

**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
**Switzerland - A Prison**

Published by Diogenes as *Die Schweiz - ein Gefängnis*  
Original title: *Die Schweiz – ein Gefängnis*



## Book factsheet

General Fiction  
80 pages  
11.3 x 18 cm  
June 1997

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French (Zoé)

### **Movie adaptations**

**2015: Im Labyrinth / Friedrich Dürrenmatt.**  
**Der kritische Geist der Schweiz**  
Director: Sabine Gisiger  
Screenplay: Sabine Gisiger

**2010: Schurkenstück**  
Director: Torsten C. Fischer  
Screenplay: Eva Zahn  
Cast: Katharina Schüttler und Oliver Korritke

**2008: Der Besuch der alten Dame**  
Director: Nikolaus Leytner  
Screenplay: Thomas Eifler  
Cast: Christiane Hörbiger, Michael Mendl,  
Muriel Baumeister, Rolf Hoppe, Rüdiger Vogler

**2001: The Pledge**  
Director: Sean Penn  
Cast: Margaret Larsen, Helen Jackson

**1997: Es geschah am hellichten Tag**  
Director: Nico Hofmann  
Cast: Joachim Król, Barbara Rudnik, Axel  
Milberg

**1996: Es geschah am hellichten Tag**  
Director: Bernd Eichinger  
Cast: Jochaim Krol, Barbara Rudnik, Axel  
Milberg

**1995: Tod im kalten Morgenlicht**  
Director: Rudolf van den Berg  
Cast: Richard E. Grant, Lynsey Baxter, Perdita  
Weeks

**1994: Der Wiedertäufer**  
Director: Heinrich Koch

**1994: In the Cold Light of Day**  
Director: Rudolf van den Berg  
Cast: Richard E. Grant, Perdita Weeks, Simon  
Cadell

**1993: Justiz**  
Director: Hans Werner Geißendörfer  
Cast: Maximilian Schell, Thomas Heinze,  
Matthias Gnädinger, Anna Thalbach

**1992: Hyènes**  
Director: Djibril diop Mamberty  
Cast: Mansour Diouf, Ami Diakhate

On 22 November 1990, on the eve of Switzerland's 700th anniversary and shortly before his own death, Friedrich Dürrenmatt gave an official speech in tribute to his friend and colleague Václav Havel – President of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, writer and former dissident. In his address, Dürrenmatt – a socio-political »enlightener« not just in others' eyes, but his own, too – contrasted Switzerland's romanticized self-image with the reality of its identity crisis and concrete political shortcomings. Using the country as an example, he describes a situation that he expressed in conversation with Michael Haller as the following: »Nowadays, people are struggling to trust their thought processes. After all, the knowledge we possess about the state of the world is hard to bear. That's why they prefer to believe: some in this, others in that.« This is a theme which pervades Dürrenmatt's writing like a basso continuo, from his earliest prose to the essays of his later work: the human being who no longer understands the labyrinthine relationships of life, power and state, and flees into idealization instead of seeking and demanding enlightenment.

The volume also includes a speech by the Swiss Minister of Defense, Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi, on Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the free individual: »He had the courage to take his own standpoint. A courage that can be dangerous, even in a democracy.«

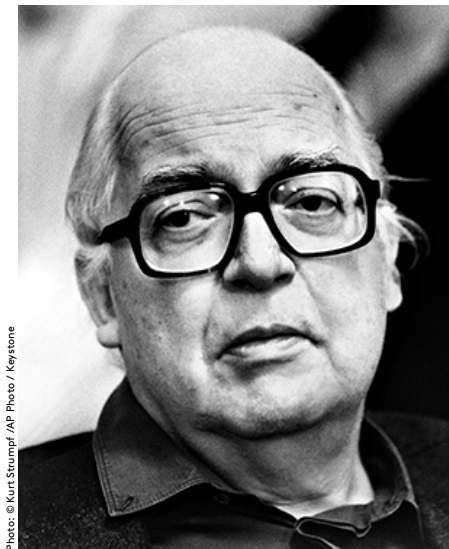


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Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921 – 1990) was born in Konolfingen near Berne as the son of a protestant minister. He studied philosophy, German literature and history of art in Berne and Zurich and worked as a playwright, novelist, essayist and painter in Neuchâtel, where he lived with his family.

