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Switzerland
in the Life and Works of . . .
John le Carré (1931-2020)

by Matthias Lerf
Translated and annotated by Richard Hacken

John le Carré lived at the southwestern tip of England in Cornwall while his masterful spy novels take place all around the world. Yet he always emphasized that Switzerland was his second home, and he spoke excellent German. During an interview in Bern’s Hotel Bellevue in 2010, on which this article is based, he even sprinkled in a few dialect phrases. He said he speaks “es bitzeli” [a bit of] Bernese German, but in general he avoided it, since it would call forth a torrent of words in response that he could not handle. In other matters as well, the writer proved himself to be a devotee of the country.

1. Bern as Refuge

It was absolutely by accident that John le Carré ended up in Switzerland. At the tender age of five he had been “stashed in the gu-
lags of the British finishing schools,” as he related in his 2010 inter-
view, since “[his] mother had disappeared and [his] father had shown
himself to be a petty crook and swindler.” The boy, whose name was
then “David Cornwell,” as a result decided at age 16 to flee abroad for
a language practicum, to learn German. Since Germany was out of the
question in the postwar period, he chose Bern. “That was somewhat
comparable, of course,” he said looking back, “to going to New Or-
leans to learn French.”

Nevertheless, he pursued German Studies and Modern Lan-
guages in the Federal City [at the University of Bern] in 1948 and 1949
and retained his ties to the city for the rest of his life.2 “I have always
felt at peace in Bern,” le Carré said. “When I would wander through
the leafy groves by night, I heard the echo of my own footsteps, which
somehow seemed to be accusing me [of disturbing the peace].” He
claimed to sense that same ambient peacefulness 60 years later—with
the Bundesplatz (Federal Plaza) as the only thing to have changed. “It
is now a hotbed for the business of banking,” he scoffed. “Only the
Café Fédéral has somehow miraculously survived.

2. Switzerland as Scene and Setting

The Switzerland of banks and international conglomerates
is a vital theme in le Carré’s books. Yet for many years he wrote
almost exclusively about the Cold War, having achieved his literary

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2 For further insight into the university years, see “John le Carré’s Life in Bern:
Spy Recruitment and Elephant Washing,” as presented by Swissinfo (https://www.swis-
We learn from Adam Sisman, le Carré’s biographer, for instance, that when the young
man enrolled at the university, he met its registrar, who “marveled at his lack of quali-
fications.” To finance his studies, the young David Cornwell worked as a waiter in a
train-station buffet and allegedly washed elephants for Swiss National Circus Knie. His
housing was a small room next to the Tobler factory where Toblerone was made and
thus always smelled of chocolate. (It is quite possible he became familiar in later years
with—and could identify with—the chanson by the Bernese Troubadour Bernhard Stir-
nemann, “Mis Käthi schmöckt nach Schoggola” = “My Cathy Smells like Chocolate,”
also involving the factory in Bern that made Toblerone.)
breakthrough in 1963 with *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, thanks to his creation of the English spy George Smiley—a figure admired in the East as well as the West. As he revealed: “It’s one of the paradoxes of my life that the KGB collected my novels and sometimes even used them for training purposes. Yevgeny Primakov, for instance, who was once the Director of the KGB, was a great fan of mine. I asked him, ‘But Yevgeny, with whom can you identify in my books?’ He answered: ‘With George Smiley, of course.’” As John le Carré quoted that, he pronounced the last sentence with a strong Russian accent.

He loved to stay publicly involved beyond his writing, having been in small cameo appearances in most film versions of his books, even in his old age. After the end of the Cold War, though, he expanded his themes towards conflicts all around the globe. Thus, he transformed Switzerland into a central setting where the international stories could introduce a narrative arc or bring it to its conclusion. One good example is *Our Kind of Traitor* (2010) which deals with money laundering operations.

Le Carré portrayed Switzerland as the “cradle of [his] writing,” but not merely as a scene of the crime for dirty business transactions. Quite to the contrary, in his opinion: “I love this paradoxical community with its four languages. The Swiss have a reputation for being greedy and egotistical, yet they provide volunteers for relief organizations everywhere on earth. It is a magnificent contrast. The character of Switzerland is not chiseled in stone, though many Swiss think it is. There is a lot happening beneath the surface.”

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3 According to Swissinfo (*op. cit.*), David Cornwell was first recruited into the British intelligence services in Bern during his student years, having met with consular officials on Christmas Day in a church. By the time of his literary breakthrough, he had become a member of MI6 and was operating in the hotbed of Cold War espionage: 1960s Berlin. His alter ego of “John le Carré” was more than a vanity pseudonym; as an operative for the Foreign Office, he was forbidden from publishing under his own name.
3. The Evil Pharmaceutical Barons of Basel

John le Carré was an unrelenting critic when it came to the chemical titans of Basel. In his novel, *The Constant Gardener* (2001), he attacked unnamed Swiss multinationals—who, in Africa for instance, used and abused people as guinea pigs and blithely accepted the deadly consequences—as “bastards with nothing but lucrative profits in their heads.”

The book and later the film caused a major stir, particularly since le Carré doubled down on his conviction that the story, when compared to reality, was “as tame as a vacation postcard.” When asked whether the Basel pharmaceutical companies had reacted, he answered in his interview of 2010: “Novartis sent me a very rude letter and asked me in a domineering tone to come to Basel to discuss the matter. I refrained from doing so.”

Hence, the artfulness of John le Carré included his feel for hot topics in the air. In his novel *Our Game* (1995), for example, he foresaw the war in Chechnya before it actually began. Up until his death he involved himself with current events. In his last novel *Agent Running*
in the Field, which appeared in 2019, he dealt with Brexit, which he categorically rejected.

4. The Bellevue

Hotel Bellevue in Bern is an important setting for the action in le Carré’s novel on money laundering, Our Kind of Traitor. Its luxurious lodgings host the [fictional] abduction of one person and the murder of another. Le Carré had been well acquainted with the venerable edifice since his days as a student. As he put it: “Over 60 years ago I came here as a 16-year-old for the first time. For 2 francs and 50 centimes back then, anyone could buy a ticket for thé dansant. They wanted the sons of rich textile barons.”

John le Carré was a very welcome guest at the Hotel Bellevue. Photo rights: Keystone-sda.ch

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4 A dance held while afternoon tea is served.
Later in life, le Carré stayed at the Bellevue time and again, eventually becoming acquainted with every nook and cranny of the hotel. During the 2010 interview, he alertly observed the happenings in the lobby (“Look over there. Those Russians are likely money launderers!”). For a photo opportunity later, he took us to his suite. There was something he absolutely wanted to show us: he pulled a pair of binoculars from a drawer in the cabinet. Evidently this was something the hotel provided for its guests.

“Just look at that beautiful view,” he said, directing the field glasses in the direction of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau [mountains], which could be seen in perfect light from the balcony. Then he roguishly added: “But using these, you can also watch the guest on the balcony across the way in quite keen detail, can’t you?”

Le Carré was no voyeur; it’s just that he loved the contrasts, the small absurdities of such locations. And he could describe them captivatingly in his novels.

5. Federer, Jeanmaire, Dürrenmatt

Besides Bern, John le Carré had one further Swiss locale where he spent a lot of time: “With the success of my novel, The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, I bought a piece of property in Wengen. I had a chalet built there, a small box, nothing sumptuous like Roman Polanski’s place in Gstaad.”

The writer got involved with Swiss personalities from time to time. To Jean-Louis Jeanmaire, the Swiss officer who had been convicted as a spy, he dedicated a book-length report published with the title The Unbearable Peace (1991; Ein guter Soldat). In it he depicted the “traitor of the century” as a victim instead.5

5 The text of this work is currently available at https://granta.com/the-unbearable-peace/ as an open-access site.
A key scene in *Our Kind of Traitor* plays out at the French Open tennis final of 2009 between Roger Federer⁶ and Robin Söderling, at which le Carré himself was present and to which he added his own observations: “That was the match during which some crazy guy stormed down onto the court. For me that was Federer’s John Lennon moment. If the stranger had pulled out a pistol and shot him dead, nobody could have done a thing; the security arrangements were lousy. Since then, I’ve admired Federer even more. He stayed completely cool.”

Finally, there was one last meeting with Friedrich Dürrenmatt⁷ in Wengen. Le Carré related: “Dürrenmatt was depressed and had the feeling that he’d written everything he had in him. Then, when he died, Max Frisch⁸ sent me a telegram with the words, ‘I envy him.’ Not me. I don’t feel the same way. I haven’t gotten to the point of envying the dead just yet.”

On Saturday [December 12, 2020], John le Carré died at the age of 89.⁹

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⁶ Roger Federer (b. 1981) is a Swiss professional tennis player, one of the most highly ranked players of all time.

⁷ Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990) was a Swiss author and dramatist. His epic theatre and satire were internationally celebrated, and he also wrote radio plays and novels.

⁸ Max Frisch (1911-1991) was a well-regarded Swiss playwright and novelist. Along with Dürrenmatt and others, he was a member of the literary circle, Gruppe Olten. The town of Olten was chosen for its central rail access from Basel, Bern, Zürich, Lucerne and Biel.

⁹ His wife, Valerie Eustace, died two months later of what some say was a “broken heart.”
The Swiss and the Romanovs

by Dwight Page

For centuries, the Swiss people and government have supported the cultural, intellectual, and economic objectives of the Russian people and the Russian government. Especially during the Imperial Era of Russian history (1682-1917), the assistance provided to the ruling house of Russia by Swiss nationals was indispensable and of vital importance in helping the Russian royal house to achieve its cultural, political, pedagogical, and ecclesiastical goals.¹

The Petrine Period (1682-1725)

Contacts of some consequence between the Swiss and the House of Romanov started as early as the seventeenth century, when a twenty-year-old Swiss soldier François Lefort came to Moscow in 1675 to serve the Romanov Dynasty, and soon reached a position of prominence. Although Czar

¹ The Romanov Dynasty began to rule Russia in 1613 when, shortly after the Time of Troubles, Michael Romanov was accepted as the new Tsar by the boyars in Kostroma, at the Ipatieff Monastery.

Peter the Great (1682-1725)
Peter I was crowned while still a child (1682), it was Peter’s sister Sophia, and later his mother Nataliya Naryshkina, and their boyar relatives, who were running the country for over a decade after Peter’s coronation, leaving young Peter with plenty of time to dream of how to change his country when he would have real power. Lefort happened to be one of the people who greatly influenced the young Czar’s world view, and, once Peter became fully in charge of his country, the Swiss soldier became one of his top advisers and became highly influential during the first several years of Peter’s campaign to modernize and to Europeanize Russia.

Even though Lefort died fairly early in Peter’s reign (1699), quite a few other Swiss soldiers, adventurers, educators, and scholars made a contribution to the history of the Russian Empire during this period. The Swiss-Italian architect Domenico Trezzini, for example, was the general manager of the construction of Saint Petersburg until 1712. He is credited with the creation of the Petrine Baroque, charac-
teristic of that city’s early architecture. The mathematician Leonhard Euler and five members of the Bernoulli family became members of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Science.

**Eighteenth Century (1725-1796)**

It was, however, in the eighteenth century, during the Enlightenment, that Swiss influence became predominant in Russia. Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, reigning between 1741 and 1761, was an ardent Francophile and was determined to realize the dream of her father, Peter the Great, to Europeanize Russia. Raised herself by a French governess, she started a vogue for everything French and Swiss which would continue unabated until the advent of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The presence of French and Swiss influence in Russia became much more pronounced during the reign of Elizabeth’s succes-

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2 Mario Franciolli and Manuela Kahn-Rossi, eds., *Domenico Trezzini e la costruzione di San Pietroburgo* (Firenze: Franco Cantini, 1994). This is an extravagant and elegant 316-page volume of essays to honor one of several Ticino artisans, who was instrumental from 1703 until his death in Saint Petersburg in 1743 in the building of the new city of Saint Petersburg. The book was part of an exhibit mounted by the Republic and Canton of Ticino, between November 27, 1994, and February 26, 1995, in honor of Domenico Trezzini.

3 Ulrike Lentz, “The Representation of Western European Governesses and Tutors on the Russian Country Estate in Historical Documents and Literary Texts” (Ph.D. diss., University of Surrey, 2008, 57-58.)
sor, Catherine the Great. Catherine made French the official language of the Russian Court, and at this time foreign tutors and governesses from France and Switzerland made their way into the households of the Russian nobility. Indeed, by the end of the reign of Catherine, the instruction of Russian children by French and Swiss tutors and governesses became the norm in the households of the Russian nobility.\(^4\)

The need for such French and Swiss tutors was supplied principally by the school of pedagogy at the University of Neuchâtel. The graduates of this school, with letters of reference from the school’s administration, were sent in large numbers from Neuchâtel to the various noble households of the Russian Empire, where they easily found employment.

By the nineteenth century, French and Swiss tutors were playing a central role in the education of the Russian intelligentsia. For example, in their works Pushkin, Lermontov, Griboedov, Gogol, Tur-

\(^4\)Ibid., 58.
genev and Tolstoi, all attribute much influence by Swiss and French tutors in the education and lives of their characters.\textsuperscript{5}

**Frédéric-César de La Harpe**

Two Swiss tutors in Russia, in particular, achieved a high level of international fame. The first was Frédéric-César de La Harpe. La Harpe was born in 1754 in Rolle, Switzerland, in the canton of Vaud. At the time Switzerland was a confederacy of mainly self-governing cantons held together by a loose military alliance, with little in terms of actual union and no central government. Some of the cantons were what was referred to as subject lands since they were governed by other cantons; Vaud, for example, had been under the control of Bern since the sixteenth century. La Harpe studied at the University of Tübingen in 1774, graduating with a doctorate of Laws degree. Leaving Switzerland, La Harpe travelled to Russia, where he became a tutor for the children of the Russian Emperor Paul I, including the future Alexander I, with whom La Harpe remained in contact well into his reign. La Harpe was a republican idealist, seeing the rule of the Bernese administration as oligarchical and as an infringement on the natural rights of the people of Vaud and the other subject states, such as Fribourg. La Harpe viewed the rule of the culturally dissimilar Bernese government and aristocracy as uncaring for the popular will, and contrary to the historical sovereignty of Vaud, in the tradition of the Swiss people.

When La Harpe became the personal teacher of Alexander I of Russia, he naturally sought to educate his sovereign in the ideals of the Enlightenment. At the collapse of Napoleon’s regime in 1815, La Harpe and his friend Henri Monod, in fact, lobbied Emperor Alexander, who in turn persuaded the other Allied powers at the Congress of Vienna to recognize Vaudois and Argovian independence, in spite of Bern’s attempts to reclaim them as subject states.

