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A Unit of Luminous Flux: Mario Botta's Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel

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Abstract

This paper examines the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel (CDN), which opened in 2000, as the site of a “dialogue” between the ideas and practice of Switzerland’s best-known Italian-speaking architect and designer, Mario Botta, and the country’s best-known German-speaking playwright, Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990). The CDN becomes a double portrait of two Swiss artists, separated by parole but not *Sprache*. Both felt peripheral to Swiss society, yet each was a product of the cantonal principle of strong regionalism aerated by the Federation’s facilitation of cosmopolitanism aligned in an environmental ecology that literally and figuratively mixed their respective media: the concrete for the ephemeral (Dürrenmatt) and luminous fluidity for the concrete (Botta).

The central thesis is that the CDN inducts the visitor in a role of active participation and exchange in an atmosphere of transcendental logic and, ultimately, however ironically, optimism. A visitor to the CDN becomes part of a theatrical event in which two actors – one dead, one alive – communicate in physical terms about the metaphysical environment, the relationship between the scenographic and the tectonic, the architecture of the interior. Dürrenmatt, at once Aristotelian, reckless, immoderate, romantic, outraged, engages Botta, a Neo-Rationalist who barely manages to contain his shouts; a rationalist who honors intuition along side reason.

Introduction

The seed for this essay was planted several years ago when I visited the then recently opened Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel (CDN) in Switzerland. The center was built in (1992-2000) with funds provided by the federal Swiss Literary Society. Exhibits and conferences related to the work of world-renowned author and playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt (Figure 1) are housed in a building by Ticinese architect Mario Botta.ⁱ The building itself which exceeds its practical function by providing a double portrait of the two men. Botta had met the author several times and admired him deeply. Word of Dürrenmatt death in 1990, prompted Botta to sketch plans for a tribute even before contacting Charolette Kerr, Dürrenmatts second wife and director of the building project.

The essay focuses on the material and symbolic worlds created by Dürrenmatt and Botta to maintain and promote their particular world views, and examines the ways that their expressive mediums and autobiographical ideas are by turns harmonious and contradictory. Rather than taking a literary or architectural critical approach, with their emphases on quantities of formal, motivational, or chronological knowledge, my approach is impressionistic, interpretive and speculative according to the nature of the persons and the edifice, in the light of certain themes that help illuminate the material.

The first of these themes is the idea of performance and the heightened self-consciousness – both in a deeply philosophical sense, and in the common meaning of becoming aware of how one looks in the eyes of others. Performance is related to the stage, which is both a diffuse ‘natural’ condition of existence, and a purposeful contrivance. The human body which transmits and expresses this performance is a

central metaphor for both Dürrenmatt and Botta. Performance is also connected to the passive and active ways that both Botta and Dürrenmatt are on display at the CDN. One of Dürrenmatt themes in his essays, criticism, and stage plays is the awareness of watching and being watched. In one of his collections of essays *Versuche*, Dürrenmatt relates how he often turns his telescope on to the sightseers who are watching his house through their binoculars down on the promenade in Neuchâtel and follows this up with a disquisition on how we are all being watched – as we watch others – in a computer-ridden world.ⁱⁱ The question of performance blends with a second theme. The production of an exhibition is more akin to the production of a theater piece than any other of story-telling. Like theater, exhibitions are formed by a group of people, or in this case by a single person –Botta – whose highly individualized vision and style reveals Dürrenmatt through a tightly focused lens that shows the visitor Botta's particular point of view. Exhibition design, strategies and installation are quite apart from exhibition content and it is interesting to consider the ways that these two men – stylistically worlds apart – coalesce in a single theatrical experience. The architectural language of exhibition uses Bottas dialect characterized by rigorous, stoic, astringent control, and Dürrenmatt's which can only be described as extravagant. For both of them the stage was central as a *genus loci* of the unities of time, place and action. They create both for and with the stage. Finally, a third theme: interrelations between these two men who each felt himself to be alien to mainstream Swiss culture, if there can be called such a thing in this federation of cantons whose regional cultures reflect their geographic isolation from one another. While at odds with one another stylistically, they were both

deeply ethical in their motivation, and shared political and world views. Perhaps the most interesting of these interactions a purely speculative one. There is a predictable unity and almost solipsistic remoteness to the CDN which is starkly opposite to Dürrenmatt's messy vitality. A major theme in Dürrenmatt's work is the *Minotaurus and the Labyrinth* (Figure 2). In Dürrenmatt's mythology the Minotaur was conceptualized not as a fearsome, destructive creature but as an innocent unjustly trapped in an isolated, incomprehensible prison. While the Centre Dürrenmatt is not particularly labyrinthine, one can imagine the Minotaur (Dürrenmatt) having some ambivalence toward the efforts of any Daedalus (Botta) to capture him in a permanent stage.

