Diogenes

Book factsheet

Friedrich Dürrenmatt
The Pledge

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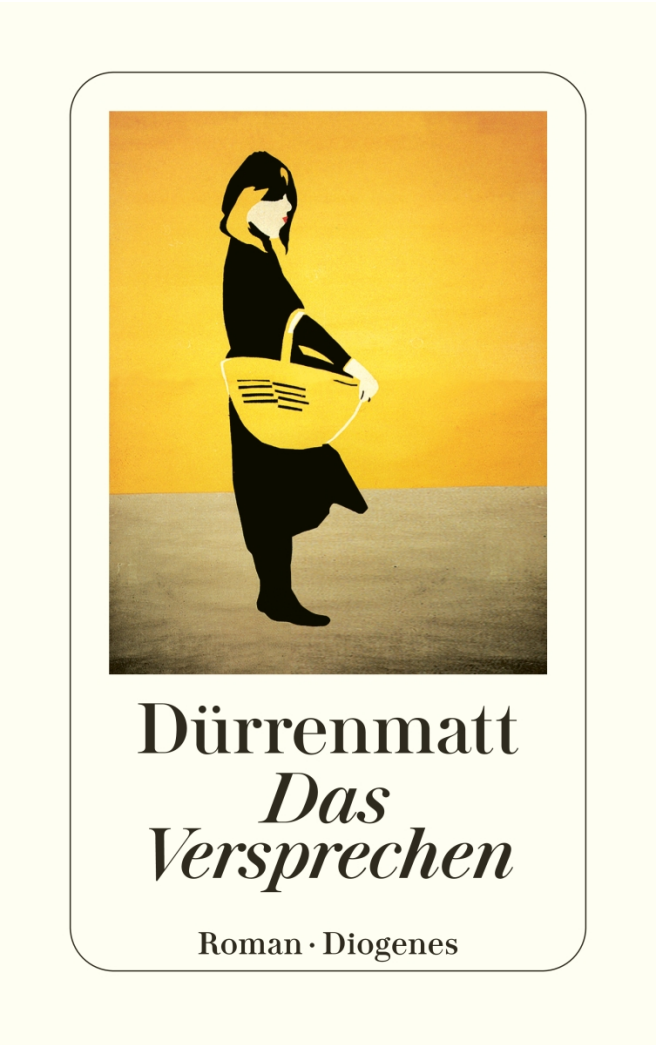

A suspenseful tale of a police inspector's unremitting search for a psychopathic killer his superiors claim does not exist. But more than a novel of crime and detection, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's deeply moving drama is the eloquent account of a decent man's gradual decay. With grim irony, the master storyteller shows how a dedicated law-enforcer's obsession for truth and justice can lead him to bait a trap as morally offensive as the evil strategy used by the maniacal murderer he relentlessly pursues.

Crime Fiction, Contemporary Literature, Compulsory Reading
160 pages
11.3 × 18 × 1.5 cm
January 1996

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Portuguese/PT (Presença)
Russian (Azbooka)
Spanish/world (Navona)
Swedish (Natur och Kultur)
Turkish (Yapi Kredi)

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

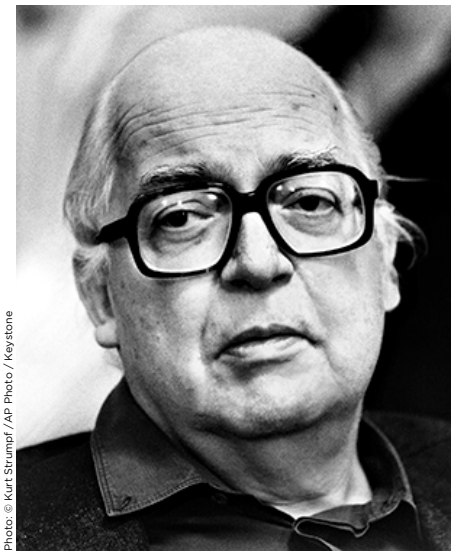


Photo: © Kurt Strumpf / AP Photo / Keystone

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.



Subject Matter
2352 pages
2021



The Plays
1584 pages
2015



The Crime Novels
992 pages
2011



His Life in Pictures
376 pages
2011



My Switzerland
256 pages
1998



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



Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt - Correspondence
240 pages
1998

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

Movie adaptations (cont'd)

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

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



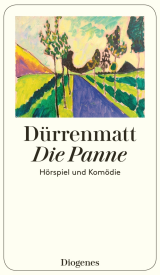
Switzerland - A Prison
80 pages
1997



Conversations 1961-1990
1296 pages
1996



The Pensioner
200 pages
1995



Traps
144 pages
1995
Movie Adaptation



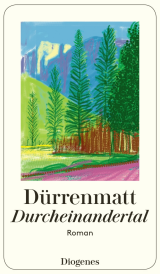
The Enormity of the Possible
144 pages
1993