\textsuperscript{5}Leonid Ignataieff, “French émigrés in Russia after the French Revolution,” in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, VIII, ed. A. Bromke et Al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 127.
The second Swiss tutor in Russia who achieved international celebrity was Pierre Gilliard. Between 1905 and 1918, he served as the private tutor of the five children of Czar Nicholas II. He left a detailed account of his life as the royal tutor for the Czar’s children, in his book, *Thirteen Years at the Russian Court*.

Pierre Gilliard was born on May 16, 1879, in Fiez, Switzerland. In his memoirs, Gilliard wrote that
he initially came to Russia in 1904 as a French tutor to the family of Duke George of Leuchtenberg, a cousin of the Romanov family. He was recommended as a French tutor to the Tsar’s children and began teaching the elder children, Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana Nikolaevna of Russia, in 1905.

He grew fond of the family and followed them into internal exile at Tobolsk, Siberia, in the autumn of 1917, following the Russian Revolution of 1917. While at Tobolsk, he was a source of much comfort to the imprisoned imperial family. The Bolsheviks prevented Gilliard from joining his pupils when they were moved to the infamous Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg in May 1918. While he and other courtiers accompanied the Romanovs to Ekaterinburg, upon arrival in the city they were detained at the Ekaterinburg rail station. He described his final view of the royal children in his memoirs:

The sailor Nagorny, who attended to the Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevitch, passed my window carrying the sick boy in his arms, behind him came the Grand Duchesses loaded with valises and small personal belongings. I tried to get out, but was roughly pushed back into the carriage by the sentry. I came back to the window. Tatiana Nikolaevna came last carrying her little dog and struggling to drag a heavy brown valise. It was raining, and I saw her feet sink into the mud at every step. Nagorny tried to come to her assistance; he was roughly pushed back by one of the commissars.6

Once the royal children and Nagorny had disappeared, the Bolshevik guards divided up the rest of the party. General Tatishchev, Countess Hendrikov, and Mademoiselle Schneider were sent to prison to join Prince Dolgoruky, who had been there since arriving with the Tsar. Kharitonov the cook, Trup the footman, and Leonid Sednev the fourteen-year-old kitchen boy were sent to join the Imperial family and Dr. Botkin in the Ipatiev house. When these latter people had gone, Rodionov entered the coach and announced, to their amazement,

that everyone else—Dr. Der-
evenko, Baroness Buxhoeveden, Sidney Gibbs, and Pierre Gilliard himself—were free
to go. For ten days, they re-
mained in Ekaterinburg, liv-
ing in the fourth-class rail-
way carriage, until ordered
by the Bolsheviks to leave
the city. On July 20, 1918, in
Tyumen, Gilliard and the oth-
er servants of the royal party
were rescued by the advanc-
ing White Army.7

Gilliard remained in
Siberia after the murders of
the family, for a time assist-
ing White Movement inves-
tigator Nicholas Sokolov. He
married Alexandra “Shura”
Tegleva, who had been a
nurse to Grande Duchess An-
astasia Nikolaevna of Russia,
in 1919. In Siberia, he was
instrumental in unmasking an
impostor who claimed to be
the Tsarevich Alexei.

For over a year, Gilliard was in the service of General Maurice
Janin, the commander of the French military mission during the Rus-
sian Civil War, until early November 1919 when along with thousands
of others, including ministers and government officials of the old re-

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gime, he fled Moscow and headed east on the Trans-Siberian railway. They were chased by the Bolshevik cavalry. After an epic journey lasting six months, he arrived in Vladivostok in early April 1920. He then took an American ship to San Francisco, and from there travelled by ship along the Pacific coast, through the Panama Canal, across the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea to Trieste. He travelled through Italy to Switzerland, and in August 1920 he reached his parents’ home in Fiez, which he had left 16 years before.

Monsieur Gilliard subsequently became a Professor of French at the University of Lausanne and was awarded the French Legion of Honor. In 1921, he published a book entitled *Le Tragique Destin de Nicholas II et de sa famille*, which described the last days of the Tsar and his family, and the subsequent investigation into their deaths. In 1958, Gilliard was severely injured in a car accident in Lausanne. He never fully recovered and died four years later on May 30, 1962.

*The Romanov Tercentenary Egg presented to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna by Tsar Nicholas II in 1913.*
The Anna Anderson Affair

In 1925, seven years after the murders at Ekaterinburg, the Tsar’s sister, Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna of Russia, asked the Swiss Gilliard and his wife Shura to investigate the disturbing case of Anna Anderson who claimed to be Grand Duchess Anastasia. Anna Anderson had been mistaken for the Grand Duchess Anastasia by a fellow inmate at an asylum in Berlin after her attempted suicide in a Berlin canal. The inmate had seen a photograph of the Russian royal family in a magazine, and there was a definite physical resemblance between Grand Duchess Anastasia and Anna Anderson. Her fellow inmate in Berlin jumped to the conclusion that this mentally ill invalid was a Princess of the Russian Royal House. Therefore, many came to believe that the imposter Anna Anderson was in fact the resurrected Grand Duchess of Russia. Knowledge of the case quickly circled the globe, and both Grand Duchess Anastasia and Anna Anderson became celebrities.

The Tsar’s sister especially insisted on the investigation by Gilliard and his wife because, of all the eye witnesses, they had been the most closely associated with the children of the deceased Tsar. On July 27, 1925, the Gilliards saw Anderson for the first time at St. Mary’s Hospital in Berlin, where Anderson was being treated for a tubercular infection of her arm. Anderson at the time was severely ill, and only semi-conscious. During this initial interview Madame Gilliard asked to examine Anderson’s feet, and noted that Anderson’s feet were shaped similarly to Anastasia’s: both had bunions. Gilliard
thereupon insisted that Anderson be moved to a better hospital, to ensure her survival while her identity was investigated.

After an operation on Anderson’s arm, she recuperated at the Mommsen Nursing Home in Berlin. There, in October 1925, the Gilliards saw Anderson again. Anderson did not recognize Gilliard, which she later claimed was because he had shaved off his goatee beard. When he asked her to “tell me everything about your past,” she refused. According to Gilliard, Anderson mistook Shura for Grand Duchess Olga on the second day of this visit. At a subsequent meeting, Anderson mimicked the actions of the real Anastasia when she asked Shura to moisten her forehead with eau de Cologne, which left Shura shaken, because at the Court of Tsar Nicholas II during the Imperial Period, Grand Duchess Anastasia had actually often asked her, as a member of the royal household, to perform this small task. The Gilliards were therefore understandably confused about the true identity of this person.

Anderson’s supporters claimed that the Gilliards recognized Anderson as Anastasia, while the Swiss Gilliards denied it, and said her supporters mistook their compassion for lawful recognition. Anderson’s friend and lifelong supporter, Harriet von Rathlef, wrote that she spotted Gilliard in the hallway after the visit, looking agitated, and muttering in French, “My God, how awful! What has become of Grand Duchess Anastasia? She’s a wreck, a complete wreck! I want to do everything I can to help the Grand Duchess!” Shura actually cried when she left Anderson that day, wondering why she loved this strange woman as much as she loved her former protégée, the true Grand Duchess.

On departure from the hospital, Gilliard told the Danish Ambassador in Berlin, Herluf Zahle, “We are going away without being able to say that she is NOT Grand Duchess Anastasia.” Gilliard later recanted, writing to von Rathlef making further enquiries about Anderson’s health, but he referred to her as “the invalid”, without a royal pedigree, rather than as “Anastasia.” Thus, by the beginning of 1926, Gilliard was clearly of the opinion that Anderson was an imposter.
While supporters of Anderson insisted that the Gilliards recognized her as Anastasia and then for some odd reason changed their minds, possibly the Swiss couple were hesitant at first because her emaciated condition made her look so different from the plump teenage royal Anastasia whom they had last seen at the Court of her father Nicholas II. While this was enough to suspend their initial doubts, they eventually decided, once Anderson was better and they could question her more closely and more soberly, that she was in fact an imposter. Anderson’s supporters accused Gilliard of turning his back on her because he was paid off by the Tsarina Alexandra’s brother, Ernest Louis, Grand Duke of Hesse.

About this time, Grand Duke Cyril Romanov of Russia, the official head of the House of Romanov after the demise of Nicholas II, gave a news conference, with other members of the Royal House of Russia, officially denouncing Anna Anderson as an imposter, who was playing this game in order to acquire wealth. Clearly this news conference greatly undermined the authenticity of Anna Anderson’s claims. With all the doubts being disseminated by the Swiss Gilliards, the last eye witnesses to have been closely associated with the Grand Duchess Anastasia before her death in 1918, and now with this official denunciation of Anna Anderson by the Royal House of Romanov, fewer and fewer people believed her claims to be the authentic heir of Tsar Nicholas II. Thereafter, in the opinion of most people, Anna Anderson had no royal blood and no right to claim the Throne of Russia. In the eyes of most, she was merely a commoner, who had no legal right to command allegiance from the Russian People.

Like Ernest Louis and the majority of the true Romanov royal family, Gilliard became a vociferous opponent of Anderson and her circle of social climbers. Gilliard wrote articles and even a book entitled The False Anastasia, which claimed that she was a “vulgar adventureress” and a “first-rate actress,” but certainly no Princess. He said that he had known at once that she was not really Anastasia: there was no congenital facial resemblance, her entire knowledge of Russian
imperial life was gleaned from magazines, books, and her friends, and she could not speak Russian English or French, as all the Tsar’s true children could. He consequently testified against her in Hamburg in 1958. The lawsuits, designed to determine whether she was truly the Grand Duchess, eventually ended inconclusively in 1970, after Gilliard’s death.

**DNA Evidence**

In 1991, the true bodies of Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra, and three of their daughters were in fact exhumed from a mass grave near Yekaterinburg. They were identified on the basis of both skeletal analysis and DNA testing. For example, mitochondrial DNA was used to match maternal relations, and mitochondrial DNA from the female bones matched that of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, whose maternal grandmother Princess Victoria of Hesse and by Rhine was a sister of Alexandra. The bodies of Tsarevich Alexei and the remaining daughter were discovered in 2007. Repeated and independent DNA tests confirmed that the remains were the seven members of the Romanov family, and proved that none of the Tsar’s four daughters survived the shooting of the Romanov family. Thus, the contention of Tsar Nicholas’ Swiss tutor, Pierre Gilliard, that Anna Anderson was not the Tsar’s daughter but rather an imposter, was finally proven to be accurate and true. However, nearly a century had elapsed before the Anna Anderson affair could finally be put to rest.

A sample of Anderson’s tissue, part of her intestine removed during her operation in 1979, had been stored at Martha Jefferson Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia. Anderson’s mitochondrial DNA was extracted from the sample and compared with that of the Romanovs and their relatives. It did not match that of the Duke of Edinburgh or that of the bones, confirming that Anderson was not related to the Romanovs. However, the sample matched DNA provided by Karl Maucher, a grandson of Franziska Schanzkowska’s sister, Gertrude
(Schanzkowska) Ellerik, indicating that Karl Maucher and Anna Anderson were maternally related and that Anderson was Schanzkowska. Five years after the original testing was done, Dr. Terry Melton of the Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University, stated that the DNA sequence tying Anderson to the Schanzkowski family was “still unique”, though the database of DNA patterns at the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory had grown much larger, leading to “increased confidence that Anderson was indeed Franziska Schanzkowska”.

Similarly, several strands of Anderson’s hair, found inside an envelope in a book that had belonged to Anderson’s husband, Jack Manahan, were also tested. Mitochondrial DNA from the hair matched Anderson’s hospital sample and that of Schanzkowska’s relative Karl Maucher, but not the Romanov remains or living relatives of the Romanovs.

While the employment of Pierre Gilliard by the Russian Royal Family represents the most intimate association between the Romanovs and the Swiss, connections between the Swiss Confederation and the Romanov family persist until the present day.

Post Romanov Era

The most dramatic example of this association is the diplomatic alliance between the Swiss government and the Romanov Family Association, one of whose presidents, Nicholas Romanov, Prince of Russia, for many years resided in Rougemont, Switzerland.

Prince Nicholas’s father Roman Petrovich came up with the idea of a family association of the Romanovs in the mid-1970s. After looking through the papers of his father, who died in 1978, Nicholas found that everything was in place for the creation of such an organization. He then wrote to all the members of the Romanov family who had been in communication with his father, and it was agreed that a family association should be created. A year later, in 1979, the
Romanov Family Association was officially formed with Prince Dmitri Alexandrovich as president and Nicholas as vice-president. When Vasili Alexandrovich became president in 1980, Nicholas remained vice-president.

In 1989, after the death of Vasili Alexandrovich, Prince Nicholas was elected the new president of the Romanov Family Association. Given that the Romanov family had been officially exiled from Russia and given that Prince Nicholas was a resident of Rougement, Switzerland, at this point, in 1989, Rougemont became the Romanovs’ cultural center. During these years there were many exchanges between the Romanovs and the Swiss city of Rougement. The Association currently has as members the majority of the male-line descendants of Emperor Nicholas I of Russia, although Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna has never joined, nor did her late father Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich.

The official position of the Romanov Family Association is that the rights of the family to the Russian Throne were suspended when Emperor Nicholas II abdicated for himself and for his son Tsarevich Alexi in favour of his brother Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, who then deferred ascending the Throne until a Constituent Assembly ratified his rule. Emperor Michael II, as he was legally pronounced by Nicholas II, did not abdicate but empowered the Provisional Government to rule. Michael’s “reign” was ended with his execution by the Bolsheviks in 1918.

Nicholas, Prince of Russia, who for so many years resided in Rougemont, considered that following the death of Grand Duke Vladimir Cyrillovich in 1992, that he himself was head of the House of Romanov and his rightful successor. With the exception of Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, Prince Nicholas was recognized by the rest of the family as head of the Imperial House.

During his years of residence in Rougemont, Prince Nicholas participated in two events which were to prove to be significant in the History of the Romanovs. First, Prince Nicholas led the Romanov fam-
Prince Nicholas Romanov died at the age of 91.

ily at the funeral in St. Petersburg of the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II and his family, in July 1998. As head of the family he was also present at the reburial of the remains of the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna in Russia, in September 2006. Prince Nicholas and his brother Prince Dmitri had been responsible for lobbying the Danish royal family and the Russian President Vladimir Putin, to allow the transfer of the Dowager Empress’s remains to Russia, so that they could be buried alongside her beloved husband Emperor Alexander III.

Secondly, as the head of the family that ruled Russia for centuries, Nicholas Romanov acted as one of the honoured guests in 2003 at the special celebration marking the three-hundredth anniversary of Saint Petersburg. Since his ancestor, Peter the Great, founded and built the city, it was only fitting that Nicholas would receive this honor.