Fig. 1: Self portrait by Friedrich Dürrenmatt (Source: Diogenes Verlag)

Fig. 2: Labyrinth I: Der entwürdigte Minotaurus by Friedrich Dürrenmatt
(Source: Diogenes)

The Midway

The word ‘midway’ refers to the middle course of an action or thought. It is also the area of a fair, a carnival, a circus, or an exposition where sideshows and other amusements are located. Dürrenmatt wrote: ‘... the event depicted (in a play) ... often starts out right *in the middle* ...’ⁱⁱⁱ and so it is with our visit to the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel. Our arrival in Neuchâtel is just as prescribed in the stage notes of *The Visit*, Dürrenmatt’s 1965 play about the economic basis of morality which established him as a major presence on the world literary scene.^{iv} The play opens with four people (Gülleners,) sitting on a bench outside the station, watching the express trains roaring past. Güllen, the town in which the story is set is a thinly veiled reference to the lakeside town of Neuchâtel Switzerland,

a small city near the French border. In the story trains never stop here, but on this day an exception has been made and a stop has been scheduled. The four Gülleners (güllen is local vernacular for dung)^v sit on the bench discussing the event that is soon to occur and the hopes they have for it.

Today we are here not to conspire in murder for profit as are the characters in the Dürrenmatt play. We are here instead to make our way to the author's home situated in a paradoxical valley on the mountain - high above Neuchâtel to see an exhibition of Dürrenmatts drawings and paintings in a purpose-built exhibition pavilion designed by Mario Botta incorporating the playwright's home. Our train pulls into Neuchâtel at 700 meters (2, 300 feet) on the 1,087 meters (3,566 feet) slope of Chaumont, a steep ridge in the Juras.^{vi} Windswept, privately minded villages, nursing a weather-beaten Gallic culture, cut off for centuries from both France and Switzerland, by rounded hilltops and deep parallel valleys. For a Rabelaisian like Dürrenmatts this locale marks not only a linguistic but also a gastronomic divide. This is the 'Röstigraben' – literally the ditch of the Swiss Rösti, a version of home-fried potatoes which is close to being their national home dish.^{vii}

The landscape of Chaumont, throws the architectural visitor into a poetic dilemma. A decision must be made: to ascend? or to descend? Like the tectonic plates that shaped the topography of the region, elevation and subduction coexist in Neuchâtel. This condition of inversion and exchange runs through every aspect of the town, and, as we shall see, runs as well through the relationship between Dürrenmatt and Botta. If we wish to dip our toes in the icy glacial waters of Lac Neuchâtel or visit the university or

any of the numerous museums or wine sellers in the city, a subterranean gondola deposits us far down the slope. We become underground aerialists.^{viii} If instead we journey directly up to the Centre Dürrenmatt, at Vallon de l'Ermitage the mountain valley half way further up the side of Chaumont we must make our way through the Old Town – remnants of twelfth-century Neuchâtel. Dürrenmatt described it as buried by a 'stone carpet of towers and walls.'^{ix} Ascending the steep and seemingly endless series of narrow stairways which run between shops and domiciles we are provided with glimpses into small verandas behind iron gates and glances through lace-covered or partially shuttered windows. The major outline of the development of the theatrical stage comes to mind: the temporality of a procession or pageant on the way to the permanence of a stage. The physical exertion required by the climb begins to make the ascent feel like a pilgrimage on a Sacre Monte. This is the way the impression of the Centre Dürrenmatt accrues: with the imprint of a thousand steps experienced over time and communally - no accident considering that for both the architect (Botta) and the playwright (Dürrenmatt) active participation as opposed to passive spectatorship was key.

