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**Reception and Function of American Culture
in Switzerland after World War II**

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**Reception and Function of American Culture
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by

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Dedication

To my wife and children

Reception and Function of American Culture in Switzerland after World War II

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This dissertation examines the reception and function of US culture in Switzerland after World War II. The study surveys the developments in Swiss material culture, literature and lifestyles against the background of the ongoing debate over the post-war Americanization of Europe. As the rest of Europe, Switzerland imported many American products in the decades after the war: consumer goods, films, technology and also elements of language. American occupation accelerated the cultural transfer from the United States to Germany. Today, many Swiss think that they are just as Americanized as the Germans. This dissertation is an attempt to uncover how this perceived Americanization happened in a European country whose contact with the United States was quite different from the one its neighbors experienced. Switzerland was never occupied.

Tracing the reception of American culture, the analysis of Swiss culture moves from the concrete to the more and more intangible. The first chapter recapitulates the

development of Switzerland's visual landscape in recent decades, examining the emergence of such features of material culture as architecture, urban planning, commercial zones, freeways, etc. A reading of images of America, so-called *Amerikabilder*, in post-war Swiss literature follows this examination of material culture. Finally, the third chapter is an attempt to grasp the Swiss *Lebensgefühl* or attitude towards life. Did, and if yes, how did the Swiss mentality, their values and lifestyles in a "clockwork country" change over the years? Can this change be meaningfully described in terms of "Americanization"? Throughout, the dissertation focuses on the individual. Rather than contributing to the "Americanization debate" on an abstract cultural level, this study recognizes the significance of the United States on an intellectual and psychological level of the individual. "Americanization" emerges as shorthand explanation for modernization processes that individuals embrace while commentators and critics often perceive threats to authentic Swiss or, as the case may be, European culture.

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Introduction

This project began more than ten years ago. After studying US-European cultural relations for a number of semesters, I decided to conclude my studies with a dissertation specifically on US-Swiss cultural relations. Publications about cultural relations between the United States and other countries around the globe are innumerable. The influence of America in Europe after World War II of course added to the great interest that transatlantic relationship had always generated among writers. Understandably, scholars and authors focused their attention on countries where that the United States had occupied and where it later maintained military bases, or studies were devoted to the more "important", i.e. bigger or better known countries. Thus, German-American or French-American relations were studied from every possible angle. Political relations, the influence of Hollywood on national film industries, the influence of American-style advertising in Europe, the European enthusiasm for American pop culture or the Coca-Colonization of Austria, all became elements of an intensifying "Americanization" debate.¹

¹ Although most studies may focus on the relations between either Germany, France, or the United Kingdom and the United States, the US-European cultural exchange between World War II and the early 1990s has been studied in all European regions. James Tent specifically examined US "reeducation" efforts in Germany in *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

In the early 1990s, I was somewhat astonished that comparatively little was available on US-Swiss cultural relations. Heinz K. Meier had published a volume each on US-Swiss relations in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.² But cultural relations between the United States and Switzerland after World War II did not seem to have attracted much academic attention. Switzerland did not really take part in the Americanization-debate. On one hand, this debate was perhaps not considered as topical as, for example, in Germany because Switzerland was not occupied and not under direct American influence. On the other hand, US-Swiss cultural relations were subsumed under European-Swiss cultural relations. After all, rock 'n' roll was imported into all of Europe. Swiss youth

1982). A number of books were published on the image of America in German literature: Sigrid Bauschinger et al., *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur. Neue Welt -- Nordamerika -- USA* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975); Frank Krampikowski, ed., *Amerikanisches Deutschlandbild und deutsches Amerikabild in Medien und Erziehung* (Baltmannsweiler: Burgbücherei Schneider, 1990). Books on US-Franco relations seem to focus on French anti-Americanism. A bestseller in all of Western Europe when it first appeared, Jean-Jacques Servan-Scheiber's book *Le Défi Américain* (Paris: Denoël, 1967) is probably the best known to this day. Servan-Scheiber argued that the influence of American investments and technology amounted to an American takeover of Europe. A number of books contained articles on the different European countries as well as various cultural phenomena: Donald Peterson Kent, *The Refugee Intellectual. The Americanization of the Immigrants of 1933 - 1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953); Edward A. McCreary, *The Americanization of Europe: The Impact of Americans and American Business on the Uncommon Market* (New York: Doubleday, 1964); C.W.E. Bigsby, ed., *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Press, 1975); Jeremy Tunstall, *The media are American. Anglo-American media in the world* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Allen Davis, ed., *For Better or Worse: The American Influence in the World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of 'Dallas'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); C. Vann Woodward, *The Old World's New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

² Heinz K. Meier, *The United States and Switzerland in the Nineteenth Century* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963); Heinz K. Meier, *Friendship under Stress. U.S.-Swiss relations 1900-1950* (Bern: Herbert Lang & Co., 1970).

culture in the 1950s and 1960s absorbed American music like the rest of Europe. Switzerland might have been considered too small or too specific a place to study such a phenomenon.

But Switzerland makes for a rewarding examination of Americanization. As the rest of the Europeans, the Swiss imported many American products after World War II: consumer goods and films as well as business organization and retail or marketing practices. They also integrated many elements of American life into their own: language as well as lifestyles. Today, many Swiss think that they are just as Americanized as the Germans although they were never occupied. How did this perceived Americanization develop in a European country whose contact with the United States was quite different from that of its neighbors?

Still, the question may linger what the relevance of a study on US-Swiss cultural relations could be? After all, US-Swiss (cultural) relations are obviously asymmetrical. Although the United States and Switzerland may have been referred to as "sister republics",³ it would not make much sense to consider respective political clout, economic strength and -- most relevant to this project -- cultural influence. This incongruence naturally suggests an examination of the reception of US culture in, or the influence of America on, or the Americanization of Switzerland, depending on the perspective.

³ James H. Hutson, *The Sister Republics: Switzerland and the United States from 1776 to the Present* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1991).

Focusing on the neutral term "reception" in this dissertation, I hope to show that even if cultural relations between Switzerland and the United States are entirely unequal and asymmetrical it is not useful to assume "reception" equals "Americanization" in the sense of some form of colonization. The term "Americanization" obviously suggests that something or somebody that is different, not American is (more or less forcefully) transformed into something American. The underlying assumption in typical examinations of "Americanization processes" is that the subject (America) and the object (for instance, Europe) were (in the outset) unique and vastly different. However, as the somewhat dated and perhaps exaggerated label "sister republics" suggests, there is a level on which the United States and Switzerland are comparable, even if relations are asymmetrical. Indeed, the United States and Switzerland share several traits that allow us to identify them as "sisters republics". The United States and Switzerland share a long-standing democratic tradition. On a national level, Swiss direct democracy can be compared to grass-roots democracy or the democracy of social movements in the United States. Some states of the union, such as California, have very similar direct democratic rights and traditions (initiative, referendum, recall). Also, the federal structure is a cornerstone of the political identity of both countries. The citizens of both countries are known for their dislike of power centralized in the capital. Although American liberty may be more famous worldwide, Switzerland shares a longstanding emphasis on

(individual) liberty. At the same time, religion, Christianity and in particular Protestantism has played a central role in the shaping of both Switzerland and the United States. A comparable sense of exceptionalism in both Switzerland and the United States is at least in part grounded in religion. However, today Swiss exceptionalism centers on the notion of neutrality.⁴

Such similarities in the (political) identity of the United States and Switzerland should not be neglected in the analysis of cultural relations between the two countries. Acknowledging the elements of identity outlined above, Switzerland has always been able to "relate to" the United States. In other words, with such a Swiss self-image it has been easy for the Swiss to accept the United States as a "sister republic" and as an influence. Rather than perceiving Americanization in the sense of something alien being imposed on them, the Swiss could rightly feel that they were engaging in the process of modernization, along with the "sister republic".

In earlier centuries, before the United States became the sole superpower, Americans were also more aware of what a smaller country could offer. The drafters of the American constitution were very familiar with the Swiss confederacy. James Hutson notes that in the early years,

⁴ Ulrich im Hof, in his book *Mythos Schweiz: Identität -- Nation -- Geschichte 1291-1991* (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1991) lists the same traits among a few more "constants" of Swiss identity, such as readiness to defend the country, multilingualism, patriotism, small size, social solidarity, and a strong work ethic.

"Americans felt a spiritual kinship with the Swiss."⁵ In the nineteenth century, the Swiss increasingly looked to America for inspiration on how to shape the Swiss constitution of 1848. Later in the same century, it was political reformers in the United States who invoked the "Swiss example". "By 1912, eighteen state governments had adopted one or the other -- or both -- of [...] the Swiss inventions of the initiative and referendum."⁶

In the twentieth century US political, economic and cultural predominance grew and eventually outdistanced countries much bigger and more influential even than Switzerland. The asymmetry between the United States and Switzerland certainly increased. Cultural transfer between the two countries became even more one-sided. Nevertheless, as will become clear in the following chapters, Switzerland was not smothered in an unrelenting "Americanization" process, but continued to make its own important contributions to the larger modernization process of the twentieth century.

Since I wrote my dissertation proposal, a number of studies on Swiss culture and American influences have been published. Several authors dealt with Americanization in the context of a series of investigations into the Cold War years. A few works were devoted to the rise of the Swiss consumer

⁵ Hutson, 30. In this context, Hutson also mentions that the "first musical, written and performed by Americans, opened in New York on 18 April 1796. It was William Dunlap's *The Archer, or the Mountaineers of Switzerland*, a dramatic depiction of William Tell and his compatriots."

⁶ Hutson, 58.

society in the 50s.⁷ In particular, Sibylle Brändli deals with American influences in her study on the super market.⁸ Even more recently, Christoph Bignens has published two book-length studies on design and material culture.⁹ Bignens concentrates on cultural relations in both books: In "*Swiss Style*" he emphasizes the Swiss contribution to modern graphic design, but naturally also deals with the exchange that occurred between the United States and Switzerland in this area. As the title *American Way of Life* suggests, Bignens' second book focuses on cultural imports from America in the fields of architecture, comics, design and advertising. Both volumes are striking in that they are characterized by catalogues and enumerations. Particularly in *American Way of Life*, Bignens seems to be keen to show that Switzerland was Americanized and adds piece after piece of evidence. For instance, he provides two chapters on Swiss architects, engineers or businessmen who spent some time in the United States and were influenced by it. Another chapter is entitled "Construction follows the American model".¹⁰ Bignens details how and by whom American building methods were introduced in Switzerland, be it the pneumatic application of concrete

⁷ Pfister, Christian, ed., *Das 1950er Syndrom: Der Weg in die Konsumgesellschaft* (Bern: Haupt, 1995); Tanner, Jacob, Béatrice Veyrassat, Jon Mathieu, Hannes Sigrist, and Regina Wecker, eds., *Geschichte der Konsumgesellschaft. Märkte, Kultur und Identität (15. - 20. Jahrhundert)* (Zurich: Chronos, 1998).

⁸ Sibylle Brändli, *Der Supermarkt im Kopf: Konsumkultur und Wohlstand in der Schweiz nach 1945* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

⁹ Christoph Bignens, «Swiss style». Die grosse Zeit der Gebrauchsgrafik in der Schweiz 1914-1964 (Zürich: Chronos, 2000); Bignens, Christoph, *American Way of Life: Architektur Comics Design Werbung* (Sulgen/Zürich: Niggli Verlag, 2003).

¹⁰ *American Way*, 69. In German the chapter's title reads "Bauen nach amerikanischem Vorbild".

(shotcrete) or the prefabrication of construction elements. This makes the book a great resource, but it seems lacking in analysis. While Bignens is certainly correct in pointing out all the different inspirations from and imitations of the American way of life, I argue in this dissertation that despite the manifold influences it is inaccurate to place the emphasis on Americanization. The development of Swiss culture is more complex than mere Americanization.

Similarly, a recent collection of essays entitled *Bilder vom besseren Leben* provides a good overview of cultural developments as they are reflected in Swiss advertising.¹¹ Although several essays deal with the rise of consumer culture or the motorization of Switzerland, none of the authors chooses to focus on Americanization. In contrast to Bignens, they interpret Swiss culture without (over)emphasizing American influences in their analyses.

Of course, outside Switzerland scholarly work on cultural relations between the United States and Europe continued in the 1990s. A steady stream of publications appeared.¹² In 1991, Reinhold Wagnleitner set off his own avalanche of studies on US-European cultural relations. Starting out with the Coca-Colonization of Austria during the Cold War, he continued to

¹¹ Daniel di Falco, Peter Bär and Christian Pfister, eds., *Bilder vom besseren Leben: Wie Werbung Geschichte erzählt* (Bern: Haupt, 2002).

¹² The following enumeration of relevant recent publications is by no means complete. The list of books is intended to give an indication of the emphases placed in studies on US-European cultural relations.

publish on the Disneyfication, McDonaldisation or Sili-Colonization of Europe.¹³ He has been particularly creative in coining alternative terms for Americanization. Recently, he co-edited a volume of essays that originated at the Salzburg Seminar and reflect the different manifestations of Americanization: Globalization, Microsoftification, Encartaification, etc.¹⁴ As the titles of Wagnleitner's essays suggest, his starting point is always Americanization, but he does not over-emphasize Americanization as a deliberate or even sinister policy. Particularly his later essays consider aspects of "self-Americanization" or focus on the ineluctable forces at work in the "iron cage of modernity".¹⁵ Americanization and all the fanciful variations emerge as synonyms for globalization which Wagnleitner criticizes as a worldwide struggle between haves and have-nots.

Amsterdam is another prolific center of American Studies. In 1996, Rob Kroes published a well-received and often cited volume of essays on American culture in Europe, *If you've seen one, you've seen the mall*. The book is part of a series of Dutch contributions to "Americanization studies",

¹³ Reinhold Wagnleitner, "Von der Coca-Colonisation zur Sili-Colonisation," *Kölner Beiträge zur Anglo-Amerikanischen Geschichte*. ed. Michael Wala. Issue 1: (August 2000).

¹⁴ Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds., *"Here, There and Everywhere": The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

¹⁵ Reinhold Wagnleitner, "Die Marilyn-Monroe-Doktrin oder das Streben nach Glück durch Konsum," *IWM Working Paper* No. 5/1997 (Vienna: Institute for Human Sciences, 1997), also available at: <http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/histsem/anglo/kbaag/index.html>.

many of them authored or edited by Kroes.¹⁶ A year after the opening of Euro Disneyland outside Paris, Richard Kuisel published *Seducing the French*, a study on "the dilemma of Americanization" in a country known for particularly virulent anti-Americanism.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, studies continue to be written on American influences on Germany. A recent example is Jessica Gienow-Hecht's *Transmission Impossible*, a study on American journalism in Germany.¹⁸

Understandably, it is mostly European scholars who are interested in or preoccupied with the perceived Americanization of Europe. Nonetheless, Americans have also contributed to the debate. In his book *Not Like Us: How Europeans have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*, Richard Pells focused on the sea change that American culture underwent as it was transmitted to Europe. His study illustrates clearly that Americanization, while it might occur, is never "pure" but always entails a transformation of American culture.¹⁹ Finally, it is noteworthy that US

¹⁶ Rob Kroes, *If you've seen one, you've seen the mall. Europeans and American Mass Culture*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996; Rob Kroes, R. W. Rydell and D.F.J Bosscher, eds., *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993); Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism. A View from the Receiving End," Conference Paper, Conference on *The American Impact on Western Europe: Americanization and Westernization in Transatlantic Perspective*. German Historical Institute, Washington, 25-27 March 1999, available at www.ghi-dc.org/conpotweb/westernpapers/kroes.pdf (30 April 2005).

¹⁷ Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

publishers have published many of the recent works on US-European cultural relations, indicating the level of interest in the issue on both sides of the Atlantic.

The concept of Americanization

"Americanization" is at the core of these studies, no matter what the author's ultimate assessment of what happened in the transfer of culture. "Americanization" represents or is at least part of an interpretive framework. In many cases, particularly, in journalistic accounts, "Americanization" serves as an instrument with which to detect more and more American influences, without considering the more complex processes in cultural exchanges. To be sure, the exchange between the United States and Europe or, in particular, between the United States and a small country such as Switzerland is one-sided. The prevalence of American artifacts in European cultures easily lends itself to view European cultures in terms of "Americanization". But this is a critic's choice. It is a choice that puts "America", a specific perception of America, in the center of studies on Europe".

"Americanization" is an imprecise term, frequently used, but vaguely defined. Historically, the term was used as something of a euphemism for the assimilation that the United States expected from the immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s, most of whom were no longer of Northern European,

but of Eastern European or Mediterranean descent. Although based in a social ideology that demanded conformity to American culture, this type of "Americanization" was envisaged to take place in the individual, who was to learn English, adopt American customs, etc. When this particular American understanding of the term "Americanization" was still widely used, it was adopted to describe a broader cultural development in the 1920s in Europe, namely modernization. At this time, "Americanization" did not yet carry negative connotations in Europe. This usage of the term eventually also cropped up in the United States, for instance in such studies as *The Americanization of West Virginia: Creating a Modern Industrial State 1916-1925*, a book published in 1996, or *The Cajuns: The Americanization of a People*, published in 2003.²⁰ To give another example, Edwin Schur used the term "Americanization" to sum up the commodification and commercialization of sex in America.²¹

Meanwhile in Europe, with the predominance of the United States increasing, "Americanization" (and elsewhere in the world outside the United States) has become a tainted word. It is mostly used in a critical sense, not to say in negative contexts. The negative connotations of "Americanization" can be explained as the result of the omnipresence of American insignia, from

²⁰ John C. Hennen, *The Americanization of West Virginia: Creating a Modern Industrial State 1916-1925* (University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Shane K. Bernard, *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* (University Press of Mississippi, 2003).

²¹ Edwin M. Schur, *The Americanization of Sex* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

Coca-Cola to McDonald's and Starbucks. In such an understanding, "Americanization" has become the twin sibling of anti-Americanism. While "Americanization" may have started out as a largely positive synonym for modernization in the early twentieth century, anti-Americanism has a longer history. In the nineteenth century, European monarchists feared "Americanization" (before the term was widely used). To them America posed a challenge to the political order in Europe. America has always suggested democracy, liberty and liberalism and thus naturally threatened European autocracies. The aristocratic perspective of "Americanization" later morphed into a uniquely European form of anti-Americanism: When, politically speaking, looking down on democratic masses no longer seemed opportune, European cultural elites, both left- and right-wing, sneered at the vulgarity of American popular culture.

By now, in Europe rather few die-hard anti-Americanists seriously polemicize against "Americanization" on a purely cultural level. Even if US popular culture is despised, it does not make much sense to belabor its inferiority in Europe in the age of *Big Brother* (originally, a Dutch contribution). Critical attacks on American popular culture ultimately reveal tired arguments of high vs. low culture. In these cases, last century's cultural elitism is still at work. However, outright anti-Americanism in contemporary Europe usually occurs on the political level, with possible reverberations in cultural debates.

While the Americanization of European culture may no longer be the source for European anti-Americanism, in other, less Western(ized) areas of the globe, Americanization is taken much more seriously as a threat to culture and identity. The concept "Americanization" took on elements of colonization or imperialism, as in some quarters the term has become synonymous with Westernization or globalization. Actual inequalities created by globalization, the North-South divide between rich and poor countries, the transformation of (traditional) societies or even the emancipation of women are all lumped together in criticism of Americanization. For instance, nobody ever seems to have said that the Middle East was being Europeanized. Democratization and modernization, whether perceived positively or negatively, are consistently attributed to Americanization. A good example is Samir Amin's recent book, *The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World*.²² Egyptian by birth and trained in Paris, the Neo-Marxist thinker clearly identifies globalization as American imperialism (which, in turn, derives from European liberalism). Amin tries to demonstrate how the American model of capitalism is imposed on the world. Such an anti-capitalist, anti-American and anti-globalist stance seems to originate partly in straightforward anti-Americanism and partly in an understanding of culture as something static. Championing liberalism and democracy is

²² Samir Amin, *The liberal virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004).

equated with warmongering against supposedly authentic, traditional and closed societies. This is not to say that the globalization of markets or the ongoing worldwide information revolution does not deeply affect local cultures. In many cases globalization puts the underprivileged at an even greater disadvantage. But the mere fact that the United States has been spearheading these latest manifestations of modernization often leads critics and opponents to assume that America is solely responsible for the transformations and upheaval within their cultures (which they idealize as authentic and durable).

Cultures do not evolve independently. After World War II, and even before, American history was closely intertwined with European history. Obviously, transatlantic relations have always been economic and political relations. But other threads of history need to be taken into consideration to appreciate the breadth of meaning of "America" for Europeans. From the beginning, "America" was also part of personal histories as in the stories of migrants and their families. When the US economy became more advanced and even dominant, modernization directly influenced the lives of Europeans as emigration did. The positive myths of America that arose from emigration history were confirmed through modernization and increasing prosperity in Europe. Finally, the spread of American popular culture and the American way of life starting in the 1950s was again felt and appreciated on a very personal level. American popular culture became part of individual European

identities. America offered to individuals what their European home country could not or did not offer: starting from "opportunities" to democracy to rock 'n' roll or the personal computer. Individuals have readily and gratefully accepted these offerings in history. The "Americanization" debates took place in parallel, always in somewhat theoretical terms compared to the personal experiences of Europeans.

In the following chapters, I trace the reception of American culture in Switzerland, focusing on "obvious" cases and analyzing them in view of the ongoing debate about perceived or actual Americanization. I decided to move from the concrete to the more intangible in my study. An overview of the development of Switzerland's visual landscape forms the first chapter (architecture, urban landscape, autobahn, etc.). An examination of such elements of material culture shows most strikingly to what extent the Swiss were active contributors to what is simply referred to as "Americanization". Indeed, considering the Swiss influences, one could also argue that America was in part "Helveticized". At any rate, a number of Swiss architects and engineers played major roles in the shaping of modern architecture. In the second chapter, I examine images of America in post-war Swiss literature (for the most part in Swiss-German literature). In the end, Swiss literature reflects a deep-rooted ambivalence about of America, wavering for instance between disgust for some aspects of American civilization and admiration of

America's natural beauty. Most frequently, American places in Swiss fiction turn out to be mere settings for essentially Swiss stories. Finally, considering changes of aspirations and values as reflected in Swiss advertising and comparing the experiences or the "Americanization" of emigrants in the United States to life in Switzerland, I try to grasp the Swiss *Lebensgefühl* (the closest translation of which is "attitude toward life"). How did the Swiss mentality, the Swiss attitude towards life in a "clockwork country", change over the years during the process of perceived Americanization?

In all chapters, I focus on American influences on an individual level. It is my contention that the perception of "Americanization" as colonization or imperialism is best put into perspective on the level of personal history. If we say that a country has been Americanized, we imply that its population, the individuals have been Americanized. In all three chapters, I will therefore focus on how individuals responded to America and perceived Americanization. Of course, "Americanization as colonization" cannot be explained away with this focus on personal history. On a personal level, "Americanization" could even be seen as indoctrination or worse. Nevertheless, I hope to uncover underlying reasons for the overwhelmingly positive reception of American culture in Switzerland.

I use personal anecdotes to introduce the topics of each chapter. In the chapters on material culture and on the Swiss *Lebensgefühl*, I also make use of information and examples from Liechtenstein. Of course, this raises the

question if and to what extent Liechtenstein examples and sources can be drawn upon for a study on Switzerland? After all, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have very distinct traditions and identities, the former as a republic and the latter as a monarchy. While these distinctions in the political traditions and identities certainly continue to be true, it does not make much sense to distinguish between Swiss and Liechtenstein culture in the context of Americanization. Since the creation of a customs union with Switzerland in 1923, if not before, cultural developments in Liechtenstein and Switzerland have been closely intertwined. Liechtenstein's educational system has been geared toward the Swiss one, not least in order to make Swiss universities and other institutions of higher learning accessible to Liechtensteiners. Thus, the majority of Liechtenstein academics hold degrees from Swiss universities. Liechtensteiners also consume Swiss media on a daily basis: not only the weather forecast on Swiss TV is entirely applicable to Liechtenstein. Because of the customs union the geographical border between Switzerland and Liechtenstein is open. When the shopping center *Pizolpark* was opened in 1970 (only the second in Switzerland), it was probably more easily accessible to Liechtensteiners than to most Swiss in the surrounding region. Similarly, some Swiss might today choose to eat in the McDonald's restaurant in Liechtenstein because it is closer than the closest McDonald's in Switzerland. Culturally and economically speaking, Liechtenstein is very much embedded in the larger region. Finally, on emigration history (which is

referred to in chapter 3): Since, culturally and economically, Liechtenstein developed in parallel with Switzerland, the "push" and "pull-factors" in emigration throughout history, certainly twentieth-century history, have largely been the same in both countries. Swiss and Liechtenstein emigrants departed on the same boats because the Swiss agents came to attract and fill the ships with emigrants from both sides of the river Rhine. In sum, although Liechtenstein and Switzerland are two sovereign states with very different political histories and identities, they are part of the same region culturally speaking. In the cultural realm, the political or geographical borders between the two countries can be ignored.

Chapter 1

Traces of America in the visual landscape of Switzerland

*America, even around 1945,
still largely regarded
the architect as one
whose business was
to decorate the house,
as a confectioner the cake.*

*Siegfried Giedion,
Mechanization Takes Command*

Growing up on an Alpine farm, I was often asked to chop wood for the tiled stove that heated our family's farmhouse. The sharpest ax available on the farm was the "American ax". My maternal grandfather Andreas, who had lived in the United States from 1914 to 1928, had brought the ax from Iowa. In 1927, the river Rhine had broken through the dam and flooded a large part of Liechtenstein's arable land. When Grandfather Andrew heard of this disaster in his home country -- or so at least the family story goes -- he realized that labor would be needed and he returned home. Apart from the ax, he apparently brought "American ways" or manners with him although the family members old enough to remember him were never very specific on what made them think Andrew had become an American. He had lived in the Mississippi valley in Iowa and Wisconsin for most of the fourteen years.

Perhaps he had seen the Mississippi rise over its banks and experienced how people dealt with flooding while he was there. Perhaps he merely bragged about the Mississippi river as compared to the "young Rhine", as the river is known where it runs through the Alps, about halfway between welling up from its Swiss source and becoming a German river.

Unfortunately, by the time I was a teenager tasked to chop wood, the "American ax" was virtually the only memory left of grandfather. This, of course, should explain part of the aura that seemed to surround the ax. Only older, more experienced woodchoppers were allowed to use it. Oddly, it seemed to have been considered more dangerous than other axes. Not only was it sharper -- or so everybody believed -- it also had two cutting edges. Indeed, it looked much like a medieval weapon, but nobody seemed to question the usefulness of two cutting edges for daily work. Doesn't it make sense for an ax to have a cutting edge and a blunt end, serving both as an ax and hammer? Perhaps one of the cutting edges was used for wood and the other for the chickens' necks. This is speculation, though. The only "fact" handed down is the mystery that was created around the ax. It was always stored on top of the tool closet to make sure none of the youngsters could reach it. And it was always Grandfather's "American ax". It was unusual, sharper and without a question a better wood cutting tool. In short, an American ax.

Unfortunately, the "American ax" could not now be located for a closer examination of its design or functionality. So it can simply serve as a reminder of the innumerable "humble things" that are apt to "[shake] our mode of living to its very roots."²³

* * *

Siegfried Giedion's recommendation, indeed his method of "observing seriously... all the things we look at hourly without seeing"²⁴ as informative examples of cultural production guides this chapter on material culture in Switzerland and, specifically, its development in constant interaction with developments in the United States. For the purposes of this dissertation I will not search for "hidden" objects, but focus on the very things we look at daily, but rarely seem to really notice: buildings, roadways, or all that could be subsumed under "visual landscape". All these manifestations are part of the material culture of Switzerland and -- depending on the popular mood at any given time -- are considered proof of Switzerland's thorough Americanization.

In the seminal anthology *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape*, the authors "specify *ordinary landscapes* to indicate [their] primary interest

²³ Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A contribution to anonymous history* (New York: Norton, 1969), 3.

²⁴ Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 4.

in that continuous surface [...] all around them" because they regard landscapes "as expressions of cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions worked upon particular localities over a span of time".²⁵ One of the contributors to the anthology, Peirce F. Lewis put it even more emphatically: "Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form."²⁶ In the following, I try to uncover the "cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions" that shaped the Swiss landscape. My starting point is the uncontested argument that Switzerland's landscape was largely Americanized, as for instance Christoph Bignens argues in the book *American Way of Life*. Reconsidering the evidence, looking more closely at the biographies of influential individuals and the cultural developments over the decades reveals that the Swiss were actually very active and competitive in what is most neutrally and best characterized as the modernization process in the twentieth century. Particularly in architecture and design, the Swiss contributed much to American culture. Although the American influence on Swiss culture was as great as in Switzerland's larger neighboring countries, "Americanization" does not adequately describe the forces that were actually

²⁵ D. W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 6.

²⁶ Peirce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D.W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 6.

at work. The following is intended to retrace the multi-faceted exchange and transatlantic cross-fertilization in the modernization process.

Americanized landmarks and identity

Modern urban and suburban visual landscapes are often described as American(ized). New York, more than any other city, has defined what a truly modern city looks like from a distance. A city, in the United States or worldwide, that wants to develop its profile is likely to do this with the construction of high-rise buildings. Sometimes a widely recognized, distinct skyline emerges. Every city can have a silhouette, but relatively few can boast a skyline in the sense of a distinct grouping of (downtown) high-rises.

Speaking of a city's skyline implies more than a mere comment on the city's beauty or ugliness. "Skyline", in addition to denominating a distinct assemblage of skyscrapers, connotes modernity, vibrancy, power, and also youthfulness, all of which translates into Americanness. Frankfurt on the Main has the best-known skyline in German-speaking lands. Indeed, on pictures of major cities such as Berlin, Vienna or Zurich, to name just three, cities are recognized by individual landmarks, be it the *Siegessäule*, the *Stefansdom* or the *Fraumünster*. None of these cities has a signature skyline. By contrast, looking at pictures of German cities, viewers are likely to recognize the skyline of Frankfurt on the Main, Germany's banking center. Not surprisingly, Frankfurt is also known as "Mainhattan". With the concept

German-speaking peoples have also adopted the term: "skyline" has become a German word.

The visual identity of most cities around the world seems to depend on single landmark buildings, be it the Opera House of Sydney, the Eiffel Tower of Paris, or the Twin Towers of Kuala Lumpur. It is mostly cities in the United States that project images of their downtown skylines as portrait of themselves, for instance Chicago, Dallas, Houston or Seattle. It comes as no surprise that people will associate cities outside the United States that have a characteristic skyline or even just a few distinctive skyscrapers with "America" and "Americanness". Such associations can be positive or negative.

