat down at the piano, so I went over and started talking to him. He told me that he was disappointed at how few people had come to listen and that he was slowly getting homesick for Chicago, where he normally appeared with a band. I told him that, two years earlier, I'd had a chance to accompany Eddie Boyd on the drums. He responded by telling me a long story about Eddie Boyd and how they traveled North together on Highway 61. "*Eddie Boyd, that's my partner,*" he called out and, looking around the room, spied a drum kit. "*Come on boy, let's get busy,*" he said and gestured to me to set it up. We played that night and the next, and suddenly I was in the world I'd been dreaming of for so long: the world of music. It had its laws, and it seemed to be very important to be yourself, question the rules, find new angles, and open your ears so you could react to the unexpected. However, it was also a world where you weren't alone, where you created something together with others, and the result was often more than the sum of the parts.

What about bread? The seed sown in my heart on those two nights only blossomed seven years later, when I arrived in Chicago on July 20, 1982, saxophone in hand, backpack containing the bare essentials on my back. In the intervening seven years I'd earned my high-school diploma, begun studying ethnology, gone to Burundi for nearly a year as part of my university course, spent two months in Chicago with Sunnyland in 1981, and played with his band. Now I was ready to join the band. Apart from the late Fred Grady on drums, his band included Steve Freund on guitar and Bob Stroger on bass (our friendship survives to the present day, and we still get the occasional

chance to play together). We performed at the club called B.L.U.E.S. every Sunday. As the youngest member of the band, I still had to discover my own voice and gain the necessary self-confidence to hold my own next to them, above all to old master Sunnyland. I hadn't spoken to him about getting paid, not only because I was living at his place free of charge, but also because I assumed that, being the 'master,' he would at some point broach the subject himself. When a long period had passed and I still hadn't seen any money, I mentioned it to my partner, Richard Wilson. He suggested that I should ask Sunnyland about it. He dismissed my objection that because Sunnyland was older, it was up to him to address me on the subject and that it would be disrespectful for me to ask him. So I summoned up all my courage and went to Sunnyland. I gave him an awkward, long-winded explanation of why I'd have to find another band if I didn't get paid, because I had to earn money, too. Sunnyland didn't say much, picked up the telephone receiver, and dialed the club-owner's number. After the performance that Sunday, Sunnyland gave me his famous handshake and thanked me. From then on I always had \$60 in my hand, like the rest of the band.

On the road. It wasn't long before Sunnyland let me drive his car. He liked to drive, and to drive a lot, anywhere you could get by car. After a performance, he usually handed me the car keys. He had an old Chevrolet station wagon at the time, a big car. And every single time he'd give me minute directions, telling me what lane to get into, when to turn on my signal, and what route to take. At first, I appreciated the precise instructions, but after a while I could have driven the route blindfolded. One night, when his instructions were really getting on my nerves, I responded a bit gruffly that there was only one steering wheel in the car and I was behind it, and if he wanted to drive himself, I could stop the car and trade places with him. But otherwise, I knew the way home perfectly well. That was the end of our conversation, and when we arrived home and I called out a somewhat bashful "*Good night,*" he answered with an incomprehensible mumble. I slept badly that night. I kept reproaching myself for behaving the wrong way. When morning finally broke, I overheard Sunnyland on the phone with his cousin, who lived right above us, declaring proudly: "*That Sam, I'm tellin' you, he can really drive.*"

Both stories illustrate the expectations I had, based on the idea I'd brought along from Switzerland that the older person – the master – looks after the younger person – the apprentice – and





lets him know when he's reached the next higher level. What I learned in the process was that I had to defend my own interests and that I was the only one who could do that. It's not a matter of one system being better than another, more of recognizing differences and acting accordingly. It seems to me that in Switzerland (and perhaps in the German-speaking world altogether), people often ask: "May I do this? Is this allowed?", whereas here in America people simply act, confident that whatever isn't expressly forbidden is allowed – a subtle but significant difference.

Finding the right language. Like many Europeans, I came to America under the misapprehension that English was an easy language. I'd learned what the Americans would call 'British English' at school, and had expanded my vocabulary with phrases from the blues world. So my English was a pretty wild mix of Oxford and Mississippi. Luckily my partner Richard corrected me from the start, ensuring proper growth in my linguistic 'garden.' Working as a translator and interpreter also showed me time and again how tricky the language could be. As a hybrid of Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) and Romance (Norman) elements, English has an enormous vocabulary with a great many idioms and specific expressions. If a German and a French word mean approximately the same, the related English word often has a more restricted meaning. For instance, the English word 'veal' (French: *le veau*) refers only to the meat of the slaughtered 'calf' (German: *das Kalb*).

But knowing the language isn't enough. Getting a handle on the American soul requires cultural background. Having grown up and gone to school in Switzerland, I'd missed out on an important part of American adolescence, grade school and high school, and all the other American values transmitted during that period. The world of sports, especially baseball and football, also play a major part in the 'American imagination.' Not to mention history and politics. And then, as perhaps the most important thing, America's great gift to the world: 'popular culture.' We think we understand this aspect of American culture from the movies, television, and music. But it easily eludes us if we lack the necessary knowledge of the country and the language. We understand it superficially, but when it comes to the expectations the single words, phrases, or images evoke in us, we notice that our own expectations are pervasively shaped by different experiences. ─

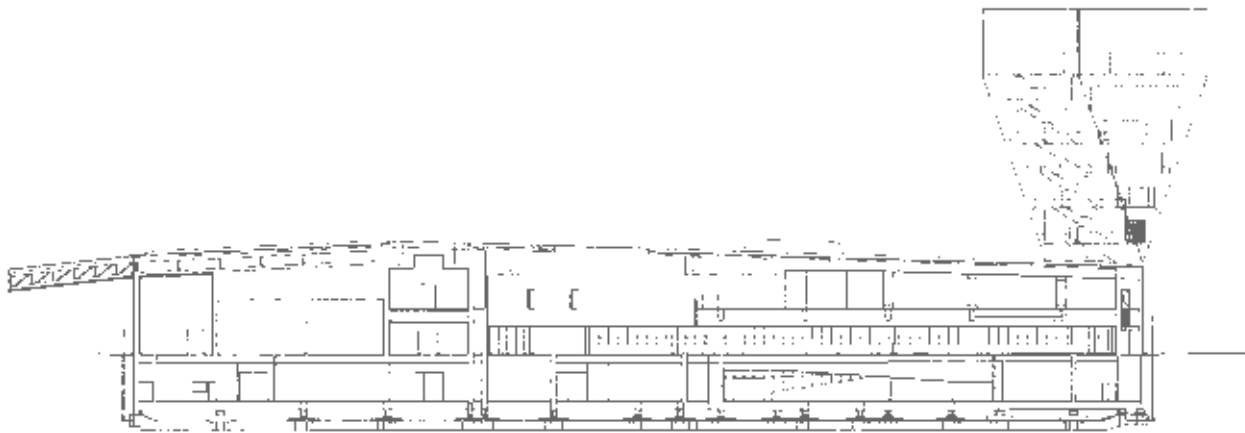
Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Basel 'emigré' Sam Burckhardt has lived in Chicago with his partner, attorney Richard Wilson, since 1982. He has made numerous LPs and CDs, and is currently working on his latest production.

If You Go to San Francisco Swiss architects in the U.S.

