The Fragile Meaning of Building Types: Social Reality in Literature and Architecture

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Can architecture represent national character? I intend to ask this question of Swiss architecture. How would it be answered? Maybe one has to ask it of literature, since books use the same words we use in our everyday lives. There is a chance one might find parallels between these two forms of cultural expression. Here is Swiss writer Franz Böni's transcription of thoughts occurring to a man hiking through mountains in his novel *Schlatt*: Already during the descent, it seemed to him as if the weather was colder on the eastern side, as if a different wind was blowing….Zuber pushed open the door that had been left ajar, entered and noticed with some astonishment a small iron stove, pans, a table, and two chairs…. On the floor, Zuber discovered … a pile of bricks, as well as, bent silverware and two tin plates…. Now he felt good, and in a position to solve the puzzle of why this well-preserved house was uninhabited and, as it seemed to him, had been left as if in flight…. (H)e realized at once that his condition was not completely without danger.… and when presently a noise of a falling bottle … sounded in the upper room, he quickly left this house.… he noticed instantly that the weather had totally changed during these few minutes.[1]

Zuber, the protagonist, habitually spends his days climbing the hills. One can assume that this environment is familiar to him. However, the above passage points out how quickly a familiar place can feel strange. Granted, seemingly abandoned buildings can lead to such uncanny experiences. Nevertheless, Böni'srapid turn to gloom surprises since it goes against the standard image of Switzerland, which is of material happiness resulting from this country's continued economic boom and high standard of living. As will become clear later on, Böni's reflections on this eeriness in Swiss life are not an isolated case in Swiss literature and culture. It is possible to find Swiss buildings that can generate such feelings. In fact, it is feasible that the house Zuber encounters could look like a typical building by Swiss architect Mario Botta. For example, Botta's*Casa Rotonda* (Stabio, 1985) (Fig. 1) is an unexpected presence in an anonymous and sparsely developed environment. The impenetrable cylindrical shape with large cuts in its surface symbolizes a contrast between fortification and open access, seemingly as ambivalent between familiarity and strangeness as the mountain hut in the above quote. Remarkably, both conjure up similar impressions. Is this really how Swiss people feel on their native soil?

[1] "Bereitswährend des Hinuntersteigensschienihm, alsherrsche an der Ostseiteeinkälteres Wetter und alsblaseeinanderer Wind. …Zuberstiess die angelehnte Holztür auf, trat in das Innereund entdecktemiteiniger Verwunderungeinen kleinen Eisen kochherd, Pfannen, einen Tisch und zwei Stühle. …Am Bodenentdeckte Zuber…einen Haufen Mauersteineso wieverbogenes Besteck und zwei Blechteller. …Nun fühlteersichwie derwohl und konnte in aller Ruhe das Rätsel, weshalb dieses guterhaltene Hausunbewohnt und, wieesihmsogarschien, fluchtartigverlasssenworden war, zulösenversuchen. … wurdeihmmiteinemmalbewusst, dass seine Lagekeineganzunge fährliche war. … und als nun in diesemAugenblickeinGeräusch von einerumfallenden Flasche … imoberen Raumerklang, verliessereiligst das Haus. …merkteergleich, dass das Wetter in diesenwenigen Minutenvoll kommengewec hselthatte."(Franz Böni, *Schlatt* [Zürich & Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979]:236-238). (My translation)

Fig 1: Casa Rotonda

Hardly anyone would contest that literary works are a good medium to depict such psychological insights. But what about architecture? Are buildings capable of telling us something about the worries and aspirations of the people who see and use them? Can the meaning distilled from a literary description be compared to the visual impression architectural forms and spaces generate? I shall attempt to provide an answer through a comparison between the socio-psychological contents of literature and architecture and the proposal that art and life become connected when they meet *in medias res* through memory and experience.[2]

What is Swiss society like? Switzerland's political and economic structure is characterized by stable institutions. Equally firm are political attitudes, because they were formed in reaction to fascism and the Second World War. During these times, the Swiss had to rely on their own resources to resist outside menaces. However, because World War II did not ravage the country as severely as it did Germany and Austria, the traditional life patterns were not disturbed.[3] Peter Demetz calls "Helvetian democracy … the product of long experience in local self-administration. (It has) strongly masculine, puritan, and practical strains; we still feel that it was originally practiced by peasants, shepherds, and hardworking artisans who wanted to protect their own way of life."[4]Nevertheless, since the Second World War the country has experienced economic and social revolutions. The economic boom after the War had created a social stratification based on disparities in wealth and income. The economic elite dominated political office, occupied the high ranks in the militia army, and took advantage of higher education. However, even though the country is affluent, it continues to second-guess itself. Switzerland presents a classical dialectic struggle between change imposed by socio/economic forces and an urge for political continuity.