In 1989 and 1990 the prominent German journalist Rolf Winter published two books, *Ami Go Home* and *Die amerikanische Zumutung*, in which he takes a critical look at US-German relations and finally argues for a separation from the "violent country".²⁷ In Winter's view, America can no longer serve as a role model for Germany (or any other democracy for that matter). Germany, he writes, has been Americanized enough; it needs to assert its own identity and adhere to its own values. Among the innumerable examples of Americanization, Winter mentions the architecture in Frankfurt on the Main. The city's downtown resembles the skyline of American

²⁷ Rolf Winter, *Ami go home: Plädoyer für den Abschied von einem gewalttätigen Land* (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhring, 1989); and Rolf Winter, *Die amerikanische Zumutung: Plädoyer gegen das Land des realexistierenden Kapitalismus* (München: Heyne, 1990).

counterparts. Germans have copied US corporate architecture, Winter writes, and thus reveal a similar kind of perverted machismo with their public efforts to prove to be endowed with "the longest." At this point Winter abandons careful reasoning. Ignoring the fact that US corporate architecture was very much a creation of Bauhaus emigrés, he ventures to ask: "By the way, is it really just a coincidence that in the externally most Americanized German city corruption is the most widespread?"²⁸ By contrast, neither of Switzerland's banking centers, Geneva or Zurich, shows off American-style erections, and yet Swiss bankers gained an unflattering reputation as "gnomes of Zurich"²⁹. Financial shenanigans may merely be alleged or actually occurring, but they have little to do with the architecture of a place.

Switzerland never really adopted American-style skyscrapers. Zurich, in particular, is sometimes remarked upon as surprisingly modern and cosmopolitan despite the lack of tall buildings. It strikes visitors as odd that Zurich does not possess one landmark high-rise. As a consequence, Americanization is perceived in other features of Switzerland's visual landscape: suburbanization, sprawl, agglomerations, commercial parks at an intersection of autobahns. Such manifestations are equally not considered part of a European urban identity. In fact, European urban planning might

²⁸ *Zumutung*, 33.

²⁹ The phrase was coined in 1964 by the then British Minister of Economics, George Brown. Great Britain felt that bankers in Zurich were responsible for the devaluation of the pound sterling. Texan author T.R. Fehrenbach (of Swiss decent himself) popularized the label with his book of the same title in 1966. T R. Fehrenbach, *The Gnomes of Zurich: The inside story of the Swiss Banks* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966), 16.

have tried to avoid such American phenomena: But as the example of sprawl demonstrates, such features of modern settlements can hardly be referred to as an exclusively American import. *Streusiedlungen* (settlements with scattered buildings) were common among some medieval communities in the Alpine region and might well have contributed to the acceptance of sprawling agglomerations that now form a continuum almost all the way across Switzerland from Geneva to St. Gallen. This corridor may be comparable to the densely settled East Coast from Boston to Washington, but it was hardly tailored after it.

Although every post-war generation seems to go through a phase or every decade seems to have a part in which Americanization becomes a particular issue of public debate,³⁰ the Americanization of Switzerland is normally "localized" prior to World War II in the 1920s. In order to study present day material culture in Switzerland, in particular the "visual landscape" of Switzerland, it is useful to trace the country's development all the way back to 1848, when modern Switzerland was literally "constituted".

³⁰ In the mid-90s, Swiss magazines reported that Switzerland was being Americanized as never before. See Michael van Oursouw, "Was von drüben kommt, das muss ja gut sein. Essen, Computer, Kleider, Trendsportarten: US-Produkte bestimmen immer mehr unser Leben. Alles was im US-Stil daherkommt, lässt sich prima verkaufen," *Facts Schweizer Nachrichtenmagazin* 1 February 1996, 50-57. Similar perceptions were expressed in all previous post-war decades. This would suggest that Americanization intensifies over the years. Instead, Americanization seems to be "discovered" anew in different areas in each decade.

The Setting

Modern Switzerland, its political system, social structure, its culture and by extension its visual environment date back to the adoption of the liberal constitution in 1848. Unlike in the rest of German-speaking territories, liberalism succeeded in Switzerland.³¹ The constitution stabilized Switzerland politically and allowed the Swiss to focus on the development of their economy and society. While German revolutionary leaders or 1848ers, as they were known, were forced to flee from their home to the New World, the Swiss increasingly had the opportunity to modernize their own country.³²

Geneva was still the biggest city with a population of about 25,000, followed by Basel, Bern, Lausanne, St. Gallen and Zürich with populations of around 10,000 each.³³ The Alpine topography demanded improvement of transportation and, in particular, the construction of bridges to span the valleys. Since ancient times, Switzerland had controlled some major north-south transit routes. In addition, transportation among the Cantons was still poor. There was great demand for roads across the Alpine passes. The development of a national network of railroads depended on the availability

³¹ Gordon Craig, *Triumph of Liberalism: Zurich in the Golden Age, 1830-1869* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

³² To be sure, emigration did not stop entirely and large numbers of Swiss migrated to the United States after 1848. But the "push" to leave Switzerland for political reasons was not nearly as strong as in neighboring German countries. Swiss emigration "waves" actually occurred at about the same time as in neighboring areas, reaching peaks in 1847, 1854 and 1881. But the number of emigrants from neighboring Württemberg in Southern Germany, for instance, reached twice the Swiss figures. Heiner Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer, *Alternative Neue Welt. Die Ursachen der schweizerischen Überseeauswanderung im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Zürich: Chronos, 1997), 49.

³³ This historical sketch is largely based on information contained in the following publications: Christoph Allenspach, *Architektur in der Schweiz. Bauen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Zurich: Pro Helvetia, 1998); *Zwischen Entsetzen und Frohlocken. Vom Ancien Régime zum Bundesstaat 1798-1848*, exhibition catalogue (Bern/Zurich: Bernisches Historisches Museum/Chronos, 1998).

of electric power. Abundant rivers could be harnessed, but all three -- the construction of roadways, railroads and hydraulic power plants -- created a great demand for engineering skills.

Naturally, this was the heyday for engineers. Engineers shaped construction and building in Switzerland as much as Midwestern engineers were in the forefront of developing skyscraper architecture in the United States. Guillaume-Henri Dufour, the victor of Switzerland's four-week civil war (*Sonderbundkrieg*) in 1847, was an engineer trained in Paris. His knowledge of cartography and topography had helped him to be victorious in the war.³⁴ In the 1820s he had built the world's first permanent steel wire suspension bridge in Geneva, the *Pont Saint-Antoine*. In 1854, he became town engineer and introduced systematic city planning to Geneva.³⁵

The Swiss also became pioneering tunnel builders. The Gotthard Tunnel (15 km) was dug between 1871 and 1882. Pneumatic drills and hammers had become available.³⁶ The heightened demand for more engineers accelerated the establishment of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich 1855.³⁷ The Institute, now normally referred to as ETH³⁸, soon became one of the primary forces driving the development and modernization of Switzerland. Tourism was another force that shaped and continues to shape the Alpine landscape. Engineers built the first *Zahnradbahnen* (rack railways) in Europe all the way to the mountaintops (*Rigi- and*

³⁴ Allenspach, 21.

³⁵ Allenspach, 24.

³⁶ Allenspach, 46.

³⁷ Allenspach, 28.

³⁸ The school was first called *Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum* and renamed *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule*, or ETH, in 1912. In English, it is commonly referred to as Federal Institute of Technology.

Jungfraubahn). And many an Alpine village became an internationally known resort after grand hotels and sanatoria had been built: from Arosa to St. Moritz to Zermatt.

The particular exigencies of roadway and railroad construction in the mountains led the Swiss to be among the first to use reinforced (ferro)concrete. Many Swiss construction firms were among the earliest licensees of François Hennebique (1842 - 1921), the French inventor of reinforced concrete.³⁹ Le Corbusier and Siegfried Giedion later pointed to Hennebique's influence in their writing.

Early Actors

Following the biographies of a number of individuals is not to suggest that a few powerful figures made Switzerland's cultural history. But by focusing on the reception and function of cultural influences, particularly American ones, it is useful to consider individual attitudes toward America to examine how individuals deal with various influences and shape their own ideas. "Anonymous" forces, such as the economy or technology, certainly shape historical developments, but individuals are agents and specific sources for an understanding of the processes. Focusing on mechanization as a driving force, Giedion still considered the work of individuals to write his "anonymous" history.

When the Federal Institute of Technology was founded, the Swiss also managed to attract first-rate teachers who were able to build a reputation for the school. Today Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) and Jacob Burckhardt

³⁹ Allenspach, 42.

(1818-1888) are likely the best known. Semper designed and built the Institute on the hill above downtown Zurich, thus introducing the neorenaissance in Switzerland. In his time best known for the *Hoftheater* in Dresden, Semper, the architect and professor, continued to participate in international competitions and "networked" the Institute intensively with European capitals.⁴⁰ The Institute was soon turning out outstanding engineers and architects.

Karl Ritter had graduated first in his class in 1868 and was soon thereafter hired to assist and eventually succeed his civil engineering teacher Carl Culmann (1821-1881).⁴¹ Ritter published widely on trusses, arches, continuous beams as well as Hennebique's system for reinforced concrete. David P. Billington argues that Ritter was more empirical and pragmatic whereas German practice was more theoretical and even dogmatic: "[I]nsofar as one can characterize national attitudes, the Swiss tended to rely less on the emerging mathematical theories in engineering and to be more open to the need for visual demonstration of performance" through full-scale load-testing.⁴² Such pragmatism seems to make the Swiss approach more akin to American pragmatism rather than French or German teaching, which is particularly noteworthy considering that prior to the opening of the Federal Institute of Technology Swiss engineers were educated in Paris (Beaux Arts), Karlsruhe or Munich. Without belaboring "national characteristics" too much, Americans and the Swiss share a certain disdain for theoretical manifestos,

⁴⁰ Allenspach, 35.

⁴¹ David P. Billington, *The Art of Structural Design: A Swiss Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2004), 21. Billington's book is the most recent publication on Karl Ritter, Robert Maillart, Othmar Ammann and other influential Swiss engineers.

⁴² Billington, 23.

preferring practical solutions to any given problem. On a less academic level, in American culture the tinkerer has been described as typically American. His Swiss counterpart, the *Tüftler*, also has an old and sometimes glorified history.

In 1893, Ritter was among the Swiss delegates to the Chicago World's Fair. During a three-month visit he studied American bridges and wrote a series of lectures and a book on "The Bridges of the United States".⁴³ Ritter, as Billington elaborates, expressed surprise at how "little attention" Americans seemed to pay to their own bridges.⁴⁴ In his writing, Ritter dwelled on what he perceived as American specifics, on form and aesthetics, concluding that American bridge builders were too utilitarian and had no concern for beauty. Rather than appearing elegant, American bridges made "a rather insipid impression".⁴⁵ Billington concludes his chapter on Ritter by emphasizing that Ritter wrote for his students, that is, for would-be designers rather than for other scholars. Robert Maillart (1872-1940) and Othmar Ammann (1879-1965) were two of Ritter's students.

Billington noticed that Maillart had focused on aesthetic aspects in his notes of Ritter's lectures on bridges. In one case, Ritter had lectured on arches stiffened by a trussed deck, "the form of which comes directly from the American practice with wood covered bridges."⁴⁶ Maillart commented on the "wonderful bridge". Having received rather mediocre grades himself, even in bridge construction, as Billington reveals, "Maillart gradually developed from

⁴³ Billington, 22.

⁴⁴ Billington, 24.

⁴⁵ Quoted by Billington, 24.

⁴⁶ Billington, 35.

an engineer of standard work to a designer of startling originality".⁴⁷ In the largely rural Canton of Grisons (*Graubünden*) and elsewhere in the Swiss mountains, Maillart designed a number of bridges that made him world-famous. The communities commonly asked for the kind of bridges they knew, designed in metal or stone. Maillart, however, convincingly pointed to the cost-effectiveness of steel and concrete. A smallish bridge in Zuoz, completed in 1901, was the first reinforced-concrete bridge in the Grisons and "the first concrete hollow-box bridge anywhere."⁴⁸ Ritter was asked by the authorities, as prescribed by Swiss law, to load test Maillart's bridge before it could be opened to the public. In his report, Ritter remarked: "The bridge, being an innovation, will doubtless find many imitators."⁴⁹ Siegfried Giedion in 1941, lecturing at Harvard, praised Maillart's "elimination of all nonfunctional" elements in bridge-building,⁵⁰ the sculptural qualities of his bridges and "the way Maillart succeeds both in expressing and in sublimating the breadth of a chasm cleft between two walls of rock."⁵¹

It is difficult to gauge how much attention the public paid to Maillart's achievements. Scholars and experts, such as Giedion, certainly expressed their appreciation, but since these bridges are often located in isolated rural areas, people don't really notice that they are driving over elegant, far-flung concrete arches. Nor are people normally equipped to fully appreciate the engineering technicalities in the elegant designs. This must have been even more true in the 1910s and 1920s when fewer people actually got to

⁴⁷ Billington, 35.

⁴⁸ Billington, 38.

⁴⁹ Quoted by Billington, 38.

⁵⁰ *Space/Time*, 375.

⁵¹ *Space/Time*, 379.

experience the bridges in their own cars. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, when the construction of autobahns set in, public debate about road and bridge construction took an environmentalist turn, focusing usually on the destruction of the natural landscape. Today, a few people with particular interest in engineering and architecture might actually visit some of Maillart's and other engineers' bridges as if they were museums, but there's no great public awareness of Maillart's masterpieces. Arguably, even public awareness of New York's suspension bridges is greater in Switzerland. If anything, the influence of American culture, mostly the media, is such that information about American (material) culture actually smothers awareness of Switzerland's own (material) culture.

This is particularly ironic in the case of New York's bridges since they were designed by ETH graduate and Swiss immigrant Othmar Ammann (1879-1965). Ammann was a contemporary of Maillart's and at about the same time as Maillart a student of Ritter's at the Federal Institute of Technology. Ammann also seems to have been particularly influenced by Karl Emil Hilgard (1858-1938), a structural engineering and later hydraulics professor at the ETH after whom the Hydraulic Prize of the American Society of Civil Engineers is named.⁵² Hilgard was of German-American, Midwestern descent (St. Paul, Minnesota) and maintained extensive contacts in the United States. He had garnered some experience in skeletal steel frame construction and enthusiastically taught American building methods at the ETH between 1899 and 1906. He also published articles in the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* (*Swiss Building Journal*) on such topics as "Iron

⁵² http://www.asce.org/pressroom/honors/honors_details.cfm?hdlid=28 (2 May 2005)

High-rises" ("Hochbauten in Eisen") or "Modern Building Methods with Particular Focus on Northamerican Engineering Practice" ("Moderne Baumethoden unter Berücksichtigung des Ingenieur-Bauwesens in Nordamerika").⁵³ He eventually became a citizen of Switzerland where he died in 1938.

Bignens emphasizes Hilgard's role as an active promoter of American building methods. In 1912, Hilgard had experimented with a "cement gun" in Boston and introduced the new technology in Switzerland in 1921.⁵⁴ Two years later, Le Corbusier expressed his own enthusiasm for this new method, publishing his own sketches of "mass-production workmen's houses" with "cement gun walls".⁵⁵

Upon graduation, Ammann followed Hilgard's and Ritter's advice to extend his studies with bridge designers in the United States. He left Switzerland in 1904⁵⁶ and, rather than returning after a while as planned, eventually became an extraordinarily successful and well-known builder of long suspension bridges in and around New York City, including the George Washington Bridge, the Triborough bridge, the Whitestone and Throgs Neck bridges connecting the Bronx with Long Island, as well as the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge over New York harbor, that, at its completion in 1965, spanned the longest distance anywhere in the world. In particular, the latter

⁵³ Christoph Bignens, *American Way of Life: Architektur Comics Design Werbung* (Sulgen/Zürich: Niggli Verlag, 2003), 56.

⁵⁴ *American Way*, 87; also: Christoph Bignens, "Aussen Schweiz -- Innen Amerika," *archithese* 1/1993, 60-61.

⁵⁵ Corbusier, *Towards Architecture*, 221. The following edition is used here: Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. trans. Frederick Etchells. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986.

⁵⁶ *American Way*, 56; Billington, 76.

bridge has become something of an international landmark: an American icon that is recognized the world over.

While Ammann was building these bridges, starting with the first deck of the George Washington Bridge in 1931 and ending with the Verazzano-Narrows Bridge in 1965, William Lescaze (1896-1969), also based in New York, was prolifically building skyscrapers, townhouses and movie theaters. Lescaze was born in Geneva and graduated from the ETH in Zurich in 1919. He first worked on World-War-I reconstruction sites in France, but within a year moved on to the United States. He is credited for completing (with George Howe) the first truly modern skyscraper in the United States, the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Building, and is considered one of the first and most important promoters of the International Style in the United States. His biographer Lorraine Welling Lanmon notes that although Lescaze did not contribute to the creation of the new theories or structural system of modern architecture, he, as a practicing architect, "was among the best of the supporting cast."⁵⁷ His work of the 1930s "was clearly dominated by Le Corbusier's influence",⁵⁸ which suggests that Lescaze, as other architects, succeeded in transporting Le Corbusier's concepts whereas Le Corbusier's own attempts to this effect were often frustrated.

Certainly, Le Corbusier was not the only one who inspired William Lescaze. His teacher at the ETH was Karl Moser (1860-1936), who was close to the German *Werkbund*, a founding member of the Swiss *Werkbund* in 1914 and a founding editor *ABC -- Beiträge zum Bauen*, a journal that soon

⁵⁷ Lorraine Welling Lanmon, *William Lescaze, Architect* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1987), 133.

⁵⁸ Lanmon, 17.

became instrumental in establishing the new architecture in German-speaking Switzerland.⁵⁹

Amerikanismus in Switzerland

Amman's and Lescaze's departure for the United States coincided with a swelling tide of Europeans who expressly traveled to the United States to learn from this more advanced society. Particularly after World War I, American superiority in a wide array of fields was commonly accepted, and, as a consequence, Europeans desired to learn from America.⁶⁰ Taylorism and Fordism were studied closely. Mechanization, rationalization, standardization and organization became virtually synonymous with "Americanization". Bignens notes that the "myth of the American as an excellent organizer spread after World War I."⁶¹ American became shorthand for "practical" or "time and labor saving." Thus, it comes as no surprise that eventually "the technical influences" would "outnumber the esthetic ones."⁶² At this stage, American "aesthetics" was not yet given much thought. With the advent and success of streamlining, as a style, however, a dichotomy in the perception of Americanization emerged: As a synonym for standardization, rationalization

⁵⁹Allenspach 47, 48, 54. Other members of the editorial board of *ABC* were: Hannes Mayer, Emil Roth and the Russian constructivist El Lissitzky (Allenspach, 54).

⁶⁰Heinz K. Meier, *Friendship under Stress. U.S.-Swiss relations 1900-1950* (Bern: Herbert Lang & Co., 1970) 130ff. Bignens also provides an overview of Americanization in the 1920s in *American Way*, 11ff.

⁶¹*American Way*, 40.

⁶²*American Way*, 17f., 69.

or mechanization Americanization carried positive connotations. When it came to questions of aesthetics, "American" soon came to stand for "irrational" sugarcoating and kitsch.

Although Switzerland had not been destroyed during the war and did not need rebuilding as neighboring countries did, the Swiss were eager to "learn" from the United States as well. In fact, the Swiss "led the way", writes Meier, which they could do because they were "not encumbered by emotional obstacles", but instead benefited from a "wide-open and well-maintained avenue of friendly relations" between the two "sister republics".⁶³ George Creel, Chairman of the US Committee on Public Information during the war, in 1918 invited a group of Swiss journalists to the United States as part of his efforts "to put America across in Switzerland".⁶⁴ Six journalists who had never been to the United States, representing the major Swiss newspapers, were given a seven weeks tour through the industrial Eastern and Midwestern regions.⁶⁵

Creel's invitation was a success if there ever was one. The Swiss started organizing their own study trips for various professional groups that became known as "Swiss missions".⁶⁶ Groups representing the following professions or categories were formed: "1. Banking, trade and administration, 2. industry and manufacturing, 3. railroads and navigation, 4. engineering and

⁶³ Meier, 138.

⁶⁴ Quoted by Meier, 130.

⁶⁵ Meier, 133.

⁶⁶ Meier 139; *American Way*, 43.

architecture, 5. agriculture and forestry, 6. the arts, museums and libraries, 7. science and education, 8. hotel management and tourism, and 9. the press."⁶⁷ Some of the "America travelers" subsequently founded the Swiss Friends of the United States of America (SFUSA), an association that published the *Swiss-American Review* for a number of years.⁶⁸ The *Review*, among other things, reported on "Swiss missions" that were undertaken throughout the 1920s. Among the founding members of SFUSA was Karl Emil Hilgard, engineer and professor at the ETH.

The number of engineers and architects who wanted to study American building methods in the United States was so large that two groups were led on a tour.⁶⁹ Many others traveled individually. Karl Moser's son Werner M. Moser worked with Frank Lloyd Wright for two years before writing about the experience in 1925 in the magazine of the Swiss *Werkbund*, *Das Werk*. As Bignens notes, Moser jr., at age 27, was quite young among the travelers.⁷⁰ For most architects learning from the United States was indeed some kind of post-graduate or advanced education. Those who were close to the *Werkbund* had benefited from the extensive contacts that men like Karl Moser or Hannes Meyer had with colleagues in Holland, Paris and at the *Bauhaus*. Albert Frey (1903-98) worked in Le Corbusier's atelier in Paris for some time before moving on to the United States in 1930. He was

⁶⁷ *American Way*, 43.

⁶⁸ *American Way*, 43; Meier 143.

⁶⁹ *American Way*, 43.

⁷⁰ *American Way*, 52.

the first to build in the United States who had actually worked with Le Corbusier and can be regarded a "Corbu disciple". (Lescaze, by contrast, was in contact with Le Corbusier, but he had never worked in his atelier). In 1934, Frey moved on to Palm Springs, California, where he became a key figure in the development of "desert modernism".

These architects were no freshmen or apprentices, but experienced architects. This is certainly also true for Le Corbusier (1887-1965): He was almost 50 years old and was considered one of the most famous contemporary architects when he first traveled to the United States in 1935-36. His motives were actually similar to those of his younger compatriots, Lescaze and Frey: Le Corbusier was looking for contracts in the United States. Being Le Corbusier, of course, he did not come to the United States to apprentice or work in an architectural firm. Nevertheless, the exhibition of his work in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the lecture tour organized for him were designed to win him contracts. Frey and other "Swiss connections" helped him to obtain an invitation to the United States.⁷¹

Le Corbusier's best known book *Vers une architecture* of 1923 -- published in English as *Towards a New Architecture* in 1927⁷² -- was largely inspired by what he had learned about American engineering and technology.

⁷¹ Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America. Travels in the Land of the Timid* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001). Bacon's study is a detailed account of Le Corbusier's stays in the United States.

⁷² The following edition is used here: Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986).

Bacon stresses this particular form of "*americanisme*" in Le Corbusier's intellectual background. "During the 1920s and 1930s no European architect wrote more passionately or polemically than Le Corbusier about the American landscape, its skyscraper and city plans, as well as its icons of machine age modernity", without having visited the United States himself.⁷³ He relied on printed sources and numerous friends who actually had first-hand experience of the United States.⁷⁴ This is all the more noteworthy considering that Le Corbusier had traveled widely in Asia, Europe and Latin America before embarking on his trip to the United States.

Once in New York, Le Corbusier depended on these literally preconceived notions, not to say prejudices. In *Towards a New Architecture*, he had favorable comments to make about American engineers, but had famously cautioned against American architects.⁷⁵ In his account of his trip to the United States in the 1930s, he picked up on his earlier distrust of American architects, calling them "timid", mostly because in his view, they had not thought through the concept of the skyscraper to its logical end. He told New Yorkers that the skyscrapers were too small⁷⁶ and suggested that

⁷³ Bacon, 3.

⁷⁴ His fellow countryman Blaise Cendrars had published several "Kodak documentaries" describing architectural phenomena that Le Corbusier might have been familiar with: on offices with radiators, the "mushrooming city" or "Frisco-City". One poem-documentary is entitled: "Trestle-work". Blaise Cendrars, *Complete Postcards from the Americas: Poems of Road and Sea*, trans. Monique Chefdor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

⁷⁵ *Towards Architecture*, 42.

⁷⁶ Bacon reprints some clippings from New York newspapers that make quite clear that New Yorkers were rather amused by Le Corbusier's pronouncements. Another appreciation of Le

Manhattan should be demolished and rebuilt, following his plans for a "Radiant City", in which the "essential joys" of urban life could be brought to the "totality of humanity": "from each room a view of the sky, the sensation of space, sun and trees."⁷⁷ Essentially, in a rationally planned city living, working, traffic and leisure activities should each take place in separate spheres without disturbing one another.

This radical idea of demolition-based reconstruction might have had its origin in Le Corbusier's Swiss hometown La Chaux-de-Fonds. After a fire in 1830, engineers had rebuilt the city allowing for wide streets to prevent future fires, but also considering natural light and hygiene.⁷⁸ In a small way, Le Corbusier's hometown was as precursor of his "Radiant City". Of course, Paris, his adopted hometown, had also experienced demolition-based city planning when under Napoleon III Eugène Haussmann tore out strips of the city to put in boulevards, most notably the "Champs-Élysées. Giedion offers an account of Haussmann's transformation of Paris in *Space, Time and Architecture*.

Le Corbusier's proposal for Manhattan was perhaps radical, but hardly unheard of. He was merely restating or suggesting on a large scale what was already happening. New York City's public housing program already

Corbusier's stay in New York can be found in Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994).

⁷⁷ Le Corbusier's inaugural lecture at the Museum of Modern Art on October 24, 1935 is reprinted in Bacon's study, 61-62.

⁷⁸ Allenspach, 24.

included measures that Le Corbusier seemed to propose: "demolition-based planning, disregard for the traditional configuration of streets, large-scale planning and block development, and comprehensively planned communities."⁷⁹ Indeed, Lescaze and Frey had designed housing projects in Brooklyn and the Lower East Side "that owed a debt to Le Corbusier."⁸⁰ General Motor's exhibition at the New York World's Fair of 1939, the Futurama, designed by Norman Bel Geddes, again projected a future metropolis reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Radiant City: individual skyscrapers were loosely placed in the landscape and connected with freeways. But, as Bacon elaborates, both Lescaze and Bel Geddes synthesized different sources: Lescaze borrowed from a number of European modernist sources and Bel Geddes had also borrowed from Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Dorwin Teague, as Bacon points out.⁸¹

Le Corbusier's reception in America was indirect, mediated by other architects familiar with his writings and plans. The only building he ever designed in the United States came very late in his career in the early 1960s: The Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Mass.

His lecture tour fell between the exhibition "The International Style: Architecture since 1922" at the Museum of Modern Art and the corresponding publication of Hitchcock's and Johnson's book *The*

⁷⁹ Bacon, 298.

⁸⁰ Bacon, 163.

⁸¹ Bacon, 162, 297.

International Style in 1932⁸² and the arrival of the *Bauhaus* luminaries Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in 1937. In the United States, modern, purist or functional architecture became known as International Style. The International Style, in the end, stands for the Americanization of European modernism.⁸³ In this process of Americanization, Le Corbusier's and others' aspirations as *auteur*⁸⁴ of their work were melted into one concept, the International Style, that gained mythic qualities, comparable to the mythic power of *Amerikanismus* in Europe of the 1920s. It must be left to speculation whether the "International Style" would have become so successful in the United States if Hitchcock and Johnson had called it European style, European modernism or, say, *Bauhaus* style? Tom Wolfe's irreverently funny booklet *From Bauhaus to Our House*⁸⁵ later gave a popular American voice to those who blamed the European modernists, mostly Le Corbusier, for the intolerable housing projects.⁸⁶ Wolfe was the most explicit, pointing to the political irony that in America worker housing conceived by socialist European architects would be transmuted into symbols

⁸² Henry-Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: Norton, 1966).

⁸³ Compare Bacon, 282.

⁸⁴ Le Corbusier showed his strong interest in being recognized as the author of his work when the French government appointed him its delegate to the Commission in charge of the construction of the UN headquarters in New York in 1946. Bacon provides a summary of his participation in this Commission and comes to the conclusion that collaborating in this project was important for him because, in the end, it finally allowed him to leave "his imprint on New York City" (304ff.). However, constructing the UN headquarters was as much a diplomatic feat as an architectural one. Linda Sue Phipps tells the story in her dissertation: "*Constructing the United Nations Headquarters: Modern Architecture as Public Diplomacy*" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1998).

⁸⁵ Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1981).

⁸⁶ Wolfe, 73; Bacon, 298.

of corporate status and landmarks. European cultural influences created apprehensions and anti-European sentiments in the United States as much as Americanization did in Europe. European culture was perceived as highbrow, not to say supercilious. Wolfe denounced and mocked the main protagonists as Silver Princes and White Gods.

Almost twenty years later, Texas writer Michael Lind wondered whether America would ever "recover from its fifty-year bout of Europhilia?" As a student at the University of Texas at Austin in the late 70s, he had noticed that nobody seemed to give any credit to the builders of the University's main building as well as other buildings that were impressive enough to him.⁸⁷ The "official history of American art" and architecture "written between 1950 and 1980" taught American students that American art and architecture came into existence when the European émigrés arrived in the late 30s and 40s.⁸⁸ The International Style "Gropius and company brought along" gave "corporate America its conformist, functional face for decades," Lind laments.⁸⁹ What irks him most is the apparent loss of a "genuinely American vision".⁹⁰ He wants America to "desire to travel the more courageous route" and resume the "task of creating an American high culture that is neither belligerently provincial nor emptily cosmopolitan... [T]he

⁸⁷ Incidentally, the so-called tower was built by a Frenchman, Paul Philippe Cret (1876-1945). See <http://www.utexas.edu/tours/mainbuilding/people/cret.html> (30 April 2005).

⁸⁸ Lind, Michael. "Where have you gone, Louis Sullivan? Will America recover from its fifty-year bout of Europhilia?" *Harper's Magazine* February 1998: 53-59.

⁸⁹ Lind, 56.

⁹⁰ Lind, 59.

alternative is a declaration of cultural independence, in which independence is defined not as autarky but as self-confidence".⁹¹ What is so amazing about Lind's cultural criticism is that it could easily be rewritten to describe cultural debates in Switzerland (and elsewhere in Europe). We will see later that Max Frisch makes virtually the same argument about Switzerland's lack of cultural courage in the 1950s.