Hubertus Adam

Swiss architects and engineers have been gaining prominence for their work in the United States since the nineteenth century – most recently Herzog & de Meuron with the new de Young Museum in San Francisco. Architecture critic Hubertus Adam presents a selection of Swiss buildings in the United States I



Sketch for the new de Young Museum in San Francisco
© Herzog & de Meuron

George Washington Bridge. Schaffhausen-born engineer Othmar Ammann (1879-1965) can be regarded as the grand old man of Swiss architecture in America. After completing his engineering studies at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, he went to the New World intending to gain some work experience and then return home. But he stayed on in New York, opening his own office in 1923, and in 1925 becoming chief engineer of the Port Authority, which was responsible for infrastructural connections across the Hudson and the East Rivers. The George Washington Bridge, which links upper Manhattan (at 179th Street) and New Jersey, is considered Ammann's masterpiece: with its span of 1067 meters, when it was inaugurated in 1931, it was twice as long as the longest suspension bridge in the world. Only a few months before his death, the engineer made a new record with the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge, which was 1298 meters long. Ammann built a

dozen bridges in the Greater New York area. His elegant designs continue to shape the city to the present day.

Philadelphia Saving Fund Society. The American architectural modernism of the 1920s and 1930s was also largely defined by European immigrants, with Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra, and the Swiss William Lescaze (1896-1969) at the forefront. Born in Onex near Geneva and trained at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, young Lescaze emigrated to the United States in 1920. After fulfilling a number of small building commissions with the architects' practice he had opened in New York in 1923, he and his partner George Howe made their breakthrough with the Philadelphia Saving Fund building, which has recently been restored and reopened as a hotel. With its elegantly curved base and a T-shaped double tower divided into service zones and of-

office areas, it anticipated the high-rise concepts of the fifties and sixties. When Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock curated their legendary International Style exhibition at the MoMA in New York in 1932, the PSFS Building was one of the few American buildings represented there. But Lescaze also achieved success with other designs, setting standards particularly in the field of school architecture.

Columbia University, New York. Nowadays foreign architects have a hard time gaining a foothold in the United States. With big architectural firms governing the building sector, ambitious architects are left to search out the niches. These include, on the one hand, university schools of architecture, and on the other, cultural building assignments for commission-givers who attach high value to challenging, spectacular architecture. Bernard Tschumi was decisive in determining the trajectory of Columbia University's Department of Architecture during his tenure as dean (1988–2003) of the New York institution. Under his guidance, Columbia advanced into the ranks of the world's most respected – and unconventional – training facilities for architects. Born in Lausanne in 1944 and trained at the FIT in Zurich, Tschumi, himself one of the most distinguished theorists and architects of our time, turned the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation into a center of international architectural discourse. During his long years of service there, the school adopted a counter-stance to practice-oriented, classic-academic training, robustly opting for the use of new media as design tools. Champions of digital design like Hani Rashid, Sulan Kolatan, and William MacDonald have been professors at Columbia for years, as have representatives of the older generation – including Steven Holl and Peter Eisenman.

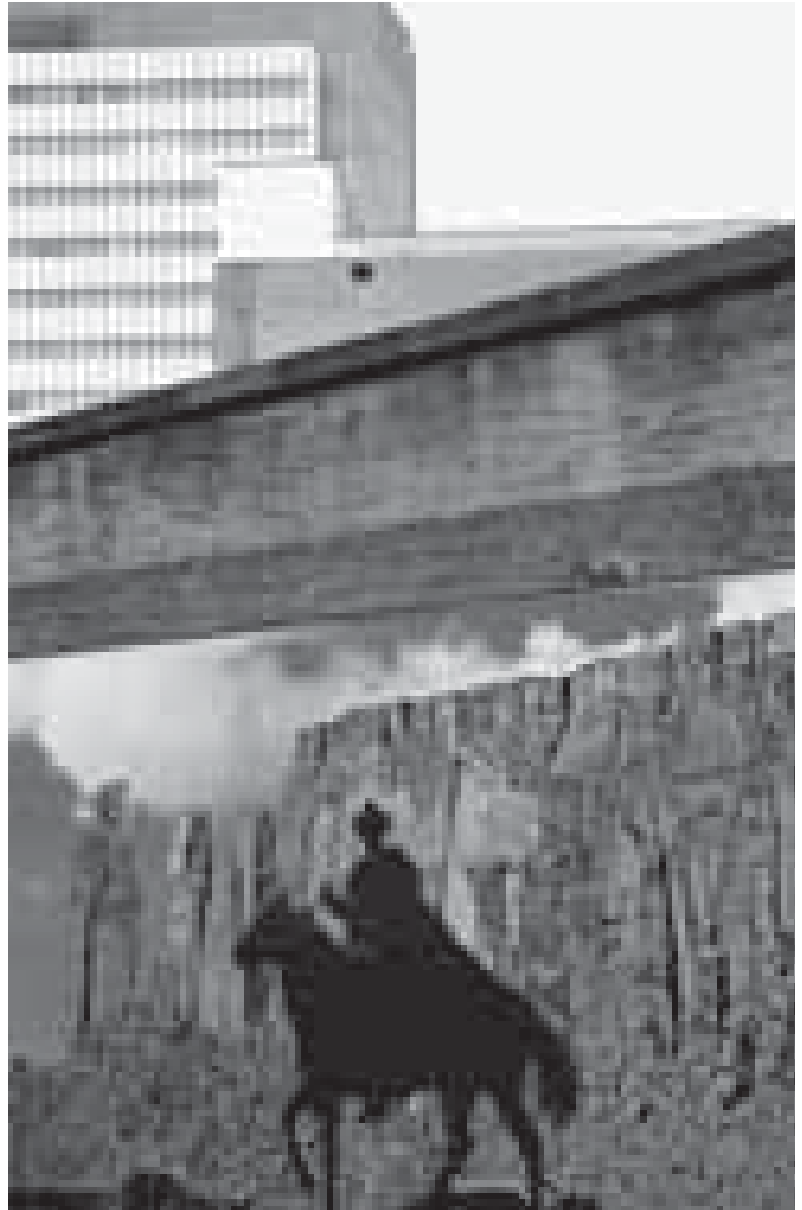
Tschumi, who maintains offices in Paris and New York, started out as a theoretician before creating what was to become the seminal example of architectural deconstruction: the design concept and “follies” of the Parc de la Villette in Paris. He has meanwhile also done a building on the Columbia University campus; further buildings in the United States are in planning.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. There is no doubt that Tschumi now ranks among the successful star architects invited to participate in international competitions – a status few Switzerland-based architects can lay claim to. Among the chosen few are Mario Botta, who built the SF MoMA (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) in downtown San Francisco, and Santiago Calatrava,

who maintains a branch office in Zurich and was responsible for the new pavilion of the Milwaukee Art Museum, opened in 2002. Gigon/Guyer lost the competition for the Nelson Atkins Art Museum in Kansas City to Steven Holl; Peter Zumthor was asked to design a hotel for former club owner and now hotel entrepreneur Ian Schrager – known above all for teaming up with Philippe Starck – but refused, feeling he would not be given the necessary freedom. Plans for Basel's Herzog & de Meuron to collaborate with Rem Koolhaas on a hotel tower with multiplex cinema for Schrager on Astor Place in Manhattan collapsed in the economic fallout of September 11, 2001.

Walker Art Center Minneapolis. The Basel architects have had greater success in the United States with their museum projects. In 1999 they were asked by Kathy Halbreich, director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, to develop concepts for the expansion of the famed institution for contemporary art. The Walker not only has one of the world's most important collections of contemporary art; it is also known for transcending disciplinary boundaries and giving scope to performance art and new media. Herzog & de Meuron's job was to expand the original building by Edward Larrabee Barnes, dating from 1971, by a number of additional galleries, a theater seating not quite 400, and other functional zones such as a restaurant, foyer, and shop. They built a passage glassed-in on the cityward side to link Barnes's brick structure with a volume of similar proportions clad in crumpled aluminum mesh panels. The distorted cube, an imposing landmark in juxtaposition with the adjacent eight-lane thoroughfare, contains the restaurant and theater, with the new galleries for changing exhibitions housed in the base connecting with the old building.