#### Movie adaptations (cont'd)

**1992: Hyänen / Hyènes, Ramatou**  
Director: Djibril diop Mamberty  
Screenplay: Djibril diop Mamberty  
Cast: Mansour Diouf, Ami Diakhate

**1989: Die Welt ist ein Irrenhaus: Achterloo IV**  
Director: Roman Brodman

**1988: Achterloo**  
Director: Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Cast: Helmut Lohner, Georg Preusse

**1988: Abendstunde im Spätherbst**  
Director: August Everding  
Cast: Mario Adorf, Horst Bollmann

**1982: Der Besuch der alten Dame**  
Director: Max Peter Ammann  
Cast: Maria Schell, Günter Lamprecht, Ruedi Walter

**1982: Der Besuch der alten Dame**  
Director: Max Peter Ammann  
Cast: Maria Schell, Adolphe Spalinger, Günter Lamprecht

**1975: Der Richter und sein Henker**  
Director: Maximilian Schell  
Cast: Jon Voight, Jacqueline Bisset, Helmut Qualtinger, Robert Shaw, Friedrich Dürrenmatt

**1974: Der Mitmacher**  
Director: Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Cast: Buddy Elias, Elmar Schulte, Werner Schumacher

**1973: Der Besuch der alten Dame**  
Director: Hans/Cella Gaugler/Ettore  
Cast: Hasle Rüegsau

**1973: Der Wiedertäufer**  
Director: Werner Schlechte  
Cast: E. Marks, F. Schütter, V. Lechtenbrink

**1972: La piu bella serata della mia vita**  
Director: Ettore Scola  
Cast: Alberto Sordi, Michel Simon, Pierre Brasseur

**1971: König Johann**  
Director: Vaclav Hudcek  
Cast: H. Qualtinger, H. Seeböck

**1971: Porträt eines Planeten**  
Director: Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Cast: W. Reichmann, H. Lohner, Ch. Hörbiger

**1967: Frank V. Opfer einer Privatbank**  
Director: Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Cast: Therese Giehse, Hubert von Meyerneck

**1967: Der Meteor**  
Director: Leopold Lindtberg  
Cast: Leonard Steckel, Wolfgang Forester, Gert Westphal, Peter Brogle



Subject Matter  
2352 pages  
2021



The Plays  
1584 pages  
2015



The Crime Novels  
992 pages  
2011



His Life in Pictures  
376 pages  
2011



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Meine Schweiz*  
Ein Lesebuch

Diogenes

*Labyrinth / Turmbau*  
(Subject Matter I-IX)  
736 pages  
2002

*My Switzerland*  
256 pages  
1998



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Minotaurus*  
*Der Auftrag*  
*Midas*

Diogenes

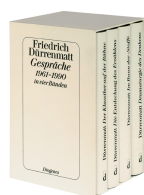
*The Minotaur/ The Assignment; or, On the Observing of the Observer/ Midas*  
208 pages  
1998



**Max Frisch**  
**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Briefwechsel*  
Herausgegeben von Peter Rüdis

Diogenes

*Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt - Correspondence*  
240 pages  
1998



*Conversations 1961-1990*  
1296 pages  
1996



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Das Versprechen*  
Roman - Diogenes

*The Pledge*  
160 pages  
1996

**Movie Adaptation**



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Der Pensionierte*  
Fragment eines Kriminalromans  
Diogenes

*The Pensioner*  
200 pages  
1995



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Die Panne*  
Hörspiel und Komödie  
Diogenes

*Traps*  
144 pages  
1995

**Movie Adaptation**



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Das Mögliche ist ungeheuer*  
Ausgewählte Gedichte  
Diogenes

*The Enormity of the Possible*  
144 pages  
1993



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Gedankenfuge*  
Diogenes

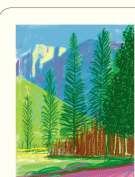
*Gedankenfuge*  
208 pages  
1992



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Griechen sucht Griechin*  
Diogenes

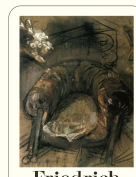
*Greek Man Seeks Greek Wife*  
160 pages  
1992

**Movie Adaptation**



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Durcheinandertal*  
Roman  
Diogenes

*The Vale of Confusion*  
176 pages  
1989



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Versuche*  
Diogenes

*Trials*  
184 pages  
1988



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Der Richter und sein Henker*  
Roman - Diogenes

*The Judge and His Hangman*  
128 pages  
1986



**Dürrenmatt**  
*Der Auftrag*  
oder  
Vom Beobachten des Beobachters der Beobachter  
Novelle - Diogenes

*The Assignment*  
136 pages  
1986



**Friedrich Dürrenmatt**  
*Der Verdacht*  
Roman - Diogenes

*Suspicion*  
128 pages  
1986

**Movie adaptations (cont'd)**

**1966: Grieche sucht Griechin**

Director: Rolf Thiele  
Cast: Heinz Rühmann, Irina Demick, Charles Regnier

**1965: Romulus der Große**

Director: Helmut Käutner  
Cast: Romuald Pekny

**1964: Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon**

Director: William Dieterle

**1964: Die Physiker**

Director: Fritz Umgelter  
Cast: Therese Giehse, Gustav Knuth, Kurt Ehrhardt, Wolfgang Kieling, Siegfried Lowitz