The amount of extra oxygen required by muscle tissue during recovery from vigorous exercise leaves us searching for the reward of the effort. Our physical need is answered by the sight of an industrial-scaled ventilation pipe (Figure 3). A black slate wall fields the pile. These are first parts of a vertically-arranged and mostly subterranean Centre Dürrenmatt (Figure 4). The ventilation pipe can be seen as a lumen. In anatomy, the lumen is the tube that connects the mouth to the digestive tract through which raw material is incorporated and digested, where enzymes expose substrates which create the

generative dynamics of the relationship between opposites. In physics the term lumen refers to a unit of luminous flux. Both definitions signal to the visitor that like so many of Dürrenmatt characters, we will be ingested and descend, like a bollus of food, or a unit of light energy, physically and metaphorically, through a literal and metaphorical interior

Insert Fig. 3: Exterior View from the Vallon de l'Ermitage (Source: author)

Insert Fig. 4: Axonometric Projection (Source: Mario Botta Architetto)

Swallowing/Breathing

The Centre is made up of three parts: an orthogonal prism-like circulation tower and an arched exhibition hall, the top of which serves as a large balcony, and Dürrenmatt's first of two houses including a swimming pool. We enter the building on a bridge which connects Dürrenmatt's old house and the tower. This entry at the horizontal and vertical center of the 'stage' parallels our arrival mid-slope when we disembarked from the train mid way between the water and Dürrenmatt's 'lost crater' as he referred to his mountain valley (Figure 5).^x A small mouth of a lobby receives us. What becomes important is the process of entering, of moving from the outside to the inside, of moving down to the lower part where the precious drawings are kept. Botta's CDN will swallow us in much the same way that it incorporates, like a phagocyte, the house in which Dürrenmatt lived and worked for the last thirty years of his life. In 1952 he moved with his first wife Lotti Geissler (1922-1983) and his three children to the house which he describes as the 'ugliest house in the region; when he bought it'.^{xi} The location at the top of Vallon de l'Ermitage was remote which suited his temperament perfectly and it provided a spectacular view over Lac de Neuchâtel to the distant Alps.^{xii} Over the years Dürrenmatt cultivated a large garden over and over again by planting trees which became a part of the forest. The house sat like a block of cheese stuck in the craw of a cultural and geological epiglottis. Dürrenmatt was a Swiss-German in a French majority. He lived almost completely apart from the life of the town here in a house that sat, like the man, stuck in the craw of a cultural and geological epiglottis.

Once inside the Centre we find a cloakroom, a small kitchen and part of Dürrenmatts library. We walk several steps to our right passing from the house into the circulation tower of the new building. A receptionist sits at the top of the stairway. The stark light coming in from under the skylights at the top of the tower casts deep shadows on her features. Sensory metaphors sweep us to the stairs as we start to descend underground where so many of Dürrenmatt's characters go, both physically and metaphorically.^{xiii} The light in this well signals that we -unlike most of Dürrenmatt's characters - can return to the surface, enlightened by what we have experienced. We will not be trapped forever in ignorance or error like Dürrenmatt's Minotaur who stares at the reflective walls of his maze trying to fathom what is real which succumbing to illusion. Then we are led via the spacious stainless steel staircase Escher like in its movement, like the flooring and like an exterior fire escape to the next level down. The tower carries light - through the skylight - right down to the bottom level.^{xiv} We are going from the light into Dürrenmatt's creative darkness as it lives in the metabolic system. The interplay of light and darkness is a creative activity that takes place continually literally and figuratively in both Botta's and Dürrenmatt's work.^{xv} In Dürrenmatt's metaphorical language, lightness and dark give impulse for growth and development. It is an interrelationship that is never fixed, but always hanging. Darkness is first, all-enveloping, formless, with no center or circumference is suspension or breath, referenced by the ventilation tower we first encounter as we approach the Centre.