De Young Museum San Francisco. The addition to the Walker Art Center was completed in spring 2005, and the following fall saw the opening of another Herzog & de Meuron project: the de Young Museum, a privately financed \$202-million project in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. The architects laid out the galleries in three parallel bands, which are connected but slightly pulled apart accordion-like. Despite the orthogonal geometry of the exterior, interstices are created – wedges, slits, dents, or courtyards, which respond as negatives to the positive shapes of the enclosed spaces. In certain places, this results in a total dissolution of a pre-set route through the galleries. Glazed areas literally integrate the park into the volume. The architects also chose an or-



ganic material for the exterior skin: copper. The whole building, which is a steel skeleton construction, is clad in copper panels patterned with perforations and dimples. Circular perforations in four different sizes and dimples both concave and convex combine in complex variations. The facade assumes a number of functions: it filters out sunlight, affords a view of the outdoors, but is also decorative, giving life to the exterior skin of the building. Transparent in one place, it is slightly opaque in another. And thanks to it, the museum, as large as it is, has the look of a garden pavilion, a greenhouse for art. The dominant vertical feature and visual complement to the roof projecting massively past the western wall is a twisted thirty-meter tower in the northeast corner of the building, which ensures that the park and the city can engage formally and visually. Indoors, Herzog & de Meuron took two different presentational approaches. Historical American art is shown in comparatively traditional rooms of fairly modest proportions. The artificially lit ethnographic collections, on the other hand, are located in more fluid spaces and are organized in illuminated ceiling-high display cases, their eucalyptus-wood surrounds creating the impression of huge frames. The architectural concept gives rise to various transitions between the spatial zones while avoiding any sense of hierarchy. The guiding principle is equality and the coexistence that sometimes becomes fellowship: San Francisco considers itself more successful than other American cities in achieving harmony between different cultures. Herzog & de Meuron have embodied this in a complex, multifaceted, intelligent museum that is at the same time spectacular and sensitive.

The Basel architects' success in the United States continues: in autumn 2005 they were commissioned to design a new, expanded building for the Parrish Art Museum on Long Island. ─

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

Hubertus Adam, born in Hanover in 1965, studied art history, archeology, and philosophy. A former editor with *Bauwelt* in Berlin, he has been an editor with the architectural journal *archithese* in Zurich since 1998. He also writes architectural criticism for professional journals and newspapers in and outside Switzerland, above all for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. He has published numerous essays and books on twentieth-century architectural history and contemporary architecture.

William Tell in the American Heartlands

A journey into Swiss tradition

Peter Haffner

Some 400,000 Swiss have emigrated to America over the centuries, founding countless towns with Swiss names.

For this issue of *Passages*, California-based journalist Peter Haffner paid a visit to one of these towns and discovered that in New Glarus, Wisconsin, the descendants of Swiss immigrants continue to observe their ancestors' time-honored customs |

In search of affordable land. New Glarus, two and a half hours northwest of Chicago by car, is a mountain village that couldn't be more Swiss. Sun-bronzed chalets decorated with coats of arms, proverbs, and flowerboxes sit perched on the gently undulating hills, savoring the aroma of fondue wafting from cozy inns.

Only a few anomalous details reveal that this isn't the Swiss Alps but the American Midwest: Green County in southern Wisconsin. The streets are laid out in a rectangular grid, as they are everywhere in the United States, the church bells of the Protestant church are silent except on Satur-

day evening, and the overabundance of folklore tells us that New Glarus on Little Sugar River is a home away from home: many of its 2111 inhabitants are descendants of Swiss immigrants who made their transatlantic voyage in 1845.

The original settlers left Switzerland because they saw no future for themselves in their home canton of Glarus. After 1840 the famed local textile-printing and cotton-weaving industry had quickly collapsed, and the new factories at the front of the valley were difficult for people from the back of the valley to reach. Poor harvests only worsened the crisis.



Over the years, some 400,000 Swiss set off for the New World, most of them in the nineteenth century. Swiss Anabaptists went in search of affordable land, Mormons in search of a New Zion in Utah. Farmers and merchants anticipated opportunities to expand, craftsmen hoped to escape from factory work, and many simply longed to go out into the big, wide world. They tended to have little trouble settling into their adoptive home: although Switzerland was a direct democracy and the United States a representative republic, the two systems were quite similar. And being Western European, the Swiss did not suffer from racial or ethnic discrimination, as other immigrants did.

New Helvetia. Theobald von Erlach (1541-1565) is thought to have been the first Swiss to set foot on American soil. He was in the service of the French, whereas later emigrants generally followed the British colonial powers. In 1710 Bernese aristocrat Christoph von Graffenried founded the settlement of New Berne in North Carolina, and soon numerous places with Swiss names were shooting up all over – from Tell City, Indiana, to Grütli, Tennessee. Vevay, Indiana, founded in 1804, can be traced back to Jean Jacques Dufour, who introduced winegrowing in America; immigrants from the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland began planting vineyards in California at the turn of the century. Swiss families irrigated the deserts of the Imperial Valley in southern California, laying the foundations for the intensive farming that supplies half the nation's fruit and vegetables today. Even the capital of California has Swiss roots: Johann August Sutter, who had fled Switzerland because of bankruptcy, purchased land there and, in 1839, established the colony of New Helvetia. When gold was discovered ten years later and his properties were overrun by greedy prospectors, his son founded the settlement of Sacramento. Swiss are more aware of this than Americans, of course. As they are of the fact that a French-Swiss bicycle racer and mechanic named Louis Chevrolet emigrated to America in 1900, at the age of twenty-two, and eleven years later started an automobile company bearing his name – a Swiss trademark made in the USA.

Swiss Center of North America. Unlike other immigrant groups, the Swiss have no center documenting their history. This is about to change: in 1999 New Glarus was chosen as the site of the Swiss Center of North America. If enough money can be raised, there will be a new building, a long, horizontal block whose functional architecture radiates Swiss sobriety. The administrator, Kaye

Gmur, doesn't really dare to hope it will happen – she may have to make do with the conversion of the old hospital in which she currently has her office. Three million dollars have been collected thus far, partly in public funds from the United States and Switzerland, partly in donations from companies in both countries. The planned center is not meant to be a museum, but a place for cultural exchange, historical research, and business networking, emphasizes Kaye. It is also to host the Swiss Roots website, via which Swiss-Americans can research their family trees and get in contact with people.

Off to the Wild West. The colony of New Glarus was a special case inasmuch as emigration was organized by leading political figures. Worried about the locals' dire economic straits, they formed an Emigration Committee in whose name two emissaries, appellate judge Niklaus Dürst and blacksmith Fridolin Streiff, were sent to America to buy land in the 'Wild West' for prospective settlers. The two men set off on March 8, 1845. It took them some time to find what they were looking for. There was plenty of fertile land for growing grain and raising livestock, but forests suitable for lumber were rare, and without wood there could be no building. On July 17, they purchased the 480 hectares of land that would become the future New Glarus.

In today's Historical Village, an original log cabin built by the pioneers illustrates the modest conditions in which settlers lived. In mid-August 1845, 135 of them – thirty families in all – arrived at their destination.

Only five families stayed on. A number of them moved away, others sold their land rights, and a few people died. In a letter dated September 2, 1850, Wilhelm Streissguth, the German clergyman who served as the colony's first minister, sent a report to the church authorities in Glarus about the state of his congregation. Streissguth, who had made the journey by train, ship, and stage-coach "*with typical American speed and disregard for the safety of the travelers' lives as well as their baggage,*" had been warned that not all was well in the Swiss colony. Quarrels and family feuds had broken out, freedom had turned into wantonness. Freshly arrived in the wilderness, some people had lost their heads, writes Streissguth, and parents had lost control of their children. Some girls had married at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and even the local physician, a certain Dr. Blumer, was living in sin with a minor. Despite all this, the minister was confident that he would be able to lead his flock back onto the straight and narrow.