**1963: The Visit**

Director: Bernhard Wicki  
Cast: Ingrid Bergmann, Anthony Quinn, Hans-Christian Blech

**1961: Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi**

Director: Kurt Hoffmann  
Cast: O.E. Hasse, Johanna von Koczian, Martin Held, Charles Regnier, Max Haufler

**1960: Abendstunde im Spätherbst**

Director: Rudolf Noelte  
Cast: Ernst Schröder, Friedrich Maurer, Günter Meissner

**1959: Der Besuch der alten Dame**

Director: Ludwig Cremer  
Cast: R. Wanka, E. Flickenschmidt, A. Schradiek

**1958: Es geschah am hellichten Tag**

Director: Ladislao Vajda  
Screenplay: Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Cast: Heinz Rühmann, Michel Simon, Gert Fröbe

**1957: Der Richter und sein Henker**

Director: Franz Peter Wirth  
Cast: Herbert Tiede, Maria Körber, K.G. Saebisch

**1957: Die Panne**

Director: Fritz Umgelter  
Cast: Peter Ahrweiler, Carl Wery, Harry Hardt

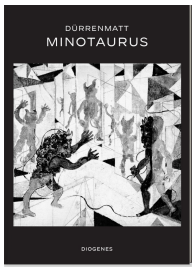
**Praise**

*Switzerland - A Prison*

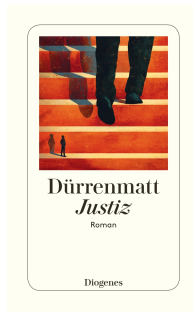
»A book that shows us the necessity of the writer's word, both within and for society.«  
– Bayerisches Fernsehen, Munich

Friedrich Dürrenmatt

»Even after the death of its author, his huge and unique work is still a dark continent, largely unilluminated and untested, a continent in motion, always good for intellectual surprises and dramatic adventures.« – Gert Ueding

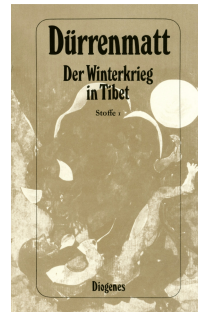


**The Minotaur**  
56 pages  
1985

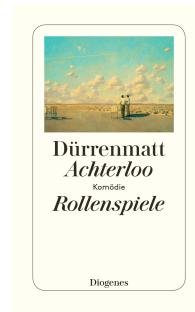


**Justice**  
376 pages  
1985

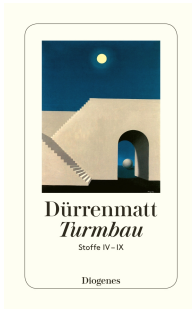
**Movie Adaptation**



**The Winter War in Tibet**  
192 pages  
1984



**Achterloo**  
128 pages  
1983

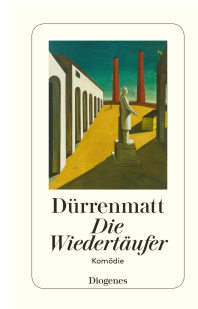


**The Winter War in Tibet/  
Lunar Eclipse/ The Rebel**  
360 pages  
1981

**Movie Adaptation**

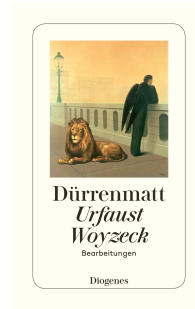


**Nexus**  
240 pages  
1980



**The Anabaptists**  
144 pages  
1980

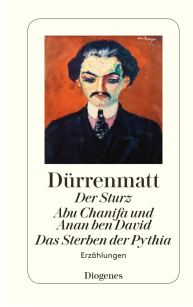
**Movie Adaptation**



**Urfaust/ Woyzeck.  
Adaptations**  
208 pages  
1980



**Theatre**  
272 pages  
1980



**The Coup/ Abu Chanifa  
and Anan ben David/  
Smithy/ The Dying of the  
Pythia**  
160 pages  
1980



**Romulus the Great**  
176 pages  
1980

**Movie Adaptation**



**The Complete Prose  
Oeuvre**  
3024 pages  
1980



**Politics**  
192 pages  
1980



**Play Strindberg/ Portrait  
of a Planet**  
208 pages  
1980

**Movie Adaptation**



**The Physicists**  
96 pages  
1980

**Movie Adaptation**



**Philosophical Essays**  
208 pages  
1980

## Praise (cont'd)

»Dürrenmatt was addressing the real crowd assembled in real theaters with all their swiftly changing feelings, their ignorance, bad habits and vaulting possibilities. At the same time he was a philosopher-poet with one eye on the picture of the real, on artifice, and on the long preoccupations of philosophy and art through the ages.« – Arthur Miller