Americanization of Le Corbusier

The "Americanization" of European modernism in the United States should be borne in mind when considering the return of modern architecture to "Mainhattan" and other places in post-war Europe in the form of corporate architecture. Bacon also considers the Americanization of Le Corbusier's architecture.⁹² She detects several aspects of Le Corbusier's post-1935 work that seem American: departure from the sheer façade and "introduction of the textured skyscraper"; a new appreciation of the skyscraper, mostly "inspired by the RCA Building at the Rockefeller Center and by Howe and Lescaze's PSFS Building"; "introduction of tension structures" influenced mostly by Ammann's George Washington Bridge; and "a new typology for the sports stadium", inspired by the stadium of Princeton University.⁹³

In conclusion, after his American experiences, Le Corbusier became

⁹¹ Lind, 59.

⁹² Bacon, 259ff.

⁹³ Bacon, 259-260.

less dogmatic, less insistent on pure, geometrical form. He adopted "organic" or sculptural forms and allowed regional influences in his later work, the pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp (1955) perhaps being the most memorable and widely recognized example. Of course, the chapel's sculptural quality and the fact that Le Corbusier actually hid the construction from view in this building raised some purist highbrows. Apart from that, much criticism came from conservative Catholics -- essentially because the architect was not Catholic enough. They claimed that Le Corbusier was probably a technical genius, but he was no artist since he did not understand details central in every church: the altar and church windows.⁹⁴

Siegfried Giedion

A contemporary and member of Le Corbusier's "Swiss connections", Siegfried Giedion (1888-1968) had originally obtained a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Vienna. Rather than taking over his parents' weaving mill in Switzerland, he took another degree in art history from the University of Zurich, writing a dissertation on baroque and romantic classicism in 1922.⁹⁵ Modern architecture and the work of the

⁹⁴ Hermann Baur, "Ronchamp und die neuere kirchliche Architektur," *Das Werk* 5 (May 1957): 187-189.

⁹⁵ Compare Giedion's own account of his formation in the preface to *Space, Time and Architecture*. A short biography of Giedion is also contained in: Stanislaus von Moos, "Siegfried Giedion zum Gedenken," in *Schweizerische Bauzeitung*, 26/1968, 467-468. Sokrates Georgiadis provides a book-length intellectual biography, drawing upon Giedion's major publications: Sokrates Georgiadis, *Siegfried Giedion: Eine intellektuelle Biographie*, ed. Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (ETH) (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1989).

avant-garde made an indelible impression on him when he visited the *Bauhaus* in Weimar and met with Walter Gropius in 1923. When Harvard University appointed him to a professorship in 1938, he was involved in a number of activities devoted to "Neues Bauen" (new architecture). He had written a book about the use of ferroconcrete in France. After Le Corbusier, whom Giedion had first visited in Paris in 1925, did not win first prize with his project for the headquarters of the League of Nations in 1927⁹⁶, Giedion and Le Corbusier launched the *Congrès Internationaux de l'Architecture Moderne*, CIAM for short, which became a forum for avant-garde architects, with the aim of promoting the principles of the new architecture.⁹⁷ Giedion became and remained CIAM's secretary until its dissolution in 1956. In this executive function he controlled what could be called CIAM's "official historiography" and influenced the agenda for the congresses. Le Corbusier remained an influential mastermind in the group.⁹⁸ CIAM's critics attacked left-wing politics and social utopias propagated by most CIAM members, and denounced CIAM as the Trojan horse of bolshevism.⁹⁹ Or, on an aesthetic

⁹⁶ Le Corbusier's modern plan lost out against the Beaux-Arts-inspired Palais des Nations we can see today in Geneva. The defeat in Geneva was to Giedion and Le Corbusier what the Columbian Exposition in 1892-93 in Chicago had been to Sullivan and Lloyd Wright: a massive personal loss and a setback for architecture. Giedion wrote later the decision turned out as it did because it was passed on to the diplomats when the jury of experts was hung (*Space/Time*, 423-424; also Bignens, *American Way*, 86).

⁹⁷ Allenspach, 59.

⁹⁸ Allenspach, 60.

⁹⁹ Hannes Meyer (1889 - 1954), another founding member of CIAM, had taught at *Bauhaus* and became its second director from 1928-1930. As Bauhaus director he introduced the category: people's needs vs. luxury goods or '*Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf*'. Meyer was a true believer in the cause, a radical functionalist who rejected aesthetic judgment in building

level, critics ridiculed the "Dutcheries" ("Holländereien") of CIAM-members. Le Corbusier drew the severest attacks, prompting Giedion to write on the occasion of his friend's 50th birthday in 1937 that his home country had been the most hostile towards Le Corbusier.¹⁰⁰

Outside CIAM, Giedion was a founding partner of the *Wohnbedarf AG* in Zurich, a company specialized in, as the name makes clear, "supplies/needs for living". Back from his first stint at Harvard in 1941, he lectured widely in Switzerland on the "American and European traditions in architecture", emphasizing that the roots of American architecture were in construction not in decoration.¹⁰¹ The Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich eventually hired him as professor in 1946.

The ETH leadership had become more moderate and traditionalist in the late 1930s under the influence of the so-called "Geistige Landesverteidigung". In the direct neighborhood of two fascist regimes and keenly aware of the threat of communism, Switzerland focused on an "intellectual defense of the nation". After the war, Giedion characterized this "artistic reactionariness" ("künstlerische Reaktion") as an "international

design. Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, Meyer's more prominent colleagues at the *Bauhaus*, were both masters at modifying their formerly avant-garde practices to suit American corporate culture. Meyer worked as architect and city planner in the Soviet Union between 1930 and 1936. He then returned to Switzerland before moving to Mexico City from 1938 to 1949. (see Allenspach, 70-72).

¹⁰⁰ Allenspach, quoting a newspaper article by Giedion, 61.

¹⁰¹ *American Way*, 54-55.

disease" brought about by the war.¹⁰² In Swiss architecture and city planning, this brought back the ideal of the wholesome Alpine village. "Neues Bauen" (New Architecture) was toned down to "Sachliches Bauen", which could be translated as "sober-minded Architecture".

This was a tough climate for modernist architecture to flourish. Le Corbusier was shunned entirely,¹⁰³ and Giedion, although now teaching at the ETH, continued to do his most influential work at US universities. Indeed, his most important, or most widely read works, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) and *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948) were published in German, considerably later, in 1978 and 1982 respectively.

In *Space, Time and Architecture* Giedion bemoaned a major philosophical concern, the separation of thinking and feeling or even a personality split in modern man¹⁰⁴, but on the whole the book is quite celebratory in tone about the technological achievements of mankind. This optimism, however careful, gives way to disillusionment about the "need for a universal outlook"¹⁰⁵ or unified vision. "All we have to show so far is a rather disquieting inability to organize the world", he concludes in *Mechanization takes Command*.¹⁰⁶ At the end of this latter book, he

¹⁰² Siegfried Giedion, "Stromlinienstil und industrielles Entwerfen in USA," *Das Werk*, vol 33 issue 5 (May 1946), 155-162. The text was later included in *Mechanization Takes Command* under the heading "Streamlining and Full Mechanization".

¹⁰³ Allenspach 79, 80.

¹⁰⁴ *Space/Time*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Space/Time*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Mechanization*, 715.

ultimately argues that mechanization must not be allowed to take command. In order to control mechanization, everything must "be subordinated to human needs".¹⁰⁷ Giedion later emphasizes "human needs" even more. His next book, published in German, was entitled *Architektur und Gemeinschaft* (*Architecture and Community*). The cover bore a picture of Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel with a crowd of pilgrims around it.¹⁰⁸ The English edition was given the title *Architecture, you and me*; however, the cover design was more formalist or abstract than the German counterpart. The words were arranged vertically on a mostly black surface, reminiscent of a poem by e.e. cummings. Design and title of this book alone signal a further shift away from a purely rational, functionalist aesthetics and even an elitist unified vision born from one architect-artist's mind towards an inclusive, democratic approach. Georgiadis finds the title of the American edition "populist".¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Frampton is even more critical of Giedion's development.¹¹⁰ Discussing a text of Giedion's written for a CIAM congress in 1952, Frampton writes in a chapter on the "new monumentality" that the "eclipse of the Modernistic New Tradition in 1939" was not only caused by ideologies enemical to modernist architecture. After all, the "Functionalist line in architecture had become the ruling style" in the United States. Instead, the

¹⁰⁷ *Mechanization*, 714.

¹⁰⁸ Reprinted in Sokrates Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: Eine intellektuelle Biographie*, ed. Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (ETH) (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1989), 184-185.

¹⁰⁹ Georgiadis, 183.

¹¹⁰ See also Georgiadis, 189f.

"demise of the New Tradition" ironically had its origin in the "heart of the movement itself".¹¹¹ Frampton recognized a weakening of the avant-garde, "modernistic" resolve, in particular because modernists gradually came to accept monumentality. He quotes Giedion: "Monuments are human landmarks which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions."... "Monuments are the expression of man's highest cultural needs."... And: "The people want the buildings that represent their social and community life to give more than functional fulfillment". This is indeed a far cry from CIAM's prior focus on "social needs" that would have to be translated into rational and functional "machines for living." References to symbols, cultural needs and representation point toward an acceptance of what was previously despised as irrational and unwarranted decoration. Experiencing corporate architecture in the United States might have influenced Giedion's attitude towards monumentality. His change in attitude, at any rate, reflects the adaptation of the Bauhaus émigrés to the US environment.

Max Frisch: *Hochhäuser* and urban planning

Of course, the debate about modern architecture and modernism in general did not stop entirely in Switzerland. It soon focused on the question of the need for high-rise, particularly in Zurich, as well as urban and regional

¹¹¹ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A critical history* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 222-223.

planning, or it shifted to other areas of design culture, namely consumer good design ("streamlining"). America loomed large in all of these debates.

The Swiss novelist Max Frisch might have been listening to Giedion's lectures on American architecture in early 1941. At this time, Frisch, later a renowned dramatist and novelist, was still a writer in his spare time: He had obtained a degree in architecture from the Federal Institute of Technology in 1940 and opened his own architectural firm in 1941.¹¹² The professors Otto Rudolf Salvisberg and William Dunkel were the most prominent in Frisch's education at the ETH. The conservative Salvisberg had been given the position of the modernist Karl Moser in the architecture department. The choice caused some controversy, particularly among CIAM members. Salvisberg had little use for *Bauhaus* and Le Corbusier.¹¹³ He was chosen precisely because he was not part of the left-wing avant-garde. Although he did not follow a clear, rational philosophy, he was considered a first-rate practitioner, as the editor of *Das Werk* wrote.¹¹⁴ Under his leadership "Swiss realism", a movement that has been labeled as "second-rate modernism" ("Modernismus der zweiter Linie"), gained prominence in Switzerland. "Modern, but realistic"¹¹⁵ was the key to this school of thought, which was further tempered by "Swiss restraint", but excelled in a perfect workmanship

¹¹² Urs Bircher, *Vom langsamen Wachsen eines Zorns: Max Frisch 1911-1955*, (Zürich: Limmat Verlag, 1997).

¹¹³ Allenspach, 72f.; Bircher, 92.

¹¹⁴ Allenspach, 73.

¹¹⁵ Allenspach, 73.

of every detail.¹¹⁶

Frisch's second influential professor William Dunkel was born in New York and wrote a dissertation on modern American urban planning. As professor in Zurich he advocated the skeletal steel frame high-rise as adequate housing for modern man.¹¹⁷

Frisch was a struggling architect. Admittedly, he had started out in a particularly difficult time. He won the competition for a public pool (Letzi-Bad), but overall, in fourteen years of practice, he did not build very much. His main interest and attention was directed at literature. In 1951, Frisch was invited to New York on a grant for drama from the Rockefeller Foundation. Frisch spent most of the year working on plays in New York, but also traveled through the United States and Mexico. The success of the novel *Stiller*,¹¹⁸ which in 1954 was published as a result of his stay in the United States, allowed Frisch to close his architectural firm and turn to writing fulltime.

In the early to mid-50s, Frisch also wrote a number of journalistic pieces on architecture and urban planning, all of them drawing on his experience in the New World.¹¹⁹ In these texts, Frisch elaborated on three

¹¹⁶ Allenspach 73, 81.

¹¹⁷ Bircher, 93.

¹¹⁸ Max Frisch, *Stiller* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp pocket book edition, 1973). In the English translation, the title was rendered as *I am not Stiller*.

¹¹⁹ "Unsere Arroganz gegenüber Amerika," in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, Sonderausgabe, 7 vols. (st 1401 - 1407), (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), vol. 3, 222ff.;

main concerns: First, he harshly criticized Swiss society, its complacency, its lack of enthusiasm and refusal to take risks. To Frisch, in Switzerland everything was a compromise. Second, Switzerland needed to take courage to plan the use of the land available. Local politics, property ownership and property rights were blocking wise planning for the future. Third, Frisch advocated the construction of new cities outside the old towns, preferably high-rises in a park setting. Switzerland needed to make better use of its scarce natural resources. In 1954, he published a radio play in which an architect and two laypersons discuss urban planning.¹²⁰ In this fictionalized conversation urban planning is portrayed even more strongly as a political and social challenge, rather than an architect's or planner's task. In Frankfurt, the three discover the beauty of new high-rises built on the post-war rubble. And they discuss how silly it is to try to rebuild medieval *fachwerk* (half-timbered) houses that used to be close to the cathedral. In Mexico, the three witness the bravery of local architecture. It not only does the job, as architecture does in Switzerland, but "it is about to become art again".¹²¹

As the three fly over Zurich, the architect in the group easily convinces the laypersons that what they see looks like rabbit hutches compared to the "manly" modern architecture of Mexico. A faulty

"Cum grano salis. Eine kleine Glosse zur schweizerischen Architektur," in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, Sonderausgabe, 7 vols. (st 1401 - 1407), (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), vol. 3, 230ff.

¹²⁰ "Funkgespräch. Der Laie und die Architektur," in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge* Sonderausgabe, 7 vols. (st 1401 - 1407), (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), vol. 4, 262ff.

¹²¹ *Funkgespräch*, 276: "Architektur, die im Begriff ist, wieder Kunst zu sein."

understanding of property rights and freedom has led the Swiss to strew their land with quaint and cute "bunny farms". How different from Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille! The laypersons find the "massive slab" somewhat "brutal", but they recognize its benefits. Le Corbusier, the architect explains to them, was allowed to build without adhering to any codes or regulations. He was guided solely by the needs of people in contemporary society, but did not attempt to imitate a village.

Frisch's thinking on architecture and urban planning finally coalesced in the booklet/pamphlet entitled "achtung: Die Schweiz", he published with Lucius Burckhardt and Markus Kutter in 1954.¹²² The booklet became the most widely read and discussed book of the 1950s.¹²³ It emphasized urban and regional planning as a political challenge and proposed the construction of a model city by 1964, the year in which the next national exhibition would take place. Instead of creating ephemeral exhibition architecture, the authors called for the construction of a city for a minimum of 15,000 inhabitants that could serve as an experiment of how to best solve Switzerland's planning problems. The authors called for a brave new model that would suit the modern Swiss way of life. Focusing on the modern way of life ("Lebensform"), the authors castigated the Swiss habit of following traditional paths. They equally rejected "Sovietization" or "Americanization".

¹²² Max Frisch, Lucius Burckhardt and Markus Kutter, "achtung: Die Schweiz. Ein Gespräch über unsere Lage und ein Vorschlag zur Tat (1954)," in *Schweiz als Heimat? Versuche über 50 Jahre*, ed. Walter Obschlager (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 133-179.

¹²³ Bircher, 233.

Rather daringly in the midst of the Cold War, they acknowledged that communism was at least a plan ("Entwurf"). What made America so attractive was the fact that it was *aware* of its way of life; at least, it had a way of life.¹²⁴ But neither Soviet nor American solutions to modern life's challenges could simply be adopted. Either way, the Swiss would become "vasalls of an alien way of life".¹²⁵ Since there was "no Swiss way of life",¹²⁶ the Swiss were particularly susceptible to following either outdated fashions such as the *Heimatstil* (the style of the fatherland) or whatever was trendy elsewhere.¹²⁷ Most people, they agreed, do not create their own way of life ("Lebensart"), they adopt it. The Swiss were looking for role models elsewhere because Switzerland did not offer any models ("Vorbilder") to them and did not have a way of life. Indeed people "are living according to Hollywood without knowing it. And even people who almost never saw a movie live according to Hollywood, for their boss, whom they envy, lives like that".¹²⁸ Frisch and his partners in crime did not want this to sound like a reproach to the Swiss people: They were accusing those who did not provide role models.¹²⁹

Finally, Frisch et al. presented their proposal as a way to preserve Swiss freedom. In the Cold War, planning was often rejected because it made

¹²⁴ *achtung*, 142.

¹²⁵ *achtung*, 143.

¹²⁶ "keine schweizerische Lebensform"; *achtung*, 148.

¹²⁷ *achtung*, 148.

¹²⁸ *achtung*, 162.

¹²⁹ *achtung*, 162.

people think of Soviet five-year-plans or corporate business plans. Freedom, however, had to be preserved through visionary planning. Freedom could only last if land and resources were used sensibly, according to an overall concept. Petty regulations (such as the prohibition of flat roofs), local laws, property rights and the neighboring landowners' rights in a country characterized by small land parcellation and the myth of "organic growth" (154) led to speculation and wasteful land use, which ultimately decimated Swiss freedom. Alluding to Othmar H. Ammann, the authors demanded that Switzerland should be free enough to offer such opportunities that Swiss bridge builders could again build bridges in Switzerland.¹³⁰ They noted that Le Corbusier was building cities in India¹³¹ and concluded: It must again be "possible for the Swiss to be pioneers without having to emigrate from their home country".¹³²

Although ostensibly a call to action to improve urban and regional planning, "*achtung: Die Schweiz*" expressed larger social concerns. Interestingly, Frisch and his co-authors came out quite strongly against adopting or imitating elements of the American way of life. For the authors it was imperative for Switzerland to take courage and self-confidently shape its future. America was accepted and proposed as a role model for a courageous and joyful approach to life. Frisch et al. did not advocate imitating particular

¹³⁰ *achtung*, 164.

¹³¹ *achtung*, 152.

¹³² *achtung*, 170.

Americana, styles, or trends. Writing about urban planning only served to write about the underlying social plight that they summed up in a remarkable question toward the of their pamphlet: "Aren't we the bleakest country near and far?" (178). This negative attitude towards life is a steady undercurrent in Swiss culture that resurfaces time and again, as we will see later.

America as a model

Max Frisch was to write some outright didactic texts, reiterating the forceful argument made in "*achtung: Die Schweiz*". Frisch, it seems, really wanted to tell his fellow Swiss how to joyfully approach modern challenges. In 1956, Frisch traveled to Mexico and Cuba and the United States. In Aspen, Colorado, he read a paper on "Why don't we have the cities we need?",¹³³ telling the American audience about his and his colleagues' proposal to build a modern city from scratch. In a long feature article published in the Zurich weekly *Die Weltwoche*, Frisch reported on city planning in Fort Worth, Texas.¹³⁴ As Le Corbusier praised the Pulaski Skyway in New Jersey and Siegfried Giedion singled out the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut, Frisch also expressed his enthusiasm for freeways he experienced in the United States.

¹³³ Bircher, 279.

¹³⁴ Max Frisch, "Fort Worth. Die Stadt der Zukunft in Texas," in *Die Weltwoche* 15 November 1956, 17-18. Frisch compares driving to downtown Zurich with driving from Hollywood to downtown Los Angeles: "Wonderful! From Hollywood you breeze to downtown Los Angeles... not only faster than from Schwammendingen to the Bahnhofstrasse, but also much faster and easier than [from Schwammendingen] to the next neighborhood. It is pure pleasure to drive on a freeway."

Herrlich! Von Hollywood saust man nach Los-Angeles-Downtown... nicht nur rascher als von Schwammendingen and die Bahnhofstrasse, sondern auch rascher und leichter als in die nächste Nachbarschaft. Es ist eine Wonne, auf einem freeway zu fahren.¹³⁵

Frisch declared "it is pure pleasure to drive on a freeway." After this introductory ode to the freeway, Frisch focused on how Fort Worth plans to revitalize its center. Freeways brought too much traffic into the center, Frisch explained. In response, shopping centers were built outside of town, which in turn rendered the downtown unattractive. Fort Worth has reached a point where it wants to revitalize its downtown and has hired Austrian-born Victor Gruen to come up with a rehabilitation plan.

Frisch does not dwell on technical details, but highlights persons and procedures. In tone and form, his article is a lesson to the Swiss public: "This is how we need to make bold plans, too."

Frisch praises Victor Gruen's far-sighted planning with a central reference date in 1970. Playing with the phrase "knappe Vorsicht", Frisch critically alludes to a Swiss example in which circumspection replaced prospective planning with the result that the finished hospital reached capacity on the very day it opened. By contrast, Frisch says, Gruen, or the Americans, planned according to the needs in fifteen or or years. But Frisch also cautioned against woolgathering in the distant future: Chicago, he reported, attempted to plan 100 years ahead, without knowing whether people

will then still be driving cars.

In Frisch's account, Gruen's visionary planning was characterized by a thorough empirical, need-based approach ("Grundlagenforschung") as opposed to "Stil-Fanatismus". In all this research and planning, "Democracy" rules. Frisch notes with appreciation that such a planning task can only be accomplished if the social scientist, the economist, the technologist and the artist work together as a team: "ohne Ansehen der Person".¹³⁶ In this democratic process, Gruen and his team got to work "in secret" for almost two years, without being pestered by the client, the Texas Electric Service Company. Eventually, the company bosses were invited to see the grand plan "under the condition, of course, that they do not express their horror ("Schrecken") before everything is explained and reasons [for specific proposals] are given." Frisch writes it took Gruen two days to explain his proposal to the bosses, and then the bosses had to sleep on it. The next morning their "skepticism had capitulated." The Texas Electric Service Company decides to put the plan before the citizens of Texas, "first the millionaires." Then a "Citizens Redevelopment Committee" is founded that eventually presents the plan in a townhouse meeting under the slogan: "A

¹³⁶ Roughly: "without one person getting special recognition for his contribution." Frisch's praise for teamwork is either not altogether genuine or his own experience changed his original preference for authorship. In 1950 he built a country villa for a hair tonic producer in Liechtenstein. When Frisch's client was hospitalized for a while, Frisch changed the measurements of the staircase without consulting its proprietor. The result was a protracted lawsuit. Frisch, his biographer Urs Bircher writes, felt that "the freedom of the artist was threatened by the power of money" (Bircher, 220).

greater Fort Worth of tomorrow!"

Frisch is impressed by Gruen's salesmanship and persuasiveness. He credits Gruen's shrewdness and his talent as a comedian¹³⁷ for the veritable "Broadway production" with which the plan was sold to the people of Fort Worth. Finally, Frisch also applauds Gruen's special kind of integrity or "a rigorous decency ("rigorose Anständigkeit"): Gruen, according to Frisch, refuses to be contractor in a city for which he created the revitalization master plan.

Again, Frisch emphasizes his perception that Switzerland wastes her best talents, sending potential pioneers abroad and importing ready-made styles, trends and forms. He notes that "shopping center" is a familiar term in Switzerland, "because we have moved to adopting American terminology as much as possible -- always with the masters of the time." He asks why Basel has a "shopping center" instead of a "marché" or "les halles", considering Basel borders France and many Swiss citizens look toward Paris as the Francophone cultural center. "The avant-garde, for which we envy America, are for the most part former Europeans ("Ex-Europäer"): Gropius, Sert, Neutra, Gill, Maybeck, Schindler or whatever the names may be of all those who never got a chance back home" ("in der Heimat nicht zum vollen Zuge

¹³⁷ Victor Gruen had performed in satirical cabarets in his native Vienna and founded the Refugee Artists Group when he first arrived in New York in 1938. See Malcolm Gladwell, "The Terrazzo Jungle. Fifty years ago, the mall was born. America would never be the same" *New Yorker Magazine*, 15 March 2004. Available at: http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?040315fa_fact1 (30 April 2005)

kamen"). "To solve our problems, we always need others to go in front of us -
- except that the example of Fort Worth offers some consolation: One of the
urbanists who created the Fort Worth plan is a young Swiss, Beda Zwicker."

I considered Frisch's newspaper article at some length because it encapsulates in a popular form what Frisch (and others) criticized about the Swiss situation. Unusually didactic, even preachy, for a journalistic text, the article again emphasizes the need to start planning for society. Frisch wrote more as a politician, aiming at social changes. Meanwhile architects, designers and businessmen pursued modernization in their areas of expertise, focusing on particular innovations rather than social change. In the 1950s, the Swiss (as other Europeans) were so absorbed in the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) that little time was left to spend on grand schemes or even model cities. This pragmatic rather than visionary approach is reflected in the discussions regarding the need for high-rise buildings in Zurich.

A recurring debate: high-rise buildings or not?

The first Swiss multi-story building, the Bel-Air Métropole, was opened in 1932 in Lausanne.¹³⁸ The Zurich contractor Eugen Scotoni,¹³⁹ who had been among the America-travelers in the 1920s, took the initiative and

¹³⁸ *American Way*, 76.

¹³⁹ Hanna Willi and Hans Rudolf Schmid, *Ein Buch vom Bauen. Mit Bildreportagen von Theo Frey. Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen der Baufirma Scotoni in Zürich und zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres ihres Gründers*. ed. AG. Eugen Scotoni-Gassmann (Zurich, 1939).

was -- after an intense public debate -- permitted to build a tower higher than the local church belfries.¹⁴⁰ The tower measures just under 70 meters and surpasses the 7-story building complex of which it is part by another nine storeys. Alphonse Laverrière, professor of architecture at the ETH in Zurich, gave the building its aesthetically unspectacular, neo-classicist form. From the beginning, starting with this first example, high-rise buildings were discussed in terms of functionalism or economy, as much as in terms of aesthetics and identity. Lausanne had given itself an "accent", a landmark.¹⁴¹

Writers have used the Bel-Air Métropole and Scotoni as evidence for the influence of America and specifically of how individuals learned from and imitated practices in the United States.¹⁴² Indeed, Scotoni had traveled in the United States in 1927 and 1929 and admired American technology and building methods. The Bel-Air Métropole was built in record time, "thanks to special machines and special methods."¹⁴³ The construction of the building's shell took less than a year. The steel frame was welded (instead of riveted), and all other parts were prefabricated off-site. Pierre Frey summarizes that basically three ideas were "brought from America": the high-rise steel frame building, the high-rise as a multi-functional building and a great hall for

¹⁴⁰ Pierre A. Frey, "Lausanne, Bel-Air Métropole, un immeuble -- des images," Published on the website of the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale (EPFL), French-speaking Switzerland's Federal Institute of Technology, located in Lausanne, at: acm.epfl.ch/collaborateurs/frey/faces1990.pdf (2 May 2005). Frey notes that the public debate about the first high-rise focused almost entirely on the problem of the "secular belfry".

¹⁴¹ *Vom Bauen*, 18, 19, 22, 28, 30.

¹⁴² *American Way*, 76-77; Frey, 2.

¹⁴³ *Vom Bauen*, 19.

spectacles, flanked by a foyer. Indeed, besides offices, shops and luxury apartments the Bel-Air Métropole also accommodates a movie theater, a concert and "spectacle" hall as well as ample parking space.¹⁴⁴ Both Frey and Bignens mention the Rockefeller Center as an obvious point of comparison. But construction on the Rockefeller Center did not commence before 1932. It is doubtful that Scotoni, in 1927 and 1929, had learned from the plans for the Rockefeller Center and imitated them in Lausanne. Scotoni drew inspiration from different sources. While the authors of his *festschrift* acknowledge that he had noticed "American construction habits, the standardization of building material as well as furnishings" such as doors and windows, they also caution that such experiences cannot simply be transposed from America to a country such as Switzerland. As the authors of the Scotoni *festschrift* point out, tiny Switzerland had not even standardized voltage yet while millions of Americans were using the same electric power.¹⁴⁵

Scotoni was a modernizer, if not a modernist. Originally Italian, his family had first come to Switzerland in 1879 to work on the construction of the Gotthard tunnel. Once established in Zurich, Scotoni Sr.'s success rested on his "cost and time saving ideas".¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, using these words Scotoni's biographers employed the same language commonly used to advertise American methods and products. Since "American" was

¹⁴⁴ *Vom Bauen*, 18; Bignens 76; Frey, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Vom Bauen*, 30.

¹⁴⁶ *Vom Bauen*, 12.

synonymous with "time and labor saving" or "practical", they might as well have referred to Scotoni as Americanized. Scotoni Sr. was also among the first owners of a telephone or car in Zurich. Most tellingly, Scotoni was very much interested in film. He had built the Apollo Theater, one of Zurich's movie palaces,¹⁴⁷ and was, until 1935, a major investor in the Nazi-controlled Terra-Film production company in Berlin. Bignens and Frey make special note of Scotoni's affinity for the Nazis. Indeed, Scotoni seems to have been inspired as much by Nazism as by Americanism. At any rate, the fact that the Bel-Air Métropole also housed a movie theater cannot be attributed only to Scotoni's knowledge of American models, but is clearly related to his involvement in the film industry. The much-cited Radio City Music Hall, as part of the Rockefeller Center could not really have been a reference point for Scotoni: The Hall was finished in 1932, the same year as the Bel-Air Métropole.

It is therefore difficult to suggest that the Radio City Music Hall was a model Scotoni had in mind when he built the Bel-Air Métropole. Rather, the comparison was made in hindsight. The *festschrift* to honor Scotoni was published in 1939, and the Rockefeller Center had just been finished. Le Corbusier had pronounced his opinion about New York skyscrapers after his trip in 1935/36. The completion of the Rockefeller Center in 1937 amazed the

¹⁴⁷ Christoph Bignens, *Kinos - Architektur als Marketing: Kino als massenkulturelle Institution, Themen der Kinoarchitektur, Zürcher Kinos 1900-1963* (Zürich: Verlag Hans Rohr, 1988),118.

Swiss: The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* titled "36 stories in 43 days".¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the Rockefeller Center grabbed the Swiss popular as well as avant-garde imagination. Le Corbusier accepted the Rockefeller Center as successful architecture even if he felt that overall New York's skyscrapers were too small. Siegfried Giedion, in 1941, dwelled on the Rockefeller Center as a textbook example for the civic center or public space "in the great city of our age." In the Rockefeller Center, Giedion wrote, the future was foreseeable.¹⁴⁹ The Rockefeller Center became a special, favored reference point for all Swiss thinking about architecture. Comparing the *Bel-Air Métropole* to the Rockefeller Center was an anachronism, but also a special expression of appreciation. After World War II, certainly today, a reader of Swiss architectural history might conclude that the first Swiss high-rise was largely derivative, its builder entirely Americanized. Yet at the time, evoking American examples was to show the level of Swiss success. *Amerikanismus* did not yet have the negative connotations of cultural colonization, etc. "Amerikanismus" meant that one was able to employ modern technology, that Switzerland had progressed on the path to rationalization and standardization.