In time, general interest in politics declined. During the 1960s, the conservative political ethos was replaced by a liberal one, punctuated by the granting of suffrage to female voters in 1971. The young--people in their twenties and thirties--alienated themselves from an unexciting consumer society. Violent clashes between the young and the authorities occurred periodically in the 1980s. Prompted by the revitalization of the economy after the oil crisis in the 1970s, this unrest was generally greeted by harsh responses from government and police. Swiss society is well ordered and not inclined to tolerate distrust of hard work and discipline.[5]This account fits southern Switzerland—the Ticino regions—like a glove. During the period in question, this part of Switzerland—where most of Mario Botta'searly buildings are located—changed from a primarily agricultural economy to an industrial and service one that emphasized tourism. This change occurred above all due to the integration of this region into the European highway system at the beginning of the 1960s.

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[2] S. Paige Baty has suggested that the language of memory is an excellent means to "transgress the divisions" between history, theory, and ideology (S. Paige Baty, *American Monroe* [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995]:40).
[3] Marianne Burkhard, "Gauging Existential Space: The Emergence of Women Writers in Switzerland," *World Literature Today* 55 (autumn 1981):608.
[4] Peter Demetz, "Switzerland," in *Postwar German Culture* (New York: Dutton, 1974):298.
[5] Information from the following sources was used to compile this description: Clive H. Church, "The Political and Economic Development of Switzerland 1945-1991," and Demetz, "Switzerland," in *Rejection and Emancipation,* Michael Butler & Malcolm Pender, eds. (New York/Oxford: Oswald Wolff Books, 1991):7-23 & 297-308. Although the literature quoted here is by now dated, Swiss culture has not changed dramatically since then, as the essays collected in a recent book confirm: Peter von Matt, *Das Kalb vor der Gotthardpost: ZurLiteratur und Politik der Schweiz* (München: Carl HanserVerlag, 2012).

Most of the Ticino architects built for the wealthy bourgeoisie that profited from this economic change.[6] Since the novels that will be examined here deal primarily with this social class, it seems justified to compare them to these architects' work. How do Swiss novelists deal with this socio-economic situation? Writers of the 1970s tended to view the individual as someone unable to live in the place where he/she finds him/herself. People are perceived as fragile. Writers describe the "struggle to retrieve individuality from the debris of mass existence."[7] A sub-theme within this topic is the repression of everything that is disturbing. The Swiss are portrayed as a "smug, bourgeois society where eccentricity … is swiftly marginalised."[8]Generally, the smooth functioning of, and material standard of living in, Switzerland are at odds with the thoughts and impressions narrated by writers, especially in the texts of a generation of young critical novelists who established themselves during the 1960s. They saw it as their duty to present a different world to their countrymen, namely one that gave form to the "glimpses of freedom" that are accessible through imagination.[9]In this endeavor, a number of topics recur. Dominant among these is the inability of the Swiss to change their identity. Many novels treat this subject by emphasizing the notion of "departure."[10] Novelists scold the Swiss middle class in particular for the unauthentic images they hold of themselves.[11] In their texts, the security offered by the country becomes a prison. The economic structure and the accumulation of wealth are seen as threats to democracy.[12] Novels record the relentless constrictions of life's routines and blame them for deadening people's imagination. In addition, writers also express "deep antagonism toward social structures that impose a rigid conformity on the individual." In many novels published during the 1960s and 70s, Swiss society was increasingly portrayed as a repressive capitalist society intolerant of modes of life other than its own. The Swiss work ethic was criticized for not bringing happiness to the individual and not being conducive to creating a sense of community. People were portrayed as cultivating mutual isolation as a way of protecting themselves against intrusion.[13]

Franz Böni turns these circumstances into plots, in which the "physical drudgery of work, exploitation of atavistic fears," and an immutable, hierarchical social order that disregards human needs react with one another. His protagonists usually do not feel themselves even capable of agitating for social change. He deals with the degrading mechanical processes inflicted on laborers and shows how this results in mental and emotional isolation. Modern technology is blamed for destroying the traces of one's past. Böni describes personal dislocation as the central experience of the modern proletariat of unskilled labor. In his novels, social institutions and processes conflict with the natural rhythms of life. He usually describes situations where there is no human solidarity, but only human failure and waste.[14] In *Schlatt*, he constructed a bleak model of Switzerland. *Schlatt* depicts the subjection of its protagonist to menial mechanical processes. This begins in childhood, when he performs his duty as an acolyte in the "Church Village" and has to endure the local priest's antagonism. The protagonist then works for years as a loader of railroad cars in the "Big City." There, the physical exertion and monotony of the work, together with an unyielding schedule and innumerable work and safety rules to follow, cause him to lose his memory and contract a lung ailment. He then returns home to the Church Village, only to discover that he can no longer reintegrate into his former community. While he needs warmth and understanding, he finds the members of the community as cold and forbidding as its natural and architectural surroundings. The protagonist himself has difficulty accepting the individual quirks of other people. However, he is incapable of finding an outlet for his anger. He takes long hikes in this alpine environment that is described as wild, untamed, dangerous to walk in, and without any signs of civilization, such as roads.