There is nothing on display in the stairwell except for Dürrenmatt's literary aphorisms displayed in white neon tubes on the white plaster wall (Figure 6). In

Dürrenmatt's early staged works he included many sensational effects, scene changes, and written 'titles' flashed before each scene. Botta's characteristic hand crafted approach to detail means that the white plaster becomes *stucco lucido* containing microscopic particles of light-reflecting material.^{xvi}

In keeping with the corporeal likeness of the Centre the stairway in the tower can also be seen as the alimentary canal. Eating was for Dürrenmatt a positive, life-affirming, hedonistic act. The author himself was an *gourmand* for whom cooking was a serious hobby. However, the processes of eating and digestion were for Dürrenmatt, a lifelong gourmet, compromised by his diabetes. Therefore he indulged much of his *Schlemmereitrieb* vicariously through his fictional characters. Bärlach in *The Judge and his Hangman*; Traps and the lawyers in *Traps (Die Panne)*; Romulus in *Romulus the Great*; Möbius, Newton and Einstein in *The Physicists* are among Dürrenmatt's famous life-affirming eaters. Of course some of these eaters were cannibals so their victims certainly wouldn't describe them that way. Digestion in Dürrenmatt's work stands for experience entering the mind as a basic nutriment for the creative process, and then converted by imagination in of something else entirely.^{xvii}

On the second level down entry we find a small cafe with an adjoining book shop, and an astonishing first glimpse of Dürrenmatt's painted works inside a small water closet original to the house and a terrace. The entire interior surface of the water closet was painted by Dürrenmatt. Painting the rooms in his various homes from floor to ceiling was something he had always done.^{xviii} A woman straddles the water tank, the walls are crowded characters staring at any occupant who can tolerate the intensity of this

crush of personas – alternately amusing and intimidating – in the confines of an already claustrophobically small room. The message seems to be discharged copiously or forcibly or not at all!

Insert Fig. 5: Site studies and notes (Source: author)

Insert Fig. 6: Interior view of the staircase (Source: author)

The half-round building is likewise provided with natural light by a crown of skylights. The roof of the ‘belly’ is simultaneously a terrace that grants one a sensational

view out across the lake into the distance.^{xix} The terrace is the element that links the landscape to the tower and the old house and follows one of Botta's principles which renders exterior terraces in such a way as to fuse with interior volumes. Anatomically, one can see the terrace railing like a belt cinched-in too tightly around the belly of a corpulent man. Botta considers the terrace an empty space with a cosmic view of the sky and the earth (Figures 7 and 8). He writes: 'It is the public space.' 'It's like a rather metaphysical stage setting, because it's empty. And the visitor becomes the protagonist.'^{xx} The terrace was already here although it was smaller and more modest, outside the old house. Dürrenmatt always thought this balcony overlooking the lake was very beautiful.^{xxi} Anatomically, one can see the terrace railing like a belt cinched-in too tightly around the belly of a corpulent man. Dürrenmatt was a physically imposing man at almost 2 meters (6'4") and over 100 kilograms (225 pounds) he smoked cigars despite heart disease to which he succumbed just short of his seventieth birthday.

Coming back in from the terrace we continue our descent to an interior loggia, part of the new building. Here we find photos linked to Dürrenmatt's biography, a mural-sized collage that Dürrenmatt made for the theatre and maquettes of stage sets, also a darkened screening room in which an interview with Dürrenmatt conducted by Charlotte Kerr, his second wife, plays on a repeating loop. The only furniture in this section of the are Botta's own iconic *Seconda* chairs (1982) which are as challenging conceptually as they are uncomfortable.^{xxii}

Insert Fig. 7: View towards the Alps from the terrace (Source: author)

Insert Fig. 8: Floor Plan +0.00 (Source: Mario Botta Architetto)

Finally we descend the last flight of stairs and arrive in the large empty volume of the ‘belly,’ as Botta refers to the main exhibition space (Figure 9). It marks the boundary of the building around 35 meters (115 feet) across and 7 meters (23 feet) high, partially embedded in the earth. Here double-height galleries are situated the terrace illuminated somatically by apertures on the perimeter of the terrace above. The light through these

pores create an ever-changing pattern of streaks and diffuse areas of light and dark that move across the curving wall and the floor as the clouds outside reveal and obscure the sun (Figure 10). The light has a specific source, radiating from the center to circumference, pushing aside darkness. The peculiar feature of Dürrenmatt's style of drama resides in the vital pleasure he displays in things comical and grotesque set against the dark background of the world.