Shortly before he departed on this particular trip to Russia, Nicholas Romanov granted an interview to swissinfo at his home in the Swiss alpine resort of Rougemont. On this occasion, he discussed
with the Swiss press the importance of the anniversary and his life as a Russian prince in exile. The interviewers noted that his chalet was decorated with paintings and pictures of his royal ancestors. Hanging in his bedroom were portraits of his great-grandfather and the wife of Nicholas I as well as a painting of Saint Petersburg by an English artist. Military books from imperial Russia filled the bookshelves. The first words that Romanov learned to write as a child were “Russia” and “God” in Cyrillic. The piece of paper with these two words hangs today on his bedroom door. He spent his days in Rougemont writing biographies of the Romanovs, but he told the reporters, he had no intention of ever moving to Russia. As he stated at this 2003 interview, “Were I 30 years younger, I would have certainly tried to settle in Russia and do something there. However, at my age, it’s too late. I’m too used to western European ways and too old to learn something new.”

During the interview, the regal octogenarian sat back on a sofa in the drawing room of this chalet and spoke to the Swiss reporters of Saint Petersburg as if he had spent his whole life in the city.

“Petersburg along with London and Stockholm is the only capital city of Europe which has never seen a foreign soldier within its walls,” he says. “And that is an exclusive privilege we are very proud of—we’ll always be proud of the heroic defenders of Leningrad who, as I often say, saved our Petersburg.”

The conversation then continued thus. “The celebration of Saint Petersburg’s three hundred years is very important. First of all it’s a sign of unity for our country,” he explained. “Moscow is the seat of government and Petersburg is no longer what Peter the Great thought it was, a window on Europe. Now it’s exactly the opposite. It’s the window on Russia for foreigners. You are much better off if you get your first contact with Russia through Petersburg because Petersburg is today what it has always been—a great city of northern Europe.”

Today, in the third decade of the twenty-first century, the Swiss Confederation maintains its cordial relationship with the people
of Russia and the Royal House of Romanov. Russia has an embassy in Bern and a consulate-general in Geneva, while Switzerland has an embassy in Moscow and a consulate-general in Saint Petersburg. Finally, the Swiss government continues to treat with sincere respect and interest the two current leaders of the House of Romanov, the President of the Romanov Family Association, Princess Olga Andreevna Romanoff, who lives at Provender House near Faversham in Kent, and Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna of Russia, who was officially recognized in March 2013 by the Patriarch of Moscow and the Russian Orthodox Church as the true contemporary representative and heir of the Russian Royal House of Romanov.

~ Bryan College
To Touch the Heavens:
A Short Story

by Sarah Hedrick

A light Swiss breeze blew through Heidi’s curly blonde hair as she and her grandfather Adolph walked along the mountain path. They had been walking up the mountainside for several hours and were nearing the top. Heidi couldn’t wait to get to the mountaintop; it was the one part of the mountain that she had never been to before. Her grandfather told her that when you were at the top, you’re up so high that you can almost reach up and touch the heavens. However, the trek was quite long, and Heidi had never gone that far up the mountain before.

She looked over at her grandfather; she could tell that he was getting tired and worn out. Although he had walked up to the mountaintop many times before, it had been many years since he had done it and he wasn’t as young as he used to be. Heidi could tell that he was starting to have second thoughts about going that far up the mountain. Adolph looked down at his granddaughter, “Heidi, are you sure you still want to go to the top of the mountain?”

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to take her to the mountaintop; after all, it was his idea. Heidi had been feeling a little depressed lately and he thought that taking her to the top of the mountain would cheer her up. But since it had been so long since he had walked that far up the mountain and that Heidi has never been there before, he was beginning to wonder if it was such a good idea to take her. However, he also knew how stubborn she could be and knew that it would be dif-
To Touch the Heavens: A Short Story

It was difficult to change her mind. Heidi looked up at her grandfather, “Yes, of course I do,” she replied.

Heidi wanted to get to the top of the mountain more than anything; from what her grandfather told her, the view was very beautiful. But the beauty at the top wasn’t the real reason why she wanted to get there; she was hoping that by being at a height where she could touch the heavens, she will also be able to talk to her deceased parents. The reason she had been so depressed lately was because she was missing them. Although she loved her grandfather and living in the Swiss mountains with him, she couldn’t help but miss her parents. After all, she was very young when they passed and barely knew them. It was this reason why Heidi wanted so much to get to the mountaintop. After her grandfather told her that she would be able to touch the heavens, she thought that it would be the perfect opportunity to talk to her parents.

Adolph looked into Heidi’s brown eyes; he could tell that she wanted to continue their hike up to the mountaintop. He sighed and smiled at her, “Okay Heidi. We’ll hike to the top.”

He looked up the elevated path that was ahead of them, “It looks like we’re almost there anyway.”

Heidi’s eyes widened with joy; she immediately started running up the path to the top of the mountain. Adolph watched as she ran and immediately tried to catch up, “Hold on a minute,” he chuckled. “Slow down.”

But Heidi didn’t stop; she wanted so much to get to the top that she didn’t want to stop and wait. She kept running and running until she was at the top of the mountain. She looked up and saw the open clear blue sky with a few small clouds floating by. She then looked around the mountaintop and realized that the whole area was completely open and clear with no trees around. It was almost as if it was the borderline between the mountains and heaven. Heidi slowly walked over to the edge and looked down at the Swiss valley below; it was just as beautiful as the sky above. She could see all of the Swiss
countryside in the valley below and the other mountains surrounding it. The mountaintop, the view of the open sky, and the view of the valley below was everything that her grandfather had told her. It was almost as if she was getting a small glimpse of what heaven was like. “Wow,” she said in awe.

Suddenly, a cool gentle breeze blew across the mountain top and across Heidi’s face. Unlike the wind that blew through her hair on her way up the mountain, this breeze was different; the wind didn’t feel like wind at all. Instead, it felt more like a gentle touch of a hand caressing her face. As the wind blew across her face, she heard something; it almost sounded like a quiet voice was whispering to her. “Heidi,” whispered the voice.

In that moment, Heidi felt a sudden presence that she had never felt before. She felt as if there was someone else on the mountaintop with her. At first, Heidi thought that it was her grandfather calling out to her; she turned around to see if he was there. “Grandfather,” she asked.

He wasn’t there; he must’ve still been walking up the path to the top of the mountain. But if her grandfather wasn’t talking to her, then who was? As she was thinking this, she heard another voice whispering her name; this time, it was different. While the first voice sounded like a man (which is why she thought it was her grandfather was talking to her), the second voice sounded like a woman. “Heidi,” whispered the voice.

Heidi thought for a moment, trying to process who those voices could be. After thinking for a few minutes, she realized that the voices could only be one thing: she was hearing the voices of her parents. She paused for a moment to see if she could hear the whispers again; there was complete silence. However, even though she couldn’t see them or hear them, she felt as if they were right there with her. “Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad,” said Heidi. “It’s me, Heidi. How have you been? I’ve been thinking about you a lot lately. I really miss you.”

As Heidi was talking, Adolph was walking up the path to the
mountaintop; and when he reached the top, he could hear her talking to someone. At first, he didn’t know who she could be talking to. He looked around the mountain’s peak to see if he could see anyone: there wasn’t anyone around. Suddenly, he realized who she was talking to: she was talking to her mother and father. “I’m living with my grandfather now in the mountains now,” said Heidi. “It’s been wonderful. I’ve made some new friends with a girl that I met named Klara and her father Mr. Sesemann. I think you’d really like them.”

Adolph smiled and started to walk over to where his granddaughter was standing. “I’m glad I finally got to talk to you,” said Heidi. “I hope you’re enjoying it up there in heaven, and I hope I’ll get to see you face to face one day. Goodbye.”

In that moment, a sudden peace came over Heidi; she no longer felt depressed or alone. She stood at the edge of the mountaintop and gazed at Swiss countryside below. As she was doing this, her grandfather stood beside her and wrapped his arm around her. He was happy to see Heidi feeling better, and she did. She now knew that even if she couldn’t see her parents, they were always with her and watching over her in heaven.

~ Bryan College
Beyond Muesli and Fondue
The Swiss Contribution to Culinary History

A Summary of Ambassador Martin Dahinden’s Book

by C. Naseer Ahmad

Introduction

Breaking bread together has deep rooted spiritual foundations for strengthening fellowship and in easing tensions among people of different persuasions. So, it is propitious that former Swiss Ambassador to United States Dr. Martin Dahinden, who is a seasoned Swiss diplomat with exquisite tastes and a vast reservoir of knowledge and experience wrote a book Beyond Muesli and Fondue, which describes Swiss contributions to culinary history.

This is a book to keep handy for all occasions because of the rich content that provides a historical perspective, and it provides splendid ideas to make any gathering memorable. For Americans of Swiss heritage, this book will give a sense of pride.

The book begins with a quotation attributed to the nineteenth century British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston: “dining is the life and soul of diplomacy.” This sets the stage for discussion very aptly, just as any diplomatic engagement requires. Ambassador Dahinden explains that in the “diplomatic world, official dinners are important for two different reasons. They provide a framework for the exchange of information and opinions, for communications, for negotiations, but also for personal contacts.”
From personal experience, attending hundreds of gatherings both formal and informal at the Swiss Ambassador’s residence as well as the residences of diplomats around the world, one can validate Lord Palmerston’s view that dining is in fact the life and soul of diplomacy. One can also affirm that during his tenure as Swiss Ambassador to the United States, many of the delicious recipes mentioned in the book were on the menu in formal as well as informal parties hosted by Ambassador Dahinden and his charming wife Anita Dahinden.

For those fortunate to have the experience of the warm friendship extended by Ambassador and Mrs. Dahinden, and it is true for
his predecessors and successor as well, the door was always open. But because Ambassador and Mrs. Dahinden had a keen interest in culinary history, menu creation became an art form and a team effort. Some aspects of this effort are documented in the “Preface” of the book. Bratwurst, Raclette, and Fondue were often served in many of the gatherings like music concerts or cultural events.

The Ambassador Who Educates About Swiss Culinary Contributions

Before delving into the discussion about the book, it will be worthwhile to discuss a remarkable speech “Switzerland’s Culinary Footprint in the United States” by Ambassador Dahinden on May 4, 2016, at the Union League Club, New York during the annual gathering of the Swiss American Foundation. Some parts of his speech are worth mentioning because they convey something very important for the Swiss American heritage.

“As Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States you hear me often speaking about the strong economic ties between Switzerland and the United States, about Switzerland being number seven foreign investor here, about the half a million jobs Swiss companies created in the U.S., about their high average salaries and about Switzerland being the leader in research and development among all jobs created through foreign investment, or you hear me speak about the challenging role of Switzerland as protective power of the U.S. in Iran, about the deepening of scientific cooperation, etc.

Today, I will speak on something completely different: about Switzerland’s culinary footprint in the United States. This fits very well to this year where we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Nestlé. While Paul Bulcke will certainly speak on Nestlé with a focus on today and tomorrow, I will trace the culinary footprint back in history. This is something I have done with enthusiasm since I arrived in the
I discovered many unknown and exciting stories I will refer to. Swiss culinary art and heritage is definitely much more than raclette, fondue, and müesli.”

In this speech, Ambassador gave an excellent overview of the Swiss contributions to the culinary history as it relates to the United States. Again, some of his words are worth repeating here because of the contextual importance.

“The Delmonico’s Restaurant was the most celebrated place you could eat in the nineteenth century and particularly during the years the Union League Club was founded. Few people know that the Delmonico’s was established by a family from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. Lorenzo the Great, as was called the most famous of the Delmonico’s, attracted the most distinguished guests of his time, from Queen Victoria to President Lincoln and Theo-
dore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, or Oscar Wilde up to the protagonists of the gilded age like the Astors, Morgans, Goodyears, Vanderbilts, or Rockefellers. Many dishes known to the present day were created in this vintage Restaurant like the Delmonico Steak, the Lobster Newberg, or the Baked Alaska. Those dishes are also part of Swiss American culinary heritage.”

The Book as Teamwork

Gracious and soft-spoken, Ambassador Dahinden made sure to credit all those who helped him in the English version of this book. The original version of this historic book was published in German. Cheryl A. Fain, the Embassy of Switzerland’s official translator, is credited for the English translation. Ambassador Dahinden wrote that, “Joao Marcos Barboza, the masterful chef of the Swiss Residence transformed the old recipes into modern recipes based on the same ingredients and with the same flavors as the original ones.” He further stated that “interns from the world of gastronomy contributed to the individual chapters and brought culinary Switzerland closer to the American public through events. I am grateful to Manuela Flattich (Ice Cream), Nicolas Roth Macedo (Cocktails), Jana Schneuwly (Desserts), and Alin Flückiger (Soups).”

Book Dinner at the Fourth Estate, National Press Club, Washington, D.C.

The Team approach worked very well in not only the production of the English version of Ambassador Dahinden’s book, but also the presentation on the Embassy event menus. In addition, there was a spectacular event at the prestigious Fourth Estate Restaurant in the National Press Club (NPC), where the nation’s leading journalists and public engagement professionals participated in a memorable setting. NPC website highlighted this event on their website with the heading:
“Swiss ambassador to take questions, share his recipes at Fourth Estate restaurant, Sept. 17.” Detailed information described the event as:

“The National Press Club’s Events and International Correspondents Teams are announcing an evening with Martin Dahinden, ambassador of Switzerland to the United States, on Monday, Sept. 17, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fourth Estate Restaurant.

The event, part of the Club’s Ambassador Series, will include a Q&A session with Dahinden. And the menu will feature not only include traditional Swiss favorites such as raclette, but also recipes from Dahinden’s cookbook, Beyond Muesli and Fondue: The Swiss Contribution to Culinary History.”

A Few Words about the Book

Organized in seventeen chapters, this book makes a delightful reading. The chapter lengths vary but each chapter has its own charm,
providing wonderful material. The readers will receive a lesson in history and information about not only historical incidents but also the recipes and how many people are served. A great aspect of this book is that the reader can just jump to the chapter that one feels like reading. For example, if at a moment, one is in the mood for an ice cream then there is a chapter dedicated for those with a sweet tooth.

Sunlight Food: Dr. Bircher-Benner and his Muesli

The opening chapter “Sunlight Food: Dr. Bircher-Benner and his Muesli,” Ambassador Dahinden writes: “Muesli or Birchemüsli is the most famous Swiss food. You can find it everywhere now, in the shops and at breakfast tables. This healthy dish is newer than many would expect. It has a troubled history and only a few people know the original recipe.”