This leaves one more point to be made with regard to the public debate: the politics surrounding the construction of the first high-rise. It is worth noting that it was not one of the modernists or a member of CIAM who

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Bignens, 61.

¹⁴⁹ *Time/Space*, 569.

built the first Swiss high-rise edifice. Scotoni, a builder with Nazi affinities, rather than an avant-garde theoretician with left-wing orientation, was able to win the debate against (religious) traditionalists who feared for the wholesomeness of Swiss culture.

Despite the 1932 example in Lausanne and despite the recognition that Switzerland had been enriched by a modern and progressive example of architecture, the Swiss remained largely skeptical about high-rises. Even the modernist avant-garde did not push high-rise buildings as much as one might have expected. To be sure, Le Corbusier had famously declared New York's skyscrapers too small, but his own multi-family buildings, the *Clareté* in Geneva or *L'Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille though large buildings, were by no means awe-inspiring high-rises. As *Bauhaus* and other European architects, Swiss modernists were preoccupied foremost with affordable working class family housing. Despite visionary concepts of a "radiant city", in reality worker's housing was not associated with landmark high-rises or skyscrapers. Even today it seems strange to think of high-rises at one and the same time as architectural landmarks and housing. The mental "image" of the high-rise does not really evoke family housing. Thus, the modern Swiss architects built and shaped some sizeable housing projects and residential estates, but no real high-rises. The return to the values of the fatherland in the context of the "*geistige Landesverteidigung*" had stifled any enthusiasm that might have existed for high-rises. Schneider points out that in the 1940s

hostility toward any big city notions was widespread, which made a discussion about such urban phenomena as high-rises virtually impossible.¹⁵⁰ Zurich, Switzerland's biggest city, was to obtain an identity precisely as a city without any high-rise deserving of that name.

In the 1950s, the high-rise debate in Zurich started up again. A number of prominent public figures came out in favor of high-rises. We already saw Max Frisch's contribution. Armin Meili, the director of the Swiss National Exhibition in 1939, entered the debate in 1950 with the question "Does Zurich need high-rises?" and proceeded to provide his own answer: Yes. Zurich, according to Meili should not become another Manhattan, "but a measured use of high-rises can give a city a noble imprint."¹⁵¹ Meili suggested the construction of some high-rises outside Zurich's old town, but nevertheless close enough to shape Zurich's skyline. Meili could also claim to be knowledgeable about skyscrapers: At the time, he was building the Swiss Center in Milan, a 75-meter structure and as such Milan's first high-rise.¹⁵²

The renowned artist Max Bill joined Max Frisch and Armin Meili as another prominent proponent of high-rise buildings in Zurich, proposing rather Corbusian structures in the green.¹⁵³ But these "public intellectuals" favoring high-rises remained comparatively small in number. Political leaders

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Schneider, "Die Grossstadt -- des Schweizers Wunsch oder Albtraum?" *Medienheft Dossier 17* (25 January 2002), 38-44. Available at www.medienheft.ch.

¹⁵¹ "eine massvolle Anwendung von Hochhäusern vermag einer Stadt ein edles Gepräge zu verleihen"; quoted in *American Way*, 62.

¹⁵² *American Way*, 63

¹⁵³ *American Way*, 63.

and the population continued to think differently, and two main objections to high-rises resurfaced: High-rises were considered undesirable because it was unhygienic to make people live in such dense concentration. Apart from problems with hygiene, high-rises were expected to create, as it were, an "unhealthy" urban growth. Manhattan was considered such an unwholesome place (Le Corbusier, Giedion and others agreed with this assessment, however highlighting one notable exception: the Rockefeller Center). Consequently, promoters of high-rises avoided American examples, referring to the situation in Scandinavia or the Netherlands instead (Schneider 39). Otherwise, the arguments in favor of high-rises remained largely academic, focusing on modern aesthetics or notions of urban identity. In the popular imagination, high-rises continued to be symbols not only of progress and the highest standards of technology, but also of uncontrolled growth and lack of *Gemütlichkeit*. Max Frisch addressed these unfavorable views in his radio play *Funkgespräch* (see above), but the public's attitude hardly changed: Even if the benefits of high-rises (e.g. saving natural resources) were recognized, people as a rule would rather avoid living in a "Block", or cube, as large buildings were known.

The relatively few high-rises that managed to be built in this climate in Zurich somewhat paradoxically grew taller in every decade. While buildings of the 1950s measured some 30 meters (12 stories), later buildings

reached 50 meters (18 stories) and finally in the 1970s even 90 meters.¹⁵⁴

Despite the construction of a number of such high-rises, the six-story apartment building remained the norm in Zurich.

As difficult as it may be to understand the Swiss and certainly Zurich's aversion to growth, this peculiar cultural trait survived until recent years. In the 1980s, the then director of Zurich's building authority famously declared, "Zurich is built."¹⁵⁵ In 1984, a law was passed that actually prohibited the construction of high-rises in the center of the city.

Different economic, demographic or cultural developments shaped and directed the "high-rise debate" in every decade. Thus, in the 1960s, Zurich's population had dwindled while the agglomeration expanded. This brought commuting and more generally traffic to the center of public attention. Major Swiss autobahns were built in this period. The oil crisis and ensuing recession in the 1970s eventually gave the debate an environmental twist, leading to the zero growth mentality of the 80s. Most recently, yet another force shaped the urban development: A new generation of "public figures", most noticeably trendsetters such as the video artist Pipilotti Rist, discovered urban life and began associating it positively with living in tall

¹⁵⁴ Schneider, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted by Felix Aeppli, "Auf dem Sprung in die europäische Champions League," in *Die Schweiz und Zürich -- Zürich und die Schweiz*, ed. Kenneth Angst (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2001), 121-134.

buildings.¹⁵⁶ Before, living a trendy urban life in Zurich usually meant that a person lived in an old town apartment that had been remodeled in a modern fashion. Decades earlier Max Frisch had even asked architects why they preferred living in these renovated old apartments instead of (possibly their own) modern buildings somewhere in a new section of the city? Small wonder then, that when a new "trend upward" set in, it sparked yet another debate.¹⁵⁷

This most recent debate can be called "postmodern" for two reasons: First, although ideology or *weltanschauung* has not disappeared completely, the argumentation about high-rise buildings is less ideological than in previous decades, in the sense that building a high-rise is no longer viewed "holistically" in terms of all-encompassing cultural or environmental philosophies. Architecture is certainly no longer propagated as an instrument for transforming society (as the avant-garde had done). Second, concerns for the function of a building seem to be abandoned in favor of a building's value as a "landmark", as a means to provide a city with its "unique character" or "charisma" ("Ausstrahlung"). The United States are certainly mentioned in

¹⁵⁶ This brief summary draws on Schneider's account of the changing Swiss attitudes toward high-rises. Most recently, Plinio Bachmann tried to capture Zurich's ambivalence about high-rises in an article entitled "Du sollst dich nicht erheben" in *Die Weltwoche*, 4 May 2005, 80-82.

¹⁵⁷ This passage is based on a number of newspaper articles such as: sel., "Das Hochhaus -- Feindbild oder Freundbild," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 November 2001, 40; Eva Mackert, "Hochhäuser: Was machen andere?" *Tages-Anzeiger*, 24 November 2001, 16.

this context, but by no means as the sole reference point. As the promoters of high-rises in the 50s had been aware of the negative image of Manhattan as a filthy or unhealthful place, promoters can nowadays refer to successful and attractive examples from the world over. Skyscrapers, skylines or simply high-rise buildings can be called truly international. Worldwide they are broadly viewed as modern. The language of skyscraper architecture has become universal, a *lingua franca* to project prosperity and modernity.

Autobahn

The 1964 National Exhibition was dedicated to "progress". Unlike at the 1939 National Exhibition, emphasis was placed on showing how progressive Switzerland was. In fact, 1964 happened to be about the middle of two decades of progress and *Wirtschaftswunder*. But the exhibition did not follow the suggestion that Frisch, Burkhart and Kutter had made in their 1954 pamphlet "*achtung: Die Schweiz*". Instead of building a pioneering model city, the fair highlighted the achievements in autobahn construction. "The national road system, encapsulated in the capital letter N, became the epitome of the Nation", writes Peter von Matt. Routes N1 (east-west) and N2 (north-south) formed the modern Swiss cross in concrete and " added up to the antithesis of the redoubt ("Reduit") in the war year." Progress meant

Switzerland was opening up to Europe.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, the desire to build a network of Swiss autobahns was rooted in a domestic need to link the Swiss cities as well as in the vision of Switzerland as a transit county between Germany and Italy. In 1924, Europe's first stretch of autobahn had been opened near Milan, and in the 1930s the National-Socialist and Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy pursued vigorous autobahn construction programs. For years, the goal was to connect Hamburg with Genoa via Basel and Zurich. The first international autobahn congress was convened in 1931 in Geneva.¹⁵⁹ The context in which the autobahn system was projected was decidedly European. Important goals were the fight against the "scourge of unemployment" as well as making a contribution to peace between nations. However, the rise of Nazism and Fascism slowed the enthusiasm for such a European endeavor; particularly Fascist Italy resisted any plans to link its autobahn to a European network.¹⁶⁰ During the war, one of the critics' main concerns regarding the autobahn, its military use, proved painfully true.

By the time the first stretch of autobahn could be built in 1955 in Switzerland, the context had shifted considerably. The autobahn did not connect big cities or economic centers with the neighboring countries, but

¹⁵⁸ Peter von Matt, "Ein Land sucht sein wahres Gesicht," in *Handbuch der Schweizerischen Volkskunde*, 3 vols., ed. Paul Hugger (Zurich: Offizin, 1992), 7-14.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Heller and Andreas Volk, eds., *Die Schweizer Autobahn*, (Zurich: Museum für Gestaltung, 1999), 37.

¹⁶⁰ *Autobahn*, 44

urban areas with the mountains. The post-war economic miracle had made privately owned vehicles available to many Swiss and created a desire for weekend outings to the mountains.¹⁶¹ Thus, the first Swiss autobahns were more akin to the parkways in the United States of which by the mid-50s a number of Swiss travelers, from Le Corbusier to Giedion and Frisch, had reported enthusiastically. In 1960, when the Swiss Law on National Routes was adopted, the autobahn, of course, added other "meanings" and purposes beyond the idea of a parkway. The national route system was to become by far the biggest national construction project and the economic artery of the land. Nevertheless, culturally speaking, the autobahn retained some of its parkway identity. For many Swiss the autobahn was as much a road for "car strolling", or a "Flanierstrasse",¹⁶² as it was a commuter route.

Urban expressways in the United States were even more explicitly used as models for Swiss projects of "city autobahns".¹⁶³ George Kammann showed in his study on expressway projects that bureaucrats in the respective federal offices indeed hoped to find an "American solution" to the increasing traffic problems in Swiss cities. In 1955, the entire planning committee of the then Federal Office for Road- and Waterways traveled to the United States.¹⁶⁴ Expressways were praised as the only possible way to preserve the historic

¹⁶¹ *Autobahn*, 46.

¹⁶² *Autobahn*, 67.

¹⁶³ George Kammann, *Mit Autobahnen die Städte Retten? Städtebauliche Ideen und Expressstrassen-Planung in der Schweiz 1954-1964* (Zürich: Chronos, 1990).

¹⁶⁴ Kammann, 105.

centers of Swiss cities. But the "city autobahns" remained projects. The federal officials encountered stiff resistance in the concerned cities, most prominently from architects who argued that expressways ran counter to sensible urban planning. Later, environmental arguments were added against expressways. By 1964 the road planners dropped their projects or shifted concept: Expressways were designed to link different parts of the national routes system. The resulting "Umfahrungsstrassen" or by-passes became largely regional or national in character instead of urban.¹⁶⁵ None of the major Swiss cities has an urban expressway as originally envisioned by the transportation planners. St. Gall may be considered an exception since the autobahn was actually dug under the city and now permits express transit from East to West of the city.¹⁶⁶

The Swiss always cherished individual transportation, perhaps as much as Americans.¹⁶⁷ Despite this common preference, enthusiasm for cars is implicitly labeled as an American trait, certainly if an affinity for cars expresses itself through the ownership of a big American vehicle. The automobile is very much associated with the United States even if many cars are imported from Japan or neighboring European countries. There is a need for such a projection of a country in which "cars roam free" because in

¹⁶⁵ Kammann, 177.

¹⁶⁶ See also Kammann, 149.

¹⁶⁷ For different accounts of the emotional attachment to cars and individual transportation see: *Autolust: Ein Buch über die Emotionen des Autofahrens*. ed. Stapferhaus Lenzburg. (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2002).

Switzerland, as elsewhere in Europe, it has become "politically questionable" to be unequivocally pro automobile. Environmental concerns have created strong currents of "anti-automobile" sentiments throughout Europe. At the same time, American cars and driving on endless, straight highways has been even more firmly placed in the image of America. Arguably, American cars will remain big gas hogs in the European imagination long after US car manufacturers stop producing such "ships" (as they are known in German). To environmentally concerned Europeans the stereotype confirms that Americans are politically retrograde wasters of world resources; to others, American cars stand for the mobility they cannot unabashedly allow themselves in Europe. While it is true that people may drive their cars long distances on international vacation (e.g. from Zurich to Spain), they are not as likely to accept long drives at home. Long drives are often perceived as unreasonable. Similarly, using public transportation within the city is almost considered a civic duty (which, to be sure, not all live up to). Big American cars, finally, are a rare sight on European roads, which confirms that they form part of the image of America but don't necessarily appeal to popular tastes. Such attitudes towards driving and cars illustrate that unwritten cultural conventions, rather than laws, determine personal attitudes and ultimately regulate, or confine, Swiss mobility.

This perception that the autobahn and automobile culture came from America has largely resulted from the United States's being ahead by a

number of years, even decades. Car ownership was long much more widespread and "democratic" in the United States than in Switzerland. In 1937, for instance, 222 automobiles were counted for every 1000 inhabitants in the United States. Switzerland reached this degree of car ownership in the mid-1970s.¹⁶⁸ Yet unlike the 1956 Interstate Highway Act in the United States, the Swiss Law on National Routes did not foster private transportation exclusively and drive public transportation into ruin. Switzerland continued to promote alternative forms of mass transportation.

Thus, by 2000, four out of five Swiss households owned at least one automobile, or 100 Swiss households owned 117 cars. However, 47% of urban one-person households and 30% of all urban households did not own a car at all. Preferred modes of transportation were "slow transportation" (on foot or bicycle) or by car. Daily, the Swiss spend over 40% of the time spent in traffic on foot or a bicycle. Distance-wise, however, the Swiss cover over 69% of their daily distance in their personal car. Obviously, there would be considerable differences between urban and rural areas in mobility behavior. More surprisingly, there are significant differences between the linguistic areas: While the German-Swiss use their own cars 38.6% of the time spent as traffic participants, this figure rises to 49.9% in French-speaking and to 56% in Italian-speaking Switzerland. In terms of car usage, the German-Swiss, on whom the present study focuses, are considerably less "Americanized" than

¹⁶⁸ Hans-Rudolf Galliker, *Tramstadt. Öffentlicher Nahverkehr und Stadtentwicklung am Beispiel Zürichs* (Zürich: Chronos, 1997), 114.

their French- or Italian-speaking compatriots.¹⁶⁹

Even if the Swiss were planning and building their autobahn system with America in mind -- which was certainly true for a number of influential figures in the process -- and even if the Swiss have as much a penchant toward individual transportation as the Americans, the historical development makes clear that the National Routes system was very much a product of Swiss culture.

To be sure, the fact that so many Swiss engineers or architects in history and in various fields of expertise looked to America for models is itself a fascinating cultural phenomenon. But it does not sufficiently explain Swiss development as a process of Americanization, as many authors have suggested. The particular situation in Switzerland always produced Swiss solutions. Thus, the organizers of the show "The Swiss Autobahn" in Zurich's *Museum für Gestaltung* (Museum of Design) write that the Swiss autobahn is the result of typically Swiss ways of thinking and working. In their view, the Swiss autobahn is typically Swiss in that it's a "belated pioneer achievement".¹⁷⁰ That is to say, compared to other countries, Switzerland started rather late, but the conceptual phase was comparatively short. The construction of major Swiss autobahns then coincided with the educational

¹⁶⁹ All information on mobility and individual transportation choices in 2000 in Switzerland are based on: *Mobilität in der Schweiz. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2000 zum Verkehrsverhalten*. Bern: Bundesamt für Statistik und Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung, 2001.

¹⁷⁰ *Autobahn*, 12-13.

campaign "Die gute Form" of the Swiss *Werkbund*.¹⁷¹ As the authors/organizers of the Museum of Design point out, Swiss autobahns are remarkably well designed: functional or "instrumental-rational" ("zweckrational"), low-key and restrained. Comparing products that received the *Werkbund's* "good form award" to the autobahn reveals the same Swiss mentality, the authors write, namely "pretentious modesty".¹⁷² We might add another Swiss trait that clearly left its mark on the autobahn: perfectionism. The workmanship in the details is truly striking. There are only clear-cut edges, and no shoulders that bleed into the fields.

It does not seem an exaggeration to suggest that, aesthetically, the Swiss autobahn takes the position of the landmark skyline that Switzerland does not possess. The autobahn changed the visual landscape of Switzerland indelibly. Stretches of the autobahn have become iconic images, albeit not as universally famous as lonely highways reaching straight for the horizon in the American desert West. But again, today aesthetic appreciation is likely to find it easier to detect beauty in a picture of Route 66 than the N2 at Airolo. As with the bridges, images of American roads may well overlay Swiss images on the Swiss mind.

¹⁷¹ "The good form" educational campaign of the *Werkbund* was launched in 1949 and lasted until 1968. Its origins, of course, went further back to Le Corbusier's "spirit of geometry" and the rational functionalism propagated by the avant-garde. In response to American "streamlining", in 1946 the *Werkbund* dedicated an entire issue of its journal *Das Werk* to industrial design. Aerodynamic forms were frowned upon by the disciples of Le Corbusier. True beauty was practical, clear in form, and certainly not trendy. It was not acceptable to cater to the tastes of the masses, basing design decisions on consumer research.

¹⁷² *Autobahn*, 14.

Driving to the *Shopyland*

After reading this insistence on the Swissness of the development of Swiss architecture and civil engineering, a critic might immediately point to another example of American influence in the Swiss visual landscape: The creation of shopping centers at the crossroads of major autobahns. The first such shopping center, the *Shopy Spreitenbach* was opened near Zurich in March 1970, followed by the Pizolpark near Sargans¹⁷³ in November 1970. After just ten years, the construction of shopping centers came to a halt.¹⁷⁴ The Swiss shopping centers on the side of the autobahn are not malls. They are smaller in size and house fewer stores. *Migros*, Switzerland's biggest "purveyor of everything", was instrumental in the spread and construction of shopping centers. Today, the typical center houses a Migros food mart, a Migros restaurant, a Migros do-it-yourself store, a Migros clothing and sporting goods store, a Migros electronics store plus a number of smaller specialty stores (such as a shoe store). Outside, the consumer can gas up at the Migrol gas station. Migros is the biggest domestic company of Switzerland, employing almost one percent of the population and holding an overall market share of 16 percent. In food retail alone, its market share is 24

¹⁷³ May I add: And only about 15 minutes' drive away from where I grew up in neighboring Liechtenstein.

¹⁷⁴ Christian Felix, "Shopping Center Ralley," *Die Schweizer Autobahn*. eds. Martin Heller and Andreas Volk (Zurich: Museum für Gestaltung, 1999), 215.

percent.¹⁷⁵

Gottlieb Duttweiler (1888-1962), the founder of Migros, was something of a kindred spirit of Henry Ford: a paternalistic entrepreneur with strong social involvement. In fact, his business, the Migros, was from the beginning intended to make a difference socially. Starting out by selling basic foodstuff inexpensively, Duttweiler moved into non-food consumer goods, gasoline, book and newspaper publishing, banking, insurances and education, and politics. In 1941, Duttweiler transformed Migros from an incorporated company into cooperative society, and it remains so today. As a member of parliament, Duttweiler championed the consumer with little money and took a strong interest in social engineering. As a retailer, Duttweiler worried about consumerism and Migros to this day refuses to sell alcohol because of its effect on the working class.

Duttweiler was a frequent traveler to the United States in the 1910s. Taylor and Ford clearly influenced him and he specifically imitated the methods of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company¹⁷⁶ when he started his Swiss retail revolution.¹⁷⁷ Most of all, he was interested in rationalizing and systematizing retail. He first focused on the distribution of staple food at

¹⁷⁵ The most recent figures of 1999 were drawn from: *Der Migros-Kosmos. Zur Geschichte eines aussergewöhnlichen Schweizer Unternehmens.* eds. Katja Girschik, Albrecht Ritschl, Thomas Welskopp (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2003). The Migros history has been written in previous books, both published by the company itself: Alfred A. Häsler, *Das Abenteuer Migros: Die 60 Jahre junge Idee* (Zürich: Migros Genossenschaftsbund, 1985); Hans Munz, *Das Phänomen Migros. Die Geschichte der Migros-Gemeinschaft*, ed. Duttweiler-Foundation (Zurich: Ex Libris, 1973).

¹⁷⁶ *Migros-Kosmos*, 61.

¹⁷⁷ *American Way*, 126-127.

lowest possible prices. Promoting consumption for profit was not on his mind. Much like Henry Ford, who only reluctantly added design alternatives to his Model T automobile, Duttweiler felt that consumers would always buy what is best and least expensive. What could design or packaging be good for? "Inexpensive" was virtually his only selling proposition in the first decades. Accordingly, advertisement was artless, purely factual or educational. Early on Duttweiler sought advice on nutrition from a "hygienist" ("nutritionists" probably did not exist yet). Thus, Migros advertising in conjunction with its own consumer publication "The Bridgebuilder" engaged in enlightening the people about a balanced diet. "A cheese-day per week" was promoted both in terms of the nutritional aspects of cheese and the benefits for domestic agriculture.¹⁷⁸ In his political newspaper, *Die Tat*, Duttweiler fought vociferously against the "high price policies" of his competitors¹⁷⁹ or frivolous advertisements that stimulated the purchase of "luxury" goods.

Duttweiler's fight against "high-price policies" on behalf of the working class caused much criticism, particularly when the stationary Migros stores grew in number. The rationalization and standardization of retail practices came under attack mostly because Migros threatened the existence of traditional grocery store owners. Once more rationalization was identified as "Americanization", and the criticism took on a rather anti-American form.

¹⁷⁸ Examples of Migros advertisements can be found in *Migros-Kosmos*.

¹⁷⁹ *American Way*, 127.

Ironically, some of the measures taken against Migros and "Migros-type" developments were also borrowed from the United States. Christina Börner points out in *Migros-Kosmos* that Swiss legislation adopted in response to the spread and success of Migros strongly resembled American anti-trust laws against chain stores.¹⁸⁰

Although Duttweiler was not a member of the aesthetic avant-garde, he espoused similar convictions: a focus on the needs of the working class, an "instrumental-rational" (or functionalist) approach, pragmatism without frills. Duttweiler began revolutionizing distribution in the mid-1920s when he started delivering staple groceries in customized Ford trucks to villages and neighborhoods. The trucks could quickly be turned into a booth. The convertability of the trucks was associated with the Pullman wagon the cabins of which could easily change functions for daytime or nighttime travel. The "architectural avant-garde" traveling in the United States had applauded his functionalism (who, reminder).¹⁸¹ The Migros trucks not only made possible bringing inexpensive staples to the people who were most appreciative of low costs, but also allowed Duttweiler to rationalize labor dramatically: The driver was at the same time salesperson and bookkeeper in his "shop".¹⁸² Functionality and simplicity also characterized the Migros stores that were built starting in 1926. Simple box-like structures again were

¹⁸⁰ *Migros-Kosmos*, 61.

¹⁸¹ *American Way*, 126.

¹⁸² *Migros-Kosmos*, 40ff.; Bignens, 127.

chosen to keep costs as low as possible. Migros "did not plan or promote" its "box"; indeed it was even opposed to creating a Migros type or identity. Despite such a "Fordish" dislike for "styling" for advertising or marketing purposes, Migros's "non-architecture" flourished.¹⁸³ The Migros-aesthetics even continued to be effective in the 1970s when it shaped the shopping centers.

Although Migros did not open Switzerland's first self-service store,¹⁸⁴ it spearheaded the popularization of this form of retailing that invited customers to look for products in what was essentially a big warehouse. Self-service was an import from the United States and was long associated with the "America way of life". Sibylle Brändli, in her chapter on the development of self-service stores, recapitulates in some detail the ambivalent Swiss attitude toward this new form of shopping.¹⁸⁵ In response to the controversy following the introduction of self-service stores, the Migros Cooperative Society developed a strategy to detach the perceived progressiveness from the "Americanization-odium" and connote self-service with positive sensual attributes of shopping.¹⁸⁶ An "increase in hygiene" was also highlighted in self-service stores since "nobody who took money also touched the

¹⁸³ Serge Steiner, "Architektur und Corporate Identity bei der Migros. Der Einsatz von Architektur zur Schaffung einer Unternehmensidentität -- Die Migros als Beispiel," in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, vol 58 no. 3 (2001), 209-215.

¹⁸⁴ In 1946, the EPA-chain opened the first self-service store in Geneva. The store was based on Woolworth's dime stores.

¹⁸⁵ Sibylle Brändli, *Der Supermarkt im Kopf. Konsumkultur und Wohlstand in der Schweiz nach 1945* (Wien: Böhlau, 2000).

¹⁸⁶ Brändli, 67.

groceries".¹⁸⁷ Brändli uncovered a report of a Migros delegation that traveled to the United States in 1961 to further study American retail practices.¹⁸⁸

They ended up exploring their own ambivalence about modernization into the bargain. In their report they reflected on consumerism and wastefulness, as Brändli writes. Today, grocery stores all seem to be operated in the same fashion, making obsolete the label "American", no matter whether it's intended positively or negatively.¹⁸⁹

Systemgastronomie: Running restaurants the American way

Every generation discovers its own form of "Americanization". Today, the complaints are more likely to be about Coca-Colonization or McDonaldization.¹⁹⁰ The first McDonald's in Switzerland was opened in 1976 in Geneva. By 2003, McDonald's operated 142 restaurants and 69

¹⁸⁷ Quotation in Brändli, 73.

¹⁸⁸ Sibylle Brändli, "'Wives in the Avocados, Babies in the Tomatos.' eine Migros-Delegation auf Reisen in den Amerikanischen Supermärkten," in *Bilder des Andern: TRAVERSE Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 1/1996, 104-116.

¹⁸⁹ Ironically, today the opposite of self-service is recognized and even frowned upon as "typically American": the bagging of groceries offered at the cashier in American stores. Although a Swiss might appreciate the kindness and friendliness of the baggers when visiting the United States, he or she is likely to disapprove of this low-wage "Mac job", mostly for political reasons. Personally, I can attest to never feeling quite comfortable about bagging, no matter for how many years I appreciated its convenience. Like shoe shining, bagging stirs unease because such labor seems below the dignity of a person. Originally, the roles in Swiss stores were reversed: The grocery was handed to you over the counter and you put it in your own bag and carried it home by yourself. The American role reversal appears strange even after the self-service part has become customary in Switzerland. The "U-scans" and "self-checkouts" would seem the way to go.

¹⁹⁰ As I write this, I notice that the spell-checker of my Apple Macintosh version of the Word word processing program recognizes Coca-Colonization as a correct word, while it underlines as questionable McDonaldization, no matter how I spell it. See George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, Revised New Century Edition (London: Sage Publications, 2004).

"McDrives" in Switzerland (www.mcdonalds.ch). One of the first McDonald's hotels worldwide was opened near Zurich airport in 2001.¹⁹¹ These figures also make clear that McDonald's is quite popular among the Swiss, which made it profitable, if not always "easy" to establish a large number of outlets in Switzerland. This is all the more significant bearing in mind that in the past decades during which McDonald's grew in Switzerland the chain became a primary target of anti-American criticism and even violence. As elsewhere, the opening of McDonald's restaurants in some Swiss locations caused protest. I remember while I was a student in Zurich one McDonald's was put out of commission for a day or two through a "stench attack" with butyric acid.

My hometown now proudly features the only McDonald's restaurant -- with a "McDrive" -- in Liechtenstein. But when McDonald's came to us in 1996 it triggered not only welcoming enthusiasm. I was a speechwriter for the Mayor then and had to write him a speech for the opening ceremony. He, and the entire town council, favored this new business in our town and argued that they could not oppose the opening of a new restaurant if the restaurateur had all the qualifications and certificates. Interestingly, the franchisee had previously worked as the chef in one of Liechtenstein's fine dining restaurants. His credentials were unassailable, but not so those of McDonald's. A rather small and not very well organized group tried to

¹⁹¹ *American Way*, 134.

convince the town council that McDonald's should be forced to use "real" dishes and silverware for two reasons, an environmental and an economic one: Liechtenstein should not be allowed to be trashed with McDonald's wrappers and McDonald's should not be given an unfair competitive advantage by being exempt from using real tableware. But Liechtenstein's business environment proved too liberal for such government interference. In the speech I wrote, the Mayor did address the environmental problem, calling on McDonald's to make available plenty of trash cans around the restaurant and admonishing the customers to do as they were brought up: put your trash in the can where it belongs. Apart from that, the mayor wanted instructions on how to eat a burger. He had never done so before.

What continued to irk the critics was a (perceived) favorable treatment of McDonald's. Klaus Schatzmann, another chef and owner of a restaurant in the immediate neighborhood of the new McDonald's, spelled it out in a letter to the editors: Why was McDonald's allowed to erect this "oversize phallus" with an M on top in front of the restaurant? When he had opened his own restaurant twelve years earlier, he had to comply with specific and rigorous regulations about the size, height and illumination of the signs. McDonald's was allowed "unaesthetic giantism". And how did we ever come to accept that everything that was coming from "over yonder" had to be bigger and bombastic? Klaus Schatzmann, who has made a name for himself that annually crops up in "blue" or other culinary guides, consoled

himself by concluding that in the future giving directions to new customers who had heard about his cooking would be much easier: "We are located behind the McDonald's Dinosaur."¹⁹²

Not all letters to the editor were as even-tempered. Martin Wachter pulled out all the stops in an essentially anti-American tirade. American non-culture had come to Liechtenstein. McDonald's was allowed to build a monumental "plastic-neon-kitsch-tower" and Liechtenstein's gastronomy sank into a "very deep hole". Wachter envisioned mountains of trash and crowds of trashy people, clad in "Stretchjeans" around their monstrous waists. The "sneaker and sweat suit crowd" would bring ruin to table manners with their habit of sipping out of plastic cups as if they had never been weaned from their pacifiers, and "putting their elbows in the Coca-Cola-puddle on the table." The only advantage he could imagine to having a McDonald's in Liechtenstein: We would not have to drive to Switzerland for "cheap food" anymore.¹⁹³

Wachter's rant is not unusual. It contains a series of common gibes against American "Un-Kultur". In hindsight, his remark about the "sweat suit crowd" seems particularly striking. Today this mark of "trashiness" would more commonly be attributed to immigrants from the former Yugoslavia.