»Dürrenmatt has always been too impulsive for his times but the chaotic world has quickly caught up with him. That's why his work will last. The purifying force of his irony becomes the more important and useful – particularly because it is driven by the profound humanity that Dürrenmatt's friends always knew in him.« – Peter Brook

»Now, like an avalanche in far-off mountains, comes Friedrich Dürrenmatt, a detective-story writer with a genius for the theater, to give us a new theme, or rather to remind us of an ancient one: justice. His vision is a cold one but pure, and very nearly unique in our day, for in his devotion to the idea of justice he has succeeded in casting across an age committed to false Love the dark shadow of the scales.« – Gore Vidal

»It was once observed by Oscar Wilde that a writer should be able to write anything. Mr. Dürrenmatt meets Wilde's requirement. He adopts a manner well liked by some of our better writers, that of a Roman of the later Empire, a golden weariness. Mr. Dürrenmatt chooses compression of style and strictness of form, but the late Imperial feeling is still there.« – Saul Bellow

»One of Europe's most important postwar dramatists.« – The Daily Telegraph, London

»Next to Kafka and Camus, he is one of the great questioners of this world.« – Martin Ebel / Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich

»Friedrich Dürrenmatt belonged to the most cheerful apocalyptic writers of the 20th century.« – Thomas Hürlimann / Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Zurich

»Universal, uncomfortable and visionary: Friedrich Dürrenmatt is the worthy reigning literary monarch of the year.« – Wener Krause / Kleine Zeitung, Graz

»He is evil, he doesn't think anything good of humanity, and he describes this – but he does it with wit.« – Elke Heidenreich / SRF2, Zurich

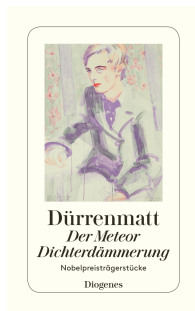
»Friedrich Dürrenmatt is a centennial author, because he saw the century that was to follow him too.« – Daniele Muscionico / Aargauer Zeitung, Aarau

»One of the greatest writers of our century.« – Corriere della Sera, Milan





**The Conformist**  
336 pages  
1980



**The Meteor/ Twilight of the Poets**  
208 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



**Literature and Painting**  
240 pages  
1980



**Reviews**  
176 pages  
1980



**King John/ Titus Andronicus**  
240 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



**The Dog/ The Tunnel/ Traps**  
112 pages  
1980



**Hercules and the Augean Stables/ The Trial about the Donkey's Shadow**  
240 pages  
1980



**Greek Man Seeks Greek Wife/ Mr. X Goes on Holiday/ News about the State of Press during the Stone Age**  
208 pages  
1980



**Nocturnal Conversation with a Scorned Man/ Stranitzky and the National Hero/ The Vega Enterprise**  
160 pages  
1980



**The Deadline**  
160 pages  
1980



**Frank V**  
176 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



**It Is Written/ The Blind Man**  
336 pages  
1980



**An Angel Comes to Babylon**  
144 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



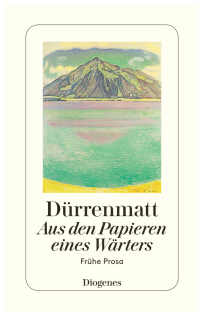
**The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi**  
224 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



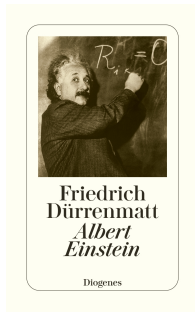
**The Complete Dramatic Oeuvre**  
3408 pages  
1980



**The Visit**  
160 pages  
1980  
 **Movie Adaptation**



*Early Prose: Christmas/  
The Torturer/ The  
Sausage/ The Son/ The  
Old Man/ Portrait of  
Sisyphos/ The Theatre  
Director/ The Trap/  
Pilatos/ The Town/ From  
the Papers of a  
Guardzman*  
208 pages  
1980



*Albert Einstein*  
80 pages  
1979