Dürrenmatt who died on December 14, 1990, drew and painted throughout his life. His output was prolific. Dürrenmatt always considered his drawing and painting activities to be 'associative', an integral part of his work. Dürrenmatt's first major intellectual decision was whether to take up painting or writing: 'Es was die Lösung irgendwie meines Dilemmas zwischen Malen und Schreiben.'^{xxiii} About his oil painting and gouaches Dürrenmatt said: 'I'm not a painter. Technically, I paint like a child. But I don't think like a child. I paint for the same reason that I write, because I think.'^{xxiv}

Here Botta expanded strategies he had used in a small exhibition of Dürrenmatt's work in 1993-4 at the Kunsthaus in Zürich. The CDN exhibition is made up of the different sections. Stage left are Dürrenmatt's gouaches of political themes. These works make a dashed line against the curved retaining wall. Dürrenmatt's lithographs and engravings. Then we find his paintings and drawings mounted on the curved sloping black walls. Dürrenmatt's great themes appear here: the Labyrinth and the Minotaur.^{xxv} Stage right are paintings of the great themes of religious thought are set on small iron pedestals a central black frame of enormous proportions, within which one very small

painting, *The Bankers*, is installed. About this painting, Botta writes: ‘in my opinion (*The Bankers*) summarizes the political program of all Dürrenmatt’s paintings.’^{xxvi}

Botta calls the enormous black frame is called a ‘screen’ because of its duty as visual and physical disguise for an emergency exit door at the center of the curved exhibition wall. This dam-like retaining wall of the belly is an over-scaled architectural element covered with glossy-black plaster. The ‘screen’ resembles the interior of an enormous telescoping bellows on a large-format view camera and as such seems an appropriate metaphor for the Botta’s tightly-focused lens that shows the visitor a particular point of view.^{xxvii} The ‘screen’ also looks like the inside of a ziggurat, and further still, like a simplified maze or labyrinth. This ‘screen’ holds in the energy of the room – an introverted space inside (which) needs no interference from the outside. The screened door might offer a pore or escape valve for the visual intensity of the artwork.

Insert Fig. 9: Floor Plan -6.70 (Source: Mario Botta Architetto)

Insert Fig. 10: Underground exhibition hall illuminated by skylights on the terrace
(Source: author)

It is a matter of record that Dürrenmatts pictorial vision was influenced by the Swiss Jean Varlin (né Guggenheim) about whom Dürrenmatt wrote several essays. The playwright especially admired Varlin's sturdy independence, both in art and in politics. But Dürrenmatt's work also paralleled something of the intensity and scorching black humor and emotion found in the paintings and graphic works of George Grosz (1893 - 1956). Grosz was one of the leading figures in the movement called *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new realism) or 'New Objectivity,'^{xxviii} Grosz's vehement form of realism distorted appearances to emphasize the ugly, as ugliness was the reality he wished to expose. This art was raw, provocative, and harshly satirical.

Dürrenmatt's theatrical and mythological leitmotifs are staged in this building which, in plan, looks like nothing so much as an ancient Greek stage: semicircular, built on the sides of hills, high tiers of seats, open to the air. Dürrenmatt's original house is one of the flanking ramps with the skene, proscenium and orchestra found in Botta's entry

core of the new building. In elevation, the relationship of the parts is inverted: the orchestra still commands as the centre with ‘the house’ delineated by the elevation lines of the downward slope of Chaumont.

The exit door and its dissimulation is enigmatic because of the striking treatment of the door on the building’s exterior, a view which is withheld from the visitor. If we were allowed to exit we would see the dash- marked vector of human metabolism with the door as the final exit. Through this door we would be able to appreciate what Botta has celebrated: grassy sloping landscape into which the belly is implanted and from which it protrudes. We would also be able to enjoy the area where Dürrenmatt cultivated his ‘labyrinthine’ gardens.