Which he did. Once the colony was truly established, it attracted more Swiss. 1910 saw the opening of the Pet Milk Farm, which was soon the region's main employer and recruited hundreds of employees – including from Switzerland. Margaret Duerst, a charming 86-year-old, is the daughter of a Swiss farmer who emigrated to New Glarus in 1915. As soon as he had saved up enough, he bought a farm, where she grew up as the third of six children. Although Swiss-German was spoken at home, in Margaret's own household – she, too, married a Swiss – English became the rule.

Rösti potatoes retain their place. The heritage was kept alive: the rösti potatoes served for dinner, the games that were played. And the fact that, as Margaret puts it, people were “very conservative”: nothing was allowed to go to waste, you had to eat your plate clean. The Swiss wouldn't adapt to the American throw-away mentality; to this day – the fifth generation – thrift continues to be considered a virtue.

The many dilapidated barns with the wind whistling through them tell us that there used to be hundreds of farms in the area. Now there are just eighteen to perpetuate the legacy of the milk and cheese industry founded by the Swiss. The Voegeli Farm, which supplied milk for the first cheesemaker in New Glarus in 1854, has survived the turmoil of time: today it enjoys an international reputation for breeding brown Swiss cows.

But even when farming had begun going downhill, someone with a nose for business could still make his fortune. Born into a hotel-owning family in St. Gallen, Hans Lenzlinger, a chef cum skiing teacher, has become something like the village king of New Glarus. He owns the imposing New Glarus Hotel in the center of town, which was built in 1853, and the Chalet Landhaus Inn, an extensive building at the edge of the village – both of them milestones of rustic architecture offering accommodation to throngs of tourists who come to visit “America's Little Switzerland.”

It was a taste for adventure that brought Lenzlinger to New Glarus in 1969 – to a place far enough away from Switzerland, yet close enough to home for him to benefit from his experience in the tourist industry. Thanks to his jovial professionalism, Lenzlinger has turned his business partners into friends and his friends into business partners; there's no club or committee he isn't somehow connected with. As Honorary Consul of the Swiss Abroad, Lenzlinger cultivates contacts with the authorities and with political figures on both sides of the Atlantic, demonstrating the same easygoing naturalness he shows in dealing with the habitués he regularly cooks for. He can't im-

agine returning to Switzerland; for someone who knows how to seize an opportunity, there's always that little bit more scope in the United States.

William Tell fever. Now that immigration has come to a halt and the Swiss prefer to emigrate to Canada because of problems obtaining an American visa, there's a need for ‘foreign’ blood if Swiss folk traditions like *Ländler* music, yodeling, and flag-throwing are to survive. The annual William Tell Pageant, which involves around a hundred amateur performers, finds more and more Americans taking to the stage as well. Once they've been bitten by the pageant bug, the joy of their exotic experience turns them into enthusiastic “*Swiss by adoption*,” as one of the actors from the genuine line of descent wryly assures me.

Deborah Krauss Smith, conductor of the Monroe Swiss Singers and the local male chorus, the Männerchor New Glarus, is worried about finding young blood: the people who come in to fill the gaps in her choral groups are in their forties – a generation still in search of their roots, a concept that doesn't mean much to the next generation. The repertoire is Swiss, and songs like “Alpufzug,” “Vo Luzärn uf Weggis zue,” and “Min Vatter isch en Appezeller” are sung in their original dialect. But the singers don't perform all the verses, because it would be too much to expect American audiences to listen to that many foreign lyrics. Deborah learned German at school; her grandmother, a nursemaid born in Canton Aargau, who emigrated out of sheer wanderlust in 1921, at the age of eighteen, had wanted to become a true American and shake off everything Swiss as soon as she could. Though she never went so far as to ban the typical Glarus veal sausage or Bernese pretzel from her table.

Elda Schiesser is the contrary case. American-born, she wanted nothing more than to be Swiss, like her daughter Linda, who feels completely at home when she is in Glarus on vacation. Asked what is specifically Swiss about their household, they exclaim in unison: “*Everything!*” If you tell them that their warmth and communicativeness makes them seem genuinely American, they are almost annoyed. Their house in New Glarus is like a little museum: costume dolls, antiques, and documents summon up the beloved home they dream about.

Silhouettes. Elda, whose appearance belies her eighty-eight years, is a celebrated silhouette artist. She discovered the hobby that was to become a vocation when she came across a book on the folk art at the Schweizer Heimatwerk handicraft store in Zurich. She then taught herself the tech-

nique. Her fame has spread as far as the White House: in 2002 she was one of the artists selected to create ornaments for the White House Christmas tree. This has significantly boosted the reputation of the “*cut up girls*,” as Elda and Linda are known, among the Americans in the village. Particularly as Elda doesn’t limit her subjects to Swiss hay wagons: she is even ready to include a proper Harley Davidson.

She was gratified to learn that silhouettes were regaining popularity in Canton Glarus after she had been selling them for a decade. Maybe the Swiss will learn what folk art is from the Americans – like the Native Americans, who have learned about their ancestors’ customs and rituals from white anthropologists.

People who grew up in Switzerland experience the difference between the two cultures with particular intensity. Uri-born Toni first came to the University of Wisconsin as an exchange student from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. In 1981, by which time he was a qualified agronomist, he emigrated to the United States and started farming. His wife, Esther, who was born in Thun, spent a year in the United States on a Farmer Youth Exchange in 1983. The two of them got married, ran a farm, went bankrupt, built up a new farm, and ended up managing Hans Lenzlinger’s Landhaus Chalet Inn. Today Toni is a financial consultant and Esther works at Roberts, a store that sells Swiss products. Despite the setbacks they’ve suffered, both of them take a positive view of their American adventure; they would hardly have had a chance to try out so many different things in Switzerland. Neither of them would ever want to go back, unlike their daughter, who went to Switzerland on vacation and found herself warmly welcomed into a large family of uncles, aunts, and cousins – something she doesn’t have in the United States.

People who emigrate may gain more than they lose – but the gains aren’t guaranteed, whereas the losses are. Emigrants can neither share their Swiss experiences with their American friends, nor their American ones with the Swiss back home. That’s the paradox of broadened horizons that comes of living in two worlds.

Yodeling cheesemaker. That more about a person’s path through life is left to chance in America than in Switzerland is something Ernst Jäggi learned by experience. A master farm laborer from Innertkirchen in Canton Bern, he moved to New Glarus in 1955 to become a farmer. When he arrived in America at the age of twenty-four, he had a hundred dollars in his wallet and knew hardly a word of English. He spent three years

working in a dairy seven days a week without a single day off. Then he went back to Switzerland, found himself a wife, bought land in New Glarus, played the stock market a little, and earned a good advertising fee touring the United States as the ‘yodeling cheesemaker’ before spending fifteen years as the manager of the Chalet Landhaus Inn. Today Ernst is seventy-five, in fine fettle despite the gloomy prognosis of the doctor who, many many years ago, diagnosed a heart defect and pronounced him unfit for military service, saying he didn’t have long to live. Nowadays ‘Ernie’ plays Attinghausen in the Tell Pageant: “*He’s the one who dies!*” he says laughingly.

Today Ernst runs a carwash in New Glarus and gently pokes fun at his brothers in Switzerland, who have been twiddling their thumbs since they retired. No, he’d never have gotten where he was if he’d stayed at home. A house of his own, no debts, time for his hobby (he paints), and four hectares of forest, where he can do what he likes whenever he likes.

And the surprises never cease: his hairdresser daughter Annemarie has just gotten married – to a mountain farmer in Gstaad in Switzerland, where she now lives. ─

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

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Engelberg, Arkansas, U.S.A.