Apparently in the mid-90s, this particular form of casual- or slovenliness was

¹⁹² Klaus Schatzmann, "McDonaldosaurus Rex," letter to the editor, *Liechtensteiner Volksblatt*, Monday, 29 April 1996, 6.

¹⁹³ Martin Wachter, "Der neue Stern am Gastro-Firmament," letter to the editor, *Liechtensteiner Volksblatt*, 4 May 1996.

still considered American. This goes to show that the tenor of rhetoric against American "Un-Kultur" remains remarkably constant while the attributes and phenomena used to describe it change with the circumstances.

It is safe to say that currently a new McDonald's in Switzerland hardly rouses anti-American sentiment. Wachter had "warned" that other American restaurants, Pizza Hut, KFC, etc. would follow McDonald's. And they did. But few Swiss seemed to care.

Most recently, the "reception" of Starbucks in Switzerland caused little more than amused amazement. The "McDonaldization of coffee" was noticed and occasionally commented on, but commentators seemed mostly astonished at how readily Starbucks was accepted in Zurich and Vienna. Starbucks combined Austria and Switzerland into one market and opened its first coffeehouse on the Continent in 2001 in Zurich. The Swiss have had their own distinct coffee culture (albeit not nearly as famous as the Viennese one), combining different "coffee habits" from neighboring countries and cultures. This openness may have made the Swiss particularly receptive to a coffeehouse that actually offered coffees in various "styles" from various cultures. In an American coffeehouse it became possible to drink coffee the Viennese way in Zurich. Despite this explanation, Starbucks' immediate success in Zurich and Vienna remains remarkable, considering that age-old habits were "broken into". Vienna was saturated with its own Viennese *Kaffeehäuser* that had even become the stuff of literature. The image of

literati and bohemian-types philosophizing and politicizing over coffee and a glass of tap water in a smoke filled Viennese *Kaffeehaus* was a powerful stereotype. A Starbucks coffeehouse seemed entirely superfluous, and opening a smoke-free coffeehouse seemed entirely hopeless to boot. Yet "despite dire predictions and a ban on smoking", Starbucks was successful from the start in Vienna.¹⁹⁴

As the smoking ban illustrates, Starbucks sells not only coffee, but a "Lebensgefühl" or lifestyle. The Austrians, "who tend to see things worse if they are bad"¹⁹⁵ provide the starkest example: They seem to have changed their mood. Starbucks advertisers played with the concept of a "Nichtraucherzone" or non-smoking area, and declared Austria a "Nichtraunerzone" or non-grumbling zone.¹⁹⁶ Just like American Starbucks customers, Austrian caffeine enthusiasts have even discovered the coffeehouse as a "dating location" (even in English). The *Kaffeehaus* literati and philosophers seem to have morphed into singles seeking romance with a cup of coffee.

The McDonaldization of Switzerland perhaps progressed more smoothly than expected because there has been a Swiss tradition of

¹⁹⁴ Steven Erlanger, "An American Coffeehouse (or 4) in Vienna," *The New York Times*, Late Edition - Final, Saturday, 1 June 2002, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Eric Pfanner, "What's Doing in Vienna," *The New York Times* (travel section), Sunday, 15 September 2002.

¹⁹⁶ Pfanner in NYT.

Systemgastronomie, to use the German term for the American way of running a restaurant. The architect Albert Frey, who had come to the United States in 1929, published an article on "transit architecture", namely gas stations and fast food restaurants, in 1930,¹⁹⁷ introducing the rather small readership of *Das Werk* to the American phenomenon of Drive-Ins. Ueli Prager (1916-1982), son of a Zurich hotelier,¹⁹⁸ grasped the concept and implemented it in his own chain of Mövenpick restaurants starting in 1948, the same year Migros introduced self-service stores. In 1948, the Mövenpick Snackbar in Zürich was praised in the media for its American-style stools at a U-shaped lunch counter and its "sober-minded" ("sachlich") American character.¹⁹⁹ This first fast food restaurant or snack bar was all the more remarkable because it introduced a new type of restaurant in an established environment: an office building in the city (Claridenhof, Dreikönigsstrasse 21). The lifestyle of white-collar workers must have been such at the time that it welcomed the "American-type" snack next to the European-style business lunch. The start opening and success of Mövenpick are testimony to the modernization of daily working life in Switzerland. Apart from snacks, Mövenpick became famous for excellent coffee and ice cream. Markus Kutter (who was one of the three, with Max Frisch and Lucius Burckhart, who proposed the construction of an entirely new city) credited Prager for his

¹⁹⁷ *American Way*, 132.

¹⁹⁸ Bignens notes that father Prager was an active member of the Swiss Friends of the United States. His hotel was the association's headquarters for years (*American Way*, 134).

¹⁹⁹ *American Way*, 134.

fine instincts in the development of gastronomy in Switzerland. Prager was comparable to Duttweiler, Kutter writes, "master in giving American achievements a distinct Swiss imprint."²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ "Er war darin mit Gottlieb Duttweiler zu vergleichen, der ein Meister darin war, amerikanischen Errungenschaften eine schweizerische Prägung aufzudrücken." In "Veränderungen", personal essay published on Kutter's website, www.markuskutter.ch.

Chapter 2

Amerikabilder in Swiss Literature

*Not a word here that not anybody else could
have been written, perhaps even better...
Did one have to travel to America
to compose sentences like these?*

*Hanno Helbling, Discovering America*²⁰¹

In the course of my studies of US-Swiss cultural relations, I became increasingly aware of the importance of American culture in my own life. While many Europeans attested to the influence of American movies in their formative years, others pointed to the first books they read: Max Frisch's literary childhood companions were *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Don Quixote*.²⁰² Emil Zopfi also says that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was "the first book he ever heard about." Then came *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.²⁰³ My own hero was *Huckleberry Finn*. I remember reading *Robinson Crusoe* and *Huckleberry Finn* as a child, but only the latter sparked a "verifiable" reader's

²⁰¹ Hanno Helbling, "Discovering America," in *The dream never becomes reality. 24 Swiss Writers Challenge the United States*. eds. Cornelius Schnauber, Romey Sabalius, Gene O. Stimpson (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1994), 130-131. The quotation is taken from a passage in which Helbling comments on Klaus Mann's texts on America. The first sentence quoted here seems rather awkward. More idiomatically, it could read, "Not a word here that couldn't have been written by anybody else -- perhaps even better..." I thank Bill Stott for this observation.

²⁰² Bircher, 28.

²⁰³ Emil Zopfi, "Images of America" (contribution to a panel discussion at the International Writing Program, Iowa City, 11 November 1998). Available at the author's website: www.zopfi.ch.

response. I once got in trouble in elementary school because I had written something on the wall, signing off as Jimmy. I always imagined Huck and Jim as wearing jeans. I for one wore blue jeans and a jeans jacket as often as I was allowed. (Inexplicably, adults in particular opposed my wearing a jeans jacket.) Later, still a teenager, I received a tracksuit jacket with the lettering USA on the back. At the time, such a jacket was probably the equivalent of a NY cap for today's teenagers. But wearing such insignia has always been an ambivalent thing to do: Clearly, it is regarded as cool most of the time. But showing colors can also provoke a rebuff. I wore the USA jacket once on an ice rink near the ski resort St. Moritz (where my sister and her family live). Jeering was swift and unrelenting: The other kids kept pronouncing USA as one word "usa" which in Swiss-German dialect means "out". Eventually, I did get off the rink.

Many of my choices as a young adult were determined by my image of America, at least to some extent. Days after graduating from high school (Gymnasium) at age 20, I went for an extended vacation to the United States. In the mid-80s I was by no means the only one among my acquaintances who traveled in the United States. Although the dollar was about twice as high as it is today, traveling in America was actually quite affordable. Even if you spent every night in a Motel 6, living in the US was cheaper than in Liechtenstein or Switzerland, as I later found out as a student in Zürich.

I remember that my travels in the US were motivated by the vague, blurry notion that I wanted to see the "real America." In my imagination I must have located this "real America" west of the Mississippi, for I ended up visiting all the trans-Mississippi states except North Dakota within the two

months available to me. This was no coincidence although I did not plan my trip, apart from the determination to visit friends in Minnesota and Dubuque, Iowa, and environs, where my maternal grandfather had lived between 1914 and 1928.

Understandably, those were the places I first visited. After that I wanted to see the vast desolate land out there, Indian sites, a rodeo, etc. I could have gone to see the Hungarian *puszta* or the Australian outback, but I didn't. Apart from picturesque beauty, America, and in particular the America West, must have exerted a special attraction.

In the West, I recall avoiding "touristy" places. I drove quite a distance out of my way (assuming for a moment that I followed a certain route) to see the Grand Canyon, but I stayed only five minutes, perhaps half an hour, because I heard French and German left and right. Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle, where I was alone and heard my first coyote, impressed me much more. In Yellowstone I almost fell over backwards and got kind of paranoid when I saw a license plate from Liechtenstein. North of the park, in the Beartooth Mountains I enjoyed myself more. In sum, my first trip now looks like a somewhat hysterical breakaway.

Even in 1987, when I chose Texas to continue my studies, I followed similar notions. Some people wondered what on earth I was going to study among the cowboys, and others (for similar reasons) applauded my choice. When one of my professors in Zurich suggested that I pick a school in the Northeast or in Canada, I decided on the spot to ignore my acceptance to the University of British Columbia. Choosing Texas was, quite prominently among other motives, the most consciously defiant rejection of well-meant

recommendations at home. Once in Texas, I learned that the state had a reputation of being "super America".

Today, trying to look at my American experiences "objectively," it seems odd how strongly I must have been drawn to see the American West instead of landscapes in Africa, Australia or even Canada. On those continents (or in Canada) it would probably have been easier to escape encountering other folks from the Continent. Clearly, natural beauty and hopes of escape cannot sufficiently explain the fascination with America.

* * *

In recent decades a vast number of studies were done in German Departments on the *Amerikabild* or image of America in German-language literature.²⁰⁴ In fiction and even in travel journalism, *Amerikabilder* turn out

²⁰⁴ Harold Jantz, "The Myths about America: Origins and Extensions," in *Deutschlands literarisches Amerikabild. Neue Forschungen zur Amerikarezeption in der deutschen Literatur.* ed. Alexander Ritter (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977); Manfred Durzak, *Das Amerika-Bild in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur: Historische Voraussetzungen und aktuelle Beispiele* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979); Alfred L. Cobbs, *The Image of America in Postwar German Literature. Reflections and Perceptions* (Bern/Frankfurt/Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1982); Anita Krätzer, *Studien zum Amerikabild in der neueren deutschen Literatur. Max Frisch -- Uwe Johnson -- Hans Magnus Enzensberger und das "Kursbuch"* (Bern/Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982); A. Leslie Willson, ed. *The Image of America in Contemporary German Writing. Dimension Special Issue* (Austin, 1983); Manfred Henningsen, "Risse im amerikanischen Deutschlandbild," *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Europäisches Denken* vol. 38 no. 3 (1984), 424; Paul Michael Lützeler, "Vom Wunschtraum zum Alptraum: Das Bild der USA in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur," in *Zeitgeschichte in Geschichten der Zeit: Deutschsprachige Romane im 20. Jahrhundert.* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), 225-245; Elisabeth Maria Wittig, *The Space of America in the Contemporary European Novel* (Dissertation. Purdue University, 1986); Ulrich Ott, *Amerika*

to be landscapes of the mind. European novelists have little "geographical" interest in the United States, but utilize American settings for their European stories. Quoting an unnamed Dutch critic, Harold Jantz observed early in the boom of European studies of *Amerikabilder*, "the myth of America cultivated in Europe is a psychological reality far more important to the European than the so-called truth about America... Europe is much more influenced by its image of America than by America itself."²⁰⁵

Jantz distinguished the following myths as the four oldest and most persistent: "First, the myth of golden-age primitivism in America, second, its opposite, the myth of brutally, relentlessly savage America that had to be sternly tamed by the forces of civilization, third, the historical myth of the westward movement of civilization, and fourth, its sequel, America as the new land of promise".²⁰⁶ These myths originally not only applied to what today is the United States. After the "discovery" of America by Columbus, the Carribean and the Spanish dominated territories naturally became the locus of European hopes. But as the British colonies in Northern America grew and became increasingly more important, European visions of America shifted north.²⁰⁷ The "New World" and all the European aspirations associated with it seemingly contracted and centered on what was becoming

ist anders: Studien zum Amerika-Bild in deutschen Reiseberichten des 20. Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt/New York: Peter Lang, 1991).

²⁰⁵ Jantz, 37.

²⁰⁶ Jantz, 39.

²⁰⁷ For brevity's sake, Dutch, French or Portuguese colonies and influences are not mentioned here.

the United States. The common usage of the term "America" to this day testifies that the myths about the United States originally encompassed the entire American continent. While the focus of the European interest shifted, the forms of American myths have remained largely the same.²⁰⁸ However, the function of these myths may vary according to socio-psychological needs in Europe. Depending on historical circumstances, one or the other of the four central myths identified by Jantz comes to the forefront and shapes the images and reception of "America". When studying myths or images of America, critics mostly, sometimes perhaps inadvertently concentrate on the discrepancies between myth, image and reality, thus trying to lay to rest myths or inaccurate images. But myths and images continue to persist even if they are debunked as distortions or caricatures. Consequently, studying the forms and functions of such myths or *Amerikabilder* and their adjustment to historical developments proves more useful than merely establishing the origins of myths and stereotypes. Literature certainly offers much information on how American culture is perceived and what they "make of America". German-language literature (as well as movies, etc.) is replete with motives, themes and images of America. François Bondy has argued that "Europeans are too heterogeneous a people to have a homogeneous image of

²⁰⁸ Compare Jantz, 38.

the United States."²⁰⁹ It is certainly useful to examine and compare the reception of America and the creation of *Amerikabilder* in different European cultures. Each culture, be it France, Germany or Switzerland, has its own interest in examining its relations with the United States. The socio-psychological needs might also vary somewhat from country to country according to political circumstances. Yet it seems fair to say that most Western European countries share similar images of America. At least, the views of America I have discovered in British, French or Scandinavian texts closely resemble Swiss perspectives.²¹⁰ Literature, mostly novels and literary journalism, yield much on how America is perceived and dealt with in other cultures.

In literature, perceptions, attitudes and ideas about a culture are comparatively accessible and "tangible". Novels and other texts are respectable objects for academic inquiry. Thus, studying national images in literature simplifies the task of studying cultural relations and exchanges. *Amerikabilder* can be studied in a single novel, in the body of work of one

²⁰⁹ François Bondy, "Culture as a Bridge," in *America and Western Europe. Problems and Prospects*. eds. Karl Kaiser and Hans-Peter Schwarz (Stuttgart: Belser AG für Verlagsgeschäfte, 1977).

²¹⁰ Even images of America found in American literature often resemble European images of America. What America's domestic critics have to say about US culture often translates into anti-American assessments in Europe. To be sure, Europeans did not approve of Washington's invasion of Iraq, and broadly speaking, large numbers of Europeans genuinely dislike the administration of President George W. Bush. But European newspapers and magazines frequently printed the words of American critics of the administration, Noam Chomsky and Norman Mailer being eternal favorites. In addition to providing American sources, European editors can also circumvent allegations of anti-Americanism by giving Americans space and airtime.

author, in a certain decade or in a national literature. Projects thus become well-defined and manageable.

The *Amerikarezeption* in literature also raises some methodological questions. It is quite clear that the image of America in, say, Max Frisch's novel *Homo Faber* is first and foremost an image of America that Max Frisch created. It may not be his only portrayal of America and it may or may not coincide with the readers' image of America. Nevertheless, when studying images of America in Swiss literature, we, authors and readers of these studies, of course assume that the images found tell us something about the Swiss view of American culture.

This is a common working assumption, but in the case of Swiss literature a particularly big leap of faith. Swiss literature, on one hand, is made up of four literatures, namely literature in French, Italian, Romansh and German. Except for Romansh literature, the three other Swiss literatures gravitate toward their respective neighbors. It is not uncommon for a Swiss-German writer or reader to know very little about what his French-speaking compatriots write, and vice-versa. "The literatures don't even look at each other," writes Rolf Kieser.²¹¹ "They rather stand back to back, looking abroad. There are few literary contacts among writers in different language

²¹¹ Rolf Kieser, "Post festum -- die vier Gegenwartsliteraturen der Schweiz," in *Forum der Schriftsteller/des écrivains*. ed. Swiss Writers Union. Jahrbuch/Annuaire No. VI (1993), 31-40.

areas. Contrary to the established myth, the Swiss are not 'multicultural' and rarely multilingual."²¹²

Ironically, the question whether Swiss literature exists at all and what it might be has long been the subject of heated debate in literary circles.²¹³

Some authors writing in German would emphasize that they see themselves as participants in German literary culture. The author Paul Nizon famously left Swiss "narrowness" and "constrictions" ("Diskurs in der Enge") for Paris²¹⁴. At any time, a number of Swiss-German writers live in Berlin, Munich or other German cities. Being published by a German, French or Italian publisher, as the case may be, is also regarded proof of the quality of the writing. Schnauber and Schulte are convinced that German-speaking Swiss authors consider themselves Swiss authors today, but don't expect this to be the case for French-speaking and Italian-speaking authors.²¹⁵ Quoting Nicolas Bouvier -- "First, I am a son of Geneva, second, I am an author of the French language and only third, am I Swiss" -- they point out that French-speaking Switzerland has "produced powerful literary exports" such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Blaise Cendrars (viii-ix). Romansh and Italian-speaking territories, in the cantons of the Grisons and Ticino, are probably

²¹² Kieser, 33.

²¹³ Fritz Ernst, *Gibt es eine schweizerische Nationalliteratur?* (St.Gallen: Tschudy, 1955); Marc Aeschbacher, *Vom Stummsein zur Vielsprachigkeit: Vierzig Jahre Literatur aus der deutschen Schweiz (1958-1998)* (Bern: Lang, 1997).

²¹⁴ Paul Nizon, *Diskurs in der Enge* (Bern: Kandelaber, 1970).

²¹⁵ Schnauber and Schulte in the preface of *The dream never becomes reality. 24 Swiss Writers Challenge the United States*, eds. Cornelius Schnauber, Romey Sabalius and Gene O. Stimpson, (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1994), viii.

too small to develop a distinct literature, which is why they are subsumed under Swiss or Italian literature.

As the examples of Rousseau and Cendrars illustrate, the neighboring cultures also have a tendency to include Swiss authors, particularly the big names, in their canons. Academics often do not distinguish between Swiss-German or German literature when writing about Max Frisch's work. His and to a lesser extent Friedrich Dürrenmatt's work helped reinstate German literature after World War II. Frisch's novels *Stiller* and *Homo Faber* became the best sellers for the German Suhrkamp Verlag. *Stiller* sold more copies (4 million) than any other Swiss literary product.²¹⁶

Another methodological problem when considering the perception of American culture in Swiss literature is the size of the readership. An author who sells three to five thousand copies of a book is considered successful.²¹⁷ The circulation of Swiss fiction has actually decreased in recent years: While in the 80s a run of 3000 copies was "normal", in the 90s the numbers have

²¹⁶ With the exception of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1880). *Heidi* was translated into some 35 languages and it is estimated that the total circulation of the story reached 50 million. The story of *Heidi* was first made into a silent film in 1920 in the United States. The second *Heidi*-film was also an American one, starring Shirley Temple in 1937. The first Swiss production came in 1952. It, too, was quite successful in the United States. Swiss authors still suffer from *Heidi*'s enormous success over decades. Spyri's novel shaped Switzerland's image of an Alpine idyll. In a "provocative speech" in the Library of Congress, Hugo Loetscher wanted to make clear that that "Swiss literature does not reflect the Switzerland in *Heidi*." See *Heidi. Karrieren einer Figur*, ed. Ernst Halter (Zürich: Offizin, 2001); *Johanna Spyri und ihr Werk -- Lesarten*, ed. Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder- und Jugendmedien (Zurich: Chronos, 2004); Lilith Frey, "Es gibt keine schweizerische Demokratie. Schriftsteller Hugo Loetscher hielt provokative Rede in den USA," *Sonntagsblick*, 14 December 1997, 33.

²¹⁷ Pia Reinacher, *Je Suisse: Zur aktuellen Lage der Schweizer Literatur*, (Munich: Nagel & Kimche, 2003), 11.

come down to between 2000 and 2500.²¹⁸ Even with such low numbers, "one-edition-only" books are quite common.

This situation on the Swiss fiction market has recently seen remarkable exceptions. Young pop author Zoë Jenny's first novel *Blütenstaubzimmer (Pollen Room)* sold more than 250,000 copies. Older authors were stunned: In the mid-80s, they earned an average of 9000 Swiss francs per year with their writing, possibly supplemented by another 3000 Swiss francs in the form of grants or stipends.²¹⁹ Young authors, like Zoë Jenny and Peter Stamm -- whose debut *Agnes* was translated into 15 European languages and also sold around one hundred thousand copies²²⁰ -- have learned to move adroitly in modern IT culture, marketing themselves

²¹⁸ E-mail from Carlo Bernasconi, editor-in-chief of the trade magazine *Schweizer Buchhandel*, 13 January 2005.

²¹⁹ Survey among 115 authors at the Solothurner Literaturtage 1986, published *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, by an authors' collective headed by Klaus Pezold (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1991), 230. This remarkable literary history might well be the last one to be published by any authors' collective of former East Germany.

²²⁰ E-mail correspondence with Peter Stamm: In February 2005, Stamm wrote, around 75,000 copies of *Agnes* had been sold in German (hardcover and paperback editions combined). Translation rights are usually sold for a lump sum in advance. Since no royalties have to be paid, foreign language publishers do not seem to keep track of sales. Stamm explained that normally an author finds out years later whether a book did well or not in a certain translation. Preliminarily, he had heard that 15,000 copies were sold in Italian and that the Russian first edition of 2000 copies was almost sold out. In all 15 languages, all together the number of copies sold must have risen above 100,000 by February 2005. This is highly unusual for a Swiss work of fiction, all the more so for a debut novel. The German hardcover edition sells for 30 francs, the pocket book for 13.00. Assuming that around 50,000 hardcover and 25,000 paperback copies were sold and Stamm received, as customary in the book trade, 10 per cent in royalties, the author earned 182,000 Swiss francs since the novel was first published in 1998. This is by no means extravagant; nevertheless Stamm is one of a handful of Swiss authors who can actually live on the profits from his works. He has thus far published five books.

and their "ego products"²²¹ on their own websites (www.peterstamm.ch) or "doing" fashion in women's or business magazines (Zoë Jenny).²²² Their literature is no longer *literature engagée*; Switzerland is not an issue for them. "Their own biographies, love, sex and the conflicts in gender relations"²²³ form the core of this recent literature. Young authors are apolitical, egocentric and autobiographical -- and commercially much more successful. This is not to say, however, that this recent literature of self-absorption is culturally and politically irrelevant. To the contrary, it amounts to a rejection of parents and literary forebears, and of their political crusades. Jenny's *Pollen Room*, for instance, is a damning indictment of the generation of 1968.²²⁴

The perception of the United States through Swiss literature is thus limited in several ways. From a reader-response point of view, some of the books cannot seriously be considered only as Swiss literature just because the author happens to be Swiss. The vast majority of copies of Max Frisch's novels were sold outside Switzerland. The portrayal of America in *Stiller* and *Homo Faber* is thus not only Frisch's nor entirely a Swiss one, but has become inseparable from the image of America in German or even European literature. Other Swiss books have sold in such small numbers that it is rather risky to extrapolate any argument about "the reception and function of

²²¹ Reinacher, 51.

²²² Reinacher, 53-54.

²²³ Reinacher, 9.

²²⁴ See also Reinacher, 172-173.

American culture in Switzerland."

Following Switzerland's 700-year anniversary in 1991, two volumes of Swiss literature dealing with America in one way or other were published.²²⁵ The anthologies comprise, in English translation, poetry and prose written in any of the four Swiss languages. Whether Swiss literature exists or not, Swiss authors certainly deal with the United States in a surprising variety of ways. The editors of *The Dream Never Becomes Reality* may be justified in saying that their anthology explores "Switzerland's complex love-hate relationship with the United States." Certainly, "America" is the "favorite modern utopia"²²⁶ for many Swiss authors, as it is for other European writers. Other places, countries or cities, occur in Swiss literature, but America looms largest. Swiss literary minds are thoroughly steeped in American culture and may, from this perspective, be considered "Americanized".

The following consideration of Swiss literature will focus on texts that not only (re-)produce positive or negative images of America, but are as much a reflection on Switzerland as on the United States. As negating the existence of Swiss literature is often a vain posture adopted by literary figures themselves, writing about the United States can be purely arbitrary or simply

²²⁵ "Post Festum: Switzerland and the World," Rolf Kieser, guest editor, *The Literary Review* vol. 36 no. 4 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1993), 437-445; Cornelius Schnauber, Cornelius, Sabalius, Romey, Stimpson, Gene O., eds. *The Dream Never Becomes Reality. 24 Swiss Writers Challenge the United States*. Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1994.

²²⁶ *Dream/Reality*, vii.

market-driven. A book about driving through the arid Southwest is a more convincing *Bildungsroman* than the description of such a journey through the Gobi desert could be. America has certainly crowded out other locales from the authors' and readers' imaginations. But in many cases, the reader may wonder, as Hanno Helbling did, whether the author really had to travel to America to write such sentences.

Striking gold elsewhere

In *Dikurs in der Enge*, Paul Nizon argued that, for the writer, Swiss narrowness manifested itself in an "absence of world";²²⁷ Switzerland did not offer enough "material" for narrative literature.²²⁸ Echoing Frisch's earlier indictment that Switzerland did not offer any space to "pioneers", Nizon wrote, "Switzerland throws away her sons."²²⁹ The complaint actually became something of a leitmotif among Swiss writers, filmmakers and artists.

La-Chaux-de-Fonds in Western French-speaking Switzerland must have been a particularly "narrow" place if the number of famous "pioneers" the city produced in one generation can serve as an indication to that effect. Blaise Cendrars was born in 1887, the same year as Le Corbusier, and in the

²²⁷ "Absenz von Welt", Nizon, 46.

²²⁸ "Die moderne erzählende Literatur unsere Landes leidet eindeutig unter Stoffschwierigkeiten oder -- genauer -- unter Stoffmangel." Nizon, 46.

²²⁹ "Die Schweiz verscherzt ihre Söhne." Nizon, 111.

same neighborhood.²³⁰ But the two met only 25 years later in Paris. They remained in contact, and Cendrars is one of Le Corbusier's early sources on America.

Cendrars stayed in the United States for the first time from 1911 to 1912. At the time, he was on a "vision quest" of sorts, determined to become a writer. He spent the days in the "Central Library", reading and writing to exhaustion.²³¹ It was here where he decided to drop his real name Frédéric Sauser and adopts his *nom de plume*,²³² much like Le Corbusier eventually gave up his real name, Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris. Both men evidently recreated themselves outside the narrow confines of all too proper Switzerland.

Cendrars and his wife Fela often went hungry in New York. Fela had unsteady work and Cendrars did not bother to earn money. After spending all day in the library, he could not afford the subway to their apartment on 70 West 96th Street. On an empty stomach, he could not really appreciate what he saw in New York. "He [began] to detest this America, this mirage, where

²³⁰ Information drawn from the website of the *Bieler Tagblatt*, <http://www.bielertagblatt.ch>, as well as the respective biographies available on the web (see bibliography). Of course, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Europeans left for America for economic reason. La-Chaux-de-Fonds is an unusual case, however, because, compared to other towns, the city boasted a vibrant watch industry. Around 1900, half of the Swiss watches sold worldwide were made in La-Chaux-de-Fonds. Moreover, La-Chaux-de-Fonds was a comparatively modern town, literally with less "narrow" streets, since it had been rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1830 (see previous chapter). Another famous son of La-Chaux-de-Fonds is Louis Chevrolet. He was a year younger than Le Corbusier and Blaise Cendrars. Both Le Corbusier's and Chevrolet's family background was in watch making.

²³¹ Miriam Cendrars, *Cendrars* (Paris: Balland, 1984), 215.

²³² Cendrars Miriam, 214.

you die from hunger."²³³

The experience in New York not only allowed him to develop into a well-known (French) writer; it also influenced his writing on America. Over the years, he published a number of works that in some way deal with America: *Easter in New York*, *New York in flashlight* (1912), *L'ABC du cinéma* (1919), *Kodak, documentaires* (1924)²³⁴, *Gold* (1925), *John Paul Jones* (1926), *Les confessions de Dan Yack* (1929), *An American writer is born to us*, *Henry Miller* (1935) and *Hollywood, le Mecque du cinéma* (1936). Cendrars also wrote about other countries or territories -- Siberia, Brazil, Panama, etc. -- and much of the time these places merely served as settings of his stories. America certainly influenced Cendrars' style and cinematic technique. He "tipped his hat" to O'Henry for the form of the stories he produced in the 1930s.²³⁵

Cendrars was fascinated by restless adventurers, world travelers and "men of action"²³⁶ like himself. In the sparse biographical information on John Sutter, a Swiss countryman who settled in Northern California,²³⁷ he found a perfect specimen, one he eventually turned into an archetype of

²³³ Cendrars Miriam, 215-216.

²³⁴ Several of the "documentaries" describe architectural phenomena: offices with radiators, the "mushrooming city", "trestle-work" or "Frisco-City".

²³⁵ Cendrars Miriam, 499.

²³⁶ Blaise Cendrars, *Gold. Being the Marvelous History of General John Augustus Sutter* (New York: Michael Kesend Publishing, 1984), 23.

²³⁷ Real life Sutter was born in 1803 as Johann Augustus Suter near Baden, halfway between Zurich and Basel, Switzerland. Eventually, his name became "Americanized" and is most commonly spelt with two t's.

modern man in his novel *Gold*.²³⁸

Sutter, in Cendrars novel, leaves wife and children behind and escapes "narrow" Switzerland. Once in California, "grandiose plans form in his mind".²³⁹ He settles the place around and north of what later became San Francisco. "[P]roceeding methodically with his plan",²⁴⁰ he becomes the undisputed ruler of his New Helvetia and the "first multimillionaire in the United States".²⁴¹ In 1848, however, a worker discovers gold on his land, and soon "hordes of rough-neck profiteers swooped down"²⁴² on New Helvetia, which eventually disappears.²⁴³ Sutter loses everything. He sues, but to no avail. In 1880, deprived of his rights and titles, he dies a pauper on the stairs of the Capitol in Washington.