From this point forward in the book, Ambassador Dahinden educates the readers who might not be familiar with Swiss history, the country’s traditions or the history of many dishes that have a Swiss connection in some form. In this chapter, readers will learn about the exemplary life of Swiss doctor Maximilian Oskar Bircher-Benner and how he became an excellent proponent of nutritional reform through his medical practice in Zurich’s industrial quarter, which “exposed him to the poor state of health of may working class families.” His medical practice also led him to discover that even the well-to-do families suffered from poor nutrition. From his ob-
Beyond Museli and Fondue

servations, he developed the theory of “sunlight food” which did not make him popular, and he was ostracized. Dr. Bircher-Benner did not give up, instead he carried on with his efforts for public health through improved nutrition. His clinic attracted many famous personalities like novelist Thomas Mann, winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize in Literature and Swiss poet Herman Hesse. “Through Birchermüesli, which is named after him, he secured lasting fame,” writes Ambassador Dahinden.

A Chocolate Dinner

“A Chocolate Dinner” is an illuminating chapter in which Ambassador Dahinden informs the readers about the history of chocolate, which was not even invented by the Swiss, though it is associated with Switzerland just as readily as are mountains, watches, and cheese. “More than two-and-half thousand years ago, the Mayans cultivated cacao trees, and their language gave us the name xocolatl for a beverage made from cocoa beans,” wrote Ambassador Dahinden while explaining how the habit of drinking chocolate was brought to Europe by the Spanish conquerors and then became a favorite drink of the European aristocracy.

After providing a historical background of chocolate, Ambassador Dahinden mentions that the “Swiss chocolate manufacturers successfully follow a strategy similar to the of the watchmakers: they focused on quality, innovation, and high added value.” He lists the pioneering Swiss chocolatiers and their investments abroad adapting to local tastes. Before giving a number of recipes at the end of this chapter, Ambassador Dahinden writes: “Chocolate is more than a sweet. One of the popular dinners at the Swiss Residence in Washington is the ‘Chocolate Dinner’ which features chocolate in every course and became a topic of social conversation in Washington. The recipes of this remarkable menu are by Chef Marcos Barboza of the Swiss Residence.”
Maestro Martino:
A Ticinese Ends the Culinary Middle Ages

The story of Martino Rossi, born around 1430 in the mountain valley known as Valle di Blenio in the Canton of Ticino, is fascinating. Ambassador Dahinden describes him as “one of the most important chefs of all time.” In this chapter, the readers will learn that Martino Rossi was one of Pope Paul’s private chefs from 1464 to 1471, and then he worked for Pope Sixtus IV. An indication of the high regard for Chef Martino Rossi’s brilliance is that in 1475, the head of the Vatican Library lists his recipes in a Latin cookbook “De honesta voluptate et valetudine (Of Honest Indulgence and Well-being).” This cookbook was later translated into other languages as well. “These recipes are a departure from the culinary culture of the Middle Ages and later form the core Italian cuisine,” writes Ambassador Dahinden. “Because clocks could not be found in the kitchens at that time, Martino gave indications by how many paternosters should be prayer until the dish was roasted, boiled, or simmered. That penchant for practicality and precision has remained a Swiss characteristic to this day,” adds Ambassador Dahinden.

Anna Weckerin and
Her Delightful New Cookbook

“The first cookbook written by a woman comes from Anna Wecker of Basel, or Weckerin in the female form customary at that time. Ein Köstlich New Kochbuch (A Delightful New Cookbook) of 1598 is a protestant work through and through and also suits Basel well for that reason,” writes Ambassador Dahinden before describing Wecker’s remarkable family history and her passion of considering food as medicine for well-being. He states that “Anna Wecker was an early advocate of dietetics, the science of eating the right foods to prevent and cure diseases,” and links Wecker’s philosophy to Dr. Bircher-Benner and “his famous Birchermüesli.” Among the
recipes from Wecker’s cookbook is the “Roasted Salmon” serving four persons.

**Vatel and the Sun King’s Delights of the Table**

“*Vatel and the Sun King’s Delights of the Table,*” is a chapter with both drama and delightful recipes. “*After the fish delivery for the great banquet for Louis XIV did not arrive on time, Vatel threw himself on his sword,*” wrote Ambassador Dahinden while providing the historical background about Vatel and the six recipes mentioned in this chapter. “*Omelette Aux Asperges*”—Asparagus Omelette was apparently a favorite of Louis XIV. The palace of Versailles had many plots occupied with hot-beds to grow asparagus.

**Dunand: Napoleon’s Chef and Poulet Marengo**

“*Dunand: Napoleon’s Chef and Poulet Marengo,*” is another interesting chapter with history, but not the drama of a chef throwing himself on his sword to avoid shame and embarrassment. One learns about the origin of Poulet Marengo—associated with the Battle of Marengo in 1800—and the creativity of Dunand. Legend has it that Poulet Marengo became Napoleon’s favorite dish that was prepared for him after every battle. In addition to Poulet Marengo, there are a few more interesting recipes with Swiss origins in this chapter.

**Delmonico’s and Haute Cuisine in the New World**

“*Delmonico’s and Haute Cuisine in the New World,*” provides a good historical perspective of the travels and business ventures of Giovanni Del-Monico hailing from the small Ticinese village of Mai-
rengo. Readers will obtain an understanding of the successful Delmonico’s restaurants perhaps by the work ethic which inspired the motto: “Quality is more important than the price.” The Delmonico Cookbook published in 1880 which was followed by “The Table: How to Buy Food, How to Cook It, and How to Serve It”—both mentioned in this chapter provide valuable insight behind the Delmonico legend, and of course, The Delmonico Steak served today.

**Joseph Favre: The Revolutionary and His Culinary Dictionary**

Ambassador Dahinden narrates the amazing story of Joseph Favre, a nineteenth-century Swiss Revolutionary, who was a “lively intellectual with broad interests and great curiosity.” From reading Joseph Favre’s story, the reader will come to appreciate the author’s skill in bringing attention to a subject, his life, and specific contributions—both intellectual as well as culinary—to history. During his lifetime, Favre worked in many restaurants and hotels, served food in a variety of settings, and interacted with people from different backgrounds. As the story goes, in 1876, Favre worked as a chef at Hôtel Zaehringen in Fribourg, and prepared a light meal for Empress Eugénie, who was travelling *incognito*, and the Bishop of Orléans, Félix Dupanloup. After the meal, Bishop Dupanloup apparently said that Favre’s cooking was “diabolically good.” Favre spent the last years of his life preparing a great dictionary of cooking. According to the Wikipedia, the complete work in four volumes appeared in 1895, with a notice to the Reader:

> “Struck by the considerable number of fanciful terms and names given to dishes on restaurant menus and the menus of dining rooms, I have long thought that classification in the form of a dictionary, including the etymology, history, food chemistry, and properties of natural foods and recipes would be a book most useful to society.”
César Ritz: King of Hoteliers and Hotelier to Kings

In the short chapter “César Ritz: King of Hoteliers and Hotelier to Kings” which begins aptly with the assertion that the name “Ritz” is a trademark for glamour and chic lifestyle, Ambassador Dahinden efficiently describes the story of Ritz who set standards for the luxury hotel business and how the name is so attractive even today. The reader will learn about César Ritz’s humble beginning as the thirteenth child in a shepherd’s family in a small village in the Canton of Valais. Ritz’s family sent him to work in an inn, where he would work as a sommelier. He was soon thrown out and told that “nothing would become of him in the gastronomy business.” But as fate would have it and as his career path progress, Ritz came into contact with the upper class. With each progression on the ladder to success, Ritz would find his calling to become an entrepreneur. In 1905, he opened the Ritz Hotel in London. Soon after, Ritz Hotels opened in cities around the world. Though, Ritz died in 1918, “the reputation of his hotels has long outlived him,” notes Ambassador Dahinden. Like the previous chapters, recipes for mouthwatering dishes are found in exquisite detail.

Oscar of the Waldorf

Like the captivating story of César Ritz, the tale of Oscar Tschirky is awe inspiring. Some would say that it is too good to be true—“a poor man, who attained prestige and wealth in America through his great commitment.” Hailing from the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Oscar followed his brother to America at the age of seventeen, partly in response to the letters of his brother which mentioned the opportunities available in this country. Soon after arriving in America, he applied for U.S. citizenship and got a job as a porter at the famous Hoffman House Hotel on Broadway.
in New York City. With a strong work ethic and efficiency, Oscar Tschirky moved into a succession of roles until he became the steward on the hotel owner’s yacht. In 1893, Oscar Tschirky later joined the famous Waldorf Hotel as the maître d’hôtel. In 1896, he published The Cookbook by “Oscar” of the Waldorf. Out of the recipes in the book, the Waldorf Salad is the most well-known and widespread to this day.

While portraying Oscar Tschirky’s story, Ambassador Dahinden also renders the history of the famous hotel as well. The original hotel was so successful that John Jacob Astor, a cousin of the builder William Waldorf Astor, built a new seventeen-story hotel next door called Astoria, which was joined by a connecting passageway called the Peacock Alley. With the new hotel, the two properties were named as “Waldorf=Astoria,” denoting the passageway. In 1929, the old Waldorf=Astoria was demolished to make way for the Empire State Building. A new hotel with the same name “Waldorf=Astoria” was built on Park Avenue and Oscar Tschirky worked there as well. On the fiftieth anniversary of the hotel, where he also had worked for fifty years, his biography Oscar of the Waldorf was released.

**Henry Haller: The White House Chef**

“*Henry Haller: The White House Chef*” is one of the most interesting chapters narrating the historical background of the famous chef—who served many U.S. Presidents—from Altdorf, Switzerland and received his initial culinary training at the Park Hotel in Davos. “*Life in the White House is immensely fascinating to the general public,*” Ambassador Dahinden accurately states. He then provides a brief—with emphasis on culinary aspects—history of life in the most recognizable building in the country and perhaps around the world. “*The eating habits in the White House fundamentally changed with the Carter family. After more than 120 years,* the
American President came from the Old South again. With him, the lifestyle from Dixieland also moved into the White House, often simple dishes from Carter’s home and with unconventional hospitality” writes Ambassador Dahinden. What is interesting is that Chef Henry Haller was there before him and had already served some of President Carter’s predecessors. There is an interesting story about the Chinese Walnut Chicken, which was one of the favorites dishes of Pat Nixon’s. “When she described the recipe to journalists as a ‘favorite of Henry’s, members of the press assumed that Henry Kissinger had brought back the recipe from China. But it came from Henry Haller.” The White House Family Cookbook, Henry Haller’s memoir includes some of the recipes for the dishes served in the White House. The recipes for the favorite dishes of different U.S. Presidents and/or their spouses make Henry Haller’s memoir and this chapter a fun read.

A special treat for the guests visiting some functions was that they also had the opportunity to see Chef Henry Haller, who passed away on November 9, 2020, at the age of 97.
Julius Maggi: Soup in the Industrial Age

“No other Swiss citizen has had such a profound impact on cultural history of soup as Julius Maggi, the well-known pioneer in industrial food production,” writes Ambassador Dahinden as he narrates the fascinating tale of this inventor who was born in Frauenfeld, Switzerland, in 1846 in an Italian immigrant family. His father was a mill owner who earned a considerable fortune. Julius Maggi took over his father’s business and expanded it. He was a keen observer and his curiosity led to the invention of soup. “A groundbreaking success was the launching of the Maggi bouillon cube (Kub),” writes Ambassador Dahinden. In an effort to patent his invention, Maggi founded the “Société du Bouillon Kub.” As Ambassador Dahinden further explains, in 1912, six million of those bouillon cubes were sold in France each month. Paris was virtually inundated with bouillon cubes advertisements. His marketing genius can be understood by the distribution of free samples in street kitchens. Readers will further learn about “cubism” as an art form.

“It is a small world, after all” is an expression people use often. This was true for Maggi as well. One of the French chefs Maggi collaborated with had also worked for César Ritz.

From this chapter, the readers will learn a lot about Maggi and the company bearing his name. “The Maggi cube and many other of Julius Maggi’s products are still on grocery store shelves throughout the world,” adds Ambassador Dahinden. The Maggi company was absorbed in the Nestle corporation and Maggi products are now sold by this multinational giant.

The Savory Swiss Soups and Their Stories

“The Savory Swiss Soups and Their Stories,” starts with the statement that “soup was the first nourishment cavemen took from the cooking pot.” In describing the soup “Potage a La Guillaume Tell,”
the Ambassador Dahinden sets the stage beautifully to introduce the readers to different soups, their recipes, and history. “Potage a La Guillaume Tell” was created by Ferdinando Grandi, who was the great nineteenth-century chef and who perhaps had Rossini’s beautiful opera “Guillaume Tell” in mind while creating this soup. The recipe of Anna Weckner’s Almond and Pea soup, based on her cookbook mentioned earlier, is included in this chapter. The “Kappeler Milchsuppe” has its origins from the First Kappel War between the Protestants and the Catholics in the Old Swiss Confederation. The interesting thing about this chapter is that in addition to providing the history of each soup mentions the culinary luminaries mentioned in this book in earlier chapters so everything ties together well.

Carlo Gatti:
The Swiss Inventor of the Ice Cream Cone

Ice cream cones sell like hot cakes during the hot summer days. Perhaps not many people know that the inventor of this vital rescue and relief item’s origin was born in Marogno in the Val Blenio valley in the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland—not far from where Martino Rossi was born. Ambassador Dahinden educates the readers about the interesting life and business career of Gatti, who was a creative genius. Like some of the other earlier chapters, Ambassador Dahinden provides the recipes of the famous ice creams and the famous hotels or restaurants they were served. Furthermore, he mentions that on special occasions at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington they are served on an ice cream cart. As the saying goes, this is something to write home about.

Swiss Desserts and the Stories Behind Them

From the chapter “Swiss Desserts and the Stories Behind Them,” the reader will learn that before cheese and chocolate, Swiss
confectioners spread the country’s culinary reputation throughout Europe. Ambassador Dahindsen’s skills as a storyteller and as an educator really shine in this chapter because in a few pages not only does he give a brief historical overview, but he also describes the recipes of mouthwatering desserts.

Cocktails Served at the Swiss Residence in Washington

Libations served before the official events start are vital ice breakers for conversations, especially in a diplomatic setting. So, the chapter “Cocktails Served at the Swiss Residence in Washington,” the creativity of the team at the Swiss Embassy in Washington. Even though not all drinks served are necessarily Swiss in origin, they are crafted in a manner which blends both Swiss and American history as well as culture in the most imaginative way. Here are a few examples:

- “Fifty Seven Chevy” is named after the popular car made by the Chevrolet Motor Company started by Louis Chevrolet who was born in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, and moved to the United States in 1901.

- “Golden Gate 75” drink commemorates the 75th anniversary in 2012 of the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California. This drink also honors the famous Swiss-American engineer Othmar Ammann who played an important role in the construction of this bridge.