Born in the U.S.A. Peter Buol: Entrepreneur and public servant

MaryLou Carroll

The son of Swiss immigrants from the Grisons, enterprising Peter Buol achieved respect and high office in Las Vegas. American historian MaryLou Carroll has made a thorough study of his career |

Mayor of Las Vegas. By the time he took office on June 1, 1911, Peter Buol had squandered \$100,000 in lottery winnings and promoted mining, insurance sales, real estate, and desert agriculture in the newly organized City of Las Vegas. Winning by a ten-vote margin, Buol was elected the founding Mayor of Las Vegas, Nevada, an office he held for two years before serving in the Nevada State Assembly (1913-1914) and State Senate (1915-1918). Buol's public service arose from his eagerness to boost commercial growth and investment in southeastern Nevada. His seven-year tenure as an officeholder suggests that Buol's real ambition resided outside politics; he was neither an eager campaigner nor an activist lawmaker. Indeed, Buol emerges from the record as an absentee policymaker who readily abandons legislative sessions in favor of first-hand mining inspections and scouting opportunities. Buol vigorously promotes local business development in Las Vegas, courts foreign investors (from Scotland), and personally risks his own small savings to foster rapid economic expansion. In the pursuit of these goals, Buol never tires. Loss of fortune came regularly in his life, and he died without securely accumulating wealth or many assets. Although his legislative impact may escape historical notice, his tenacity, optimism, inexhaustible pursuit of opportunity (which Americans insist is a national personality trait), and unshakeable commitment to new beginnings must be counted when assessing the prosperity currently enjoyed in the City of Las Vegas, where risk-taking and chancing the odds trump almost all other attributes. In addition, he competitively loosened the grip of the Las Vegas Land & Water Company, a subsidiary of the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad, on water and land rights when Las Vegas municipal organization and commercial development were in their founding stages. Peter Buol favors an anti-monopolistic model in early Las

Vegas town-building and reflects U.S. American assumptions, expectations, and limitations regarding expansion and opportunity.

Go west, young man. Peter Buol was born in Chicago, Illinois, to Swiss immigrant parents on October 1, 1873, two years almost to the day after the fatal Chicago fire. Beginning on the evening of October 8, 1871, the fire peeled a three and a half-mile wide path and continued unchallenged until the morning of October 10, 1871. Three hundred people lost their lives, and at least one hundred thousand lost their homes, from the modest to the exclusive. At the time of Peter Buol's birth two years later, Chicago rebuilding was well underway and promised to surpass what had been destroyed.

An 1877 Chicago neighborhood directory listed Swiss-born Frank Buol, residing at 145 Wells Street; declared occupation: "cook." Peter Buol's parents, Frank Buol and Peter's mother, who is unnamed, arrived in the United States in 1869. One of five sons, Peter apprenticed with his master chef father in the culinary trades and earned wages at a young age assisting his father in food service. His formal education in the public schools ended in the eighth grade; thereafter, Buol worked for his father preparing food and for various rail lines preparing and serving meals and overseeing food preparation and service to first-class diners on the Santa Fe Railroad. By one account, Buol operated a food concession in Chicago around 1900, where he served five thousand customers a day! After ten or more years of chef service on cross-country rail lines, Buol traveled to California before settling in the western state of Nevada. He arrives by stagecoach in the desert town, Las Vegas, roughly in 1904 (age thirty-one) and begins to assess exploitable resources, including his own talent for marketing high-risk enterprises to wealth-seeking potential investors and consumers.



Peter Buol
Photo: UNLV Special Collections

Moving in or taking over? Las Vegas, the Spanish name for “meadows,” offered nineteenth-century travelers the refreshing abundance of artesian springs in the midst of a desert landscape and was favored by Spanish who were *en route* to California. In 1855, Mormon missionaries also established a mission and military fort and attempted to practice settled agriculture in the area later known as Las Vegas. The Mormon endeavor was abandoned after two years in 1857, but the military fort has been preserved and is the oldest historic site in Las Vegas. Predating both the Spanish and Mormons in the region were Southern Paiute Indians, who maintain a minority but self-determined status in present-day Las Vegas. An area consisting of around eighteen hundred acres was sold in the late nineteenth century to Montana senator William Clark, who then auctioned land parcels in 1905 for the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad link between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Los Angeles, California. The ‘selling’ of land in nineteenth-century United States history for the purpose of white (Christian) ownership and expansion accompanied the loss/purchase/theft of land by/from American Indian communities, tribes, and cultures. By the late nineteenth century, desert regions such as Las Vegas, previously judged unsuitable for white use, were increasingly inhabited by whites who were following rail, mining, agricultural, timber, and other industries in the expanding U.S. economy, as well as Christian missionizing. The rise of white occupancy, both immigrant and native-born, occurred simultaneously with American Indian depopulation. Hence, the abundance of forts and military shrines.

Springs and orchards. Soon after Peter Buol’s arrival in Las Vegas around 1904, he recognized the importance of underground springs and aquifers to town growth. By late 1905, Buol had formed

the Vegas Artesian Water Syndicate, which was designed to drill for water for agricultural use. One 1913 Nevada observer reports that Buol planted a fifteen-acre peach orchard in Las Vegas immediately upon his arrival. Buol also reportedly planted forty acres of cantaloupe in 1914. Agricultural production, however, failed to promise a profitable return even in the presence of artesian springs, which Buol skillfully located and drilled. Desert soil in the Mohave was too alkaline to produce high-yield edibles. However, Buol continued to try agricultural production and shipped produce by rail. Buol visited Scotland in 1913 to solicit investment in Las Vegas housing development. He contributed land and water rights, and the investors pledged \$100,000. Although the financing collapsed and only \$20,000 was paid, the residential area was constructed and named “Scotch 80’s.” It is today an exclusive Las Vegas suburb. Peter Buol earned \$15 per month as Las Vegas Mayor. Along with his wife, Lorena Patterson, of Booneville, Missouri, and adopted daughter, Dorothy, they fashioned a comfortable home and family life for roughly twenty years in Las Vegas, before moving to California in 1925. Buol suffered a stroke in 1937 and died in 1939 in California. Peter Buol did not enjoy a long life by modern standards. In his sixty-six years, he cultivated a casual indifference to risk, insatiable optimism, marketing genius, opportunistic sense of timing, and political instinct. The city of his birth, Chicago, and the birthplace of his political administration, Las Vegas, depended for their origins on just such qualities and individuals. ─

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Yodeling Swiss-American Cowboy Hillbilly Mennonite Dwarfs

Bart Plantenga

“...the shrill jodel of a cowherd, sent forth across the broadening valley; from the other side anon there answered it, athwart the monstrous silence, a like exultant herd-call: the echo of the towering mountain walls here mingled in; the brooding valley leapt into the merry lists of sound... so speaks to the musing man the moan of beasts, the whistling wind, till over him there comes the dreamlike state in which the ear reveals to him the inmost essence of all his eye had held suspended...” – Richard Wagner* I

“What is common to all yodeling is the purity and honesty of the statement. There are no deceits, no ironies, no sarcasms, no lies being made by the yodel”

– Tiny Bill Cody

The Eidgenössischer Jodler Verband would agree with Wagner. To them yodeling’s an organic, Ur-Swiss, mystical vestige rooted in earlier Romantic-era identity-politics nationalism.

Swiss herders and American cowboys have more in common than you might think. Both embody the distinct cultural myths associated with rugged individuals. Both are herders and herding is not easy. It entails animal management skills that include employing calls, often yodels. Swiss and cowboy yodel styles are similar yet different. “Both styles have a unique ability to release a soul-freeing flow of notes,” observes Eastside Dave Kline, a Pennsylvania Swiss yodeler who fuses inspirational mountain musics into so-called ‘mountain folk.’ “I grew up listening to Swiss and other yodeling and it certainly inspired me in a positive, magical way.”