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[6] Interestingly, Mario Botta's first commissions were either for clients to whom he was recommended by his mentor TitaCarloni, or they were his relatives. In addition, he participated in competitions, either alone or with older colleagues such as Luigi Snozzi, Carloni, and Aurelio Galfetti (*Botta: Complete Works, 1960-1985*, Part 2, passim).

[7] Wilfried van der Will, "E.Y. Meyer: The Construction of History through Literature," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 154.

[8] Michael Butler, "Kurt Marti: 'Chaos in die Ordnungbringen'," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 124.

[9] H. Morgan Waidson, "Adolf Muschg: Glimpses of Freedom," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 94.

[10] Michael Butler, "Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 43-44. The early Max Frisch began his writing career with works that tackled the age-old question of how to realize oneself in one's native society (Peter Demetz, *After the Fires* [San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986]: 296).

[11] van der Will, "E.Y. Meyer," 141.

[12] Ian Hilton, "Otto F. Walter: Literature and the Strategies of Revolt," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 72.

[13] Ronald Speirs, "Peter Bichsel: 'In Geschichten leben'," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 76-77.

[14] Malcolm Pender, "The Fourth Generation after Frisch and Dürrenmatt," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 229.

The most harrowing feature is that the landscape is described by using geographic place names, not topographical terms. In the end, the protagonist develops a multitude of ailments.[15]

This pessimistic outlook on the Swiss is also reflected in Ticino School architecture. The Ticino School--a strong part of the European rationalist movement--dominated architectural development in Switzerland during the 1970s and early 80s. This movement generated its designs from both architectural and contextual requirements. Architecturally, the buildings exhibit their materials and construction openly. Typical examples of Ticino School architecture are characterized by simple, pure forms with a focus on mass and contour lines, and ornamentation derived from structure and construction technology. Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart's *Casa Tonini* (Toricella, 1974) (Fig. 2) rises over a perfect square and is topped by a pyramidal roof. Palladian influences are evident in the cubical volume and the focus on the central bay that extends into a lantern on top. These references are quoted in an abstract manner and sometimes placed out of context. For instance, the typical Palladian frontispiece arch is put behind the house to frame a desired view. All these elements are presented in a modernized, hard-edge manner that results from reinforced concrete construction. Contextually, such designs attempt to relate the old to the new. The "old" comes from architectural typology and the vernacular traditions. The "new" comes from building technology. In addition, these architects intend to express a mythical topography of the Ticino region; something Botta calls "the natural calling of the site."[16] The result is a contrast between rationalist formal order and cultural references to the vernacular.[17]

Fig. 2: Casa Tonini, entrance façade

When architects reduce their designs in this manner to form and materials alone, the human dimension, which could offer clues to society's problems, is excluded in these buildings. To incorporate this dimension, architecture needs to adopt a collective cultural cause. Buildings should represent how a society realizes itself. This means that their design should be rooted in, and cultivated by, the people they serve.[18] How do the buildings of the Ticino School address individuality? The topic of identity and its potential for change against an overpowering world lends itself readily to architectural application. The main credo of the Ticino School claims that architecture must first refer to itself. For the Ticino architects, new things can only be created by manipulating traditional orders. Consequently, their designs derive from a typology of form and use. The meaning of these types is determined through history. Such concepts seem to preclude any consideration for the individual. Reichlin/Reinhart's *Casa Tonini* demonstrates this design theory. It's perfect nine-square plan represents the ideal Palladian scheme as distilled by Rudolf Wittkower.[19] The cubical volume and emphasis on the central bay also stem from Palladio. This bay is topped by a pyramidal roof and becomes a public square inside the building. This design expresses the belief that architecture is a discipline that behaves according to rules, especially those founded on numbers and geometry. Through such connections, this building incorporates a measure of history and philosophy into architecture, while social and psychological concerns are missing from this catalog.

[15] Böni, Schlatt. Cf. the quote at the beginning of this article.
[16] *Mario Botta: The Complete Works, 1960-1985* (Zurich, Munich, London: Artemis, 1993):118.
[17] Kenneth Frampton, "The will to build," in *Mario Botta: Architecture and Projects in the '70s* (Milano: Gruppo Electa, 1979):12.
[18] Frampton, "Will to build," 7.
[19] Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971):71-73.