Outside stairs flank and accentuate the expanse of the curve resembling routes to the great ziggurats of ancient Mesopotamia one of which was in Babylon, another great theme of Dürrenmatt. Botta’s usual schema is one in which buildings are never simply contoured into a site, but instead declare themselves as clear primary forms set against the topography and the sky. The only exceptions to this are cases where he adds to an existing building by digging below ground. The CDN is this. The view of it is largely hidden. Our experience is, therefore physical, not visual. It is underground architecture. Botta thought that building underground was especially appropriate here, because: ‘There are no facades. It is a hypogeal space. He [Dürrenmatt] is a writer that explores the human soul. This is why I felt that the idea of burying into the ground was right.’^{xxix}

The yellow of the Neuchâtel sandstone which composed the hull of Dürrenmatts house matches his irascibility, like yellow bile in medieval physiology. Botta’s CDN

grows out and around this house which Botta purified from a bilious yellow to a white cubic volume. Botta's additions are clad in gray ten-centimeter- thick (4 inch) slate –an anthracite or a non-volatile carbon that burns a clean light, with dichromatic cladding, a primary element of Botta's decorative vocabulary the acknowledged source of which is the Romanesque Pisa Cathedral (begun c. 1063 to 1350). An earlier and perhaps more significant predecessor is in the Moorish tradition exemplified by the Great Mosque of Cordoba (785 – c. 1000) in which a multitude of round arches made of alternating black and white stones marks out an arresting graphic diagram of movement. Chromatic striation is also typical of nineteenth century Ticinese masonry.

Most of Botta's buildings can be said to follow a principle of standing forth from the surrounding landscape just as Dürrenmatt wants his work to stand out against the (darkness) of life. Dürrenmatt shows man's actions somehow disengaged from the gravity of earth in a light in which the lines are more distinct and less blurred, and in which the forms rise in clean contrast from the background.^{xxx} Interesting then is the fact that in CDN Botta reverses his usual inclination toward a strong building profile. Botta and Dürrenmatt each mine for the unchanging condition of man combining the past, present and future in an active continuum and not presenting artifacts without temporal depth or associative perspective. For Dürrenmatt, the stage was 'not a battle field for theories, philosophies, and manifesto, but rather an instrument whose possibilities I seek to know by playing with it. 'My plays are not for what people have to say: what is said is there because my plays deal with people, and thinking and believing and philosophizing are all, to some extent at least, a part of human behavior.'^{xxxi} There exists in the oeuvres

of both Botta and Dürrenmatt something akin to conservation of matter. For both, themes are recycled and recombined; metaphors reappear often enough to be considered leitmotifs.^{xxxii} Botta move to abandon the stone of his early building to try out “common” materials like his use of lightweight concrete blocks is paralleled in Dürrenmatt’s the idea of necessary expulsion and the idea of waste material as necessary part of the metabolic process and a necessary component of new growth.^{xxxiii} The architect’s intention seems to have been to show that new beauty can be created from the waste materials of industrial society.^{xxxiv}

Conclusion

The enduring strength of both theater and architecture are essential elements of the experience of CDN – its physical presence and the power of the relationship between living spectator and living performer, set within the boundaries of a specific physical framework. For Botta, the strength of architecture also lies in its ability to use finite elements to talk about other things, such as ‘architecture is rather like painting.’^{xxxv} For Dürrenmatt ‘the task of art, insofar as art can have a task at all, and hence also the task of drama today is to create something concrete, something that has form.’^{xxxvi}

Botta claims that the foundation of good architecture is ethical even before it is aesthetic. Persistent in his effort to create beauty in architecture out of elementary relationships without cynicism Botta has always sought a sensual and earthbound architecture: an architecture compounded of enclosures, an architecture laid into the earth and vegetation, an architecture that has feeling for rooted and mythic beginnings. Similar

feelings and concerns are evident in Dürrenmatts dig to the center of his soul. Both exploit the power of substrates to dissolve and expose, to communicate directly, to act on the barrier between speculation and participation. Dürrenmatt would make the concrete out of ephemera while Botta would exchange the solidity of building materials for luminous fluidity. Dürrenmatt wrote: 'The real pessimism is the inability or unwillingness to face things as they are.'^{xxxvii} Botta as well challenges pessimism in contemporary critique of architecture 'as widespread as it is unjustified - which denies the possibility of constructing quality buildings in the 'bad' age of ours.'^{xxxviii} A visitor to the CDN becomes part of a theatrical event in which two actors - one dead, one alive - communicated in physical terms about the metaphysical environment, the relationship between the scenographic and the tectonic, the architecture of the interior.

ⁱ A parson's son and an atheist, Dürrenmatt wrote with a passion for justice and attacked many of the sacred cows of modern society, but never won the Nobel Prize some felt he deserved. Dürrenmatt was less the regional author that he was once considered to be, certainly in comparison with his compatriot Max Frisch, who left Switzerland to live abroad.

