

# Sounds : Swiss devotion

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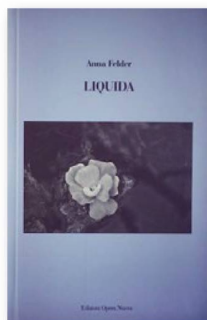
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## Li-qui-da



ANNA FELDER:  
"Liquida"  
Edizioni Opera Nuova 2017  
110 pages; CHF 20

Like a play on words, the syllables of the Italian book title stand above the three chapters of this collection of stories. "Li" means "there" in English, "qui" means "here" and "liquida" translates as "fluid", but can also mean "he liquidates" or the imperative form "liquidate!". The feel for language, its sound and the desire to play with it typify all of the stories in Anna Felder's book. Not until the final story does the author reveal the secret surrounding "Liquida", leaving readers to ponder over "the intricacies of liquidity".

The stories in the first part of the book are set in Switzerland. In "Merlot im Tarnmantel", the author depicts a train journey through the

Gotthard. The first-person narrator observes a woman who has poured Merlot into a water bottle. Perhaps she has done this to prevent her fellow passengers speculating about her wine drinking, or perhaps so that her memories of Ticino remain undisturbed.

"A play thing of the infinite ocean: at home, between the everyday objects and names which still float to the surface a bit, gently and inconspicuously. The telephone no longer rings impertinently..." This is the start of the story of "Madame Germaine", in the third part, in which an ageing woman attempts to come to terms with her diminishing ability to hear. It is funny to read how switching the receiver from one ear to the other can trigger things and change perspectives. Here the sea symbolises the silence which increasingly surrounds Madame Germaine.

To mark her 80th birthday, Anna Felder collected unpublished and revised stories which are now also available in German translation. The author writes about a world that she is familiar with and observes keenly. Everyday events are reflected intricately and often figuratively in short texts into which subtle irony is always interwoven. Every story appears honed at length so that it finally sparkles in many ways. These are short stories which can be seen in a new light every time they are re-read.

Anna Felder, born in 1937, grew up in Lugano and had a German-speaking Swiss father and an Italian mother. She studied literature in Zurich and Paris. She then taught Italian at the old cantonal school in Aarau. Today, the author lives in Aarau and Lugano. In February 2018, she was awarded the Swiss Grand Prix for Literature by the Swiss Confederation for her lifetime's work.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

## Swiss devotion



MIN KING:  
"Immer Wieder,"  
Irascible 2017.

This has never been done before: soul from Switzerland – and in dialect too. And not simply the sterile, glossy dance music that has appeared in the charts under this name for a number of years. Rather, it is the kind of authentic soul that emerged from rhythm 'n' blues in the late 1950s.

The music of the Schaffhausen group Min King is a delight. The quintet play with great devotion and their most potent weapon – the voice of Philipp Albrecht – is always at the heart of the rousing arrangements. Thirty-something Albrecht's vocal talents span the full gamut of the genre, from painful yell to soulful whisper. Indeed, he sounds so re-

laxed and credible it is as though soul had only ever been sung in the pithy Schaffhausen dialect rather than the lilting English of black Americans.

Min King make audiences sit up and listen. Their single "Blue-mewäg" has been enlivening the playlists of national radio stations since 2012, and their album of almost exactly the same name – "Am Bluemewäg" – entered the Swiss charts in its first week, albeit only in 86th position. There are a number of reasons why it has taken Min King five years to follow up with "Immer Wieder". Firstly, the band took some time out after an extended tour, front man Philipp Albrecht tested the waters as a solo artist with the dance hall track "Fründin", and a slight change of style had to be made for the second album.

On "Immer Wieder", Min King sound much less like a sumptuous soul band from the Sixties, instead leaving more space between notes. "Meisli" is a lingering Blues track in a minor key performed completely without a refrain. "Bisch Immer No Da" is a reggae number on which the rush of the Rhine Falls can be heard. While "Teil Dich Mit" is a gentle 6/8 beat song with a Nancy Sinatra guitar. In the title track, Albrecht sings about going round in circles and never "finding a way out".

Overall, the band seem more laid back on their second album, and their sound is warmer – like an after-hours party that you would really like to be invited to. Even though there are no big hits like "Blue-mewäg", the path taken by Min King is still very much one worth following.

STEFAN STRITTMATTER