Speculation has it that this impersonal solution was chosen because the Casa Tonini was built for a mathematician. Hence, the post-modern house of a number cruncher becomes a celebration of the essence of the Palladian villa.

Even scarier is that this building feels surprising similar to the ones Zuber encounters on his hikes. While the novel was meant to be critical, the architects simply do not seem to care about how the individual feels. In Mario Botta's work, a similar attitude can be found. His buildings distinguish themselves by their emphasis on geometrical form and solid exterior walls. The cylindrical shape and convex surfaces of the *Casa Rotonda* (Fig. 1) are a case in point. There are no clearly defined façades or contextual references. Typologically, this house is without precedents. One could argue that its roots lie in medieval castles, but this would place its origin in the realm of fortification. The *Casa Rotonda* questions cultural assumptions concerning the nature of dwelling. Anything conventional or traditional is eliminated. Moreover, everything is subordinated to form. The interior is laid out symmetrically around the central slot of the stairwell and skylight. Rooms are irregular, leftover spaces resulting from the insertion of a rectangular grid into the house's cylinder (Fig 3: Ground floor on top, 3rd floor at bottom). The façade elevation does not reflect the disposition of interior spaces. Thus, the design imposes a strict order on its inhabitants. Instead of dealing with the comforts of dwelling, the Casa Rotonda addresses architectural structure, daily sun patterns, and views to the surrounding landscape. These are impersonal principles. Through its uncommon form it also expresses intolerance toward the existing buildings around it.

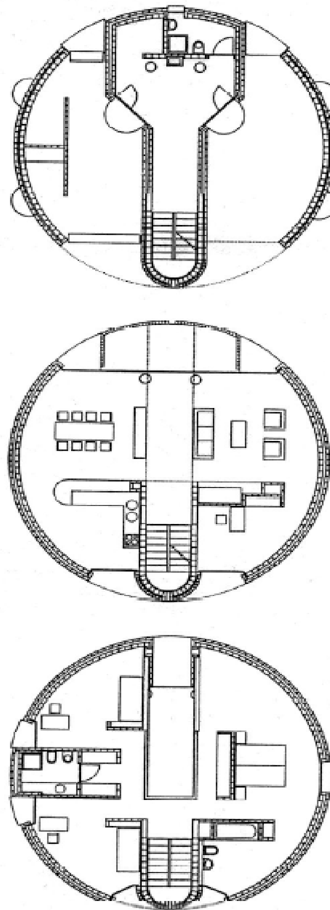

Fig. 3: Casa Rotonda, Floor Plans

What solutions to relieve the aforementioned oppressive social and economic order are offered by the writers? Generally, there is almost no way out. Christoph Geiser even mentions the family as a latent cause of death. The first-person narrator of his prose works is generally at odds with Swiss orthodoxies.[20]

[20] Malcolm Pender, "Christoph Geiser: The 'literarische Ich' as Vantage-point," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 156, 158, 159.

Geiser uses novels to show social attitudes at work in an individual life.[21] His *The Secret Fever* (Das geheime Fieber) deals with irreconcilable forces at work within the individual consciousness, forces created by the existential dilemma of being homosexual in a bourgeois society denying its subjects individual liberation. Within the novel, the life of the Baroque painter Caravaggio and his homosexuality and inclination to violence serve as a foil to the unsatisfied desires of the narrator. Caravaggio's paintings of young boys are exclusively seen as depicting objects of lust. The Caravaggio collection of the Vatican is described as a gallery of potential sex conquests. The protagonist sees the youths in the paintings first as Caravaggio and later as himself. The fantasies evoked by Caravaggio's paintings and the impossibility of ever realizing them in the narrator's bourgeois society are used to express the emotional turbulence that characterizes the narrator's life. The rich and satisfying life that is suggested by Caravaggio's art does not correspond to the unstructured reality of contemporary life. Through the imaginary situations of the paintings, the narrator sees only the limitations and contradictions of his own situation. Caravaggio's downfall comes when he starts painting women and falls in love with one of his models. He then loses his main patron and has to flee Rome. The figure of Caravaggio acts as a vehicle for the narrator to explore his own difference from conventional members of society. In the end, he realizes that he cannot find the fulfillment he wishes for. He understands that society only allows him a reflection of his self, not absorption.

Now, when we turn from novels to buildings, we find that where the writers offer a diagnosis, the architects seem to accept the oppressive order. One might interpret the fact that Mario Botta generally avoids clustered compositions or building extensions as reflecting the rigid, uncompromising social structures described above. Even balconies, terraces, and entrance porches are pulled into the closed form of the building. Botta's massive exterior walls establish a sharp datum. They replace the fence, which usually serves to outline the site. Without a fence, Botta's houses become additions to their greater surroundings. Instead of finding themselves in a small-scale environment that can be easily surveyed, the inhabitants are tiny points in an immense expanse.

