# Diogenes

Book factsheet

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

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




Contemporary Literature
80 pages
11.3 × 18 cm
June 1997

Contact:
Susanne Bauknecht, Rights Director,
susanne.bauknecht@diogenes.ch and
Suzanne Hégelé, Film Rights Manager,
suzanne.hegele@diogenes.ch

### 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 Rudknik, Axel Milberg

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

**1994: Der Wiedertäufer**
Director: Heinirich 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: Hyänen / Hyènes, Ramatou**
Director: Djibril diop Mamberty
Screenplay: 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.«

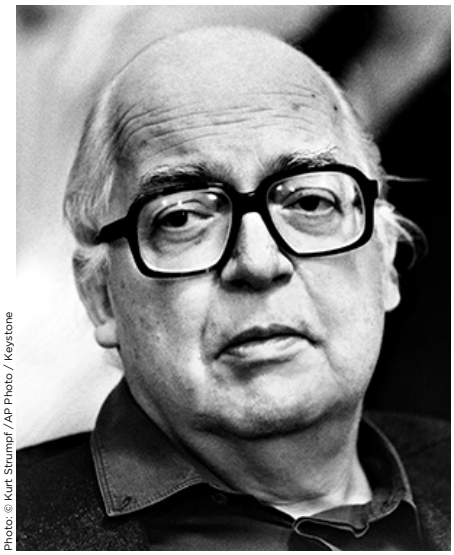


Photo: © Kurt Strumpf / AP Photo / Keystone

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

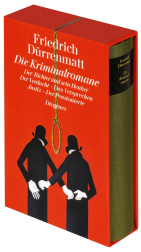
**1967: Frank V. Opfer einer Privatbank**
Director: Friedrich Dürrenmatt
Cast: Therese Giehse, Hubert von Meyernick



*Subject Matter*
2352 pages
2021




*The Plays*
1584 pages
2015




*The Crime Novels*
992 pages
2011

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




*My Switzerland*
256 pages
1998



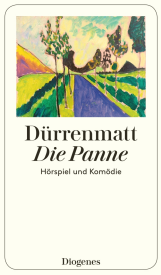

*The Minotaur/ The Assignment; or, On the Observing of the Observer of the Observers/ Midas*
208 pages
1998




*The Pledge*
160 pages
1996
**Movie Adaptation**




*The Pensioner*
200 pages
1995




*Traps*
144 pages
1995
**Movie Adaptation**



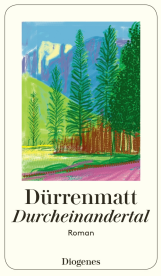

*The Enormity of the Possible*
144 pages
1993




*Gedankenfuge*
208 pages
1992




*Greek Man Seeks Greek Wife*
160 pages
1992
**Movie Adaptation**




*The Vale of Confusion*
176 pages
1989




*Trials*
184 pages
1988




*The Judge and His Hangman*
128 pages
1986




*The Assignment*
136 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: Die Physiker**
Director: Fritz Umgelter
Cast: Therese Giehse, Gustav Knuth, Kurt Ehrhardt, Wolfgang Kieling, Siegfried Lowitz

**1964: Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon**
Director: William Dieterle

**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. Flickenschildt, A. Schradiek

**1958: Es geschah am hellichten Tag**
Director: Ladislao Vajda
Screenplay: Friedrich Dürrenmatt
Cast: Heinz Rühmann, Michel Simon, Gert Fröbe

**1957: Die Panne**
Director: Fritz Umgelter
Cast: Peter Ahrweiler, Carl Wery, Harry Hardt

**1957: Der Richter und sein Henker**
Director: Franz Peter Wirth
Cast: Herbert Tiede, Maria Körber, K.G. Saebisch

**Praise**

*Switzerland - A Prison*

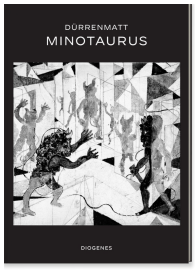
»A book that shows us the necessity of the writer's word, both within and for society.«
– Bayerisches Fernsehen, Munich

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




*Suspicion*
128 pages
1986



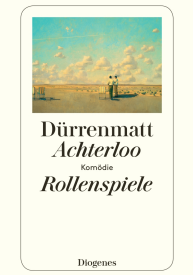

*The Minotaur*
56 pages
1985



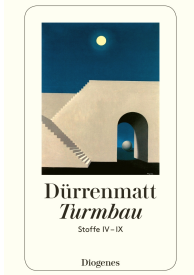

*Justice*
376 pages
1985
**Movie Adaptation**




*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



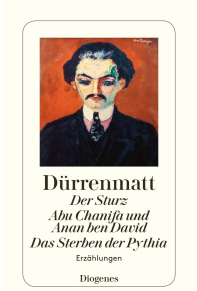

*The Anabaptists*
144 pages
1980
**Movie Adaptation**




*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**



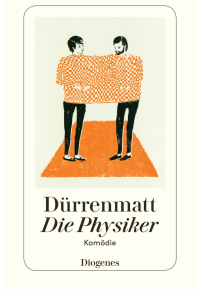
*The Complete Prose Oeuvre*
3024 pages
1980




*Politics*
192 pages
1980




*Play Strinberg/ Portrait of a Planet*
208 pages
1980
**Movie Adaptation**




*The Physicists*
96 pages
1980
**Movie Adaptation**

## Praise (cont'd)

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

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

»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

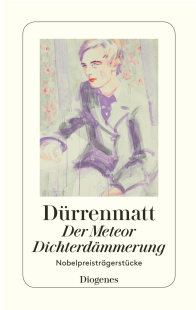
»Friedrich Dürrenmatt is a centenial author, because he saw the century that was to follow him too.« – Daniele Muscionico / Aargauer Zeitung, Aarau




*Philosophical Essays*
208 pages
1980




*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



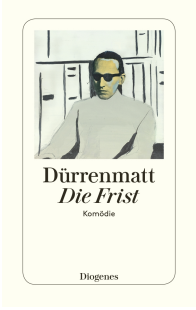

*Hercules and the Augean Stables/ The Trial about the Donkey's Shadow*
240 pages
1980




*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**



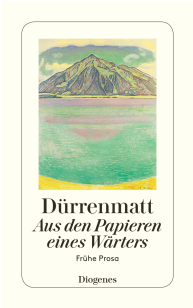

*The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*
224 pages
1980
**Movie Adaptation**



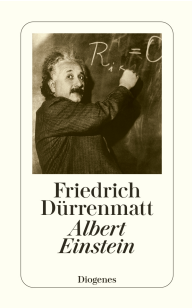
*The Complete Dramatic Oeuvre*
3408 pages
1980




*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 Guardsman*
208 pages
1980




*Albert Einstein*
80 pages
1979