- “The Astoria” was created by Oscar of the Waldorf and was published in the book 100 Famous Cocktails in 1934.

In Search of a Swiss National Cuisine

“In Search of a Swiss National Cuisine” is an interesting chapter which provides the analysis as well as explanation of why foodies can’t identify a specific Swiss cuisine despite enormous contributions to culinary history.
Because each chapter presents interesting historical perspective and dishes or drinks with Swiss origins, it is hard to ignore the Swiss contributions to culinary history and just as hard to pick a favorite because every chapter is outstanding in its own right.

The book provides a culinary journey from the Renaissance to the modern times. It gives so many opportunities to discover remarkable chefs and the recipes associated with them.

The list of recipes, neatly organized by categories such as soup, desserts, and cocktails and drinks, is tucked at the end of the book. For those who want to try any of the recipes, this list contains the designated page number.

This book is a splendid idea for an ice-breaking diplomatic discussion in any setting. It should also be a good item for the bookshelves of diplomats who work hard to solve sometimes intractable issues.

On the Road with the Ambassador Dahinden’s Book

Books inspire readers to try recipes, and there are so many ideas that can be explored with Beyond Muesli and Fondue. Another option is to explore the choices in local surroundings. In the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the Stable restaurant and the Swiss Bakery might satisfy those looking for some of the culinary choices in the book. Each restaurant has its own charm and unique history. For instance, when a customer visits the Swiss Bakery run by Laurie and Reto Weber, they might feel as if they are in Switzerland, whereas the bakery is actually in a strip mall just outside the Beltway in Springfield, Virginia. The staff is friendly, the ambiance is definitely Swiss, and the food is both tasty and excellent. The menu includes traditional items that a customer might find in the streets of Geneva, Zurich, or Zermatt.

Laurie’s introduction to the culinary world began as a child in her parents’ restaurant in the Midwest, her father was also a baker.
Reto’s story is like some of the people mentioned in Ambassador Dahinden’s book.

In his native Canton of Thurgau in Switzerland, Reto followed in his grandfather’s footsteps to become a baker and pastry chef. He arrived in the United States in 1996 to work for Albert Uster Imports, North America’s premier importer of fine Swiss foods. As their Research and Development Chef, Reto traveled extensively throughout the U.S., teaching classes and giving demonstrations on Swiss products to food professionals. In 2001, Reto and Laurie purchased a small neighborhood bakery and created The Swiss Bakery and Pastry Shop, where their client list includes embassies like the Embassy of Switzerland, Washington, D.C., Swiss Societies (Clubs), and other organizations.
From Redemptive Suffering to Redemptive Reconciliation in the Authorship of Johanna Spyri

by Frederick Hale

Introduction

That Johanna Spyri (1827-1901), best known for her Heidi books, gained renown as one of Switzerland’s most popular and widely translated authors is beyond dispute. The two companion volumes Heidi’s Lehr- und Wanderjahre and Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat were published in Germany in 1880 and 1881, respectively, and have been reprinted and published in more abridgements, translations, and cultural adaptations than nearly all other works of their era. Several of Spyri’s many other books also enjoyed popularity and were read not only in German, but also in various other languages on both sides of the Atlantic.

Less well known, however, are the pivotal religious dimensions of her authorship. This sobering reality is readily understandable when one is cognizant of certain facts. On the one hand, Spyri was a relatively self-sequestered person who did not seek the limelight but preferred to acquaint the public with her books rather than her personality. On the other hand, the nearly global popularity of the Heidi volumes across cultural lines rested partly on their narratives undergoing various abridgements and modifications, among them versions that were largely or completely sanitized of their religious dimensions to
make them more acceptable in generally non-Christian milieus, such as Japan, and in cinematic adaptations, among them the 1937 film starring Shirley Temple in the title role.

Although it is very difficult to glean more than a morsel of information about Spyri’s religious views from conventional biographical sources, not least because she chose not to write an autobiography, a theologically informed analysis of her literary texts sheds much light
on religious themes that are central in some of them. In the present article, I shall explore fundamental concerns in two of Spyri’s more revealing works, namely her little known novella of 1871, *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab*, and *Heidi*. It will be seen that the religious motifs in these utterly unlike books differ significantly from each other, but that in certain respects those in the debut piece foreshadow some of those that are apparent in *Heidi*. Considered together, they illuminate aspects of Spyri’s religious thought as manifested in texts published with approximately a decade’s separation but in both cases after she was more than forty years old.

**Spyri’s Underlying Christian Message**

That religious motifs permeate Spyri’s writing has been a truism in critical commentary on these celebrated stories. Precisely what the spiritual message flowing through them are, however, and how they function within Spyri’s fictional world remain much less well understood, and patently false assertions about the matter have long burdened the secondary literature about this author.

Roots of the misconceptions lie in the nineteenth century. As early as 1896, Heinrich Wolgast (1860-1920), a teacher in Hamburg who more than nearly anyone else pioneered the study of children’s literature in Germany and was possibly the first scholar to publish deprecating views of Spyri’s authorship, took her to task for burdening her writing with moralistic and religious motifs. She stood head and shoulders above most other contemporary female authors of fiction for children, he allowed, and demonstrated talent in virtually everything she published. But in the final analysis, her spiritual preoccupation had led to at least a partial lowering of aesthetic standards: “Bald ist der dichterische Saftstrom stark und frühlingsfrisch, und es gelingt, die religiösen und moralischen Gegenstände zu lebensvollen Gestalten dichterisch umzuformen, bald ist er schwach und stockend, und das Erdreich der Religion und Moral bleibt tote Masse . . .” Less defensi-
bly, Wolgast generalized categorically that everyone in Spyri’s gallery of characters could be pigeonholed according to a crassly simplistic binarism: “Tugendbolde und Bösewichter ergeben sich als die beiden durchschlagenden Kategorien der Menschheit.” Within this allegedly Manichean construction, moreover, the religiously inclined persons were “ausnahmslos musterhaft und tugendsam.” Furthermore, this critic, who nowhere evinced an adequate degree of comprehension of theological matters for making evaluations of them, insisted that in Spyri’s fiction “alle Geschehnisse haben ihre Ursachen und Wirkungen in der natürlichen Welt, aber der religiöse Sinn der Verfasserin läßt ihre Personen in allem den Finger Gottes sehen und verehren.”\(^1\)

Wolgast adduced virtually no evidence to substantiate these categorical indictments of Spyri’s allegedly crassly simplistic representation of Christian spiritual life in her expansive fictional corpus.

Nearly three-quarters of a century later another specialist in the realm of German children’s literature, Klaus Doderer, echoed similar sentiments about the Manichean gallery of characters in Heidi. He acknowledged that Spyri had created a relatively broad spectrum of personae but, quite in accord with Wolgast, he insisted that “bei näherer Betrachtung läßt sich jedoch erkennen, daß die Mitspieler des Romans in zwei Parteien zerfallen.” One camp features those “die durch die Tugend christlicher Frömmigkeit und ein Leben der Nächstenliebe und Hilfsbereitschaft ausgezeichnet sind,” such as the two grandmothers, Clara Sessemann’s wealthy father, and his friend, Dr. Classen. Doderer thought that Spyri had created merely two characters in the opposite camp, namely the severe governess Fräulein Rottenmeier and Heidi’s grandfather, “Alm-Oehi.” Intimately related to this alleged characterization, Doderer also briefly noted that there was another crassly Manichean dichotomy between wholesome highland and destructive urban life in Heidi.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Heinrich Wolgast, *Das Elend unserer Jugendliteratur* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1905), pp. 189-190.

With regard to the Christian dimensions of *Heidi*, the interpretive frameworks which Wolgast and Doderer proposed are untenable and misleading. Both overlook the diversity of the characters Spyri created and fail to come to grips with the fact that some of those people, as individuals and as members of groups, cannot be neatly pigeonholed into the binary categories which their interpretations require. Owing in large measure to this myopia, Wolgast and Doderer neglected much of the essential Christian message which Spyri had conveyed in a way less crass than they suggested.

What sort of religious messages did Spyri convey in her fiction? Occasionally, critics have imprecisely labelled that of *Heidi* “pietistic” without defining that term or adducing evidence to relate *Heidi* to any of the several varieties of pietism that had unfolded in several sectors of European Protestantism since the seventeenth century. Although Spyri appears to have had ties to pietistic trends in the Reformed Church in Switzerland, her personal spirituality in the late 1870s when she wrote *Heidi* must remain a matter of speculation because of the lack of firm evidence. The difficulty lies in the apparent impossibility of discerning enough about Spyri to reconstruct her religious perspective at any given point in her life. As Rosmarie Zeller, one of the editors of her sparse extant correspondence, has observed, Spyri actively covering her tracks by requesting people to return letters she had written so that they could be destroyed and did not believe that biographies related anything approaching undistorted impressions of their subjects. It is nevertheless generally accepted that Spyri, whose mother’s father was a Swiss Reformed pastor, grew up in a pietistic home in the village of Hirzel, near Zürich. She received confirmation instruction from a theologically conservative pietist, Antistes Füssli, in that city. Furthermore, it is known that for decades as

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3 The classic though outdated historical study of Swiss Pietism is Wilhelm Hadorn, *Geschichte des Pietismus in den Schweizerischen Reformierten Kirchen* (Konstanz: Carl Hirsch, 1901).

an adult she maintained close ties with the pietistically inclined Betsy Meyer-Ulrich, the mother of the renowned poet and novelist Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, and was a frequent guest in her home.\(^5\) As will be seen below, in both *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* and stories she contributed to Pastor Cornelius Rudolf Vietor’s *Kirchenblatt* in Bremen, Spyri incorporated intensely religious themes. After the early 1870s, however, she did not publish anything until 1878 and by then apparently had distanced herself somewhat from the pietism of her family of origin.

At any rate, the overarching spiritual perspective underlying *Heidi*, though clearly Christian, does not clearly reflect any particular genre of Christianity represented in Switzerland during the nineteenth century, apart from being obviously Protestant as seen in the references to the two pastors and the citations of Protestant hymns. Whether either Calvin or Zwingli would have recognized his theological and ecclesiastical emphases in *Heidi* is doubtful. To be sure, one finds references in the text to the absolute sovereignty of God but little else that was distinctively Calvinistic or Zwinglian. For example, double predestination, one of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, is not an explicit theme in *Heidi*, nor is limited atonement. One finds no reference to such distinctively Calvinistic matters as semi-theocratic relations between church and state, Calvinistic views of the sacraments, or the belief that all human works apart from Christian faith are sins. Some of these matters are simply not relevant to the plot of *Heidi*, while others are central to it.

**The Nexus of *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab***

Spyri’s modest breakthrough as a known literary artist can be dated to 1871 when, in her early forties, she published *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* semi-pseudonymously under her initials “J.S.” In many

key respects, this fairly well-crafted novella anticipated the immeasurably more familiar tale of the Alpine girl and her grandfather. It will be argued that in her first published work of note, Spyri began to develop themes which bore much more widely harvested fruit in *Heidi*. Among them are the revelation of the divine in nature, the spiritual value of faith inculcated through the Bible and hymnody in childhood, and the centrality of forgiveness and reconciliation as a regenerative force in human life. On the other hand, it will also be seen that *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* emphasises the theme of redemptive suffering as a key to happiness regardless of one’s physical state. This last-named dimension of Spyri’s earliest significant work is far removed from what one finds in the immeasurably more saccharine Alpine world of *Heidi* and underscores the fact that she began her literary career writing not for children but for adults and that she did so in a painfully realistic vein.

The common thematic ground which unites these two works written nearly a decade apart is thus considerable. At the same time, however, *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* also differs from *Heidi* with regard to certain matters, including its spiritual themes. Nevertheless, the incomplete relationship between the two illuminates crucial elements which can contribute to a greater understanding of the mind and authorship of their immensely popular but notoriously enigmatic author.

A synopsis of this little-known story’s sparse plot will suffice to bring its contours into focus. The first-person narrator, who remains

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6 Several of the points in this section were previously discussed in my article “Anticipating *Heidi*? Redemptive Suffering in Johanna Spyri’s *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab*,” *Acta Germanica*, XLVI (2018), pp. 109-119.
nameless, recounts her insouciant schooldays in a Swiss village, focusing on her friendship with a classmate, “Vrony,” who is two years her senior. Given the relative brevity of the text (slightly under 6,000 words), this eponymous character is moderately well developed. The daughter of the local sextant, she has lost her mother to unidentified causes. Nevertheless, her outward demeanour is generally cheerful, sufficiently so to make the narrator describe her as a pupil with “wenig wissenschaftliche Bestrebungen, dagegen für alles Komische einen besonders offenen Sinn.”

Yet Vrony is not a one-dimensional manifestation of youthful exuberance in an Alpine setting. Behind the veil of good cheer she is an unrequited soul. Physical signs in her physiognomy foreshadow the subsequent turmoil in her life. “Es war, als wenn die verschiedenen Theile gar nicht zusammengehörten,” recalls the narrator. With her grey eyes, Vrony seemed to penetrate people whom she observed. At the same time, though, her little round nose projected such an impression of naïvete “daß man ihr das Äußerste in dieser Richtung hätte zutrauen können, wenn nicht die schelmischen Mundwinkel von unten herauf sich wie darüber moquirt hätten” (Spyri 1871:5). Nevertheless, behind these seemingly disjointed features, the narrator perceives something immeasurably deeper in her friend. She remembers how on sun-bathed evenings this had been manifested in a unity with nature: “Wenn wir so da standen, sah ich auf einmal wie aus ihren Augen ein seltsam warmer Strahl der sinkenden Sonne nachglühte, und ein Hauch der Verklärung über ihr Gesicht kam . . .” Her facial radiance makes the narrator wonder: “Wenn Vrony ein verlornes Königskind wäre!” (Spyri 1871:6). This theme resurfaces late in the narrative after Vrony endures years of suffering but, as one consequence of it, and in tandem with a rebirth of her childhood faith, spiritual regeneration.

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7 J.S., Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab (Bremen: C. Hilgerloh, 1871), p. 5. All subsequent references are to this first edition.
This curious girl’s life is burdened by her relationship to her widowed father, a matter which is arguably not explored in sufficient depth. Her father is stern and demands that she assist him with his responsibilities, but the extent to which he is cruel remains unspecified. Vrony informs the narrator that she appreciates immensely any free time she has outdoors but admits that if she returns to her modest home near the church at all late, her father will beat her. Vrony must keep house in her late mother’s stead and spend parts of her evenings assisting her father in weaving, a task she intensely dislikes but cannot avoid. Consequently, Vrony fears the stern parent’s call which takes her away from the narrator and the beauty of the outdoors into an evening of work in their modest abode. Those moments of separation also affect the narrator: “Schweigend trennten wir uns, wir fürchteten beide den alten, wortlosen Küster” (Spyri 1871:7).