Fig. 4: House at Ligornetto

The walls of the *Single Family House* in Ligornetto (1975-76) (Fig. 4) establish the typical contained stereo metric shape. A number of openings used for doors, windows, and balconies are cut into it. The largest of these cuts slices through the center, opening it up for use as a loggia. Thus, the outside is physically let into the house, while from inside people can only look out. Similarly, interior spaces seem to be adapted to requirements outside the user's psychological realm.

To verify this assumption, Hillier and Hanson's method of spatial analysis, as introduced in their in *The Social Logic of Space*[22] might help to deduce how the building's plan illustrates the social relationship among the inhabitants themselves and between inhabitants and visitors. Since all the spaces are contained within a higher-order cell, the House at Ligornetto is a no distributed system where social relations are primarily occurring inside the building. To define these relationships, the connections between individual rooms must be established.

[21] Pender, "Christoph Geiser,"166-169; Christoph Geiser, *Das geheime Fieber* (Frankfurt/Main, 1990).

[22] The spatial analysis that follows is indebted to the method laid out in Bill Hillier & Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), especially 11, 94, 123, 142, 144-45, 159, 217, 258 & 259.

Does each room have an equal neighbor, presenting thus a symmetrical arrangement, or is access between rooms unequal, hence asymmetrical? Answering such Hillier/Hanson questions helps to identify who controls access to each room and is in charge of the entire household. The House in Ligornetto clearly has an asymmetrical layout. It is composed of two rectangular containers, which are separated by a gap, but form together an oblong, rectangular cube.

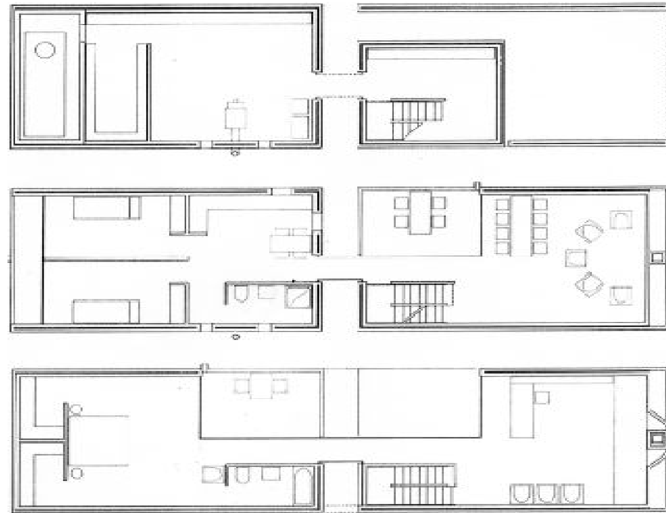

Fig. 5: House at Ligornetto, Floor Plans

The first floor (Fig. 5, top) contains the garage and the vestibule with a staircase in the right half and utilitarian spaces (heating, laundry) in the other. Upon climbing the stairs, the inhabitant is immediately in the living/dining room, with a view into a glass-enclosed kitchen. When crossing the open terrace between, the inhabitant gains access to the children's quarter with a common sitting area from which the bathroom and the two bedrooms can be accessed. Climbing up further to the third floor, the inhabitant arrives at the den with access to a terrace. On the other side of the terrace is the master bedroom with access to the bathroom and a glass-enclosed study. In this house the different floors contain different functions and each floor is divided into public and private spheres. The building is therefore not easily permeable to visitors. The users of the various bedrooms control access to them. The plan gives children ample freedom from parental supervision, as their bedrooms are housed in a separate wing. The plan suggests that within the family, each member is treated equally, which would indicate a democratic order. Each member of the family has the opportunity to withdraw to his/her private space. There are no direct connections between the private rooms. Instead, one must always pass through a public area.

When we accept this household as a sociogram of a social system, and compare the spatial order of this house to the national political order outside, we find that Botta's plan perpetuates exactly the social system the novels reject. At best, the plan offers an objective model of democracy, but fails to provide clues and incentives about how this social/political organization can be used to generate beneficial human change. The syntax of the spatial order links separate events, but does not provide the continuity that stimulates human interaction. Botta's plan does not promote "social solidarity." It may provide a functioning system inside, but does not convey a conceptual order. Botta's house demonstrates the power of the social system, which determined the plan and form of the design. Ultimately, the building exhibits reduced opportunities for social change, as there is only a small potential for social and human growth in its spatial order. The example of the House at Ligornetto shows disregard for the theory that the local (spatial) system of the house constructs the global (social) order, and vice versa.[23] The individual is treated inside the house in the same manner the novels suggest individuals are treated outside, in society. It appears that Swiss literature and architecture react differently to the dominance of the socio-economic order in life. Novelists complain that this order's normative expectations have become existentially inadequate,[24] whereas Bottaand Reichlin/Reinhart seems to embrace its norms.