ⁱⁱ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Versuche*, (Zürich: Diogenes-Verlag, 1988), p. 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 'Problems of the Theatre,' *Tulane Drama Review* 3, no. 1 (October 1958), p. 19. This version of 'Problems of the Theatre' was prepared for publication (Verlag der Arche, Zürich, 1955) and translated by Gerhard Nellhaus from the manuscript of a lecture delivered by Friedrich Dürrenmatt in the fall of 1954 and the spring of 1955 in different cities of Switzerland and West Germany.

^{iv} In German *Der Besuch der alten Dame* regarded by many to be his finest play and one of the most frequently performed plays and a huge success on Broadway in addition to Germany. He won two awards for it the Grillparzer-Prize, Austria Academy the Science, 1968 and Grosser Schiller-Prize, Swiss Foundation, 1969. The play really has three major

characters: the old lady, Claire Zachanassian; her former lover and object of her ruthless justice, Alfred Ill; and the people of the town of Gullen, who make up a kind of composite representation of society itself.

^v The name Gullen is from Gülle a Swiss dialect word meaning for ‘fermented cattle urine’ or ‘liquid manure.’

^{vi} The town has actually two names: Neuchâtel and Neuenburg and two official languages: French and German.

^{vii} Röstigraben is the Swiss German expression for the cultural and linguistic divides between the German and French part of Switzerland. This term was born from political tensions and the rise of nationalisms that Switzerland lived through in the context of the World War I. Basically, potatoes are grated and then grated again before being passed to the frying pan; you can have the Rösti Bernois (potatoes alone); Rösti with bacon and Jurassic Rösti with bacon and cheese.

^{viii} *Fun’ambule* (tightrope walker) is the world first endless rope haulage system to link the lower part of the town, near the University, to the train station on the upper part made possible by Swiss Expo.02.

^{ix} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, ‘Vallon de l’Ermitage’ in *Versuche*, (Zürich: Diogenes, 1988), pp. 9-56. First published in the *La Revue Neuchâteloise* (Winter 1980/81).

^x Dürrenmatt’s idea of the lost crater can be referenced in *Der Tunnel* written in 1952. One of the best-known and most anthologized of the early prose works. About twenty minutes out from Bern on the rail line to Zürich, which Dürrenmatt took almost every weekend during this year at the University of Zürich, lies a short tunnel. This one time, however, inexplicably, the tunnel does not end. Instead the train full of passengers is sent careening toward the center of the earth.

^{xi} Peter Erismann. *Mario Botta: Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel*, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2000), pp. 21-22. The house was a yellow cube with a flat roof and known to be the first one in Neuchâtel.

^{xii} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, ‘Vallon de l’Ermitage’ in *Versuche*, (Zürich: Diogenes, 1988), p. 16. Kenneth Whitton notes in his radio play *Episode on an Autumn Evening* (*Abendstunde im Spätherbst*, 1959) that Korbes’s house is an exact replica for Dürrenmatt’s house in Neuchâtel. Even the most photographed and climbed mountain of the Alps the Matterhorn is also visible from aerial distance of 130 kilometers (80 miles).

^{xiii} Dürrenmatt’s labyrinthine subterranean prisons occur in the early narrative *The City*; in the tunnel in the existentialist narrative of the same name; in the black caves in which the *Winter War in Tibet* is being fought; in the dungeon in which the monster

Polyphemus hunts the female journalist F. in the narrative *The Assignment*; in the sub-basement in which "Doc" works for the Mob in *The Collaborator*; and in the dungeon in which Abu Chanifa and Anan ben David languish for years before their release and reconciliation.

^{xiv} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

^{xv} Adam Hubertus, 'Museum in Hangelage: Mario Botta: Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel,' 1992-2000,' *Archithese* 31, no. 1 (January-February 2001), pp. 16-19.

^{xvi} Stucco lucido is plaster mixed with grains of light-reflective material.

^{xvii} As a poor student in Zürich, Dürrenmatt would starve all week, then ride the train home to Bern so that he could eat well at least on the weekend. As a struggling newlywed playwright, theater critic and cabaret sketch writer before his first big break with the detective novel *The Judge and his Hangman*, Dürrenmatt was literally a starving artist. When he finally could afford to eat well, it remained a lifelong passion mirrored again and again in his literature.