‘Official’ Eidgenössische yodels morphed outdoorsy *natuurjodels* (organic, playful improvisations) into highly structured chamber music. It foregoes the “eee” sound in favor of the full-bodied *heimweh* largo “O” of woe sound (catapulted by the enunciated consonant trigger) – although Swiss yodels can escalate into the ferociously, frenetically fast. Yodeling is, after all, also fluff, farce, ornament, career opportunity and heard on the flattest plains and in the busiest cities.

A vocal response to the world. Swiss yodeling is a grand topographical dialog between human and environment, inspiring deep connections to the big ‘out there.’ Ironically, big sound in tiny land. Conversely, cowboy yodels evoke intimacy – small in a big land. Their characteristic eerie “eee” sound render them both sinister and gleeful. Jimmie Rodgers’ twangy yodels sound like casual knife thrusts or lonesome train whistles. Tommy Johnson’s blues yodels sound like a howling wind through a bullet hole in the soul.

Tiny Bill Cody, Canadian cabaret cowboy, sees cowboy yodeling as “*more intimate, and vulnerable, in-*

tended for no one; a personal statement of the pure joy or melancholy of the moment.” Mike Johnson, black truck-driving yodeler, who combines country and Swiss styles, notes: “My first influence was Johnny Weissmuller’s Tarzan call. I was later inspired by Swiss yodeling through Elton Britt and others who used it to go beyond the Jimmie Rodgers-style yodel, which is definitely easier on the throat and vocal cords. The cowboy style gives me a laid-back warm feeling while the Swiss style generates a spine-tingling blood rush.” Cody agrees: “The Swiss yodel is much more forceful, more declarative. The singer is passionate about something (love, politics, nature) and confident about its need to be communicated.”

Texan Janet McBride, grand dame cowgal yodeler, observes: “The Swiss yodel seems more entwined with harmony voices all working together to make some of the most beautiful yodel sounds ever.” Czech-Texan Randy Erwin, master of many yodeling styles, notes that “The blues yodel is the main course and the fast, Swiss stuff is the dessert which is rooted in a long tradition and everything seems codified. The cowboy style is a bastard child who can roam at will because nobody really knows where it came from. I hear Africans, Irish, blues, Hawaiian slide guitars, hillbillies, and guys in lederhosen slapping their knees when I yodel.”

Communicational magic. So, everything you’ve ever heard about yodeling is wrong. Culture has slanted our senses toward the view that yodeling is something marginal, annoying – a sign of something seriously wrong with civilization. But yodeling is actually a powerful form of communication. This is satirized in Tim Burton’s *Mars Attacks* – menacing Martians’ helmets shatter and their bulbous heads explode in great bursts of green cerebral goo upon hearing yodeler Slim Whitman’s histrionic yodeling. In Disney’s *Home on the Range*, villain Alameda Slim (technically: Randy Quaid’s voice mixed with yodeling by Randy

Erwin and Kerry Christensen – his CDs *Swiss Cowboy* and *From the Old West to the Alps* embody cross-pollination) learns that his yodeling hypnotizes cattle – and humans. He hopes to use it to hypnotize the masses into electing him president. George and Ira Gershwin’s *Strike Up The Band* (1927), a poignant anti-war satire, uses yodeling as the secret weapon to lure the Swiss Army out of hiding to put an end to a ridiculous war. Yodeling as *disarming* vocalization!

Farfetched? Well, no. Manfred Bukofzer, in his 1936 “Magic & Technique in Alpine Music,” described the magical powers of various Alpine tones when combined with certain mystical words. The *kuh-reihen* was mystical because it bound the herder to his herd and warded off evil spirits and sickness. Meanwhile, seventeenth-century reports describe Swiss mercenaries suffering from *heimweh* (homesickness) who, upon hearing certain Alpine songs, would go AWOL, berserk, or even die. A law was passed that forbade hysteria-arousing yodeling in the presence of Swiss soldiers. Yodeling’s octave leap indeed affects the nervous system differently than standard singing.

But what is a yodel? Greeting? Warning? Joyous outburst? Pious ululation? Cowherd’s come-on to the most udder-endowed among his herd? Or an irritating “*variation upon the tones of a jackass*,” as Walter Scott opined in 1830? Probably all of the above.

A yodel is distinguished from other vocalizations by its *emphasis* on that jolt of air that occurs as the voice passes from bass or chest voice to high head voice or falsetto — and vice versa. No glottal jolt, no yodel. A genuine *juutz* is wordless and not really ‘music’ but an acoustical signal mostly associated with cowherds communicating with one another and their herds. Ed Sanders of the Fugs calls it “*a homemade Morse code for people in the mountains*.”

Yodeling’s geographically ubiquitous, found in every musical genre from jazz to opera, hip-hop to techno, but most still associate yodeling with the Alps.

Yodeling comes to America. Probably my book’s most controversial theme is when/how the yodel entered America. Most conventional wisdom says no earlier than 1815, two hundred years after Europeans first emigrated, so: Native Americans probably *already* yodeled. Their vocals often include “*vocal pulsations, falsetto, nasality*.” There’s evidence that West African slaves brought their yodel via the African “Slave Coast,” including regions

inhabited by yodeling Pygmies. Landscape architect Frederick Olmstead heard strange “*Negro jodling*” in 1850s South Carolina as “*a long, loud, musical shout, rising and falling, and breaking into falsetto*,” common sounds among the informal field-hollerin’ singers. Harold Courlander believed these utilitarian cries “*employing African vocal devices, such as yodels, echo-like falsetto*” voiced a soul music of the fields. Some slave vocalizations stem from enchanting Pygmy yodels, which are intimately related to the forest, source of mystery and sustenance. Jazz vocalist Leon Thomas believed Pygmies sang through his unique voice, which extended its anthropological ‘verbal energy’ whenever his Pygmy-yodel-scat was heard.

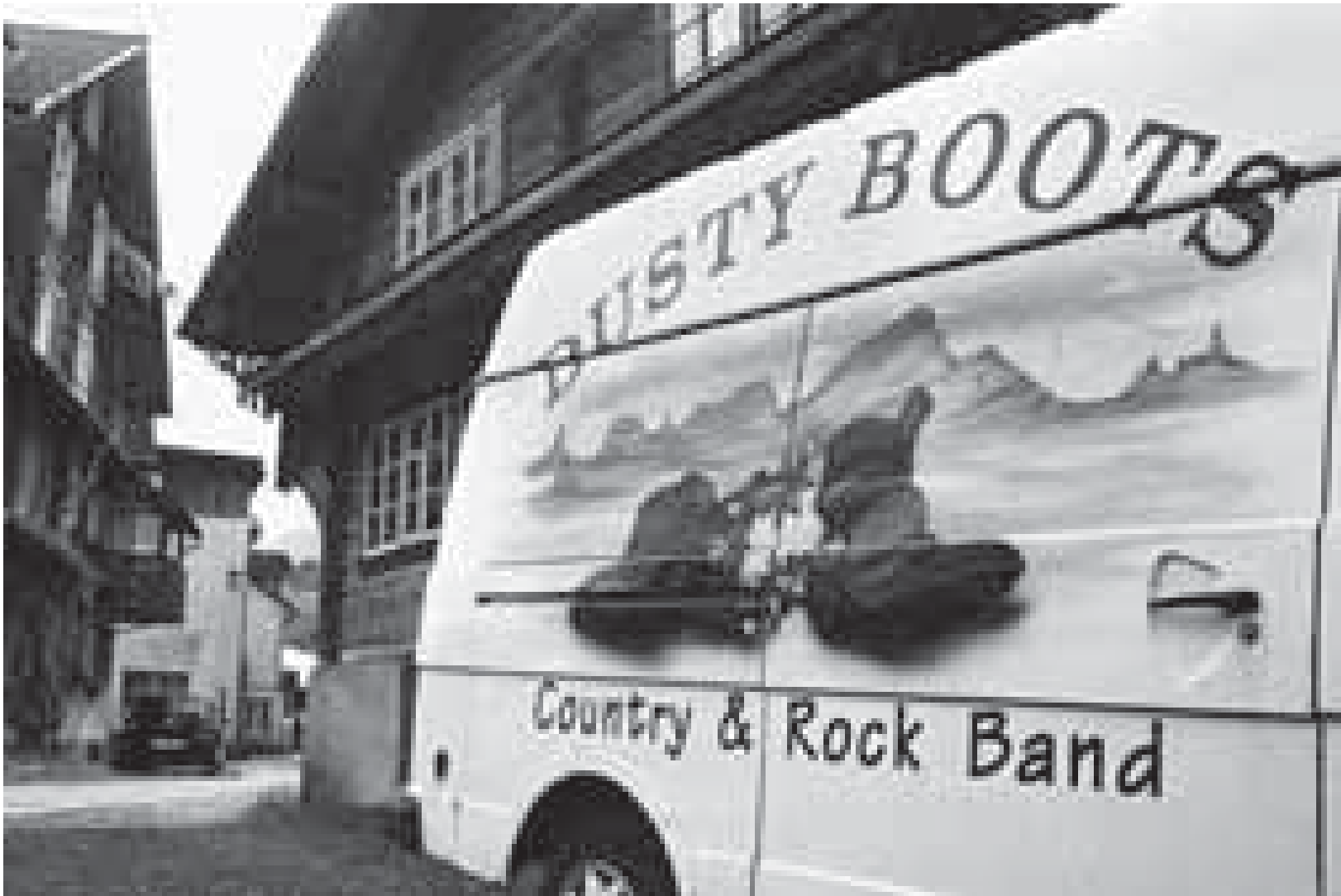
Cowboys *real* – black, white, or Mexican – probably yodeled, although none made a career of it. Colorado cowgal yodeler Liz Masterson believes “*it makes sense that any kind of herdsman would use this high-pitched sound to go across the herd. If the cattle are all lowing in a low sound ‘mwaawwnn’ and suddenly they do a ‘WOOoooOO,’ a high-pitched sound like that’d go across the herd. Even today on ranches I visit, I hear people making these not-so musical sounds. You can definitely hear a yodel in them where they’re goin’ ‘Wee-Yip Gee-Yip Gee-Yip.*”