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[23] Burkhard's statement that female novelists commented on "an everpresent vacuum that envelops human relationships and chills life into clockwork order," may serve as a corroboration of the above spatial interpretation (Burkhard, "Existential Space," 609).

[24] Pender, "The Fourth Generation," 225.

Given their pessimistic assessment of the individual's power to change the system, Swiss novelists deal heavily with the topic of rejection. Female writers in particular focus on the oppressive nature of patriarchy and the corresponding behavior of women.[25] Gertrud Leutenegger's novel *Continent (*Kontinent) is told by a female narrator who has been commissioned to produce a record of the sounds that occur in an aluminum factory, to mark its 75th anniversary. This factory, together with a vineyard monoculture, dominates the economy of the novel's village. Both activities constantly rape nature, either through pesticide spraying on the vines or air and water pollution by the factory. The novel documents how this affects nature. The fertilizer is poisonous and when it is sprayed on the plants it drizzles into the village. The villagers no longer plant apricots, only the more robust and resistant apples. This is offered as their reaction to what are called the "fluoride wars."

The cut branches are burnt, which leads to thick smoke that hides the views of the landscape and puts a black coating on the plastic flowers of the villagers. Periodically, there are references to landslides, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. Such natural forces are compared to the power of the factory, which corrupts and intimidates the villagers. There are frequent references to the narrator's predecessor who apparently perished through malnutrition. The narrator feels constantly watched. These events and scenes are used to demonstrate the ills of modernity, by addressing how they affect the state, industry, and people. The forces of nature are contrasted with primitive exploitation of human power. The village's local event is then compared on the global level to China, which is introduced as being just as politically oppressive as the village is environmentally oppressed. The restrictions on personal freedom in China are juxtaposed to the transgressions committed by the factory and the ravaged nature against the villagers.[26] Problems of modernization are analyzed in different political systems. The narrator/protagonist reacts to this oppression through futile acts, such as throwing her recorded tapes in the river, but only after the factory had copied them. She loses her job, but is offered a place to stay in the village. She leaves in the same way in which she has arrived. She no longer knows where she is, which Leutenegger explains as having lost one's continent. A feminist perspective is introduced through a conflict between the narrator and the water inspector of the works. In this conflict, material power is equated with sexual power as an image patriarchy fostered.[27] Gertrud Leutenegger generally deals with social stigmatization of women and their rejection of political manipulation. *Continent* combines modern technology with village tales, and advocates that personal and political spheres must interact with each other. Personal alienation is seen as not conducive to responsible collective political action.[28]

In their concern for the individual, the novelists propose to use local narratives to resist the power of a totalizing master narrative.[29] Do the buildings of the Ticino School offer similar escapes? On first sight, the use of primary stereo metric shapes and pronounced walls creates a sharp demarcation between nature and architecture. The building seems to enter into a confrontation with nature.[30] Nevertheless, Botta maintains that his buildings fit into their territories. In the House in Ligornetto, horizontal stripes on the façade are meant to mimic the furrows in the surrounding fields after the farmers have tilled them. Botta also points to the visual connections between inside and outside. Particularly chosen views determine the siting of a building as much as the concern for its integration into the topographical setting. These features set the building up as an independent part of the environment and express "man's primary needs and the roots that he has sunk into his land."[31] Such statements suggest that the architects are dealing with a master narrative that is made up of history, modernism, and topography. This is not a local narrative, as it does not contain elements that allow each user avenues for personal identification with his/her environment. In the novels, the Swiss landscape has become the setting for the system's limitations on individual lives. If remedies are offered, they postulate a partnership between humans and nature to replace the stifling impact of science and technology.[32]

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[25] Hilton, "Otto F. Walter," 72.

[26] Already in her novel *Ninive* (1977), Leutenegger had dealt with "modes of existing in several closely delineated, insular places" (Burkhard, "Existential Space," 609).

[27] Gertrud Leutenegger, *Kontinent* (Frankfurt/Main, 1985).

[28] Boa, "Gertrud Leutenegger," 211-214.

[29] Boa, "Gertrud Leutenegger," 218.

[30] Toshio Nakamura, "Building the Site," *Architecture and Urbanism* (September 1986):5.