With this novel, Cendrars stylized the pioneering efforts in America as a modern day equivalent of an ancient Greek myth. Heroes create civilization, but are tragically cut down by fate. For Cendrars, America was the site of modern myths.

The reception of *Gold* was extraordinary. Stalin is said to have been inspired by the novel to explore and industrialize the Ural mountain.²⁴⁴ In America, critics were appalled at the historical inaccuracies and attacked the

²³⁸ Blaise Cendrars, *Gold. Being the Marvelous History of General John Augustus Sutter* (New York: Michael Kesend Publishing, 1984).

²³⁹ *Gold*, 33.

²⁴⁰ *Gold*, 49.

²⁴¹ *Gold*, 59.

²⁴² *Gold*, 65.

²⁴³ *Gold*, 72.

²⁴⁴ Cendrars *Miriam*, 409.

scandalous work of the "unscholarly Frenchman".²⁴⁵ Particularly, California felt misrepresented. At the same time, a number of people named Sutter or Suter approached Cendrars for help in claiming their "inheritance".²⁴⁶

After Cendrars agreed to put a love story into the script, Universal Pictures decided to turn *Gold* into a film. Directed by James Cruze, the film was released in 1936. It "was reportedly Universal's biggest box office disaster of the era."²⁴⁷ Cendrars was on assignment in Hollywood at the time of the movie's release, but he had no patience to actually wait for the opening of "his" film. Instead, he returned to Paris to publish his book on *Hollywood, the Mecca of Cinema*.

Finally, Cendrars got into a legal dispute with Louis Trenker, the Austrian filmmaker and Nazi sympathizer, who had written his own book on Sutter and made a film with the same title, *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien*. The inaccuracies and falsehoods that the American readers had criticized in Cendrars' novel now served to prove that Trenker had plagiarized. But in the end, the German courts rejected any claim since copyright was not recognized. So, while Trenker was being celebrated by Mussolini and Goebbels, Cendrars ended up empty-handed.²⁴⁸ For the Nazis, Sutter was an ideal Arian *Übermensch* and his fate could serve as an illustration of the crass materialism of the American people, personified in the rapacious gold diggers

²⁴⁵ Cendrars Miriam, 411.

²⁴⁶ Cendrars Miriam, 414.

²⁴⁷ From the Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com (30 April 2005).

²⁴⁸ Cendrars Miriam, 423-424.

and their inferior culture.

American(ized) Women

Frisch succinctly summarized his own contradictory image of New York in an essay published in 1951.²⁴⁹

Regarding New York, I am certainly one of the enthusiasts. It is an exciting city, daunting and childish, magnificent, just as abominable as beautiful, indeed often very beautiful, then again a bad dream, adorable, cruel, foolish; it is not a city, but a world.²⁵⁰

Such contradictory perceptions obviously leave room for interpretation and variations. Consequently, Frisch ascribed these impressions to different characters in his fiction and played with the contradictory ideas. Indeed, it is fair to say that Frisch's short four lines summarize most of what his contemporaries and successors write about New York.

The image of New York and generally the *Amerikabild* in Max Frisch's literary work has received much scholarly attention.²⁵¹ A number of in-depth studies have been published.²⁵² There is no need to restate these

²⁴⁹ Max Frisch, "Amerikanisches Picknick," in *Materialien zu Max Frisch «Stiller»*, ed. Walter Schmitz, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 282-286.

²⁵⁰ *Picknick*, 282.

²⁵¹ A recent compilation contains a good deal of Frisch's texts on the United States: *Max Frisch in Amerika*. ed. Volker Hage (Frankfurt: Schöffling & Co., 1995).

²⁵² Günther Bicknese, "Zur Rolle Amerikas in Max Frischs *Homo Faber*," *The German Quarterly*, No. 1, January 1969, 52-64.

Sigrid Mayer, "Zur Funktion der Amerikakomponente im Erzählwerk Max Frischs," in *Max Frisch. Aspekte des Prosawerks*. ed. Gerhard P. Knapp (Bern/Frankfurt/Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1978); Anita Krätzer, "Das Amerikabild im Prosawerk von Max Frisch," in *Studien zum Amerikabild in der neueren deutschen Literatur. Max Frisch -- Uwe Johnson -- Hans Magnus Enzensberger und das "Kursbuch"* (Bern/Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982); Paul Goetsch, "Ein Leben in Geschichten und Zitaten: Max Frischs Stiller und die amerikanische Literatur," in *Exempla. Studien zur Bedeutung und Funktion exemplarischen Erzählens*. ed.

perceptions and images here and engage in a debate, for instance, on whether the description of a descent into the Carlsbad Caverns in *Stiller* represents a descent into the underworld, reflects on Jungian depth psychology or is a play on Plato's cave metaphor. The most relevant impressions Max Frisch garnered in the United States and utilized frequently in his writing (and explicitly in his political involvement) were discussed in the previous chapter. Here, one more element of Frisch's *Amerikarezeption* shall be highlighted: the function of American women and the role of America for women in his writing.

Frisch's *Montauk*

Montauk, Frisch's strongly autobiographical novella published in 1975²⁵³, contains the most complete portrayal of an American woman in his work. In the early pages of the book, Frisch mentions that Philip Roth had dropped off a copy of his new book, *My Life as a Man*. Frisch wonders whether it would be possible to publish a book with such a title in German and proceeds to analyze his life and manhood on an outing to Montauk at the Eastern end of Long Island, 110 miles away from New York City. On the surface, Frisch describes a weekend he spent in 1974 with Lynn, a young

Bernd Engler and Kurt Müller (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), 449-472; Hans Bänziger, "Leben im Zitat. Zu Montauk: Ein Formulierungsproblem und dessen Vorgeschichte," in *Max Frisch. Aspekte des Prosawerks*. ed. Gerhard P. Knapp (Bern/Frankfurt/Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1978); Elisabeth Maria Wittig, *The Space of America in the Contemporary European Novel*, (Dissertation, Purdue University, 1986).

²⁵³ Max Frisch, *Montauk: Eine Erzählung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp pocket book, 1981).

publicist who arranges interviews with authors, including Frisch himself. The author notes that Lynn, as a collaborator of his American publisher, had not read any of his works, which allows him to play the devil's advocate on his own work.²⁵⁴ And, more importantly, it leaves time for other, personal topics.

Lynn is the same age, 31, as the author's older daughter.²⁵⁵ She is introduced to the reader in quite some physical detail: "She is very slender, but not bony." As they go for a walk in some forest on Long Island, Lynn wears tight blue jeans without a belt, the legs rolled up to the calves and a comb stuck in one side-pocket on her tiny behind. Her long red hair is tied into a knot, but left swinging in her back as they walk through the woods.²⁵⁶

Max admires this lithe and blithe young woman, her combination of intelligent sophistication and unrefined naturalness. On one hand, she asks the writer smart questions unlike the reporters; on the other hand, she challenges his sense of propriety with actions such as answering his phone just because she happens to be sitting next to it.

She is consistently described as natural, self-assured, unabashed and completely at home in her body. When she meets him at his hotel room to go for dinner, she first sits on the floor to meditate. When the aging intellectual worries about his sexual performance, she advises him to just relax, or she rejects his advances, whichever way she might feel at the moment. After sex

²⁵⁴ Frisch writes that the first person narrator enjoyed arguing nothing but the opposite ("lauter Gegenteil"), for instance that he does not take any interest in politics (*Montauk*, 28).

²⁵⁵ *Montauk*, 53-54.

²⁵⁶ *Montauk*, 9.

she remains naked, taking care of things in her kitchen, while the author, already dressed again, sits at the table talking to cover up his uneasiness.

Interwoven with the recollection and examination of that weekend are short vignettes of people who were closely related to Frisch. Most of them are women, all are European, and they don't compare favorably with the natural girl, Lynn. Frisch recalls how Ingeborg Bachmann, with whom Frisch lived in Rome in the 1950s, would insist that he not attend her lectures or participate in the same writers' meetings. Bachmann was private, needed her space and did not introduce him to her neighbors. Rome was "her Rome."

Yet more staggering is Frisch's account of his first love. He recalls his relationship with one Frau Haller, a woman who lived in the apartment above his and his wife's. Frau Haller is permanently paralyzed, and, feeling insecure about this, Frisch continuously avoids meeting or visiting her. When chance finally brings the two together, Frisch realizes that Frau Haller is his first love, *Thesy*. For reasons Frisch himself does not understand, he never visits her again although they remain in the same adjacent apartments for several more years.²⁵⁷ In this comparison of relationships with women in Switzerland and New York, New York in fact appears much less cold or anonymous than Switzerland.

Mark Cory has analyzed German "campus novels", erroneously including *Montauk* among them, and proposes in conclusion that the female

²⁵⁷ *Montauk*, 73-79.

characters in these books are literary incarnations of the noble savage.²⁵⁸ German writers encounter Pocahontas on American campuses. Pursuing intimacy with American college women, they forget about unhappy past experiences or free themselves from European conventions.²⁵⁹ To overstate it but slightly, American women also helped the Swiss writer Max Frisch to discover his "life as a man."

Montauk, although no memoir or journal, has been said to be an authentic self-description, down to the rather unpleasant personality traits Frisch attributed to himself.²⁶⁰ As Norbert Staub wrote in a review, "[i]n the clear coastal air at Montauk, words are expressed that would not have been said as easily in Zurich."²⁶¹ We saw earlier that Frisch's experiences in America of the early 50s considerably influenced him politically and artistically: He was 40 years old at the time, but America still "radicalized" him. It seems even more remarkable how the 60-year old Frisch was affected by the affair with Lynn, a woman half his age. Ultimately, Frisch describes each stay in New York as an experience of personal growth.

Frisch has rightly been called a "critical lover of America".²⁶² The contradictory complexity of Frisch's emotions and thinking about America

²⁵⁸ Mark E. Cory, "Romancing America: Reflections of Pocahontas in Contemporary German Fiction," *The German Quarterly* 62/3 (1989), 320-328.

²⁵⁹ Cory, 324.

²⁶⁰ Bircher, 28.

²⁶¹ Norbert Staub, "Globale Optik. Ein Amerika-Lesebuch von Max Frisch," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (international edition), 11 November 1995.

²⁶² Staub in *NZZ*.

makes them more convincing. They certainly appear more genuine than clear-cut, but one-dimensional anti-Americanism or America-enthusiasm found in other authors. Finally, Frisch "utilizes" his special relationship with America in his female characters. In Frisch's fiction, it is mostly the women who experience America as liberating and an opportunity to grow.

American women are consistently (or stereotypically) portrayed as more free, self-assured and emancipated than their European counterparts. It comes as no surprise that European women characters in fiction become freer and emancipated in America. In Frisch's novel *Stiller*, a female protagonist, Sybille, begins, "as we say, a new life."²⁶³ The narrator seems to be self-consciously aware that he is relating a stereotype of America. But Sybille does begin a new life: She enjoys the anonymity and the resulting freedom that New York offers her.²⁶⁴ Professionally she does well and can remain independent from any man. She enjoys life in America, but she is not enthusiastic about it.²⁶⁵ Nothing seems easier than relating to Americans, in America of the 1950s. Frisch wrote the novel during and after his first stay in New York in 1951 and his protagonist Sybille voices the best impressions the author had. Everybody is so open and friendly. Sybille finds "wonderful" how Americans "dare to praise" and encourage others. In private affairs, particularly sexual matters, this American openness and frankness eventually

²⁶³ Max Frisch, *Stiller* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp pocket book, 1973).

²⁶⁴ *Stiller*, 309.

²⁶⁵ *Stiller*, 311.

seems superficial. After a conversation of twenty minutes with an American, she notes, one knew as much as after one year in normal relationships. And after twenty minutes nothing more would be added. The superficiality that seems to irk Sybille is twofold: Cordial confidentiality is established too quickly, but once two persons confide in each other, the American won't really go further than "wishing you well". Thus, Sybille comes to feel, Americans continuously offer up the same non-committal optimism: "She'd rather lie in the sun on one of the small roof gardens" than engage in such "genial non-relationships" and remain alone while with someone.²⁶⁶

Frisch's character Sybille ends up staying in New York for as long as "it works" for her and then returns to Switzerland to settle into a relationship, marriage and family. Unlike Stiller, the novel's anti-hero who tries to transform himself into another person, but ultimately fails, Sybille succeeds on her own terms.

Friendliness and superficiality as recurring themes

Sybille's perception of American friendliness and/or superficiality is an old and often recurring topos in European literature about America. Indeed, it is staggering how frequently Europeans comment on American

²⁶⁶ Stiller, 311-313.

friendliness.²⁶⁷ Three more examples shall suffice. The French writer Simone de Beauvoir, who traveled in the United States five years before Max Frisch, wrote in her travel journal: "What makes daily life so agreeable in America is the good humor and friendliness of Americans. Of course, this quality has its reverse side. I'm irritated by those imperious invitations to 'take life easy'".²⁶⁸ De Beauvoir also finds "this amiability disconcerting." American optimism, she concludes, is "necessary for the country's social peace and economic prosperity".²⁶⁹

The Swiss author Peter Bichsel writes that he was frequently asked what he thought of the phony "keep-smiling"-friendliness in America. He explains that he found it wonderful; even in New York, Americans are friendly. They always say please and thank you. What baffled Bichsel most is how long Americans remember his name. Weeks after first making each other's acquaintance, an American might still call his name across the street: "Hello, Peter." The Americans' memory for names impresses him and he appreciates their attentiveness, Bichsel writes.²⁷⁰

This may be a small point in terms of cultural relations. But in fact, Bichsel's point is a perceptive and precise comment on the oft-recurring

²⁶⁷ It is difficult to say what this obsession with friendliness compares with: Perhaps with the American stereotype of French rudeness. At any rate, such obsessions reveal more about the obsessed than the object of the obsession.

²⁶⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁶⁹ de Beauvoir, 23.

²⁷⁰ Peter Bichsel, "Wie hast du's mit Amerika?" in *Geschichten zur Falschen Zeit* (Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1981), 68.

stereotype of American friendliness. Rather than characterizing American friendliness as superficial, he indirectly reproaches the Swiss for their deplorable habit of not cultivating their memory for names and using names infrequently. Responding to the question about how he feels about America, Bichsel in the end reflects on his own country, Switzerland.

To mention one more European author, Martin Walser also praised the easy-going human interrelations in the United States.²⁷¹ He recognizes friendliness as something that developed on the frontier where helping each other was more necessary than anywhere else. Friendliness here forms part of the cowboy mystique (rather than, for instance, part of Southern hospitality of which Europeans are not likely to know very much).

European notions of American friendliness and superficiality are always interpretations and as such largely misconceptions, no matter whether they are grounded in economic or pioneer history. Social interactions on the two continents are simply different. German gruffness, to mention another stereotype, seems friendly enough back home. I daresay that Bichsel would feel awkward if a Swiss compatriot whom he does not know closely greeted him asking: "How are you, Peter?" Paul Fussell tried to come up with the following explanation after studying European behavior on nude beaches in the Balkans and elsewhere: "U.S. 'friendly' style is not international. [...]"

²⁷¹ Martin Walser and André Ficus, *Die Amerikareise: Versuch, ein Gefühl zu verstehen*. (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1990), 50f. Walser is not a Swiss author, but he was born and raised and continues to live a few kilometers away from the Swiss border on Lake Constance.

Non-Americans have mastered the paradox that it is formality rather than informality that lubricates social encounters."²⁷² With this paradox ingrained, Europeans fail to understand American friendly informality as just another style without being judgmental about it. And finally, the enormous frequency with which Europeans comment on American friendliness is evidence to what (large) extent cultural relations play out on a subjective and emotional level.

American dystopia

It has become an oft-cited commonplace that European authors don't really know the United States because they hardly ever visit the "fly-over country" between New York and California. Although acquainted with other parts of the United States, Frisch certainly focused his attention on New York. In Jürg Federspiel's writing, New York takes the place of America. All his texts with an American subject are set in New York.

Federspiel lived in New York for several years in different decades. During his stays in New York, he contributed journalistic pieces for different Swiss newspapers. For the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Federspiel wrote stories or vignettes on "Mailer's Marilyn", "Brooklyn Bridge", Hotel Chelsea, "Concert in Bryant Park", Chinatown, "La Marqueta, Spanish Harlem", "The Bowery", "Algonquin Hotel", "Radio City Music Hall", "Canal Street", "Washington

²⁷² Paul Fussell, "Travel, Tourism, and 'International Understanding,'" in *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 166.

Square", "Potter's Field", "Katz's Delicatessen", "Orchard Street", "Gramercy Park".²⁷³ The choice of topics itself is rather stereotypical. On one hand, a journalist would naturally search for new stories or fresh approaches to familiar aspects of American culture. On the other hand, looking for what exists "only in America", authors end up writing about the same *kind* of topics.²⁷⁴ This is what a Swiss critic once referred to as "Chinatown, Washington Square and the eternal squirrels in Central Park" as opposed to a close-up, detailed and specific depiction of everyday reality.²⁷⁵

Federspiel stayed in New York from 1967 to 1969 and published the stories that he sought and the impressions he collected in a book length account entitled *Museum of Hatred (Museum des Hasses)*.²⁷⁶ Few encounters and events reported in the book seem original today. New York is filthy, smelly, rat-infested, violent, delirious and crazy. Death seems to lurk everywhere. Perhaps since 1969 too many similar tales have been

²⁷³ Based on the Federspiel inventory of the Swiss Literature Archive within the Swiss National Library: <http://www.snl.admin.ch/ead/html/federspiel.html>

²⁷⁴ This is not to criticize Federspiel in particular. It is a well-recorded phenomenon that few writers create something entirely new, particularly those who start out in a journalistic mode. John McPhee wrote an unusual portrait of Switzerland in 1983: *La Place de la Concorde Suisse*. He followed an annual refresher's course of mountain troops of the Switzerland's militia army and observed the land and its people. Despite this fresh angle, McPhee cannot really avoid clichés: Switzerland is spic and span; Swiss cheese has holes; cowbells ring from the mountain meadows, and French-Swiss soldiers invariably drink wine. To my mind, McPhee's is still the best portrayal of Switzerland, although by now somewhat dated. The book is a pleasant read, perhaps because, in the end, McPhee does not avoid clichés, but instead combines them in an unusual record of a militia refresher course.

²⁷⁵ Quoted by the *Autorenkollektiv*, 248.

²⁷⁶ Jürg Federspiel, *Museum des Hasses: Tage in Manhattan* (Munich: Piper, 1969).

published.²⁷⁷ It all seems exaggerated. Federspiel's account can still be considered the "most negative travel and field report in contemporary German literature."²⁷⁸ As such it is a document of its time, the late 60s. The Vietnam War, racial conflict, widespread poverty and the murder of Martin Luther King discredited the United States in European eyes.²⁷⁹ In this context, Federspiel's fiercely pessimistic report could strike chords it might never again have reached since then.

To European writers, the lack of governmental care about poverty and crime seem anything from outrageous to scandalous or even immoral. Swiss writers realize that more freedom from government means less oversight on the part of the government, but observations on American cities often declare the price of freedom to be too high.

Federspiel wrote several more books set in New York: *The Best City for the Blind* (1980) (some chapters on NY), *The Ballad of Typhoid Mary* (1982) and *Kilroy* (1988). *The Ballad of Typhoid Mary* remains his most enduring achievement.²⁸⁰ He tells the story of 13-year old Mary Mallon, an

²⁷⁷ In conjunction with Federspiel's New York stories, Sabalius also discusses Kuno Raeber's novel of 1973, *Alexius unter der Treppe oder Geständnisse vor einer Katze*. Raeber also conjured up New York nightmares. A hallucinating junkie makes his confessions to a cat under the stairwell and relates "phantasmagoric visions" of New York falling to ruins. Raeber's protagonist wants to save Manhattan through a ritual sacrifice (Sabalius, 17). For a study of images of New York in German literature see Sigrid Bauschinger's "Mythos Manhattan: Die Faszination einer Stadt," in *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur. Neue Welt -- Nordamerika -- USA*. eds. Sigrid Bauschinger, Horst Denker and Wilfried Malsch. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975. p. 382 - 397.

²⁷⁸ Krätzer, 10.

²⁷⁹ See also Sabalius, 15.

²⁸⁰ Federspiel, Jürg. *Die Ballade von Typhoid Mary*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982.

immigrant who carries typhoid pathogens without ever falling ill herself. She is hired as a cook in several wealthy homes and passes the lethal disease on to her employers. Mary begins to suspect that she might be the source of the resulting deaths. One doctor also realizes that Mary should be quarantined, but sympathizes with her. Federspiel explores questions of responsibility and guilt, but in the end Mary's refusal to remove herself from contact with other people is presented as some kind of anonymous justice: It is not Mary but fate that strikes down the predominantly decadent upper class for whom Mary works.

Despite this rather dubious philosophy of justice, the novel was quite well received. In my high school it was assigned frequently, mostly because Mary Mallon is a strong female figure. She defends her freedom against the odds. As in his previous books set in New York, Federspiel's sympathies are with the underdog, the struggling "little people." New York, as *pars pro toto* for the United States, is portrayed as exploitative. Yet even in Federspiel's pessimistic works, New York is a place where women can find their own liberation. As in the case of Max Frisch's female characters, New York is redeemed because it offers independence and opportunities to female figures.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ On this point, see also Sabalius, 16.

Historic truth in historical fiction

New York emerges even more strongly as a locus for personal, particularly women's emancipation and self-realization in another Swiss novel/biography: Eveline Hasler's novel *Die Wachsfügelfrau* tells the story of Emily Kempin-Spyri (1853-1901), who was Switzerland's, indeed the German-speaking lands', first female lawyer.²⁸² Holding a doctorate from the University of Zurich, she was still not allowed to practice or teach law in Switzerland. In 1888 she moved to New York with her family. New York University allowed her to teach "non-registered students, particularly business women" in a "Woman's Law Class".²⁸³ In 1890, Kempin gave her inaugural lecture. However, only a year later she had to return to Europe because her teenage son fell ill. Neither in Zurich nor Berlin was Kempin given the opportunity to pursue her profession. After a nervous breakdown, she was hospitalized and declared hysterical. She died in 1901 in Basel's psychiatric clinic.

Beyond New York

America as "Plage" or "Sehnsucht", as a source of worry or object of longing (Toni Lienhard), or as the "Land of Promise and Land of Savagery"

²⁸² Eveline Hasler, *Die Wachsfügelfrau: Geschichte der Emily Kempin-Spyri*, (Munich: Nagel & Kimche, 1991).

²⁸³ *Wachsfügelfrau*, 217.

(Ray Allen Billington) has been an enduring enigma²⁸⁴. While scholars such as Ray Allen Billington found this prevalent dichotomy in nineteenth-century European images of the American frontier, it is often a difference in the perceptions of rural vs. urban America. "Didn't New York negate what America said?" Martin Walser wrote in his "attempt to understand a feeling", as he subtitles his travels in the States.²⁸⁵ While American cities, mostly New York, are likely to provoke disappointment, even disgust with America, the American countryside continues to be the locus of the American Dream for Europeans. To be sure, for some of those (comparatively few) authors who write about states outside New York or California, rural America might be a purgatory of provincialism, even though "cowboy freedom" and individualism and other such ancient elements of the American Dream by their very nature tend to be associated with the American West.

More than any other locale in America, the American West has taken on the function as a place of mind for Swiss as for other European writers. Invariably, road trips in the Southwestern desert are meant to describe an inner journey.

²⁸⁴ Toni Lienhard, *Plage Amerika -- Sehnsucht Amerika: Reportagen* (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1989). The same dichotomy has been captured in different word pairs by Peter Freese in *"America": Dream of Nightmare. Reflections on a composite image* (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1991); or by Ray Allen Billington in *Land of Promise and Land of Savagery: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

²⁸⁵ *Amerikareise*, 38.

America Deserta

In his novel *Wüstenfahrt* (1984), Christoph Geiser's first person narrator tells the story of a ride through the desert with his friend/partner. The United States is strangely absent. Social realities and even clichés about America are missing. The desert landscape maybe described in some detail, but not in a naturalistic manner. Rather, the desert reflects the inner moods of a couple in a situation of impossible love. Apart from the American setting, the novel is a Swiss story. In the desert, the two male protagonists are free from Swiss conventions, but once the restrictions of home are removed, their homosexual relationship faces a crisis. The protagonists finally break up when they are back in Switzerland. Geiser uses the rather well-worn clichés of America as the land of liberty and opportunity to explore the possibilities of a love that has not (yet) been sanctioned by custom. He transformed yesteryear's pioneer treks in search for land or gold into a late-existentialist search for impossible love and companionship.

Sibille Tröml has considered Geiser's novel in conjunction with Walter Vogt's novel *Altern* (*Aging*), published in 1981.²⁸⁶ Geiser and Vogt were real-life travel companions in the Southwestern desert. They both turned their experience into fiction. As the title indicates, Vogt's novel is a reflection on growing old, on autumn in human life. He does not deal with the

²⁸⁶ Sibille Tröml, "Von den Schwierigkeiten des "Unsagbaren": Walter Vogts *Altern* und Christoph Geisers *Wüstenfahrt*," in *Neue Perspektiven zur deutschsprachigen Literatur der Schweiz*, ed. Romy Sabalius, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, vol. 40, (Amsterdam/Atlanta, Rodopi, 1997), 187-201.

relationship. His novel is set in Switzerland, but episodes and memories of Los Angeles, in particular Venice Beach, are woven in as counterpoints to the subdued mood of the book.

In his film *Paris, Texas* (1984), Wim Wenders used the American West to the same effect as the two Swiss authors. Internationally, more people are aware of this movie than of any of the Swiss novels. Thus, the film probably sums up best what preoccupations are projected onto the West of the European imagination. It also makes one wonder what it was about the *Zeitgeist* of the early 1980s that called for this image of the American West: a culturally barren landscape where sensitive Europeans can concentrate and probe into their innermost selves. Jean Baudrillard's essay *America* of 1986 belongs into the same category, portraying America as culturally barren.²⁸⁷ Swiss novelist Rolf Lappert followed suit in 1994 with the novel *Himmel der perfekten Poeten*, set in the Arizona desert where Italian poets suffer boredom and isolation.²⁸⁸ In the American desert, the cultured and refined meet with the primordial and untamed. In the end, all these works do little more than recycle old European myths about uncivilized America. Indeed, Geiser and the other authors echo three (of the four) most persistent myths identified by Harold Jantz: "the myth of brutally, relentlessly savage America

²⁸⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Amérique* (Paris: Grasset, 1986).

²⁸⁸ These short remarks may sound sarcastic and negative. Both Geiser and Lappert received good reviews for their novels. Geiser's novel was compared to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Lappert collected kudos from Munich to Vienna to Zurich for the cinematic or American aesthetic of his style. Information is provided on the publisher's website: www.nagel-kimche.de. (30 April 2005).

that had to be sternly tamed by the forces of civilization; the historical myth of the westward movement of civilization," and "America as the new land of promise" (see above). Encountering these myths in such modern or postmodern tales also testifies to the variability and endurance of American images and culture. In comparison, other deserts don't seem to inspire the same kind or quantity of "visions" and existential quests.

California Dreamings

Hugo Loetscher's account of his stay in Los Angeles as a writer in residence, *Herbst in der Grossen Orange (Autumn in the Big Orange)* is also replete with stereotypes.²⁸⁹ Sabalius calls it a "smorgasbord of clichés" (19). Indeed, we encounter Hollywood, consumerism and artificiality. There were restaurants where a "chicken in tails recommended grilled chicken".²⁹⁰ The lawns are too green, even the blue sky seems fake blue, or "stubbornly blue".²⁹¹ Unnatural. Yet Loetscher utilizes clichés in a satirical manner. He is neither blasé nor accusatory, but presents his excursions in greater LA with irony and fine humor: "Dreams must come true here".²⁹² The narrative is rather simple, following the holidays of a fall semester: Labor Day, Halloween, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving... all of which provides ample opportunity to comment on consumption habits and consumerism. But

²⁸⁹ Hugo Loetscher, *Herbst in der Grossen Orange* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1984).

²⁹⁰ *Herbst*, 58.

²⁹¹ *Herbst*, 24.

²⁹² *Herbst*, 159.

Loetscher's accounts of his excursions are also unusually perceptive.

Thankfully, he sticks to surface observations and avoids psychologizing.

His writing strikes me as reminiscent of Joan Didion's *Slouching toward Bethlehem*. There's a similar, mildly apocalyptic amazement with the way California culture is progressing. Some of Loetscher's readers have observed that in his Los Angeles Western civilization has reached the end of time. The fact that the narrator H. celebrated his 50th birthday in California and finds visiting Venice Beach a revitalizing experience (as did Vogt) reminds them of *Death in Venice*.²⁹³ But Loetscher does not seem to be quite so gloomy. He has long favored writing from different, non-European perspectives. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Swiss weekly journal *Die Weltwoche*, he published an essay from the vantage point of a "Pacific coast."²⁹⁴ By European standards, Loetscher quite early prophesied the advent of a century of Pacific cultures. In *Herbst in der Grossen Orange*, Loetscher writes: "H. had spent a green autumn where the West reached its limit. But where the West ended, the Pacific began."²⁹⁵ More than anything else, Loetscher seems fascinated by Los Angeles where East and West share an ocean, the only ocean where all superpowers meet.²⁹⁶ As he states in the anniversary essay, "This is what makes the 80s so fascinating: It was a time,

²⁹³ Sabalius, 22. Sabalius writes in some detail about the perceived "atmosphere of decadence and doom", but also concludes that Loetscher's view is not pessimistic.

²⁹⁴ Hugo Loetscher, "Ein Rückblick auf unsere Zukunft. Von einem pazifischen Ufer aus," *Die Weltwoche, Sonderbeilage 50 Jahre Weltwoche*, 17 November 1983, 19-29.

²⁹⁵ *Herbst*, 162.

²⁹⁶ *Herbst*, 163.

whose decline opened up a future, determining the existence of the world."

This is not so much apocalyptic as it is non-Eurocentric.

The California Dream does turn into a nightmare in Sibylle Berg's recent novel *Amerika*.²⁹⁷ The novel tells the stories of four deplorable German characters. Their lives are essentially without purpose and meaning. But they have dreams: They either want to be more beautiful, famous, successful or rich. The author warns them: "Be careful what you dream, for it could come true".²⁹⁸ Indeed, they all end up in California, become famous, and are beautiful or rich. But they are also miserable, cheated out of life. On the edge of swimming pools they look for love, but perform anonymous fellatio instead. A true love turns out to be a callboy. Nice moments in a restaurant can be bought. And yet, laughter is always forced, too loud.²⁹⁹ Berg is obsessed with gender relations and relationships. None of them is happy. "They are rather like shopping in super markets".³⁰⁰

Berg's novel indeed could be described as the vision of the end of Western civilization, a postmodern apocalypse. In comparison, Loetscher's travel and field report of Los Angeles appears downright upbeat. Berg's writing no longer attempts to recreate any image of America. Of course, it is a dystopic view, but this could not matter less. There's no dream to aspire to

²⁹⁷ Sibylle Berg, *Amerika* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1999). Berg is a German author who lives in Zurich.