Vrony’s longing for happiness and removal from her present life gradually becomes evident to the narrator. While the two frolic near the village church and notice the sun set behind the distant, snow-clad Jura mountains, Vrony expresses her Edenic vision of what lies behind them:


At that point, Vrony’s response is not at all anomalous or ambiguous when the narrator asks what she wants to be when she grows up. “Ich will glücklich werden,” she declares. “Ja, ja, es ist mein größter Wunsch, ich möchte so werden, wie glückliche Menschen sind” (Spyri 1871:11).

Having completed her primary schooling in the village, the narrator moves to western Switzerland to learn French Grazie and los-
es contact with her erstwhile schoolmate. After returning to the village, however, she inquires about Vrony. An elderly neighbour enlightens her to the shocking news that at age nineteen the girl had married a raucous carpenter. They had then moved to another community, though not before it became known locally that Vrony had suffered immensely at the hands of her husband. Eventually the narrator meets her again, namely while she is close to death and apparently receiving only palliative care in a medical institution which deaconesses administer. In their conversations, Vrony reveals the extent of her afflictions, which earlier nearly drove her to suicide. To the amazement of the narrator and despite her awareness that she is near death, she now has a remarkably cheerful demeanour. She relates how she had finally recovered her spiritual life and remained faithful to her violent spouse. Implied, but nowhere explicitly stated, is the possibility that she noticed the germ of his moral regeneration.

**Vrony as a Reflection of the Legendary Veronica**

The name of the central character which the narrator explicitly identifies as a diminutive variant of “Veronika,” was no doubt carefully chosen. Already in the sixth paragraph, the girl who bears this name is associated with the village church; she bears the nickname “Küster-tochter Veronika.” In an extra-Biblical hagiographic tradition, Saint Veronica observed the suffering of Jesus Christ bearing his cross towards Golgotha, offered him her veil to wipe his brow, and after receiving it again found a perfect image of the suffering Saviour imprinted thereon. In fourteenth-century Europe, this theme began to be depicted in religious art. No “Saint Veronica” was ever officially canonized by the Catholic Church, but this legendary figure was locally venerated as such with Masses celebrated in her honour. To be sure, in post-Reformation Europe, memory of this tradition was largely in Roman Catholic environments and hardly played a central rôle in the Swiss Reformed ecclesiastical life which made a profound impact on Johanna Spyri. That di-
mension of hagiographic spirituality nevertheless seems to have had at least faint echoes in Reformed piety and readers of *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* who are aware of this can hardly overlook its onomastic significance. As will be shown below, the girl’s name is intimately linked to Spyri’s pivotal themes of redemptive suffering and the continued application of faith nurtured by Christian teaching. The latter is all of a piece with what one subsequently finds in *Heidi*.

Redemptive Suffering
as Christian Discipleship

Within Christianity, the notion that suffering on behalf of other people and their salvation can be an essential dimension of spiritual discipline and that it is done in imitation of Christ is a venerable tradition which does not submit to succinct definition. P. Riga summarized it as follows:

> Christian tradition has seen the aspect of the voluntary submission of affliction and works of self-denial also as a way of imitation of imitation Christ’s own love. The Christian is in a sense the prolongation of the presence of Christ in space and time, and as such he must continue Christ’s actions in his own life. Christ died for all men because He loves all men. Christians must continue this loving suffering and mortification for those who are, either potentially or in fact their brothers in Christ. The example of Christ is clear. He offered his life and sufferings for others that they might become pleasing to God. The Christian has an essential mission as a member of Christ’s body to continue that work.\(^8\)

To be sure, this notion has drawn extensive criticism in modern times. To the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana, for ex-

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ample, the intimately associated phenomenon of pain had nothing to do with salvation. Indeed, he argued, by its very definition, pain was inimical to the desired life, and that we should “seek to initiate remedial action is a notion contrary to experience and in itself unthinkable. If pain could have cured us, we should long ago have been saved.”

Nevertheless, when one reads Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab and ponders Spyri’s construction of its central character’s willingness to sacrifice herself for her abusive husband—and to find a certain abiding joy in doing so despite her physical suffering—the graphically depicted controlling theme of this story which launched her literary career becomes clear.

The Motifs of Suffering and Joy

Spyri evocative description imprints on readers’ minds the degree to which Vrony suffers. Old Anne informs the narrator that Vrony has long been “im Elend” (Spyri 1871:16) and subjected to repeated beatings at the hands of her husband (Spyri 1871:19). When the narrator finally meets her hospitalized friend, she finds “eine völlig abgematerte Gestalt, so bleich und elend, daß ich erschrack” (Spyri 1871:20). But this horrific appearance masks an inner peace which forms much of the essence of the story.

Ever didactic, Spyri relates through the inquisitive narrator the secret of Vrony’s inner happiness despite her years of violent tribulation. The answer, which will not surprise readers who are familiar with subsequent themes in Heidi and other works, lies in the restoration of her Kinderglaube. The details of this development remain somewhat murky as the narrator re-establishes her friendship with Vrony.

Crystal-clear, however, are the physiognomic signs that she has undergone a spiritually healing transformation. The narrator describes the bed-ridden Vrony’s arms and neck as being covered with

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wounds. Notwithstanding this evidence of physical abuse, her face with its previously incongruous parts now features a “veredelter Ausdruck.” and her grey eyes have a “neues mildes Licht” in them. This fundamental physiognomic change is sufficient to attract the narrator: “Ein Hauch stiller Größe wehlte mich an aus ihrem ganzen Wesen, der mich befremdete und doch bekannt anmuthete, als hätte ich ich immer gewußt, daß in Vrony etwas Königliches wäre . . .” (Spyri 1871:21). The narrator initially finds it difficult to harmonize the visual contrasts before her: “Nie habe ich ein Gesicht so voller Sonnenschein gesehen inmitten bitterer Schmerzen!” she declares. It seems beyond comprehension—“wo nahm dieses Menschenkind, das vor mir lag, die kraft dazu her?” (Spyri 1871:22).

When readers consider Vrony’s face against the backdrop of the Veronica legend, however, and particularly when conscious of Spyri’s spiritual constitution, it becomes quite comprehensible. What Spyri has carefully crafted in her central character is a suffering servant motif, i.e. a woman who rather displaying a veil bearing the image of Jesus Christ’s face has played a part which overlaps with the passion event of the New Testament. It is on her own countenance that she radiates an image of salvation stemming from her reinvigorated faith. Her suffering has lain at the heart of her spiritual redemption.

**Redeeming the Lost Sheep**

An intimately related theme incorporates the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18 and Luke 15. In that well-known teaching about God’s concern for His wayward creatures, the Good Shepherd leaves 99 sheep behind to search for one that is lost. When that sole animal is found, shouldered, and taken back to the flock, there is more rejoicing over its recovery than for all the rest. The plight of Vrony readily lends itself to an interpretation in light of this parable, which is explicitly referenced in the story. *Mirabile dictu*, it is precisely this pericope
on which the sympathetic village pastor preaches when Vrony hesitatingly returns to church. In the meantime, he has assured her that God is seeking her and that He will also find her husband. Vrony perceives herself as the lost sheep and relates to the narrator that this realization is a key to understanding her happiness despite her extreme affliction.

Vrony’s abusive, ne’er-do-well husband is an intense encapsulation of fallen humanity. The narrator initially introduces him as “ein hochfahrendes Wesen” with “so wilde schwarze Augen, daß sich Jeder-man vor ihm fürchtete und ihm aus dem Wege ging” (Spyri 1871:13) with the exception of Vrony, whom he rhetorically seduced with his exotic tales of life in distant places. The subsequent description of this demon is voiced by her neighbour, the elderly Anne, who conveys to the inquisitive narrator key details but is at a loss to explain why Vrony had rejected the older woman’s advice not to become seriously involved with him. When the unhappy couple and their child eventually return to a village nearby, Anne rushed to their modest home after hearing a “Jammergeschrei” and found the bleeding Vrony attempting to flee from the grasp of her husband, from whose eyes “kam’ s wie Höllenfeuer” (Spyri 1871:17-18).

As the story concludes, this possibly—or potentially—regenerated soul, despite his history of violent sin against his long-suffering and now deceased spouse, is—at least physically—in church. Spyri relates nothing more about his spiritual state, but the message is clear: Vrony, who reflects the image of the suffering Christ, has died for his sins and, perhaps shocked by her death for which he bears responsibility, he has finally begun to respond. He, too, perhaps is a lost sheep who has been found. What his future holds, readers are left to ponder.

The Inner Struggle:
To Intervene or Not to Intervene?

At first blush, *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* might seem to endorse passive suffering and, in the end, a tolerant attitude towards
domestic violence. Such an interpretation necessitates overlooking the horrific portrayal of the latter phenomenon’s consequences for the central character. Furthermore, a careful reading cannot ignore the narrator’s struggle over how to respond to Vrony’s suffering, a matter which Spyri developed explicitly.

After learning many details from old Anna about the physical consequences of the carpenter’s abuse, the narrator finds herself wrestling with herself. Thunderstruck, she considers how she can help her childhood friend. Her own attributes, including the Gallic Grazie she believes she has acquired through her education in western Switzerland, her knowledge of Goethe, and her familiarity with Homer’s heroic Odyssey all count for naught when she learns that she has sailed into uncharted waters of human suffering. “Hätte ich auf jene Stätte des Elends mit der Odyssee in der Hand treten können und das zerschlagene Leben mit homerischer Heiterkeit aufwecken,” she asks rhetorically. “So verdreht war ich nicht” (Spyri 1871:19).

Moreover, she does not even visit Vrony upon learning of her plight. Why not? Retrospectively, the narrator weighs the possibility of some negative spiritual force inhibiting her: “Als ich an jenem Abend an der Eiche weinte, war das nicht nur um eines vorübergehenden Mitleids willen, was ich für Vrony empfand sondern weil eine dunkle Macht an mich herantrat in diesem Leiden, gegen die ich keine Wehr mehr hatte” (Spyri 1871:19). She therefore does virtually nothing until discovering that her old schoolmate is gravely ill. Then the narrator can only regret her moral failure to intervene. The moral lesson of the story is thus foregrounded just as explicitly, though much more briefly, as the spiritual ones.

**Literary, Hymnodic, and Biblical Allusions**

Among the arrows in Spyri’s quiver of literary devices was her penchant for embedding in her texts allusions to Goethe as well as brief excerpts from German or Swiss-German hymns and the Bible.
Collectively, they constitute a conspicuous element in *Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab* and underscore the themes of *Kinderglaube* and redemptive suffering.

Undoubtedly the most renowned and recognizable literary reference occurs relatively early in the novella. The narrator, now temporarily far from her childhood home, is enthralled by the beauty of nature “*an einem milden Mai-Abend*” as she observes the setting sun cast its light upon the snow of Klariden’s glowing peaks before her and hears blackbirds singing their vernal tones and the waters of the Sille, swollen by freshly melted glacial snow. In these paradisiacal surroundings, her soul is no less than “*wonnetrunken*” and echoes the song of the archangels in the Prologue in Heaven of *Faust*, though here slightly paraphrased:

> “*Ja alle deine Wunderwerke*
> *Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag!*”
> (Spyri 1871:14).

This is not only 24-carat enrapturedness with nature typical of nineteenth-century literary romanticism; it also underscores a *Leitmotiv* in Spyri’s writing which would reverberate in *Heidi*, namely the unfathomable beauty and divine power of nature that stands juxtaposed with human frailty yet plays a vital rôle in regenerating and empowering people who in one way or another are broken.

The narrator’s familiarity with Goethe extends beyond *Faust*. She quotes from the opening monologue his *Iphigenie auf Tauris* when relating her mindset on the same occasion when she recalls the above-cited lines from *Faust*: “*das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend*” (Spyri 1871:14). Speakers of German had used this *geflügeltes Wort* countless times in literary texts and elsewhere since the late eighteenth century. Its rhetorical function in Spyri’s construction of the narrator’s attitude story is not fully clear. Generally speaking, among German writers in the age of Goethe and beyond ancient Greek culture was perceived as a full expression of
humanitas. It is conceivable, however, that Spyri includes this morsel of Goethe to underscore that the narrator’s mind before becoming reacquainted with Vrony and learning from her friend’s spiritual unfolding had developed in a humanistic direction, whereas Vrony, who never had an opportunity to acquire a significant amount of secular learning, had become versed in the Bible and hymnody, and this ecclesiastical education served her well in her hour of intense spiritual and emotional need.

Apart from these echoes of Goethe, Spyri reached back into seventeenth-century Lutheran hymnody and drew on two hymns by the German theologian Paul Gerhardt as well as one by Philipp Friedrich Hiller, an eighteenth-century pietistic Lutheran pastor in Württemberg whose hymns had also been preserved in Swiss Reformed ecclesiastical music. The inclusion of these works has a distinct rhetorical function in Spyri’s construction of Vrony’s spiritual development. Early on, the narrator expresses her respect for the girl’s ability to compose simple songs and sing them in a variety of ways. After her marital ordeal, Vrony’s attachment to the sung word harmonizes with her recovery of her Kinderglaube. She informs the narrator that as a child she had received from her pious mother a hymnbook but only recently had become significantly more familiar with its content (Spyri 1871:31).

Spyri used an excerpt from a hymn by Johann Sebastian Bach to highlight Vrony’s constancy in faith as undergirded by a well-established tradition of ecclesiastical music:

Ich laß Dich nicht, Du Hülfs’ in allen Nöthen!
Leg’ Joch auf Joch, ich hoffe doch,
Auch wenn es scheint, als wolltest Du mich tödten.
Mach’s, wie Du willst, mit mir,
Ich weiche nicht von Dir!
Verbirg auch Dein Gesicht,
Du Hülfs’ in allen Nöthen,
Ich laß Dich nicht! Ich laß Dich nicht!
Though not explicitly identified in the text, this is 467 in the *Bach-Werk-Verzeichnis*, “Ich lass’ dich nicht.”

In addition to these segments of ecclesiastical music, Vrony readily quotes segments of the Psalms to express her faith and also, notwithstanding her affliction, to nurture the narrator. Lines from the 130th would have been familiar to many readers: “*Aus tiefer Noth schrei’ ich zu dir*” (Spyri 1871:23). Less well-known are the words she relates to the narrator from Psalm 73: “*Wenn ich nur Dich habe, so frage ich Nichts nach Himmel und Erde*” (Spyri 1871:23).