[31] Botta: Complete Works, 1960-1985, 231; Kenneth Frampton, "The Isms of Contemporary Architecture," in *Tessiner Architekten*, Thomas Boga, ed. (Zürich: Thomas Boga, 1986),:26.

[32] van der Will, "E.Y. Meyer," 151, 153.

In contrast to the romantic views of the architects, writers depict landscape as topographical doom and talk about its demonic quality.[33] The extensive focus on history that is promoted by the architects indeed may "obliterat(e) possibilities of action under the impenetrable fog of historical inevitability."[34]

Mario Botta addresses the tenuous relationship between the individual and society by transposing this opposition to the area of construction. His buildings suggest that he rejects a purely technological view of the world. Although many are built of reinforced concrete, this is usually covered in brick or concrete-block veneer, in an effort to get back to the basics of architectural construction in masonry work. The buildings look handcrafted. A single material, such as brick, is manipulated to create myriad colors and textures. This allows an element of individuality to enter. On the whole, however, we gain a rather ambiguous impression of Ticino School buildings. The houses seem to present the same rigid order as the Swiss social structure does, without concern for the individual and his/her identity.

Is there a potential that this approach to architecture can generate social change? The architects of the Ticino School seem to suggest that society's problems should be solved in the realm of architectural form, rather than sociological or psychological meaning or expression. For Botta, the dignity of architecture does not result from intuition, but from history and architecture's own rules. History is the place where architecture finds and defines its meaning. Form and meaning are determined through their relationship to historical buildings. New meanings come primarily from familiar ones, and only secondarily through socio-cultural usage. The architects do not see this as just repeating history. They simply proclaim that architecture must first reflect its own nature. Botta's designs are based on a rational analysis of typological, morphological, and technological traditions. Nevertheless, one suspects that history is the only reality the architects accept.[35] They maintain that it is possible to exist in the present and the past simultaneously. Does this outlook make their method schizophrenic? The architects use an up-to-date, modern approach for their designs and construction, while simultaneously evoking the past to assist users in comprehending this modernization. This method appears highly problematic because it combines two seemingly incompatible ingredients—modernity and the past.

Sometimes Swiss writers are also ambiguous in their remedies for change. Gertrud Leutenegger demands the restoration of myth and emotion as a means of enhancing the element of rationality. For her, past and present are merely two worlds that are mixed to uncover present tensions.[36] Other authors challenge national myths nurtured by a conservative society.[37] They portray the Swiss as reflective beings—thinking about their past—which might prevent them from being original. The issue is whether "fundamental change (is) precluded by the conditioning force of the past." Novelists see the corresponding "atrophying of imagination" as a root cause for the malaise of Swiss civilization.[38]

Using the past to define present meaning fails ultimately. Nevertheless, the architects maintain that new meanings can only be derived from familiar ones, and reject sociological, economic, and functional explanations. A work of architecture usually combines physical sensations and stimuli to communicate and educate, in the hope that a total experience will lead to cultural action. However, by using a historical typology, the Ticino School architects propose that something new can be created, even if it is dressed in traditional clothing. Werner Haker cautioned that because of its "conceptual stance, the new architecture of the Ticino may … not be communicable to the lay person."[39] The most effective cultural learning occurs through assimilation, i.e., when new understanding is created through changing the meaning of old practices.

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[33] John J. White, "Hermann Burger: 'Die allmähliche Verfertigung des Todes beim Schreiben," in *Rejection and Emancipation*, 189, 192.

[34] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991):47.

[35] Martin Steinmann, "Wirklichkeit als Geschichte: Stichworte zu einem Gespräch über Realismus in der Architektur," in *Tessiner Architekten*, 12, 13.

[36] Boa, "Gertrud Leutenegger," 207, 235.

[37] Another example of this plays out now, as historians begin to reject some of the myths about Swiss history that have persisted until now. They use accurate documentary research to point out the shortcomings of the earlier history books.

[38] Butler, "Kurt Marti,"131.

[39] Werner Haker, "Marginalia on the new Architecture in Ticino," in *Tessiner Architekten*, 12, 24.

The goal of this process is to generate a new system of connections between cultural works and their meaning, within which new personal outlooks and relationships can be forged. This assumes that there is a connection between culture and identity.[40] Do Ticino School buildings simply perpetuate old traditions or can they engender change? Mario Botta does not design in a "Heimatstil." He most certainly does not follow nostalgic ways of preserving the past. Nevertheless, Fredric Jameson's critique of postmodernism fits the Ticino School like a glove. In Switzerland's economic culture, which is deaf to history, works of art are consumed, not experienced. When a civilization has forgotten how to think historically, it can no longer conceive of the present in relation to the past. Ticino School architects refer to typologies and mythologies as sources, without acknowledging that they transform these origins into two-dimensional images in their designs. These images then become photographs, or architecture produced for consumption, not for assimilation. The resulting pastiche is an imitation of dead styles. The architects symbolize (historical) time through space and disregard that these two areas require different techniques of conceptualization, namely memory for time and movement for space. The past that the architects refer to in their buildings is presented as an object, not as a "historical subject."[41]