²⁹⁸ *Amerika*, 151.

²⁹⁹ *Amerika*, 76.

³⁰⁰ *Amerika*, 184.

and no nightmare to avoid. If an example is given, it is intended neither as a positive nor a negative one. The starkest images, crass language and cynicism are simply served up for effect. Recent pop literature -- rather successful in German-speaking countries -- seems to be written for an emotional effect: not merely entertainment, but some form of titillation or disgust.

This new genre of pop fiction might have originated in journalism, so-called pop journalism. Tom Kummer, a Swiss journalist who reported from Hollywood for popular as well as "serious" magazines in both Germany and Switzerland, recently told his own controversial story in pop journalism.³⁰¹ Kummer had become famous for his star interviews in the 1990s. He published unbelievable interviews with Sean Penn, David Letterman, Demi Moore, Bruce Willis, and many more. How did he dare ask them such questions? How did he get them to answer so openly? He asked the actor Sean Penn, a chain smoker, why he extinguished cigarettes in his own hand? Penn apparently responded: "I am an existentialist. Sometimes life bores me."³⁰² Kummer started an interview with Demi Moore on a similarly existentialist note: "Demi Moore, when did you last suffer physically?" And Moore is reported to have responded: "Yesterday on the freeway. I was stuck in traffic for two hours. People in Los Angeles just don't know how to drive

³⁰¹ Kummer, Tom. "Die Matrix der Wirklichkeitsentwürfe." *Cover Medienmagazin* No. 5 (Spring 2005): p. 10-12.

³⁰² Tom Kummer, "Der Staat ist die Pest, die Kunst ein Kreuzzug und das Leben ein Krieg: Der Schauspieler und Regisseur Sean Penn über den Untergang Hollywoods, die Todesstrafe und sein Problem mit Frauen," *Das Magazin*, 4-10 May 1996, 46-54.

when it's raining."³⁰³ Readers either loved or hated the stars after reading such interviews. There was something raw and personal about them. Clearly, they had an effect.

Kummer's interviews were published until Sharon Stone announced that she had never met Kummer and certainly never given such an interview. It turned out that he had invented page-long, unbelievably believable dialogues. Supposed realism had become pure fiction, masquerading as portrayals of famous Americans. Once caught, Kummer was banned from publishing in German-language magazines.

According to Kummer, this "new journalism" had started in the mid-80s when *Tempo* magazine asked journalists to write about anything and everything in the same brisk and nonchalant tone: Helmut Kohl, Kalashnikovs, sex or gummy bears. "In this show there was no truth, but effects," Kummer explains and claims that, ironically, this type of journalism was indirectly promoted by the "authenticists". Editors would not accept reportages or a journalist's point of view for ideological reasons: As "authenticists", Kummer argues, they upheld the "Anglo-Saxon virtue of objectivity, failing to recognize it as a ritual, as pure construction".³⁰⁴ They kept asking for his style of raw interviews, never considering that they might be staged or wholly invented.

³⁰³ Tom Kummer, "Wenn ich beim Training leide, dann empfinde ich ungeheuren Spass dabei," (interview with Demi Moore), *Das Magazin*, 21 February 1998, 38-43.

³⁰⁴ *Wirklichkeitsentwürfe*, 10.

Apparently, Kummer researched his "interviews" well. They were not verbatim records, but nonetheless "true", acceptable. Kummer later explained that all the information was factual, presented in the form of "concept art". Kummer was banned from publishing, but he was not held accountable for alleged misrepresentations or falsehoods. Some editors who bought his interviews were fired.

Mobility

In all the narratives situated in the American West mobility is a central motive. All protagonists or first-person narrators drive and move about, not always with a destination. As set forth in the previous chapter, for Max Frisch mobility was predominantly a challenge to urban planning and America a place to look for inspiration in dealing with that modern problem. Frisch grew enthusiastic about America's freeways in Hollywood, Fort Worth and elsewhere. But he also considered driving and mobility as an aspect of the modern way of life. His feelings about mobility as a social phenomenon are at best mixed. In his 1951 essay about his first "American picnic" he describes a Sunday outing in a car.³⁰⁵ Again, he first considers that the task is enormous: Of the eight million people then living in the city, thousands wanted to leave for the countryside on Sunday. This was comparable to

³⁰⁵ Max Frisch, "Amerikanisches Picknick," in *Materialien zu Max Frisch «Stiller»*. ed. Walter Schmitz. vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 282-286.

mobilizing the Swiss army.³⁰⁶ Frisch enjoys the ride, following beautiful parkways through open nature, "for miles as if nobody had been here before".³⁰⁷ But "after three hours" he begins to "ask himself about the destination".³⁰⁸ The picnic indeed turns out to be a strange experience: Hundreds of cars on a beautiful site, but almost no paths. Many people enjoy their picnics in their cars. They never seem to get out of the car.³⁰⁹ He tries to find an explanation for what is inexplicable to him. The answer he comes up with: "fear of being alone, fear of oneself".³¹⁰ Back in his apartment, he waxes even more philosophical as he continues to hear the rolling noise of innumerable cars. They keep rolling and rolling, day and night. "But whereto? Perhaps they don't know themselves".³¹¹ Frisch leaves the ambiguity unresolved. Who are they? Who is rolling on and on? The cars or the people? What began as a description of a pleasurable ride ends in a short meditation on individual self-determination vs. being dominated by technology. Frisch wrote this in 1951. Forty years later, the question about the destination seems irrelevant. Driving has become a purpose in itself.

Unlike several other authors, Martin Walser does not dwell on the negative experiences in American society. Whatever bad he might have seen,

³⁰⁶ *Picknick*, 282.

³⁰⁷ *Picknick*, 285.

³⁰⁸ *Picknick*, 283.

³⁰⁹ *Picknick*, 284.

³¹⁰ *Picknick*, 285.

³¹¹ *Picknick*, 286.

he feels "homesick for America" which he cannot easily explain.³¹² Among the many things he mentions to circumscribe his "feeling" are the beautiful sky over Texas or the oak and cedar trees that "grew in his head" while he was a visiting writer at the University of Texas.³¹³ The absence from German culture seemed like a stay at a health spa, Walser notes further into the booklet (12). Part of the treatment consisted of driving and yet more driving around. Walser, the man of letters, discovers that he loves American cars.

Every car designed in America dreams of being a Rolls Royce. Hulking elegance ("ungeschlachte Eleganz") is the goal. These Japanese things are totally functional. They dream of nothing.³¹⁴

It is such reverie Walser has in mind when he later states that some of his German contemporaries find it "politically questionable to feel good in America".³¹⁵

Amerikabild: a puzzling composite image

The two anthologies of Swiss literature published in the wake of the 700-year anniversary of Switzerland make accessible in English a sizeable number of Swiss texts on the United States, originally written in all four official Swiss languages.³¹⁶ Rolf Kieser prefaced the collection in *The*

³¹² *Amerikareise*, 8.

³¹³ *Amerikareise*, 8.

³¹⁴ *Amerikareise*, 15, 19.

³¹⁵ *Amerikareise*, 61.

³¹⁶ See footnote, 222.

Literary Review with an introduction to Swiss literature.³¹⁷ In *The Dream Never Becomes Reality*, Romey Sabalius discusses the works of sixteen authors who write in German, leaving aside works in other languages.³¹⁸

While these anthologies provide a good overview of *Amerikabilder* in Swiss literature, the choice of texts seems to be determined largely by a desire to make a broad, representative selection. Some of the texts may be perceptive pieces of literature. However, from a reader-response point of view, they could not be considered particularly relevant because of their small audience. For instance, Swiss-Romansh poetry may be representative of Swiss *Amerikabilder*, but it probably does not contribute much to the creation of such images among the larger public. Texts originally published in a daily newspaper, such as Hanno Helbling's "Discovering America", probably have to be considered too ephemeral to have an impact on images of America.³¹⁹

But "America" inspired other Swiss writers that were not included in these two recent American anthologies. Some of their works are likely to have a larger audience and thus a potentially bigger impact on the reception of America in Switzerland. One of the most interesting aspects of such works

³¹⁷ Rolf Kieser, "Post Festum: The Four Literatures of Contemporary Switzerland," *The Literary Review* vol. 36, no. 4 (summer 1993), 437-445.

³¹⁸ Sabalius, Romey. "Das Bild der USA in der zeitgenössischen Literatur der deutschsprachigen Schweiz." In: *Neue Perspektiven. Zur deutschsprachigen Literatur der Schweiz. Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*. vol. 40. ed. Romey Sabalius. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997. p. 11-30.

³¹⁹ Helbling's text was published in German in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* on 23 March 1992.

is that their authors seem to discover more and more American places outside New York, Los Angeles or the desert Southwest. Gradually, the American map as it appears in Swiss literature is expanding to include cities and areas that used to be *terra incognita*.

Between Cendrars and Frisch, from 1936 to 1938, Annemarie Schwarzenbach published literary journalism on New York and beyond, often about the South. Her writing was recently rediscovered and reissued as exemplary pieces of *literature engagée*. A member of a prominent and affluent Zurich family, she preferred to write about those living in the shadows. Although she focused on poverty, racism and other forms of social injustice, her writing never turns into an indictment as for instance Federspiel's. Also, her photographs that accompanied the texts are subtle, yet full of empathy. Dorothea Lange comes to mind. Interestingly, Schwarzenbach's personal experience of America was ruined by the difficulties of romantic relationship. After her relationship with Carson McCullers proved to be an impossible love, she fell into depression and spent some time in psychiatric clinics.³²⁰

Christoph Keller published an "American novella" entitled *How is the weather in Boulder?*³²¹ Keller tells the story of a famous pianist who suffers a

³²⁰ Annemarie Schwarzenbach, *Auf der Schattenseite. Reportagen und Fotografien*, (Zurich: Lenos, 1990); *Jenseits von New York. Reportagen und Fotografien 1936-1938* (Zurich: Lenos, 1992).

³²¹ Christoph Keller, *Wie ist das Wetter in Boulder? Eine amerikanische Erzählung*. Frankfurt: Collection S. Fischer, 1991.

nervous breakdown and tries to escape his aunt's fate: She died from an overdose of happiness. He tries to avoid the performances he has already committed to. One of the concerts is to take place in Boulder. It is not evident at all what makes this an "American novella". It seems references to America have become formal elements that allow an author to give his or her work a semblance of cosmopolitan sophistication. Similarly, Peter Stamm's novel *Agnes* (1998), mentioned before, tells a love story that develops in a Chicago library between a journalist who is researching a story about historic Pullman train wagons, and a beautiful American woman who is working on her dissertation in physics.³²²

Even if authors return to New York as a setting for their novels, there are signs that the map of America is becoming less sketchy. The French-Swiss author Daniel de Roulet zoomed in on the blue line that guides the marathon runners from start to finish through New York. De Roulet, a left-wing activist turned runner, reflects on his acts of sabotage in the 1960s as he follows the blue line from the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge to Central Park.³²³

Lincoln or Fonda as Socialist educators?

To conclude this round-up of Swiss images of America, Peter Bichsel's vignettes are a useful choice. Bichsel does not use or produce

³²² Peter Stamm, *Agnes* (Zurich: Arche, 1998).

³²³ Daniel de Roulet, *Die Blaue Linie* (Zurich: Limmat Verlag, 1996).

images of America himself, but reflects critically on Swiss perceptions of America.

"In your cinema, America, I went to school," Peter Bichsel writes in one of his "stories told at the wrong time."³²⁴ He grew up in Swiss small towns and in movie theaters, Bichsel explains. The movies were American, and Bichsel does not exclude the possibility that he acquired his notions of what's good and bad from these movies. Bichsel goes so far as to say that American movies not only socialized him, but also might have made him a socialist.³²⁵ The dreams manufactured in Hollywood evidently did not travel unchanged across the Atlantic.

One of the films that shaped his consciousness was John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), starring Henry Fonda. He respects Abraham Lincoln/Henry Fonda although he does not really like the Abraham Lincoln/Henry Fonda character.³²⁶ What he resents most is that "Abraham Lincoln forced the notion on him that he would have to live a successful life." If it was not Lincoln himself, it was Henry Fonda as Lincoln who planted this idea in his head. Should he bear Lincoln/Fonda grudges? He can't.³²⁷ But he resents that he compares what he saw in such a film to the real life story that a friend and fellow socialist told him. Obviously, it seems to irritate Bichsel

³²⁴ Peter Bichsel, "Abraham Lincoln als Henry Fonda," in *Geschichten zur Falschen Zeit* (Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1981). The text first appeared as newspaper column in 1976.

³²⁵ *Lincoln*, 81.

³²⁶ *Lincoln*, 83.

³²⁷ *Lincoln*, 84-85.

that an American movie would somehow interfere or even supersede ethical and social values that he could have learned from life.

Peter Bichsel moves beyond European perceptions of American materialism or acquisitiveness and puts it in the context of the ambitious aspirations he detects in America. In the films of the "dream machine Hollywood" he discovers one source for the astounding ambitions common to the American lower and middle classes. "You can do it, you can have it all," Hollywood movies seem to reiterate as they constantly celebrate the extraordinary. Bichsel resents such messages because they don't acknowledge the admirability of little people's "real lives."

"In your cinema, America, I went to school", Bichsel concludes. "You set the standards for what chokes me up. I fight against it, but I remain all choked up... and I resent that you concealed from me that most people go to bed at night and get up in the morning".³²⁸

Bichsel found an original and powerful way of describing his own Americanization. American influences not only influenced superficial matters of style, but shaped his identity. Considering this, his description comes across as unusually equanimous. Like Max Frisch, Bichsel never engages in anti-capitalist rhetoric accusing the United States of crass materialism as other European socialists or even non-socialists have done.

³²⁸ *Lincoln*, 85.

Admitting that you are a fan of America could be difficult for any socialist; at times it can be awkward for any European. During the Vietnam War, during the Reagan administration as well as during the Bush eras it is considered politically incorrect, simply naïve or, worst, an admission of fascism if one admits to liking the United States. Bichsel tackles the challenge head-on by answering the corresponding, mostly implied, but seldom openly stated question: So what do you think about America?³²⁹ "Beautiful, wunderbar, phantastic," he says he normally replies. "I would love to live in New York." Bichsel admits to exaggerating, "but there are reasons for exaggerating".³³⁰ For, it is not the country itself that determines how one feels about it and its people. That depends entirely on one's own experiences and emotions, Bichsel reminds his readers.³³¹ "What we call «Americans» are anything but the people who live in that country. The «Americans», that's the name of an army. The «Americans», that's what we call an economic superpower. The «Americans» is another name for the CIA".³³² On a flight to Los Angeles, Bichsel realized how few things he actually associates with America: a President, a Kissinger, a CIA, and a cowboy to top it off.³³³

³²⁹ Peter Bichsel, "Wie hast du's mit Amerika?" in *Geschichten zur Falschen Zeit* (Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1981). First published as newspaper column in 1976.

³³⁰ *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 67.

³³¹ *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 67.

³³² *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 70.

³³³ *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 69.

Bichsel goes on to elaborate that for instance "Spaniard" does not denote a "typical" person from Spain in the same way as "American" always describes a type or rather a stereotype in the heads of the Swiss (and, I daresay, other Europeans). How could the words "America" and "Americans" develop that way? He traces the "etymology" of the stereotypical "America" back to immigration history. "America" originally stood for the dreams and hopes of the people who eventually migrated to the United States. In the United States, "America" was transformed into a kind of patriotism that is hard to stomach for a European. Every holiday "-- even Easter --", Bichsel seems to shake his head, becomes a holiday of the American flag. The star-spangled banner, Bichsel concludes, is perhaps something exotic and unreal even for Americans, a promise that used to be the hope of the immigrants. In Europe, the hope that resonated in the word "America" could not be associated with the flag. Thus, "America" stands for unfulfilled hopes and is, in the end, unrequited love.³³⁴

Bichsel makes similar points in other vignettes. In his version of Columbus's story for children,³³⁵ Bichsel finally takes the point to its logical conclusion: "Amerika gibt es nicht" or "America does not exist": True, "everybody says the same things about America, things they knew before they even went there. Now that is really suspicious."

³³⁴ *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 70-71.

³³⁵ Peter Bichsel, "Amerika gibt es nicht," in *Kindergeschichten* (Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1974), 26-39.

Chapter 3

Swiss Lebensgefühl

Mein Leben ist eine giving-story. Ich habe verstanden, dass man contemporary sein muss, das future-Denken haben muss. Meine Idee war, die hand-tailored-Geschichte mit neuen Technologien zu verbinden. Und für den Erfolg war mein coordinated concept entscheidend, die Idee, dass man viele Teile einer collection miteinander combinieren kann. Aber die audience hat das alles von Anfang auch supported.

Jil Sander, German fashion designer³³⁶

When I first visited the United States in 1985, I stayed for several weeks with friends in St. Joseph, a small college town in central Minnesota. I had a chance to experience student life as a guest in a house that was shared by several students. Although I also attended some classes and it was here where my decision to study in the United States took shape, I devoted myself for the most part to student life outside school.

All the roommates in the house were teenagers or had barely turned 20. I admired their freedom and independence. The fact that they lived on their own was fascinating to me since back home nobody I knew had moved out of their parents' home before their twenties.

³³⁶ Quoted in: Dieter E. Zimmer, *Deutsch und anders. Die Sprache im Modernisierungstaumel* (Hamburg: Rohwohlt, 1997), 21-22.

What impressed me most about my friends in Minnesota was the eloquence and openness with which they talked about relationships and romance. They certainly seemed to have more experience, or at least a broader vocabulary, differentiating between "going steady", "dating somebody off and on", "being close" or "being an item." Where I was from, at our age, a young adult either had a girlfriend or boyfriend, as the case may be. Beyond that, relationships were not really categorized.

The roommates in the house in St. Joe had their own schedules, but all of them had made a ritual out of watching the soap opera *Days of Our Lives* during lunchtime. At the time I found the show pretty good. Somehow it seemed to capture reality accurately, all the difficulties with relationships, etc. I might also have simply accepted the soap because my friends watched it religiously and used it as a conversation piece. At one point, however, I came to think that soap operas not only depicted life, but life was imitating art: Melissa, one of the roommates who happened to share the first name with one of the soap's characters, had problems with her boyfriend. The way she and the group talked about Melissa's relationship as it was in the process of breaking apart eventually struck me as a real life version of *Days of Our Lives*.

In a recent episode of the Swiss equivalent of the TV show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, one participant had to answer the last question about "a film with James Dean, *For they do not know what they are doing*"

(as Rebel without a Cause is called in German)³³⁷: He knew that the leader of a youth gang died in a test of courage. When he realized that his answer was correct and he had won the game, he cheered "yes" (in English), in a typical gesture shaking his fist in the air, "yes, yes." Indeed, expressions of exuberance and celebration are often in English nowadays. The Swiss frequently use "yeah", "gimme five" and even "okidoke". It is no longer just language proper that absorbs American words and phrases, but also signs, gestures and mimic expressions. My own children scream in the roller coaster at a county fair in a way their parents never screamed. To be sure, we, the parents, were noisy children, too, but in a different way. In the case of my children, the explanation may be fairly easy and plausible: They got to ride on roller coasters for the first time when we lived in Connecticut and obviously "learned" and got roller coaster riding down to the last detail, including, as it were, the "accent" of the appropriate expressions of joy. However, as the examples of "okidoke" and even "gimme five" show, most people adopt "cool" phrases and behavior from movies. This can lead to strangely anachronistic or out-of-place usage. When did somebody in the United States last say "okidoke?"

* * *

The chapter on material culture delineated developments in the visual landscape of Switzerland arising from cultural changes and modernization. In

³³⁷ The German title of the film *East of Eden* reads: "Denn sie wissen nicht was sie tun."

the chapter on Swiss literature, America emerged as a place of mind, as an invention or recreation of creative (or not so creative) writers. In the present chapter, I will try to sketch "America" in its even more intangible, psychological manifestations. "America" is not only a mental fabrication, but encapsulates an emotional or psychological need. It could be argued that "America" as a psychological manifestation is the site of most dramatic forms of "Americanization": the standardization of expressions, personal habits, or lifestyles. However emotional or psychological such manifestations may be, they express themselves physically. People begin to look "American". Of course, it is a staple of anti-Americanism to point to American insignia on clothing, to NY caps on European heads or English phrases on T-shirts. More recently, the body itself seems to be adapted to an American form: Although one of the most famous bodybuilders is Austrian, health and sports trends in recent years have all "come from America". In other words, "Americanization" has moved on to conquer the individual body.

Consumption, the acquisition and "individual" arrangement of product brands, has become the most prevalent form of self-expression. The body is increasingly being instrumentalized to create identity and signal an association with a specific subculture. Belonging to a specific group of people is no longer defined by the work we invest to gain our livelihood, but by our investments in our own image. Class has been replaced by subculture.

Again, as with American influences in material culture (corporate architecture, super markets, fast food, etc.), it is easy to enumerate any number of "proofs" that even our brains and psyches have been colonized by America: In German-speaking lands, we engage in "mind mapping" or "dating" and the "single" appears to be the fastest growing subgroup in society. We aspire to improve our "wellness" and "fitness" through regular "jogging" or "spinning", "core" or "bodywork". In Switzerland, "*Fahrrad fahren*" is as outdated as the ancient *Veloziped* (bicycle without pedals, powered more like a scooter or kickboard). The Swiss now go "mountainbiken". Even "walken" seems more modern (beneficial to your health?) than "gehen", let alone the quaint "wandern". For some activities, such as the "one-night stand", we never seemed to have had a term, just an awkward definition/explanation: "sexuelles Abenteuer für eine Nacht". The "instant flirter" has cropped up in trend magazines before a definition could be created. Even if the coinage does not make much sense, the concept seems to resonate with the audience. Finally, "coole Driver" seem to understand some rules better if they are told in English: The current official campaign against drunk driving uses the slogan "drink or drive".

The most visible and all-encompassing expression of this "Lebensgefühl" (attitude towards life) that is preferably verbalized in English, is Berlin's "love parade" or Zurich's "street parade." Body-consciousness and consumerism, sex, drugs, and techno music, all merge in a weekend long

ritual of self-dramatization.³³⁸ The street carnivals, a mixture of love-ins and techno party, exhibitionism and hedonism, draw bigger crowds -- participants, not spectators -- than any other cultural event. Critics are aghast: They point to parade's virtual speechlessness. The music is too loud. All expression is physical. The parades lead to a deliverance from language and liberation of bodies. Apart from all this, street parades are thoroughly orchestrated consumer events. It's all about consumption and self-absorption, ecstasy.³³⁹ The almost exclusively political demonstrations of yesteryear have been transformed: Today, anti-globalization protests coexist with rather epicurean festivals such as the street parade. Both forms of public manifestations are products of the internationalization of popular culture.

These parades could not have been imported from the United States, for the simple reason that such large-scale "carnivals" do not take place in the United States. "Burning Man", which is organized every summer in the Nevada desert, or Key West's "Fantasy Fest" may be comparable as far as the main ingredients music, alcohol and drug use, and the celebration of the body are concerned. But, most significantly, these modern-day American bacchanalia are not parades through downtown of major cities. They are not mainstream events. By contrast, in Germany and Switzerland the most recent parades were broadcast on public television. Zurich uses pictures of the street

³³⁸ The original love parade in Berlin seems to have died. It did not take place in 2004. Zurich's street parade draws over a million participants every summer.

³³⁹ Jean-Martin Büttner, "Ohne Worte. Über Techno, Körper, Sprache und rhythmisches Paradiere," *Tages-Anzeiger*, 10/11 August 1996.

parade in official brochures about the city. Despite these differences, street parades are loosely associated with American popular culture, at least partly because "parade music", Techno, originated in the United States and because "parade language" (if verbalization is needed at all) is English.

New habits and (daily) practices indicate a shift in values. The fact that most of these habits and practices are described with English words makes this change in values even more threatening to some:

"Americanization" seems to have moved from the surface to the very core. But the changes in values are first and foremost an outgrowth of increasing individualization, which cannot be blamed on America, but seems to be part of "normal" human individuation. Individualization is one of the phenomena that Europeans might like to subsume under "Americanization". Even in the land of individualism, the process of individualization draws criticism. While American critics of their own culture might link the change of family structure, the increase of single households or a general decline of social values to liberal politics, European critics of society often resort to "Americanization" for an easy explanation for disconcerting developments.

Changing attitudes towards life in advertising images

Advertising has long been identified as a major culprit in the change or, depending on the perspective, the erosion of traditional values.

Advertising "creeps into the mind of the masses."³⁴⁰ Consistently, advertising has become a preferred subject of cultural or social studies as well as a target of criticism. Simon Eggimann has examined the change from "way of life" to "life style" as it emerges in Swiss advertisements from 1950 to 1990.³⁴¹

In the 1950s and the early 1960s, middle-class values clearly dominated Swiss print advertising. Most commonly the woman was depicted as a homemaker and the man as the breadwinner. Clear-cut gender roles were even maintained in the depiction of leisure activities. According to this advertising, only one pattern of life existed: marriage and family with specific roles for men and women.

New life patterns emerged in advertisements in the 1960s and early 1970s. A shift of underlying values occurred, "measurable" even in print advertisements. Eggimann found that in particular the strong sense of duty that seemed to permeate life in the immediate post-war era eroded gradually. Propriety and conformity to what had been considered the Swiss thing to do was devalued. More and more non-conformist types began to populate Swiss advertisements. Advertising copy and imagery increasingly sought to provoke. Eroticized images were first used for the purpose of such

³⁴⁰ Rainer Gries, Volker Ilgen and Dirk Schindelbeck, *"Ins Gehirn der Masse kriechen!" Werbung und Mentalitätsgeschichte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

³⁴¹ Simon Eggimann, "Von der Lebensweise zum Lebensstil. Werbung als Abbild des Wandels von Werten und Lebensformen in der Schweiz 1950 bis 1990," in *Bilder vom besseren Leben. Wie Werbung Geschichte erzählt*, eds. Daniel di Falco, Peter Bär, and Christian Pfister (Bern: Haupt, 2002), 193-208.

provocations, but soon became expressions of a new liberal attitude.³⁴²

Particularly in advertisements for cigarettes, sexualized content was utilized to appeal to values that increasingly shift toward the individual: (romantic) togetherness was given up in favor of fun among friends; personal gratification and happiness replaces more and more ideals of success.

The trend away from social values toward individual values continued in the advertisement of the 80s. Print ads clearly reflected the increasing individualization of society. At the same time or as a consequence, values reflected in advertising became more pluralistic. Different, sometimes contradicting sets of values coexist. Self-fulfillment or personal gratification might be portrayed as a result of a successful professional life or the consequence of a non-conformist and carefree lifestyle. The uniform ideal of marriage, family and home has all but disappeared from Swiss advertisement. Eggimann also found that individual rebellion against conventions supplants any form of political struggle, most of all union fights. Leisure activities are depicted instead of home or workplace situations.³⁴³

³⁴² Christine Wanner, and Brigitte Walser, "Die Dritte im Bunde. Die Zigarette als erotisches Accessoire in der Werbung zwischen 1965 and 1985," in *Bilder vom besseren Leben. Wie Werbung Geschichte erzählt*. eds. Daniel di Falco, Peter Bär, and Christian Pfister (Bern: Haupt, 2002), 137-148.

³⁴³ See Eggimann, 205.

American individualism in advertising

Images of leisure activities and sports often contain images of America. These images may be no more than an allusion, a caption in English or, depending on the product advertised, a specific symbol of America. One such symbol has long been the cowboy, most of the time quite appropriately depicted in a Western setting. The cowboy is a well-worn image for individualism, but is certainly not always usable. The connotations and perceptions change considerably according to political circumstances.

In the 80s, even the word "cowboy" acquired mixed meanings. While the cowboy still stood for the virtuous, tough frontiersman on one hand, he also became something of a ruthless villain. When the leftwing environmental and peace movements gained influence in European politics and societies, Ronald Reagan for many personified the latter kind of cowboy. Perhaps one could make the argument that President Reagan with his tough talk against the "evil empire" and emphasis on private initiative changed the image of the cowboy. This went so far as to make the cowboy a stereotype readily available to caricaturize (conservative) politicians. While at some time a crown or a Napoleonic laurel wreath might have been used to ridicule the aspirations of a powerful politician, the cowboy and the sheriff became figures that could be used in smear campaigns. The cowboy as a danger to global community has recurred frequently in political caricatures of the past decades. But cowboy images are by no means used only to characterize or

criticize American Presidents. When a European politician is referred to as a cowboy it is an even more damning judgment.

Even a cursory examination of print advertisements that appeared in magazines in the 1980s and 1990s reveals a noticeable change in the representation of the United States in advertisements, analogous to the image conveyed in caricatures or political opinion pages. When Reagan dominated the cowboy image, the cowboy and the American West also virtually disappeared from advertising imagery. Even the Marlboro man kept a low profile for while.

In the late 80s, however, more and more images of the West returned to magazine advertising. The new ads not only use well-known images of the West such as Monument Valley, but also introduce new ones such as the Cadillac Ranch outside Amarillo or Rocky Mountain landscapes. Nova Insurance Company, for instance, in 1988 encouraged private initiative (that is personal insurance in addition to the state-sponsored insurance), alluding to eccentric private enterprises such as the Cadillac Ranch. With the increasing popularity of rock climbing (in Switzerland known as "bouldering"), more and more images appeared of some daring "free climber" hanging from a red rock cliff, his or her sinewy body clad in tight-fitting and sleeveless clothing. Western landscapes again became prominent

as a locus for freedom and individualism. The cowboy image was diversified, if not entirely replaced.³⁴⁴

The image of America is at the same time stable and protean. Depending on socio-political circumstances popular imagemakers adapt the perspectives of America. John Fiske has accurately pointed out with regard to the Western myth:

Despite the easy exportability of the Western myth and its ready incorporability into the popular culture of other nations, it always retains its Americanness: it thus admits the forging of links between American values and the popular consciousness of other nationalities.³⁴⁵

Generally, the new use of American images is more playful and ironic than before. While the West still stands for individuality and freedom, advertisers don't take these connotations too seriously. The most prominent case in point was the "Test the West!" campaign for West cigarettes from 1989 into the early 90s. The advertisers related eccentric characters (flashy homosexuals, hookers, or effete fatsos, etc.) to individualism and freedom. The campaign was a great marketing success.³⁴⁶

The American West also continues to be an inexhaustible reservoir of entertaining features that can be published in magazines or the weekend

³⁴⁴ The usability of the rock climber is particularly interesting because the mountaineer of the Alps does not crop up in advertising very much. The mountaineer's individualism seems to be connoted more negatively than the rock climber's.