As part of her strategy of emphasizing how the two former schoolgirls have grown in different directions, there is an obvious and quite well-developed portrayal of Vrony’s reliance on the Scriptures and church music to help her cope with an abusive and seemingly impossible personal predicament. The nameless narrator, by contrast, can appeal to Goethe and Homer, but she readily acknowledges her weakness and lack of moral courage in failing to respond adequately when her friend was in dire need.

**Religious Motifs in Heidi**

Turning to the two-volume *Heidi*, is its religious outlook essentially pietism, as has been alleged? Certainly dimensions of it overlap with emphases typical of pietism. One finds a great deal of personal piety on the part of two elderly ladies, namely the grandmothers of Peter and Clara, manifested especially in prayer, devotion to the Bible, and an emphasis on hymnody and devotional materials. At a child’s level, Heidi follows in their wake, but this expression of faith does not really characterize anyone else, with the partial exception of her grandfather. Such typically pietistic elements as the *ordo salutis*, or path towards sanctification, are not part of this book for young readers.

The religious factors which are mentioned or at least clearly implicit in *Heidi* can be listed succinctly: God, church, pastors, Bible,
daily prayer, the efficacy of prayer, hymns, repentance, confession of sin, reconciliation with God and with other people, baptism, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and Heaven. On the other hand, many elements of Christianity are conspicuously absent or at least not explicitly mentioned, e.g. Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, creeds, liturgy, gifts of the Spirit, original sin, absolution, cross, resurrection, atonement, communion, eschatology, God’s judgement, and Hell. Occupying a middle ground—implied but not stated—are such topics as the fruits of the Spirit and God’s creation of the world. It is almost as if Spyri consciously based her story on a reductive, common-denominator sort of Christianity which would be palatable to a broad range of Christian readers.

Fundamental to Spyri’s presentation of the faith is her concept of God, which one can discern in Heidi but which is not, of course, presented in a systematic, doctrinal way apart from Frau Sesemann’s teaching about prayer and providence. God is implied to be primarily transcendent and theistic. One can pray to God and, as Frau Sesemann emphasises in her detailed conversation with the disillusioned Heidi in Frankfurt, God decides whether to answer prayers according to whether the petitions therein are good for us. Accordingly, there is much implied emphasis on divine providence. We subsequently read that God’s intervention in the world is largely indirect, made through the village pastor, the two grandmothers, Heidi, and other people. Communication with God is thus depicted primarily as making requests and giving thanks, but also through the hymns which are quoted in part. Though transcendent, God intervenes in the world, bestowing faith, healing and reconciliation. However, in places of the text God is immanent as well as transcendent and is especially approachable on the mountains. That is in itself a strong motif in Heidi. Of course, there are numerous precedents in Christianity and Judaism, and one can find much Biblical symbolism related thereto in the narrative.

The conventional Christian, theistic presentation of divinity in Heidi is neither pantheistic not immanentist, despite the healing power of environment. Yet God is clearly more approachable and,
apparently, helps people more effectively in the village and on the mountains than in Frankfurt. However, there is no strict geographic line of demarcation. After all, in Frankfurt one finds Clara’s pious grandmother, and it is there Heidi learns to pray and trust God, primarily through that elderly Christian.

Spyri may have perceived a spiritual gap separating the generations in Switzerland and incorporated it in her text. Explicitly expressed Christian faith is conspicuously absent from most of the younger characters—at least those who are mentioned by name—apart from Heidi. By contrast, in general, it is older characters in Heidi who are more pious. Praying with grandmothers is specifically underscored. The pastor in the Dörfli is also an elderly man.

Heidi’s Path to Spiritual Maturity

Heidi is above all else a Christian Bildungsroman, the story of its eponymous protagonist’s spiritual formation and how, after coming to faith in a compassionate God (without, remarkably enough, any explicit reference to Jesus Christ though with an emphasis on his parable of the Prodigal Son), she serves as an instrument of God’s message of reconciliation and healing. At the beginning of the narrative, when Heidi enters the guardianship of her grandfather, she is only five years old and, though charming and friendly to man and beast alike, she evinces no Christian influence on her early life. Only later, in Chapter Ten, is it revealed that at an even younger age she prayed with one of her grandmothers. There is not even a hint that she was baptized in the Swiss Reformed Church or any other denomination, though of course that was conventional practice. Alm-Oehi, at that stage, is disaffected from formal religious life and makes no spiritual impact on his granddaughter. The figure who gives her initial guidance in that

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10 J. Spyri, Heidi’s Lehr- und Wanderjahre. Eine Geschichte für Kinder und auch für Solche, welche die Kinder lieb haben (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1880), p. 160. All subsequent references are to this first edition.
respect is her playmate Peter’s pious, blind grandmother. The seed she apparently plants germinates in Frankfurt. It is this elderly woman’s Christian spirit, expressed in her love for Heidi and her life of prayer and hymnody, which quietly influences the young girl during the two years she spends in her grandfather’s care before going to Frankfurt. Heidi and the elderly man visit her often, he to assist with the maintenance of her modest house. “Wenn mir nur der Herr Gott das Kind erhält und dem Alm-Oehi den guten Willen!” is the old woman’s prayer” (Spyri 1880:70).

No less influential in Heidi’s spiritual formation is Clara’s grandmother, Frau Sesemann, with whom Heidi comes into frequent contact in Frankfurt. In their first encounter, this woman establishes rapport by being friendly to the Swiss girl and imploring her to address her as “Großmama” (Spyri 1880:152). She also gives Heidi books which are initially unidentified but readers subsequently learn include a volume of Bible stories. Upon learning of the girl’s unrelenting sadness, Frau Sesemann expresses concern in a candid conversation which Spyri uses to underscore the importance of prayer. She assures the obviously troubled Heidi: “Denk’ einmal nach, wie wohl das thun muß, wenn Einen im Herzen Etwas immerfort drückt und quält und man kann jo jeden Augenblick zum lieben Gott hinge hen und ihm Alles sagen und ihm bitten, daß er helfe, wo uns sonst gar Niemand helfen kann!” (Spyri 1880:160). This assurance marks a turning point in Heidi’s life, when she takes her supplications to God, especially in regards to her intense longing to return to the Alps and her grandfather.

Subsequently, Frau Sesemann voices a more sophisticated notion of prayer, arguably in words which might soar above the heads of many children of Heidi’s age. The girl, still in Frankfurt, gives up communicating with God when her prayers to return to Switzerland go unanswered. Frau Sesemann addresses the problem squarely: “Siehst du, der liebe Gott ist für uns Alle ein guter Vater, der immer weiß, was gut für uns ist, wenn wir es gar nicht wissen. Wenn wir nun
aber Etwas von ihm haben wollen, das nicht gut für uns ist, so gibt er uns das nicht, sondern etwas viel Besseres, wenn wir fortfahren, so recht herzlich zu ihm zu beten, aber nicht gleich weglauen und alles Vertrauen zu ihm verlieren.” She also broaches the matter of divine forgiveness, assuring Heidi that God will forgive her for not continuing to pray and indeed will increase her faith and trust in providence (Spyri 1880:168). The girl heeds these words, not only in Frankfurt, but also after returning to Graubünden, where the Christian faith nurtured during her time in the German city aids in the spiritual healing of her grandfather and the restoration of Clara’s mobility, as will be discussed below.

Alm-Oehi as Fictional Transfiguration of the Prodigal Son

Spyri employs the second most important character in the plot, Heidi’s grandfather, as a postfigurative type of the Prodigal Son to illustrate the necessity of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The transformation the aged man undergoes under the influence of the Gospel is profound though not total. Notwithstanding the negative image he long has had in the village, Alm-Oehi invariably treats Heidi with kindness. From the day of her arrival she elicits a beneficent strain in him, and at times he does favors for Peter’s mother and blind grandmother. Yet he harbors strong resentment and hostility towards the villagers in general and is alienated from the church until Heidi returns from Frankfurt, her illustrated Bible story book in hand, and, armed with the hitherto cited message which Frau Sesemann has imparted to her, is prepared to serve as a vehicle of God’s proclamation of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Spyri artfully lays out the background for this in the way she narrates in Chapter One the man’s morally encumbered early life. Dete, who is the sister of Alm-Oehi’s late daughter-in-law, relates to one of the villagers that his family of origin had possessed “eins der
“schönsten Bauerngüter in Domleschg” and was the elder of two sons. “Aber der Aeltere wollte Nichts thun, als den Herrn spielen und im Lande herumfahren und mit bösem Volk zu thun haben, das Niemand kannte. Den ganzen Hof hat er verspielt und verzecht . . .”. Instead of repenting at that time and being warmly welcomed home, he had remained overseas for more than an additional decade and, after the deaths of his parents and brother, returned to Domleschg with a young son only to find that “es schlossen sich alle Thüren vor ihm und Keiner wollte mehr Etwas von ihm wissen” (Spyri 1880:7-8).

This is far from a fully-fledged allegory of the parable of the Prodigal Son, of course, and the outcome is significantly different, but readers with a measure of familiarity with Luke 15 will none the less immediately recognise it as being inspired by that very well-known text. In the third chapter, the old man’s bitterness comes to expression when his granddaughter asks him about the croaking of a bird. “Der höhnt die Leute aus dort unten, daß sie so Viele zusammensitzen in den Dörfern und einander böös machen,” replies Alm-Oehi. The narrator explains, “Der Großvater sagte diese Worte fast wild, so daß dem Heidi das Gekrächz des Raubvogels dadurch noch eindrücklicher wurde in der Erinnerung” (Spyri 1880:48-49). The kindly village pastor attempts to help him overcome his estrangement. Calling on the elderly man in an unsuccessful effort to convince him to place his granddaughter in the local school, he tells Alm-Oehi that he lives “allein und verbittert gegen Gott und Menschen!” and pleads with him to move from the mountain into the village and be “ausgesöhnt mit Gott und den Menschen.” The old man is adamant, however, believing that “die Menschen da unten verachten mich und ich sie auch, wir bleiben von einander, so ist’s Beiden wohl” (Spyri 1880: 77-78).

Spyri returns to the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation in Chapter Fourteen, using Heidi’s assurance to her grandfather that if they pray diligently God would not forget them, an assertion which he initially rejects on the grounds of his experience and ongoing alienation from the villages that no one ever forgets. “Und wenn’s einmal
so ist, dann ist's so; zurück kann Keiner, und wen der Herrgott verges-
en hat, den hat er vergessen,” Alm-Oehi declares, clearly alluding to his own situation. Evincing spiritual maturity beyond her years, Heidi opens her well-worn Bible story book to the retelling of the Prodigal Son parable in which the young man says, upon returning home, “Ich bin nicht mehr werth, dein Sohn zu heißen.” That night the old man folds his hands to pray and, mirabile dictu, utters the words of Luke 15:18-19 (“Vater, ich habe gesündigt gegen den Himmel und vor dir und bin nicht mehr werth, dein Sohn zu heißen”), suggesting that he had learned them properly in his youth (Spyri 1880:229, 231).11 This incident, one of the most detailed in Heidi, marks a turning point in his life, a return to God, Christian fellowship, and happiness.

It is not without precedent in Spyri’s fiction. One finds a striking parallel in Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab a decade earlier. The terminally ill eponymous central character, a humiliated victim of spousal abuse, recounts to the first-person narrator how she had become alienated from the church early in her life but regained her spiritual vitality. The pastor in her home village had urged her to return to regular worship, and after four weeks she had overcome her inhibition. “Alle mußten mich ansehen, dachte ich, als gehöre ich nicht dahin,” Vrony feared. The clergyman had preached on the parable of the lost sheep, which occurs shortly after the Prodigal Son parable in Luke 15, and underscored the Good Shepherd’s tireless search for it. This had struck a chord with Vrony:


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11 However, in the 1862 German Protestant Bible, which was widely used in Reformed churches in Switzerland, the text in question is slightly different: “Vater, ich habe gesündigt in den Himmel und vor dir; Und bin hinforder nicht mehr werth, daß ich dein Sohn heiße.”
der Trost meine Seele: Einem Hirten gehoere ich an, Er hat mich lieb, Er kennt mein Verlorensein, Er sucht mich, Er haelt mir die Hand entgegen!” (Spyri 1871:30-31).

Whatever Spyri’s precise spiritual constitution may have been in the 1870s and early 1880s, this account, read in tandem with that concerning the Prodigal Son as a parable in which Heidi’s alienated grandfather could see a type of himself, testifies boldly to Spyri’s conviction that the proclamation of God’s grace could be instrumental in changing the lives of people who feel isolated and cut off from the love of their fellow human beings.

**Peter’s Resentment, Anger, Forgiveness**

Spyri employs one of the principal secondary characters, the goatherd Peter, to convey fundamental Christian lessons about the nature of sin and the centrality of forgiveness. In this instance, Heidi is not a direct conduit of the Gospel but a passive factor in the plot. When the stricken Clara visits Heidi, these two spend most of their time together, leaving virtually no time for Peter, who is clearly enamored of Heidi. In his bitter resentment, he clandestinely pushes Clara’s wheelchair over a cliff. In what may well have been inspired by Genesis 50:20, in which Joseph assures his brothers that their evil-intended behavior towards him actually served a divine purpose, Spyri draws an indirect cause and effect relationship between the jealous boy’s misdeed and Clara’s regaining of her mobility.

As the wheelchair is no longer available, Heidi, with the reluctant aid of Peter, encourages the partially lame German girl to try to walk. After a few halting attempts, this succeeds. Shortly thereafter, the spiritually mature Frau Sesemann visits them, and Peter confesses his part in the destruction of the wheelchair. Frau Sesemann immediately uses this occasion to teach a crucial lesson and declare forgiveness. “Sieh, wie das Böse, das du thatest, zum Besten ausfiel
für die, der du es zufügen wolltest. . . . So kann der liebe Gott, was Einer böse machen wollte, nur schnell in seine Hand nehmen und für den Anderen, der geschädigt werden sollte, etwas Gutes daraus machen und der Bösewicht hat das Nachsehen und den Schaden davon,” she explains. In the same homiletical conversation, when addressing Peter’s initial efforts to conceal his culpability, Frau Sesemann voices basic instruction about the divine conscience:

“Aber siehst du: wer etwas Böses thut und denkt, weiß es Keiner, der verrechnet sich immer. Der liebe Gott sieht und hört ja doch Alles, und sobald er bemerkt, daß ein Mensch seine böse That verheimlichen will, so weckt er schnell in dem Menschen das Wächterchen auf, das er schon bei seiner Geburt in ihn hineingesetzt hat und das da drinnen schlafen darf, bis der Mensch ein Unrecht thut” (Spyri 1880:159-160).

This is Spyri at her most transparently didactic.