The typological approach of the Ticino School, which is highly conceptual, may be criticized for overlooking the constructive structures of individuals, such as might result from his/her material conditions. While a building type expresses the cultural model of behavior, only the habits of the individual articulate his/her needs. Consequently, in architectural design the social function of culture should be considered. Architectural types should be "an ensemble of spatial-symbolic relationships which are derived from the cultural models in the form of a distributive typology of behavioral spaces."[42] The Ticino School can be criticized for its "epistemological pathology." These architects separate "knowledge" from "belief," suggesting that human beings can "stand outside (their) beliefs." To understand a Ticino School building, one needs only (scientific) knowledge; inherent human capacities and deep-seated thought structures are rather ineffective in this task. The buildings "shut us out even from a sympathetic participation, by imagination," from their interpretation. There is a discrepancy between the sensory perception required to grasp the spatial layout, and the expert view needed to grasp the historical references.[43]

A similar disparity structures Swiss society and culture. Society is structured along the rational and formal orders imposed by the national economy, while culture and community are organized along ethnic characteristics. Hence, social integration is based on rational interests, while communal integration happens along subjectively felt adherence. Ethnic communities, which determine culture, are defined by external habits, customs, and memories that engender a subjective belief in belonging to a group. However, if people adhere too closely to ethnic characteristics alone in their integration to society, they risk overlooking actual social (=economic) relationships. Consequently, the typological approach chosen by the Ticino School does not appear to adequately educate Swiss people about their culture. The modern social system--the ruling economic order--is unsurveyable by the uninitiated. This system also puts up quite formidable obstacles against complete integration. The anonymity of modern life favors that one regress to ethnic distinctions to find identity. Identity should be defined as the relationship of the individual to him/herself, society, and the world. Culture is an integral tool in this activity, as it assists the individual in determining his/her identity by helping to decipher social life, and providing guidelines for action. Therefore, culture is the result of creative attitudes of individuals to reality. Since modern Swiss consciousness is based on the economic system, not on ethnicity or culture, the Ticino School fails to generate change. Its approach is conservative and influenced by a static concept of culture and an ethnic understanding of nation. It accepts universal ideas of modernization and egalitarianism that have been established in the recent global economy, and consequently regards ethnic diversity as meaningless. In order to accommodate social change, cultural identity cannot be static, but must be permeable. It should be clear by now that the Ticino School's methods do not differentiate cultural, social, and individual concepts in a sufficiently discriminating manner, nor are they derived from a convincing objective study of Swiss culture, society, or individuals.

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[40] Georg Auernheimer, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Erziehung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995):86, 98-101. Auernheimer's concepts of multicultural education have been adapted here to architecture. The author feels that a study dealing with multicultural education in Europe provides pertinent data to this architectural analysis.

[41] For Jameson's critique, consult his *Postmodernism*, ix - xi, 18, 99.

[42] These ideas, which ultimately go back to Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gaston Bachelard, have been taken from Georges Teyssot, *Die Krankheit des Domizils* (Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1989):66-71.

[43] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 139, 182, 317.

Consequently, literary and architectural signs are quite different from one another. Literature is in the service of something outside of itself, whereas architecture is defined from within itself. While literature creates intuitively out of free will, architecture's creations come from blood, soil, and history. This distinction does not make one a truer expression than the other. The Ticino School simply proposes that the irrational should only be considered through the use of reason. Thus, architects like Mario Botta deal with general requirements, and not with the individual in an antagonistic environment, or the role of women in a patriarchal society. Demetz believes that in the Swiss "the … instinctive will to serve the neighbor clashes with a recurrent need for open spaces, unfettered contemplation, (and) fulfillment of the individual imagination."[44] The conflict between individual and community is addressed especially well in the forms of Ticino School buildings. While property belongs to individuals, the view on the houses belongs to everyone. The problem with Ticino School architecture is that it appears to be an unemotional, rational style of architectural design. When asked about this distinction between thinking and feeling, Mario Botta answered: "What I think (about architecture) comes from a collective heritage--it doesn't belong to me.… But an architecture also exists which is very autobiographical."[45]Botta does not elaborate on the differences between thinking and autobiography, an ambiguity that may account for themes submerged within this article, namely the duality that is inherent in much of Swiss social and cultural behavior.

[44] Demetz, "Switzerland," 299.

[45] "Botta," in *Tessiner Architekten*, 348.