Gedankenfuge
208 pages
1992



Greek Man Seeks Greek Wife
160 pages
1992
Movie Adaptation



The Vale of Confusion
176 pages
1989



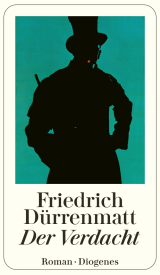
Trials
184 pages
1988



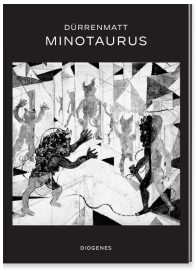
The Judge and His Hangman
128 pages
1986



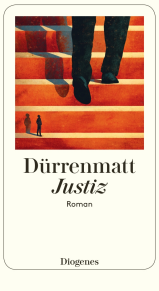
The Assignment
136 pages
1986



Suspicion
128 pages
1986



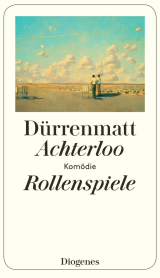
The Minotaur
56 pages
1985



Justice
376 pages
1985
Movie Adaptation



The Winter War in Tibet
192 pages
1984



Achterloo
128 pages
1983

Movie adaptations (cont'd)

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

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

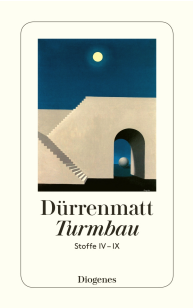
1960: Abendstunde im Spätherbst
Director: Rudolf Noelte
Cast: Ernst Schröder, Friedrich Maurer, Günter Meissner

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



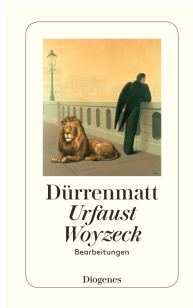
The Winter War in Tibet/ Lunar Eclipse/ The Rebel
360 pages
1981
Movie Adaptation



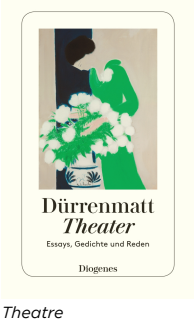
Nexus
240 pages
1980



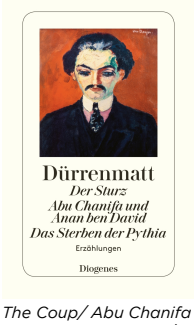
The Anabaptists
144 pages
1980
Movie Adaptation



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



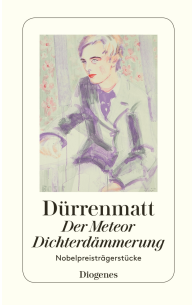
The Physicists
96 pages
1980
Movie Adaptation



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

Praise

The Pledge

»Perhaps Dürrenmatt's best work.« – Anderson / Wall Street Journal, New York

»Dürrenmatt reinterpreted the detective novel and pushed it in a new, postmodern direction, passing the baton to the likes of Umberto Eco and Paul Auster.« – Malcolm Forbes / The National Newspaper, Abu Dhabi

»A stark essay in crime and pursuit, as terse and assured in construction as the best of Simenon.« – Spectator, London

»A shocker done on the level of high art. Every word falls into place like a footstep of approaching doom.« – Newsweek

»To add to the excellence of the novel's narrative, the reader also gets Dürrenmatt's provocative thinking on the flaws of crime fiction and police behaviour.« – The Times, London

»A chilling study of an obsession that defies all reason.« – Daily Mail, London

»This spare yet potent book conjures the most striking magic, entrancing with its chills, shocks, artful delights, and even surprise lyrical wonders.« – The National, Glasgow

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

»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



King John/ Titus Andronicus
240 pages
1980
Movie Adaptation



The Dog/ The Tunnel/ Traps
112 pages
1980



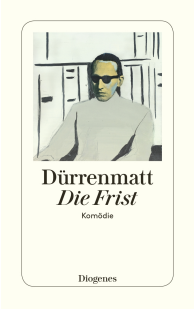
Hercules and the Augean Stables/ The Trial about the Donkey's Shadow
240 pages
1980



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



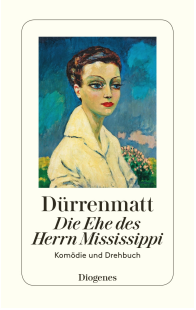
Frank V
176 pages
1980
Movie Adaptation



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



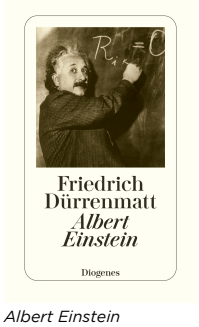
The Complete Dramatic Oeuvre
3408 pages
1980



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

Praise (cont'd)

»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