^{xviii} Peter Wyrsch, 'Die Dürrenmatt-Story, *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung*, (18 and 23 March and 1, 7, 15 and 22 April 1963; all on 23-5 except 15 and 22 April on 37-9). *Die Stadt* (The City, 1952) is told in the first person who is described as a hungry young painter absurd life and his room in the eastern suburb whose walls he had decorated from top to bottom. As his first wife Lotti Dürrenmatt told the Swiss public in 1963 interview, he pictured a labyrinthine town full of strange, mysterious and unnamed people.

^{xix} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 86. In 2002 one could overlooking the portion of the Swiss Expo located on Lake Neuchâtel and appreciate the UFO-like objects on the platform of the Neuchâtel arteplage (a neologism combining the French words for "art" and "beach" - shore) directly onto the lake so that they can be dismantled later without leaving trace and speculate on Dürrenmatt's reception of the spectacle.

^{xx} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

^{xxi} *Ibid.*, p. 88. Reclusive Dürrenmatt was a 'self-made' astronomer and physicist, who spent a great many of his sleepless nights star-watching on the patio of his house.

^{xxii} Pierluigi Nicolini, *Mario Botta: Buildings and Projects 1961-1982*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), p. 134. 'Designing a chair, like designing a house, means pursuing a new image capable of representing the needs of the day, capable of responding to contemporary sensitivity, capable of suggesting new hope. Even a chair becomes an opportunity for confrontation with our knowledge and, as always, in every project, it

becomes a moment of awareness and verification of our problems, our doubts and our hopes.'

^{xxiii} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Rollenspiele* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1986), p. 86; see also Kenneth Whitton, *The Theatre of Friedrich Dürrenmatt: A Study in the Possibility of Freedom*, (London: O. Wolff, 1980), p. 210. For a time in the early 1940s he tried to establish a career for himself in the graphic arts, but in the meantime he had begun writing and gradually reached the decision to make his living as a writer.

^{xxiv} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 'Persönliche Anmerkung,' *Dürrenmatt Bilder und Zeichnungen*, (Zürich: Diogenes-Verlag, 1978).

^{xxv} There are stories in *Stoffe I-III* and in *Turmbau* about Dürrenmatt's childhood surrounded by the tall trees in the Emmenthaler woods. In the tales, and in his ballad *Minotaurus* and all the narratives that contain labyrinths, the author explains the origins of his fascination with the Minotaur theme and tells how he found its old town center of arcades and plazas in Berne, where he lived for years before moving to Neuchâtel, to be a labyrinth.

^{xxvi} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

^{xxvii} The terminology camera lucida (Latin, 'light chamber') is an optical device used as an aid in drawing or copying and here it be used as aid of the architectural grammar.

^{xxviii} Dürrenmatt's last appreciate essay of Varlin can be found in *Versuche*, pp. 121-8; see also Whitton, *The Theatre of Friedrich Dürrenmatt*, pp. 213-14. The term *Neue Sachlichkeit* was coined in 1923 by Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, former director of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim.

^{xxix} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

^{xxx} Adolf D. Klarmann, 'Friedrich Dürrenmatt and the Tragic Sense of Comedy', *Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism*, Eds. Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 99-133. First published in the *Tulane Drama Review* (IV, 8).

^{xxxi} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 'Problems of the Theatre,' p. 19.

^{xxxii} Roger Crockett, *Understanding Friedrich Dürrenmatt*. (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 18.

^{xxxiii} The German word for BKS is a masonry company that produces Sichtmauersteine which is lightweight concrete block made out of sand, and fine gravel with significant hydrogeological pores. It is produced in colour too.

^{xxxiv} Mario Botta, *The Ethics of Building*, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1997), p. 17.

^{xxxv} Peter Erismann, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

^{xxxvi} Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 'Problems of the Theatre,' p. 19.

^{xxxvii} Kurt Fickert, *To Heaven and Back: The New Morality in the Plays of Friedrich Dürrenmatt* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), p. 43.

^{xxxviii} Mario Botta, *The Ethics of Building*, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1997), p. 13.

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