³⁴⁵ John Fiske, "The Jeaning of America," *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 1-21.

³⁴⁶ Part of the success is attributable to the appeal of Western (European and American) culture after the fall of the Berlin wall.

edition of newspapers. Apart from Hollywood personalities or the California governor, be his name Reagan or Schwarzenegger, a manhunt in the Nevada desert can provide popular reading material in Switzerland.³⁴⁷ Even texts about comparatively little known historical figures, such as the Pinkertons, can make it into a Swiss magazine.³⁴⁸ A flurry of articles was published about "Burning Man" after German-language magazines discovered this annual neo-tribalist ritual in the Nevada desert.³⁴⁹ The stories always have more entertainment than news value. Authors and editors prefer stories about the unusual, eccentric or what exists "only in America." Of course, this choice also tends to promote old stereotypes.

Americanization and emigration history

As we saw in the previous chapter on American images in Swiss literature and the previous section on advertisement, "the myth of America cultivated in Europe is a psychological reality far more important to the European than the so-called truth about America, that Europe is much more influenced by its image of America than by America itself."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Toni Lienhard, "Claude Dallas: Cowboy, Doppelmörder, Volksheld," *Tages-Anzeiger Magazine* 13/1987 (undated clipping): 41- 48.

³⁴⁸ Jürg Weibel, "Allan Pinkerton," *Tages-Anzeiger Magazine* (mid- to late-80s, undated and unnumbered clipping), 31-35.

³⁴⁹ Carmen Butta, "Die Wüste lebt. Hippies, Freaks and Künstler treffen sich in Nevada, um den Burning Man zu feiern," *stern magazine* 40/1998 (undated tear-out), 38 - 46.

³⁵⁰ Jantz, 37.

How did the myths about America or images of America influence emigration? Do the same or similar myths still influence individuals, even if they don't emigrate? How did the special attraction of the United States develop or why did the United States throughout history have particularly inimical foreign critics? Finally, why has Europe's relationship with the United States been much more complex and perturbed than with other centers of emigration such as Canada or Australia?

In summer 1992, when I toured the Midwest researching in courthouses and local libraries for a publication on the history of migration from Liechtenstein to the United States, I visited some genealogical societies and spoke to their members about our project.³⁵¹ After a presentation to the Genealogical Society of Clayton County in Iowa, a woman in the audience asked why we in Liechtenstein, in the source country, were (still) interested in the emigrants? The questioner, being a member of a genealogical society, could relate to the interest one might have in finding out where one's ancestors came from. But why should anybody in the old countries try to keep track of all those who left and in many cases burnt all bridges behind themselves? A fascinating question.

It could indeed be revealing to examine the function of all the numerous publications about emigration or emigrants. Innumerable

³⁵¹ *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*. 2 vols. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998).

emigration guides, emigrants' biographies, descriptions of the New World, fictitious accounts of pioneer treks as well as historical accounts of European migration to the United States have been published.³⁵² The continuing demand for histories of emigration indicate that the desire to come to terms with emigration is equivalent to the wish to know one's ancestry. This is a personal interest that goes beyond the interest in sheer facts and figures.

Migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Many publications have dealt with economic or political causes for migration. Historians commonly shy away from migrants' personal motivations because they are difficult to grasp in strictly scholarly terms. Yet particularly readers back in the Old Country want to know more about motivations beyond, say, economic statistics. For people who stayed home it is often difficult to comprehend how others could pack up their belongings and leave their native country for good. After all, the fact that relatives or neighbors choose to turn their backs on their home country can be and often is understood as a negative comment about home. Migration can be offensive to those who stay behind.

People, migrants and non-migrants alike, need to make sense of the migration experience. It's part of national as well as personal histories.

³⁵² When I worked on the publication on emigration from Liechtenstein to the New World, I familiarized myself with similar publications that had appeared in our region, in Austria, Southern Germany and Switzerland. It is amazing to see how small a territory authors might chose to investigate and write essentially the same story. The story of emigration from Liechtenstein *is* essentially the same as the story of emigration from Switzerland across the river Rhine or from the neighboring Austrian province of Vorarlberg. Few people, I assume, are interested in the minutiae of local emigration legislation. There must be other factors that make emigrant stories popular.

However, in the Old Country as well as in the New World, people tend to resort to mythmaking about migration. While migrants and their descendants often prefer exaggerated rags-to-riches stories about immigrants, folklore in German-speaking countries has coined quite different words with which to describe the desire to pull up one's stakes: Terms such as "Wanderlust" (literally the «desire to roam») and "Amerika-Fieber" (America-Fever) try to express the migrants' inner motivation as some sort of affliction or unsteadiness. Be it a story of success or an invocation of *wanderlust*, both explanations serve to make acceptable the choice to leave home.

Famine or political and religious persecution are commonly cited as reasons for leaving Europe. But most Europeans stayed home despite all the hardships. Even the starving Irish did not all leave for the United States. Hence it makes sense to look for some kind of psychological predisposition to emigration that accompanies stimulation from outside.

Emigrants went after their American Dream; for the majority throughout history, however, it apparently sufficed to have America as a locus for their dreams. In a study of nineteenth century German fiction, Juliane Mikoletzky found that stories with an American theme were primarily for those who stayed. She discards the argument that travel books and adventurous accounts set in America inspired people to leave Germany. More commonly, people read the books for compensation and gradually

accepted emigration simply as an alternative action.³⁵³ The works both offered escape from European realities and assisted the reading public in overcoming a feeling of betrayal and abandonment by the emigrants. In sum we may conclude: the popular books about America, those set on the historical frontier as well as contemporary travel accounts or fiction, serve a double psychological need in Europe.

The history of European immigration to the United States corroborates the power of the image of America, the country's mythic attractiveness relative to socio-political circumstances that might have spurred emigration from the old countries. The available historical scholarship on emigration reflects the power of this myth over reality today. There are many more academic works on the emigration to the United States than to any other country. Swiss historians, to give an example, have so far virtually ignored emigration to Germany or to Russia.³⁵⁴ Certainly, the fascination with America even determines the choice of scholarly topics.

Emigrant case stories

The essays contained in the second volume on emigration from Liechtenstein focus on migration as a personal, inner experience. As editors, we felt the historical account of migration from Liechtenstein to the

³⁵³ Juliane Mikoletzky, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung des 19. Jahrhunderts in der zeitgenössischen fiktionalen Literatur* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988).

³⁵⁴ Klaus Anderegg et al., "Zu Stand und Aufgaben Schweizerischer Historischer Wanderforschung" in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* vol. 37 (1987), 303-332.

Americas contained in the first volume could bring readers close to the migrants' experience. Likewise, of course, the migrants' stories can hardly explain migration as a historical phenomenon. The two volumes were intended to complement each other, one providing verifiable historical data and documents, the other supplementing the facts with the incalculable emotional dimension migration evokes in both migrants and those who stayed behind.

In the stories of families in which several generations in sequence produce emigrants it is possible to observe legends at work. The story of the Buechel brothers, Werner, Eugen, Josef jr., Louis and Walter, all of whom settled near Mequon north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s provides insight into personal motivations and the force of legend. Inevitably, the family legend becomes interwoven with the mythologized America.

Grandfather Fidel Buechel had been found dead beside the railroad tracks near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1881. Fidel had emigrated to Guttenberg, Iowa, with a group of young men from their hometown Balzers when his son Josef was but three years old.³⁵⁵ Apparently, grandfather Buechel had grown so homesick that he decided to walk back to New York

³⁵⁵ The fact that Fidel, like most other emigrants from Balzers settled in Guttenberg is the result of the oldest and most powerful piece of fiction in the stories of emigration from Liechtenstein: Until the publication of *Nach Amerika!* it was commonly believed in Liechtenstein that Guttenberg was a Liechtenstein settlement, named after the Gutenberg Castle on a hill above Balzers. Unfortunately, this turned out to be no more than a nice story.

along the railroad tracks in order to return to Liechtenstein. This chapter in the family history could be "closed" only half a century later when son and grandsons could walk the tracks near Pittsburgh.

The grandsons started out as the stereotypical dishwashers in different hotels before starting their own "Alpine Village" in Mequon north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The "Alpine Village" became a popular country inn. One of the brothers composed German folklore music that was performed in the "Alpine Village". He became an honorary Indian chief and showed his own movies about America whenever he visited Liechtenstein. As a teller of his and his family's story he both celebrated his own success in America and provided an explanation for why they all left their hometown.³⁵⁶

As could be expected, the experience of Liechtensteiners hardly differs from other emigrants' stories. Liechtenstein can even boast its own Hollywood success story. Hermine Kindle (1905 - 2001) had to leave Liechtenstein because her hometown Triesen did not offer them many opportunities. She came from a large family, several members of which ended up leaving Liechtenstein. After a brief stay in Cincinnati in 1925, Hermine moved on to Hollywood, where she soon met Miguel de Contreras Torres. The couple moved to Mexico City where both of them pursued

³⁵⁶ Arthur Brunhart, "Die Auswandererfamilie "Manzele-Büchel" aus Balzers," in *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*, vol. 2. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998), 161-174.

successful careers in cinema.³⁵⁷ The late actor/director Contreras Torres played a central role in the development of Mexican film. Under the pseudonym Medea de Novara, Hermine was one of his favorite actresses.³⁵⁸ Between 1951 and 1979 they owned Gutenberg Castle in Liechtenstein as a summer residence. The annual stays of the couple in Liechtenstein became a textbook example of how emigration stories become legends and myths.³⁵⁹ Hermine herself preferred making near mystical pronouncements and seems to have actively worked on her own legend. She always claimed that as a young girl she had known that she would buy Gutenberg Castle one day. While living in Hollywood, she had become a born-again Christian of some sort and she and her husband firmly believed that all reality originated in one's own imagination. "Everybody creates his or her own home, for one's true home is inside", Hermine explained rather mysteriously.

Arguably, economic circumstances in Liechtenstein and Switzerland triggered most emigration prior to World War II. Bearing in mind that most people did not choose to migrate, the personal circumstances or an "inner disposition" was a strong factor in the decision to leave home even in those times of hardship. Today, emigration in terms of a flight from economic

³⁵⁷ http://cinemexicano.mty.itesm.mx/directores/contreras_torres.html (30 April 2005)

³⁵⁸ http://cinemexicano.mty.itesm.mx/estrellas/medea_de_novara.html (30 April 2005)

³⁵⁹ Loretta Federspiel-Kieber, "Jeder schmiedet sich seine Heimat selbst, denn die wahre Heimat ist das Innenleben," in *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*. vol. 2. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998), 93 - 110.

depression or political oppression does not make sense for Switzerland or other European countries. Subjective reasons have become the sole factors.

Emil Walch's (1926-1996) story is an illustrative case. On the surface, his decision to leave Liechtenstein in 1948 may be understood as some form of economic hardship. His father's construction business, in which Emil worked as the bookkeeper, had gone bankrupt. However, from long interviews with Emil Walch it emerged that it was not an economic necessity for him to emigrate. He wanted to leave because he felt so terribly ashamed after his father's bankruptcy. In addition, Emil's American uncle Raymond Seger (1905-1992), a native of St. Louis, was developing the ambition to bring more and more people from his ancestral home to the United States. Emil was one of the first whom Raymond sponsored. Over the following years, Raymond Seger visited Liechtenstein several times and always "recruited" emigrants to join the small community of Liechtensteiners in St. Louis he was keen on enlarging.

Once in St. Louis, Emil worked in construction. He soon got married and started a family. It was important to him that he could make enough money to ensure that his wife would not have to work. Known as "swift Swiss boy", Emil played "semi-pro" soccer for the St. Louis Razors and was able to supplement the family income considerably. He also lent money to other workers and was called a Jew because he demanded interest. Others called him Hitler because he was a rather strict foreman. In sum, fitting in or

assimilating to the new surroundings was not important to Emil. His sole ambition was to get ahead and erase the shame he felt because of his father's bankruptcy. For the same reason, he even deleted his brother Anton from his narrative: Anton had followed Emil to St. Louis in the 1950s, but was apparently not very successful. Emil never mentioned him in the interviews. In the end, Emil judged his own biography with mixed feelings. Materially, he had achieved what he wanted. But in a sense he had never left Liechtenstein. When he visited Liechtenstein as a retired man and widower every summer of the early 1990s, he often expressed regret about how much Liechtenstein had changed. He had made a fresh start and had become a new person in America, but he could not really accept a Liechtenstein different from the one he had left behind.³⁶⁰

Andrea Eberle (*1964) lived a very "normal" if somewhat eventless life in Liechtenstein when 1990 she decided to take English language courses instead of going on vacation. She chose Los Angeles because her sister was living there. (Back in Liechtenstein, her sister was rumored to be a grunge band groupie, going by a very English sounding name. She had left a number of years earlier and cut all contacts with her home country, leaving ample room for rumors.) Andrea took English courses and then tried to find a job as an intern. Things changed dramatically from there: She got married to one of

³⁶⁰ Robert Behnen and Pio Schurti, "Die Familien Gassner, Seger und Walch in St. Louis," in *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*. vol. 2. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998), 63-72.

the men whom she met at a job interview and started working as a scout for, RTL, a Luxemburg TV channel broadcasting in much of Europe. Andrea's job was to watch American shows and report on what might be useful for European TV. The things she had to look for might simply have been a news item or a particular theme or guest for a talk show. Life in Los Angeles became much more unsteady than back home. Andrea in the meantime changed jobs several times, got divorced, changed addresses, etc. She does not like the fact that in Los Angeles nobody seems to have what she would call a family life and she finds relationships in general are "different", not to say more difficult. She loves the weather in Southern California, but dreads the thought that she might have to live through another earthquake or fire. Interestingly, she enumerated a list of things she did not like or approve of in Los Angeles when I interviewed her. But in conclusion, she compared her life in Liechtenstein to living in a playpen and her new life in Los Angeles to playing in a big backyard on a sunny day.³⁶¹

Rita McLean-Sele was a great stroke of luck in my research on emigration. She had lived in Canada for a number of years, but then returned to Liechtenstein. Since she was no emigrant in people's mind, nobody informed us about her until very late in the process. In the subsequent interviews I conducted with her, she corroborated our working assumptions

³⁶¹ Andrea Eberle, Los Angeles. Conversations with the author in 1993, 1995 and 1998. Essay published in *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*. vol. 2. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998), 243-245.

about personal motives almost literally. Rita says she "was a different person in Canada". Before taking an *au-pair* position in Montreal, she held a good job in Liechtenstein, had a large circle of friends and was a member of a close-knit family. But "something was missing," she remembers. As it turned out, all she needed was something to trigger her decision to leave. Trouble with her boyfriend did just that. In Canada she eventually experienced several stereotypical *au-pair* horror stories, continued to stay illegally and worked for little money in different jobs. She cannot quite explain why she did that to herself. She had no career, instead spontaneity and flexibility ruled her life. She finally decided to return to Liechtenstein when she realized that she was pregnant. Her partner followed her to Liechtenstein and they got married. Rita misses Canada. Life was freer, more open. Liechtenstein, she thinks, is materialistic. Everything is about money and status. But there's little adventure. Rita hastens to add that she herself contributes to this situation: She returned to Liechtenstein because she knew, financially speaking, life with children would be easier in Liechtenstein. Rationally, she opted for financial security and a stable family environment. Emotionally, she still yearns for more adventure and less stability.³⁶²

³⁶² Rita McLean-Sele, "In Kanada war ich ein anderer Mensch als hier" in *Nach Amerika! Geschichte der liechtensteinischen Auswanderung nach Amerika in zwei Bänden*. vol. 2. eds. Norbert Jansen and Pio Schurti (Vaduz/Zurich: Historical Society of Liechtenstein/Chronos, 1998), 271-274.

Reflections of contemporary emigration in Swiss news magazines

As mentioned before, "source countries" continue to have a strong interest in "their" emigrants. At any rate, not only historians are interested in emigration. Stories of emigration and emigrants are published in regular intervals in Swiss newspapers and magazines. For instance, in 1992 *Das Magazin*, the weekly magazine of Zurich's *Tages-Anzeiger*, published a number of portraits of Swiss emigrants.³⁶³ Fred Hayman, boss of the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles and creator of Giorgio perfume, is quoted as saying "Switzerland is too small and too structured." Susanne Bartsch, queen of New York's party scene in the 1990s, explains she will return to Switzerland when she no longer feels the desire to grow. "In Switzerland, there are too many hurdles", attests Hans Lenzlinger, who owns two hotels, a chocolate store and a ski-resort near New Glarus, Wisconsin, also known as "Swissconsin".³⁶⁴ François Bucher, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Florida State University and founder of the Nautilus Foundation, describes these hurdles in different terms: "In Switzerland, people cannot stand the extraordinary."

The same magazine three years later devoted a title story to the young Swiss living in Los Angeles.³⁶⁵ Many of the young people portrayed did not

³⁶³ Jürg Weibel, "Das Weite suchen: Schweizer in Amerika" *Das Magazin* 41, 8/9 October 1992, 28 - 41.

³⁶⁴ Steven D. Hoelscher interviewed the same Hans Lenzlinger for his study on New Glarus, entitled *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 201-202.

³⁶⁵ Tom Kummer, "Der kalifornische Traum. Junge Schweizer in Los Angeles," *Das Magazin* 5, 4 February 1995, 32 - 45.

seem to have settled in yet. It would be difficult to establish an "emigration history". There's the student of architecture who dabbled in movie production. There's a Swiss tattoo artist in East LA and a French-Swiss gay couple who operate a coffeehouse in West Hollywood. And a deconstructivist architect from St. Gallen who thinks Frank Gehry is overrated. The author of the story, Tom Kummer seems to meet any number of young Swiss who aspire to become Hollywood divas networking at parties. Says one of them: "You always recognize the Swiss by their good upbringing and propriety. You recognize them in the very second in which they make an attempt at showing feelings, but their hang-ups come out instead. That's why the 'Los Angeles education' does them a lot of good: They have to cultivate small talk."

Since Tom Kummer, known for his fabricated celebrity interviews, is the author of the last mentioned story, we may wonder whether all these eccentric Swiss actually exist in Los Angeles and whether he really interviewed them. Certainly, the lives portrayed could have been plausibly invented, for the story never seems to change. They all use similar vocabulary for their criticism of Switzerland and the same set of clichés to describe their attraction to America. Journalistic accounts indeed resemble fictions and vice-versa. In the case of Switzerland, the prevalent story since World War II has been the same tale of narrowness, stifling convention, lack of adventure, including a lack of space for eccentrics and no windows of

opportunity for pioneers. Finally, all the stories corroborate Peter Bichsel's assessment: "Everybody says the same things about America, things they knew before they even went there."³⁶⁶

In conclusion, the Swiss (as other Western Europeans) no longer emigrate because they want to be someplace else, in a place where they can build a better future for themselves. They leave because they want to be somebody else. All emigrants need to assimilate to their new surroundings. The process of assimilation and acculturation has most often been examined from the perspective of emigrants as some sort of victim. Emigrants are seen to be thrown into difficulties because they were forced to leave for economic or political reasons. From this perspective, Americanization is understandably viewed as forceful; something inflicted upon migrants although assimilation always requires personal efforts. Indeed, every moment in history provides examples of emigrants who return to their countries of origin because they found it difficult or impossible to assimilate or to become American(ized). Those migrants who relocated foremost in order to be or become a different person away from Switzerland readily Americanize themselves.

Finally, for the purposes of this project, the immersion of Swiss emigrants in United States culture can be compared with the absorption of

³⁶⁶ See chapter on literature. Bichsel, *Wie hast du's mit Amerika?*, 39.

American culture by the Swiss in Switzerland. Analogically, apprehension of Americanization can be compared to the reluctance to leave one's home country, no matter what the circumstances. Emigrants are always a rather small part of any population. As we have seen, in Switzerland it is most frequently a rather small number of people, cultural trendsetters, who function as translators of modernization and American culture in Switzerland. Thus, the debate over "Americanization" or "anti-Americanism" can be better understood as an expression of the tension between the agents of change and the preservers of tradition in a given society.

Is Europe moving to America?

To conclude this chapter, I'd like to put my presentation of the emigration experience and the Americanization of emigrants into a psycho-historical framework. Gert Raeithel, an Americanist at the University of Munich, has tried to explain German-American relations with a psycho-historical model.³⁶⁷ He uses the overwhelming evidence that rather than the starved and apathetic, the down-trodden or "huddled masses", it was the most up-and-going people who emigrated to the New World. Their enterprising spirit shaped American society. In the context of migration, the psychoanalytical term "object relations" describes the disposition or the willingness to pack up and leave. In history, most Europeans' object relations

³⁶⁷ Gert Raeithel, *"Go West" -- Ein psychohistorischer Versuch über die Amerikaner* (Frankfurt: Syndikat, 1981).

were strong; they stayed despite all kinds of hardships and often felt abandoned by emigrants. The prevailing trait of American culture, Raeithel argues, remains weak "object relations".

Raeithel's writings suggest a connection between the former sense of abandonment and the stereotypes of "rootlessness" or "superficiality" in present-day America. The feeling of abandonment was historically also interpreted as a rejection of the native culture. Today, this perceived rejection of culture translates into stereotypes of lack of culture in the United States. Such prejudices are admittedly very vague, yet precisely their vagueness makes for their adaptability and resilience. Analogously, Raeithel's essay proposes a correspondence between European admiration for American mobility and individual freedom and former admiration for brave emigrants who frequently ventured into a uncertain future. The difference between those who stayed and those who left for the New World thus serves as a psychological background to explain both positive and negative views of America. Raeithel's model allows us to comprehend the contradictory statements about America as a plausible whole.³⁶⁸

The Norwegian scholar Steinar Bryn developed a more sociological model to analyze contradictory Norwegian notions of America(nization).³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Gert Raeithel, "Wiederkehrende Elemente im deutschen Antiamerikanismus der Nachkriegszeit" *Amerikastudien* 31(3) 1986, 335-339.

³⁶⁹ Steinar Bryn, "Norway and America: Looking at Each Other," *Scandinavian Review* Summer 1988, 152-160; Steinar Bryn, "Popular Culture and Geographical Linkage -- has

His model complements Raeithel's psycho-historical approach and is easily adaptable to all of Europe. To grasp the tensions between Norwegian social democratic values and individualistic "American dreams," Bryn generates two sets of characteristics and values, one for the ideal-type European social democracy, one for the mythic America:

Ideal-Type European Social Democracy	Mythic America
community-oriented	individualistic
social responsibility	self-realization
modest	self-assuring
traditional	experimental
worker-oriented	consumer-oriented
people-oriented	profit-oriented
rooted	mobile
equality	freedom
justice	opportunity
cooperative participation	competition
European reality	American Dream
security	adventure
scarcity of resources	land of plenty

Scandinavian Culture been Americanized?" (Paper delivered in the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Texas at Austin, 23 April 1991).

etc.

etc.

Of course, the values of so-called mythic America are not entirely alien to Europe. To the contrary, most of the values listed in the right column are attractive to Europeans. But values shift. Bryn states that "mythic America's" values had a better ring in Norwegian ears in 1990 than in 1960. Social democratic ideals had simply come to be considered "boring".

Bryn says American culture is so popular in Norway because Norwegian society for a long time suppressed individualism. Norwegian heroes were decapitated and replaced with American heroes, most prominently the cowboy.³⁷⁰ This also holds true for Switzerland. Barbie has become more popular than Heidi, and Rambo is tougher than Wilhelm Tell. Once again, the American dream turns out to be a Norwegian or, as the case may be, Swiss creation.

In recent years, European aspirations moved toward the right-side column above. In more concrete and practical political terms, the costs for "people-centered" policies in Europe became too expensive. As a consequence, more and more European countries opt for more "individualism", be it in health care or other areas that used to be untouchable in social democracies. Another impressive case in point is "rootedness" vs.

³⁷⁰ Steinar Bryn, "Popular Culture and Geographical Linkage -- has Scandinavian Culture been Americanized?" (Paper delivered in the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Texas at Austin, 23 April 1991).

"mobility": European integration creates one market, and national boundaries are becoming more and more obsolete. The free movement of persons is one of four fundamental principles within the EU. This freedom, however, has also started to demand greater flexibility and mobility from Europeans. In a traditional mode of thinking this could be perceived as Americanization.

Future Europe might opt for more structural inequality between rich and poor and more individual freedom as we find it in America. Europeans favor individual self-expression. Choice is increasingly accepted as the opportunity to choose between a variety of products. Freedom and individualism are losing significance as political terms.

Anxiety about this development and in some cases expressions of anti-Americanism result from the conviction that "an increase in individual freedom and, associated with it, freedom of self-expression" is pseudo-democratic. Democracy "evokes ideals of social equality and justice." The "ongoing process of democratization in the aesthetic-cultural sphere", however, "refers to... a tendency that can lead to extreme civil privatism with no links to any community life or common good whatsoever."³⁷¹

In terms of Raeithel's framework, strong object relations continue to bind Europeans to their communities and cultural heritage. Despite the tendency towards American values, they are not likely to altogether abandon social-democratic ideals and move towards a mythic Europe tailored after the

³⁷¹ Mel van Elteren, "United States Cultural Imperialism Today: Only a Chimera?" in *SAIS Review* vol. XXIII no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2003), 169-188.

mythic America. "America" is likely to remain a creative force in the European imagination, as much as in the United States itself values of liberty and individualism remain the undercurrents on which American culture moves forward. As ideals, aspirations and inspirations, the American dreams and values serve both America and Europe, albeit in different forms. The American Dream is essential to the *Lebensgefühl* of both Europeans and Americans.

Conclusion

*The cause of America is
in a great measure the
cause of all mankind.*

*Thomas Paine,
Common Sense*

Imports from the United States to Switzerland can be summarized as follows: In the 20s and 30s, during the heyday of so-called "Amerikanismus", improving life, saving labor and time, in short progress were the key aspects of what the Swiss (like other Europeans) emphasized. Technology, engineering as well as systematic business and sound management practices, made progress possible and ensured the development of convenient and efficient products. Later, in the 50s and 60s, this emphasis shifted more and more from the material to the personal. Traits such as casualness and a laid-back attitude became the much-coveted attributes of Americans. As material modernization was maturing, individualization and personal lifestyles became central to cultural transformation in Switzerland.

As I hope the previous recapitulation of Swiss culture could make plausible, everything the Swiss ever imported from America, they "created" themselves. Americanization as a forced process of indoctrination or "re-education" (as in post-war Germany) is a misconception in the analysis of

Swiss culture. In a sense, all the Americana that supposedly influenced Switzerland were Swiss from the start, but they might have emerged in Switzerland in an American form because the American form was ready for adoption. Americanization suggests the imposition of something that was not there before, or forcing American culture on an entirely different culture. It is easy to find examples of "American influences" or even name the influencers and intermediaries. But tracing Swiss cultural history also made clear, I hope, that cultural developments were latent. Cultural changes, including those affecting the visual landscape, may have been set in motion through the cultural exchange with the United States. But it is too facile to infer Americanization just because many developments first began in the United States and then moved to Europe and Switzerland. It is a common stereotype that everything new travels from America to Germany to Switzerland. Even if this temporal sequence were a fact in all cultural developments, we could not correctly stipulate a causal chain of events as in: Switzerland changed the way it did because of American influences. At best, "Americanization" is a shorthand explanation of what happened.

The cultural development often referred to as Americanization also reflects human or individual development. In allusion to Thomas Paine's dictum about the American cause being the cause of all mankind, we can say that "America", the mythic America or the American Dream, is a human dream. This human dream continues to be about equality, freedom and

individualism. America has always been the hope of the oppressed. If, in the case of Switzerland, it seems hyperbolic to talk about the oppressed, we can use the "regulated". Objectively speaking, equality, freedom and individualism might be just as developed in Switzerland (or other European countries) as in the United States. But it is a characteristic of dreams or aspirations that they are never objective, but rather subjective. In the cultural area, Switzerland is much more regulated. Objectively compared to Switzerland (or, again, other European countries), the United States is more open and protean. America "contains multitudes" and rather happily "contradicts itself" while in Switzerland identity is conceived of in terms of heritage, continuity and coherence.

In early 2005, the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* began celebrating its 225th anniversary with a series of public lectures and panel discussions, one of them being devoted to the "transatlantic partnership"³⁷². The panel made up of prominent historians and politicians³⁷³ agreed that the current discord in transatlantic relations was but a new edition of an old issue. The much-lamented crisis in the wake of the war in Iraq had some new qualities but was by no means a new phenomenon. A certain anti-American atmosphere had been latent in Europe. Historian Dan Diner emphasized the cultural

³⁷² "Werben um transatlantische Partnerschaft -- NZZ-Podium zum Verhältnis Europa - Amerika," *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 17 January 2005.

³⁷³ Wolfgang Schäuble, Chairman of the CDU/CSU in the German Bundestag, Dan Diner, Historian in Leipzig and Jerusalem, Timothy Garton Ash, historian at Oxford and Stanford universities, and Wolfgang Schüssel, Chancellor of Austria.

differences at the heart of the tensions: Fundamentally, Europe and the United States differed on the concept of origin ("Herkunft"): In the United States it did not matter where a person was from. In Europe, this question is consistently played down while it actually informs much of the thinking and discussion, Diner argued. Freedom and equality are conceived of in diametrically opposed ways: For Americans freedom always takes priority over equality. These cultural differences explain the continued attractiveness of the American Dream although Switzerland/Europe is no longer oppressed. America places fewer restrictions on identity. "America" seems to allow more space for individual growth. Thus "America" and (self-) Americanization continue to be an alternative in European minds.

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Conclusion

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Vita

Pio Schurti was born in Triesen, Liechtenstein, on 8 June 1964, a son of Peter and Wilhelmine Schurti. After graduating from high school, the Liechtensteinisches Gymnasium, in 1985, he began his studies at the University of Zurich. After completing two years in Zurich, he transferred to the University of Texas at Austin where he obtained a B.A. in English in 1988 and an M.A. in Comparative Literature in 1990. He then enrolled in the American Studies Program at the University of Texas. In 1994 he moved to New York and worked as an editor in the Secretariat of the United Nations. From 1996 to 2001 he was self-employed as a publicist and ghostwriter in Liechtenstein. He served as the director of Liechtenstein's Pavilion at the World's Fair Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany. In 2001, he joined the Foreign Service of Liechtenstein. From 2002 until 2004 he represented Liechtenstein as a diplomat at the United Nations in New York.

Pio Schurti is married to Beatrice Noll Schurti. They have three children.

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