**Clara’s Exemplifying of the Healing Power of God’s Creation**

It is at least arguable that only in her construction of Clara’s healing does Spyri wander from what many theologically informed Swiss Reformed Christians would accept as conventional Christian verities. Apart from its fundamental implausibility, the incident and remarks by both Heidi and Clara arguably approach a pantheistic concept of divinity without actually reaching it. There are, admittedly, clear Biblical precedents for perceiving the hand of God in nature, and this comes to expression in inter alia the notion of *El Shaddai*, God of the mountains, where divinity is experienced more intimately and with greater majesty than in, for example, urban environments.

The hilly and mountainous landscape of the Biblical lands provided a wealth of imagery for writers of the Old Testament as
well as the New, and there are approximately 500 references thereto. Although many of these are merely geographically designative rather than poetic, the expressions of religious meaning and metaphors stemming from them are also common. Among these is the notion of the holy mountain, the special abode of God where people encounter the divine more directly than at lower altitudes. In much of the Old Testament this is Mount Sinai, where Moses receives the Ten Commandments. Elsewhere, Abraham has one of his special experiences on a mountain in Genesis 22, and God appears to Moses on Mount Horeb in Exodus 3. After the settlement of Israel in the Promised Land, Zion replaces Sinai as the principal dwelling place of God on earth. It takes on eschatological and other theological significance as a place to which the righteous will stream, as in Isaiah 2, rather than a remote, unpopulated one from which people are generally excluded.

Spyri certainly makes much of a general Alpine version of this attitude towards mountains. Alm-Oehi attributes Clara’s recovery to “unseres Herrgotts Sonnenschein und Almluft.”12 Clara, viewing the star-strewn firmament with Heidi, exclaims that “es ist gerade, wie wenn wir auf einem hohen Wagen in den Himmel hineinfahren würden,” and her youthful hostess offers an explanation for the twinkling of the stars which links them to divine providence: “Weil sie droben im Himmel sehen, wie der liebe Gott Alles so gut einrichtet für die Menschen, daß sie gar keine Angst haben müssen und ganz sicher sein können, weil Alles so kommt, wie es heilsam ist” (Spyri 1881:100-101).

The restoration of Clara’s general health and the recovery of her ability to walk are attributed to several causes. Three natural ones are the mountain air which is cited repeatedly as an invigorating element, abundant sunshine which is implicitly contrasted with the darker

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12 J. Spyri, Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1881), p. 146.
environment in Frankfurt where Clara has spent little time outdoors, and the food she consumes in the Alps, especially goat’s milk. Rural victuals are described as much more palatable than those of that city (Spyri 1881:111). But Heidi’s dynamic intervention is also crucial. Initially, she suggests that she could carry the older girl to a different section of the mountain pasture in order to see its flora, a proposal which Clara dismisses as unrealistic. At that point, Heidi, in a rare moment of anger, presses Peter into service and, supporting Clara between them, they assist her in taking her first steps. All of this occurs after Clara has received unidentified treatment for approximately six weeks at Ragaz (Spyri 1881:81). There is no mention of prayer for her healing, although after it is a fait accompli some of the others express their gratitude to God as well as to Heidi and her grandfather for their instrumental parts.

**Conclusion**

Previous scholars who have commented on the difficulty of knowing much about Spyri’s religious beliefs may be correct in judging that the paucity of evidence outside her texts places a low ceiling on what can be ascertained. One can only wish that e.g. hitherto unknown correspondence, unpublished essays, or other sources will be unearthed that shed light on her spiritual convictions and their relevance to life during a time of noteworthy theological upheaval in European, including Swiss, Protestantism. Even when one closely examines what Spyri wrote in fictional works and finds obvious emphases on the themes which have been highlighted above, one cannot necessarily conclude that her own convictions are identical to or to a significant degree overlap with those of any of the characters whom she created. This caveat reflects a truism in literary scholarship generally.

Nevertheless, with some measure of confidence we can conclude that Spyri developed distinct themes in the two works under
consideration, and that despite their glaring differences, they also manifested overlapping spiritual ground. In both texts the sovereignty of God is underscored, as are the typically Spyrian belief that the divine is revealed partly in nature, the value of faith that is nurtured in childhood through Bible lessons and hymns, and the supreme importance of forgiveness and reconciliation as the driving force of regeneration in humanity.

In any case, an important step forward would be a critical analysis of Spyri’s less well-known books. After all, Heidi, notwithstanding its enormous popularity, was only one of dozens of books which she wrote between the 1870s and the 1890s. In several of the others, among them Ein Landaufenthalt von Onkel Titus (1881) and Cornelli wird erzogen (1890), there are noteworthy if not particularly well-developed religious dimensions. The possible identification of consistent themes in them would make it possible to draw more extensive, if nevertheless necessarily cautious, conclusions about what motivated this highly popular author. Much mining in Spyri’s oeuvre remains to be done. How many nuggets prospectors can expect to find is, of course, debatable, but considering the prominence of the religious elements in Ein Blatt auf Vrony’s Grab and Heidi, one must suspect that considerable pay dirt waits in the remaining lode. Extracting it should be a relatively simple task.

~ Liverpool Hope University

A great deal has been published concerning emigration from German-speaking, Alemannic Switzerland. The present book fulfills the great need to give more attention to the French speaking cantons of the western part of Switzerland, La Suisse romande.

The authoress tells us that the main objective of this book is to trace the emigration from Cornol in the canton of Jura throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this regard, the geographical location of Cornol is symbolic: the village is located on the western slope of the Jura, extending from the lofty col des Rangiers, looking west toward the plain of France and the Atlantic Ocean, even farther west. In other words, the village of Cornol seems to open its doors toward the Western Hemisphere and America, and is thus perfectly situated to encourage and to promote westward emigration.

The book begins with an introduction containing helpful images and graphs, and is then divided into four parts: Part One, concerning emigration between the years 1815 and 1876; Part Two, concerning emigration from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until 1950; Part Three, entitled “The United States, the new Promised Land”; and finally, Part Four, dealing with the hazards of emigration.
The book is quite comprehensive and provides many insights on the full spectrum of the subject of Swiss emigration abroad. Thus, it goes far beyond emigration from the canton of Jura, and serves as a kind of encyclopedia of the various topics of Swiss emigration abroad. Chapter Four, in particular, presents three cases of Swiss emigration to foreign lands: Canada, Argentina, and Madagascar. Hence, the book provides the reader with a unique and thorough global perspective.

It is, however, Part Three which is of special interest to the readership of the Swiss American Historical Society. This section focuses on emigration from the canton of Jura specifically to the United States. It includes a chapter on the emigrants’ arrival at New York and Castle Garden and Ellis Island, the principal centers for processing Swiss emigrants in those days; a second chapter elucidating the geographic redistribution of the emigrants across the United States, from New York to the Far West; and a third chapter examining the various professions of the Swiss emigrants in the United States; and a sixth chapter clarifying the attitudes of Americans and American society toward the new Swiss newcomers. The book demonstrates that in the late nineteenth century attitudes toward Swiss emigrants were, in some cases, unfriendly and critical. In other cases, however, attitudes were receptive and positive. The book stresses that, over time, the Swiss came to be more and more appreciated and valued by American society.

The book concludes with a special chapter on the motivations which incited the Swiss of the canton of Jura to emigrate to America and to other destinations. Beginning on page 325, there is also a long and exhaustive list of all emigrants from Cornol, providing in addition the names of the respective countries to which each individual emigrated. Thus, the book is of great value to any American whose family originated in the canton of Jura, and who wishes to explored his or her genealogical tree.

In sum, *Un village Suisse émigré dans le canton du Jura*, is a masterpiece of sociology and genealogical research, which exemplifies
the best activities of the historian and the genealogist. In addition, the book would be an excellent supplementary textbook for inclusion in courses on Francophone culture. It is written in a superb French, and makes it obvious why Neuchâtel and the canton of Jura for centuries have been the principal pedagogical center of Europe. This book is therefore a must for the libraries of all Swiss Embassies and Consulate and for the libraries of all serious researchers on Swiss history and genealogy.

~ Dr. Dwight Page, Bryan College
It is safe to say that an investigation into the life of Johann Ulrich Müller would scarcely warrant the rapt scholarly attention that it does were it not for the presumptive impact of that individual on Gottfried Keller—who was and is perhaps the prime Swiss exponent of literary realism in the eyes of the world. It has been established that Keller’s novel, *Der grüne Heinrich* [*Green Henry*], closely parallels the novelist’s own life story, episodically shifting into near-direct autobiography. One memorable character in the novel is closely based on Keller’s friendship with Müller, which had originally begun when the two were school comrades.

That nameless figure appearing in the second volume of the *Green Henry* novel is depicted as fiery, enthusiastic, and rapturously immersed in art and literature. That character, in short, for whom Müller ultimately stood as the model, was more closely attuned to Green Henry’s (and thus Keller’s) sensibilities than were any of the developing artist’s other acquaintances.

In real life, those common inclinations found expression in an ongoing exchange of letters between Keller and Müller (the
latter a native of Frauenfeld, Canton Thurgau). Combining Seidler-Hux’s expository text with Keller’s novel passages and the Keller-Müller correspondence—conveniently reproduced in this attractively illustrated monograph—we get the sense that Keller felt the need to push himself, scrambling to keep up with the perceived theoretical and creative accomplishments of Müller, both as a talented artist and as a writer.

In the novel itself, however, any incipient aura of this talented friend as a model or muse—any further mention of his “glowing image” and “heroic shadow”—was to dissipate in a flash when Heinrich Lee (Green Henry) discovered that his comrade had copied long textual passages into his correspondence from great authors and philosophers rather than from the storehouse of his own creativity. In the first draft of the novel, Heinrich Lee showed some understanding for the plagiarist, reasoning that this crony had not made fun of him, but had only taken a shortcut to keep pace with his (Lee’s) own zeal. A scant few pages after his first mention, then, this literary figure had awakened in Green Henry simultaneous respect, love, and hate. There was no further mention of him in the novel.

Taking into account both the novelistic exposition of Müller’s blithe literary appropriation and the real-world assistance he provided to Keller during periods of poverty, we can speculate that this love-hate mix of emotions might well have mirrored Keller’s true feelings. Keller scholars have generally been less forgiving, though, pegging Müller with such epithets as “swindler,” “fibber,” “unsteady character,” or “one of Keller’s youthful misalliances, someone who never amounted to anything afterwards.” For literary critics up until our own 21st century, then, Müller has stood for the opposite of Keller’s scrupulous honesty.

One exception to this single-minded view of Müller, almost from the beginning, has been the Guild of Thurgau Writers. Individual cantonal reviewers and journalists have made an effort to supply more comprehensive details and fairer judgments about their native son. In
particular, the Reformed pastor Walther Huber published a detailed article in the *Thurgauer Zeitung* in 1919 on the occasion of Keller’s 100th birthday, detailing the youthful rapport as well as he could research it. Then, in a follow-up article, he published further biographical data he had learned from Müller’s family.

One century after the work of Walther Huber in Thurgau, Monica Seidler-Hux—a native of Frauenfeld engaged in the Manuscripts Division of Zurich’s *Zentralbibliothek*—has found herself ideally placed by native inclinations, archival access, and research training to write the definitive tome on the Keller-Müller topic. Her own institution holds the literary papers of Gottfried Keller, while the *Bürgerarchiv* in Frauenfeld is a first resort for details on Müller’s life in Thurgau and beyond.

Seidler-Hux’s publication provides us with illuminating, extensive and incredibly well-documented answers to the simple but key questions she poses (p. 11): “What is reality and what is fiction—in *Green Henry* and in the biographies of Gottfried Keller? How did the relationship between the two of them come about, and how did it change? What, in actual fact, ever became of Keller’s friend from Frauenfeld?”

As Seidler-Hux started following an ever-expanding search space beyond Zurich and Frauenfeld to identify the historical Johann Ulrich Müller, astonishing facts came to light (pp. 11-12 *et passim*). One finding led to another in her *Schnitzeljagd* (paper chase) for signs of Müller’s life throughout the nineteenth century. A number of parallels between the life stories of the two friends became evident. In Müller’s case, though, temporary financial difficulties and fruitless years as a journeyman in Switzerland, Austria, Romania, and Hungary led him to forge a new beginning in America. Further research exposed Müller’s participatory contributions in North American locales and on projects which, in historical hindsight, were truly notable. His life path, as outlined by the author, served as a miniature mirror for the expansion of horizons and pioneering innovations in the initial age of technology,
industry and transportation. In that regard, the book represents the restoration of an impugned reputation. The author’s rehabilitation of Müller furnishes multiple grounds for respecting him.

Müller’s passionate engagement in life and learning, as originally refracted through a literary figure in a novel by Gottfried Keller, apparently never slackened in his newfound home. Seidler-Hux outlines his successes as a veduta painter, architect, civil engineer, draftsman, surveyor of the Great Lakes, cartographer, and family man in his new identity as an Americanized John U. Mueller. Causes for sadness and difficulty only intervened from overseas, from notices of family deaths and from Swiss authorities who questioned Müller’s citizenship rights *ex post facto*, and thus the legitimacy of his marriage in Ohio to a Pomeranian woman he had met on his voyage to America.

The print book that houses these extensive research findings for the *Hier und Jetzt* (*Here and Now*) publishers has charms to draw the sensory delight of even those readers reticent to dive deeply into a work with a total of nearly 800 footnotes. Both for casual readers and for those mesmerized enough by the literary and biographical strands of intertwining narrative to immerse fully, there are the added delectations otherwise reserved for a coffee-table book, so to speak. Six-score-and ten illustrations not only supply crowning visual commentary on the lives and works of Keller and Müller (with an emphasis on the latter, of course), but they also serve *en masse* as a visual honorarium to the reader’s senses. The contrasting coarse-versus-smooth tactile duality of the book cover likewise beguiles the sense of touch (and makes the inveterate literary historian ponder further discoverable dualities in the text between the covers).

Seldom will the reader of literary or cultural history—resonant in this case with rich overtones of biography—be favored with such intellectual transparency, directness, or trust as Monica Seidler-Hux displays in devoting more than a third of her monograph to primary documentation that undergirds her thesis. Maps, timelines, literary excerpts, and, above all, the revelatory correspondence of two
consequential Swiss friends, allow the reader to weigh the author’s claims. (It should be noted that the author reproduced letters to and from other relevant personalities as well, including exchanges between Keller and his mother.) An appendix with bibliographic and index navigation eases the scholarly shuttling between source and commentary—not necessarily in that order. Beneficial for the reader, and exemplary for biographical scholarship, Seidler-Hux places hefty weight and central attention on the sources, echoing the Renaissance humanists’ advice: *Ad fontes* ([Back] to the sources). The textual commentary concludes as early as page 202, while the subsequent and final 116 pages provide slam-dunk documentary evidence as to the verity of the author’s endeavor.

~ Dr. Richard Hacken, Brigham Young University
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