Wilf “Montana Slim” Carter, Swiss Baptist minister’s son, embodied the freewheeling freight-train-hopping yodeling cowboy spirit (both authentic and pop) with his unique Alpine-meets-Western yodeling.

Early Swiss immigrants. Mennonite archivist Leonard Gross believes that “*the yodel came to North America with the first emigration of Swiss proper*.” As he explains: “*My wife, who’s Swiss (her father, a Mennonite minister living in Tavannes, could yodel well), says yodeling goes way back into Swiss Brethren tradition. It would seem obvious that Swiss Brethren migrating directly from Switzerland to North America would have brought some yodelers with them.*”

German Mennonites and Amish were among the first immigrants in the 1670s. These refugees of war and religious persecution came to Pennsylvania via Rotterdam from the Pfalz (Palatinate) in southwestern Germany. They spoke Swiss dialects, sang old work songs, some of which included yodeling. Yodeling Betty Naftzinger, born a Swiss farmer’s daughter outside Kutztown, PA, remembers learning to yodel while plowing the fields in the 1940s.

The Swiss settled in South Carolina, Maryland, and Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. Others headed west (1820–1900), forming German and Swiss immigrant communities in Texas





and Indiana. The Amish of Bern and Emmental, Switzerland, established Berne and Geneva in rural Indiana, where they've preserved folk traditions, including the Alemannic dialect and yodeling, an acceptable form of non-commercial entertainment that provides social cohesion. Milkmaids also serenaded their cows with yodeling.

Many from Canton Glarus ended up in Wisconsin, establishing the towns of New Glarus and Monroe in the 1840s. By 1900, there were eight thousand Swiss immigrants in Wisconsin. Appenzell yodeler Louis Alder emigrated to Monroe to found the Monroe Yodel Quartet (1921). The Moser Brothers, a Swiss yodeling family, toured North America, eventually settling in Wisconsin and yodeling in the Swiss pavilion at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Rudy Burkhalter grew up in Basel, where he learned accordion and yodeling. He became a renowned Wisconsin composer and in the 1950s wrote yodel songs like "Will You Teach Me How To Yodel" for Disney TV productions. The Edelweiss Stars, a New Glarus yodel group, performed regionally from 1950 to 1996. Betti Vetterli (third-generation Swiss) and Martha Bernet (born in Leissigen, 1927) were a popular yodeling duo who promoted Wisconsin dairy products at concerts. The yodels in Disney's 1937 *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs* came courtesy of the "Swiss Family Fraunfelder." Yodeler-teacher-musician Reynard Fraunfelder brought his family from Wildegg, Switzerland, to California – later Wisconsin. He co-wrote many Disney yodels and passed yodeling on to his children. Son Rheiny yodeled Dopey's part in the "Silly Song."

Echoes of tradition. While doing research at the Mennonite Historical Society and lecturing at

Goshen College in 2005, I discovered 1970s cassettes of informal community gatherings that included yodeling, some local Alan Lomax recordings, and a songbook that included Swiss and pop/country yodeling songs. During my lecture, several local Mennonites performed some impromptu yodels.

Helvetia, an Appalachian village in West Virginia, was settled by the Swiss in 1869. Helvetians maintain their Swiss folk-cultural character by speaking Switzer-Deutsch, dancing, playing accordion, and yodeling. Yodeler-cheesemaker Bruce Betler's family immigrated from Berner Oberland and Aargau in the 1870s. He notes that "*Helvetians grow up learning Swiss folk songs. Yodeling is part of these songs.*"

Yodeling re-entered North America in the 1820s via professional traveling Swiss/Tyrolean families, the world's first pop stars, who serenaded homesick immigrant audiences. Spin-offs of Austria's successful Rainer Family turned yodeling into a mid-nineteenth-century craze. The Hutchinson Family ("New Hampshire Rainers") made yodeling so trendy that even opera divas included 'mountain-style' songs in their repertoires. Vaudeville and records further resuscitated yodeling. The Bärtschi Yodel-Band, Swiss tenor Arnold Inauen, Jacob Jost and the Swiss-American Male Voice Choir made popular yodel records between 1900 and 1927. Swiss-American yodeler Fred Zimmerman recorded "I Miss My Swiss" with renowned bandleader Paul Whiteman in 1925.

Yodeling was made *famous*, however, by Jimmie Rodgers, America's first (country) superstar, who served as a fecund confluence of American musical styles — hillbilly, jazz, blues, Hawaiian, cowboy, and immigrant songs. He made yodeling cool

and a commercial necessity. Some believe his yodeling was inspired by Swiss-style yodelers he heard in vaudeville tent shows.

Myth and music. We often confuse mythical Switzerland with geographically, ethnomusicologically 'correct' Switzerland. Perception manufactures reality. McBride remembers: "One of the first yodel songs I ever learned was 'Chime Bells' (by Irish-Cherokee Swiss-style yodeler Elton Britt). You know how it goes. 'Out on a mountain so happy and free.' The mountains being the Swiss Alps in my mind." The popular yodel song "She Taught Me To Yodel," like many other pop songs ("Yodel Polka," "Swiss Maid"), fabricates Swiss life in an entertaining, consumable manner. "I went across to Switzerland / Where all the Yodelers be / To try to learn to yodel / With my yodel-oh-ee-dee / I climbed a big high mountain / On a clear and sunny day / And met a yodelin' gal / Up in a little Swiss chalet / She taught me to yodel." Meanwhile Jodelkönig Peter Hinnen, Swiss yodeling pop star, reversed the flow by borrowing the cowboy yodeling he grew up listening to for songs like his "Auf meiner Ranch bin ich König" ("El Rancho Grande," 1934). Schematically: Alpine settlers trekked further into the interior and there met other immigrants. The floating (Swiss and African) yodel latched on to popular British-Irish ballads in the Appalachians; and, eventually out West, to Mexican and immigrant songs, morphing into blues, hillbilly, rockabilly...

