

How to Desperately Suck at Cliches

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I was born in Argentina. This fact, all by itself, provides a rather unlimited amount of smiles in every person I meet.

The name “Argentina” invariably evokes ideas of roughness, wilderness, passion, like few countries in the planet. People dream about Argentina. People dream of going there and hitchhike, ride horses with the Gauchos in the Pampas, following the steps of Che Guevara. People picture themselves attending a *Superclásico*, screaming with another eighty thousand people as the ball reaches the net. People dream of colors, smells and sounds yet unforeseen, offered only to the pleasure of a lucky few. Maradona. The Pope. Evita. Borges. Messi. All together, around a gigantic barbecue.

But wait, it gets better (or worse.) For reasons that go beyond the scope of this text, I happen to have lived in Switzerland for almost 30 years. Which, in itself, is another interesting fact to talk about in any social situation.

Ah, Switzerland, they say. Mountains. Watches. Punctuality. Trains. Incredible landscapes. James Bond movies. Cheese. Lakes. Peace conventions. Humanitarian organisations. Banks. Cheese fondues. Victorinox knives. Neutrality. Ski resorts. More cheese. The Matterhorn on a postcard, with the soothing sound of the Alphorns in the background.

Argentina and Switzerland. Switzerland and Argentina. Both countries with amazing clichés, deeply rooted in the minds of people all over the world. Go anywhere in the world, mention those two countries, and somebody will start dreaming for sure. Guaranteed.

As much as I love these, my beloved two countries of citizenship, the truth is that I suck at being both Argentine *and* Swiss.

Seriously. I mean it. Deeply. Almost to the point of shame.

Let me explain with an enumeration of utter failures:

- I do not dance tango.
- I have never ridden a horse. Ever.
- I do not play football (also known as soccer by my American readers.) I tried. Better not say more.

- I do not particularly enjoy going to the mountains – needless to say, I do not ski, either.
- I do not even know how to play Jass. I do play Truco, though. I used to be quite good at it even.
- I prepare a rather unremarkable maté.
- My travels through the geography of each country has been so far limited to a few big cities.
- My Argentine friends always tell me that I am too polite, punctual and organised.
- My Swiss friends tell me I am too disorganised and blunt.
- Oh, but I did my military service as a soldier of the legendary Swiss Army. A rather awkward club to belong to, if you ask me.

In any case I am a voracious meat and cheese eater. I am an epicurean deeply in love with the culinary gifts offered by both countries, but, needless to say, I am not a very good cook of either.

TL; DR: I am too Swiss to be Argentine, and too Argentine to be Swiss.

As the reader can imagine, at some point I came to the conclusion that none of these labels really matter. People are very keen to fit everything and everybody in little boxes, in order to understand and to manage. In my case, none of that crap ever works. I do not fit any box, and I do not want to fit in any.

And neither should anyone try to fit in anyone else's boxes, and neither should anyone try to fit other people in their own little boxes. Just let everyone be what they are.

Oh and, by the way, yes, my family name is Polish. Do not get me started on that one.