

The Visit: A Tragi-Comedy

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Dürrenmatt once wrote of himself: "I can best be understood if one grasps grotesqueness," and *The Visit* is a consummate, alarming Dürrenmatt blend of hilarity, horror, and vertigo. The play takes place somewhere in Central Europe" and tells of an elderly millionairess who, merely on the promise of her millions, swiftly turns a depressed area into a boom town. But the condition attached to her largesse, which the locals learn of only after they are enmeshed, is murder. Dürrenmatt has fashioned a macabre and entertaining parable that is a scathing indictment of the power of greed.

Friedrich Durrenmatt was born in Switzerland in 1921 and has long been considered one of the world's leading German-language playwrights. His plays have received international acclaim, with *The Visit*, *Romulus the Great*, and *The Physicists* having been performed on Broadway and in major capitals throughout the world. Dürrenmatt's concerns are timeless, but they are also the product of his Swiss vantage during the cold war: his key plays explore such themes as guilt by passivity, the refusal of responsibility, greed and political decay, and the tension between justice and freedom. Durrenmatt died in December 1990. Joel Agee is the author of two memoirs, *Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany* and *In The House Of My Fear*. His translations of Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Hans Erich Nossack's *Der Untergang* won the Helen and Kurt Wolff Prize and the Lois Roth Prize of the Modern Language Association, respectively. In 2007 he was a finalist for the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize and received the Alta National Translation for his translation of the *Selected Writings of Friedrich Dürrenmatt*. Text: Welsh, German (translation)

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..... Terms of the Tragicomic Mixture by RUBY COHN Ionesco calls *The Chairs* a tragic farce , Beckett calls his English translation of *Godot* a tragicomedy , and Dürrenmatt calls *The Visit* a tragic comedy , which he defines as a comedy that ..."