Obviously, mixing things somewhat Swiss and vaguely cowboy into things dynamically experimental best illustrates contemporary yodeling on the rebound – from mountain echoes to the recording studio's echo effects. ─

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* Wagner, Richard. "On Inspiration," from *Wagner's Prose Works: Volume 5*, quoted in *Music, Mysticism & Magic*, selected and annotated by Joscelyn Godwin. New York: Arkana, 1986, 244.

The Woman with the Peace Pipe

Naomi Pfenninger's American Indian festivals

Dorothee Vögeli

Now there is a way to experience Native American culture 'live' in Switzerland. At the American Indian festivals organized by Naomi Pfenninger. What does the American woman with Native American roots hope to achieve?

Dorothee Vögeli visited her to find out I

Native American. Naomi Pfenninger belongs to the group defined as Native American. For the slender woman with long hair and narrow, dark eyes, the significance of this fact is mainly symbolic: compared with the members of her tribe on the Onondaga Reservation, she has always led a privileged life. The daughter of an American Indian father and an Irish immigrant mother, she grew up in white America. She married a Swiss who had come into her parents' home as an exchange student, and then followed him back to the Limmat Valley in Switzerland, where she raised two daughters, working for big American companies as a secretary next to it. But the older Naomi Pfenninger got, the greater her interest in her Native American roots became. Ten years ago she and her partner began organizing American Indian festivals in Switzerland, in the hope of providing greater understanding of Native American culture. "We want to show that this culture still exists – and to put Winnetou-style mystification into perspective," she says.

'Indians' are a construct, a modern myth. And it was the conquerors and settlers, but equally the early tourists and photographers like Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952), whose nostalgic view of the declining culture of North America's indigenous inhabitants nurtured this construct. People continue to regard featherwork and teepees as the prototypes of Native Indian culture, never considering that American Indians are divided up into many different peoples with very different languages and customs. Naomi Pfenninger would like to offer the Swiss some insight into this diversity. For: "Indigenous Native American culture lives on, on the reservations." There she can observe the inhabitants regaining pride – thanks partly to the autonomy granted to them by the government – in a past submerged and co-opted by the Europeans, and trying to find their own approach to their cultural roots. American Indian dances, music, and, of course, handicrafts are being cultivated again, not least for sound economic reasons. She realizes that certain clichés are perpetuated in the process. But that, too, is part of living Native American culture.

Closeness to nature. Her most important possession is a little jar of soil from home. When she left

her town and family at the age of twenty, her father gave her this symbolic gift to take out into the world with her. An American who speaks perfect Swiss dialect with an American accent, she shares her father's closeness to nature, a trait also characteristic of the Native American spirit. Her father – an accountant by profession – never knew his birth parents. In the wake of the assimilation of Native Americans common at the time, he was adopted in infancy by a white family. The question of his true roots was never an issue, remembers Ms. Pfenninger. She wasn't particularly concerned about her background either: as a young girl, she wanted to fit in and be like everyone else. But even as a child she was already fascinated by the Amerindian folk festivals (pow-wows) held on the Onondaga Reservation near her hometown in New York State, to which her family regularly took her. The beautiful feather ornaments, the brilliantly colored costumes, the rhythm of the drums, and the storytelling – which sometimes extended over several days – are among her most vivid childhood memories.

Today she wants to know more about these traditions. As this knowledge comes, not by way of written sources, but in the form of stories, customs, and ceremonies, it cannot be acquired via the intellect, explains Ms. Pfenninger. That is what makes Native American culture so amenable to esoteric interpretation. But the half-Native American is also fascinated by the possibility of an individual approach. She has no trouble merging the sensual-archaic symbolism of American Indian culture with Christian faith. She has therefore remained an active member of the Christian American church. "Whether I say God or Great Spirit doesn't really matter much. But we should be grateful for what we have."

On the reservation. The Swiss-by-choice gets her information about Native American forms of expression on the spot, from friends on the reservations she regularly visits. "I'm not frightened off by poverty and social adversity – on the contrary: the simple life is just as much a reflection of spirituality. Of course, Native Americans like having a set of six matching cups. But it's far more important for them to have their uncle's pipe or father's feather on the otherwise bare wall, because of its symbolic value." Her



Naomi Pfenninger
Photo: Walter Maissen



visits to reservations have also shown her that the cultivation of traditions can help reduce the high rate of depression and alcoholism among American Indians, as a sense of shared roots reinforces the feeling of belonging. She is convinced that learning traditional dances and handicrafts indirectly pulls many people out of the vicious circle. That is a further reason she hires Native American musicians, dancers, and craftspeople for her festivals in Switzerland.

These presentations of folklore, including storytelling, are not merely a way of shifting an American minority center stage and offering perspectives. The project is also designed to promote cultural exchange. This aim is achieved at the personal level by lodging Native Americans with host families during their tours of Switzerland: these encounters have frequently led to friendships and even partnerships for life. But there is also contact with the festival visitors, who generally display a high level of interest. There are those who are irritated by the glitz and glitter favored by modern-day American Indians. But for Naomi Pfenninger, kitsch is also an expression of "a living culture that didn't get bogged down in the eighteenth century."

Highlighting the positive aspects. The subjugation and persecution of the Native Americans is deliberately excluded from the festivals. When this occasionally draws criticism from spectators, "I tell them that our festivals aren't the place to go into the subject in depth. Apart from which, we have to remember that many peoples of the earth have suffered as much as the Native Americans. Concentrating on the regrettable episodes in a long historical development blocks out the present moment." She knows plenty of compatriots who are incapable of coming to terms with the past. "But we have to move on by perpetuating the much older, positive aspects of our culture." One way is the current programs on the reservations to revive Native American languages. Time and again she is contacted by Swiss seeking personal contact with "genuine Indians." In a rich, highly developed country like Switzerland, this yearning to go 'back to nature' doesn't surprise her. What she can't explain is why interest in archaic cultures is so much greater in Switzerland than in the surrounding countries. In any case, more literature about Native Americans has been produced in Switzerland than anywhere else. The American Indians Ms. Pfenninger brings to Switzerland are also struck by the enormous interest shown in their culture and the warm welcome they receive on the trips she organizes for them to the Titlis or Zermatt. She recalls an episode that has remained unforgettable to her:

during an American Indian festival in the mountains, an alphorn player happened upon the group. He let them play his instrument and tried out their flutes. That is the ideal form of spontaneous cultural exchange.

Home is where the heart is. Naomi Pfenninger, too, found Switzerland slightly alien at first. Coming here as a young woman, she felt the Limmat Valley was like a huge village without land. But as time passed, she noticed "that there's nature here, too, if you look for it." Fall is the only time she gets homesick – for Indian Summer, with its indescribably brilliant colors. Her childhood was shaped by the 'American way of life.' That made it all the harder for her to feel at home in Switzerland. There were no shopping malls, fast-food emporiums, or parking garages here in the sixties. She was nervous shopping at the village store: used to self-service supermarkets, she didn't know how much a kilo of carrots was, or even how to say 'carrot' in Swiss German. She regrets how Americanized Switzerland has become over the last few decades: "The distinctive, individual quality has been lost."

"Home is where the heart is," she says. And because her heart is with her daughters in Switzerland, but she feels an equally close bond to her hometown and to her friends on the reservation, she actually has three homes. So she goes home when she travels to the United States, and comes home when she returns to Switzerland. She could imagine having an extended stay on a reservation, because she would like to take time for the ceremonies she has never seen. But as she is going to be a grandmother soon, Switzerland is likely to be her most important home for some time to come. ┘

Translated from the German by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart

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