



Understanding Friedrich Durrenmatt

(Understanding Modern European and Latin American Literature)

Roger Crockett

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Roger A. Crockett's comprehensive overview of Friedrich Durrenmatt's dramatic and narrative oeuvre reveals the international importance of one of Switzerland's most talented and scandalous playwrights. Durrenmatt gained fame beyond the Swiss borders in the early 1950s with the serialized detective novel "The Judge and His Hangman" and a series of radio dramas. His worldwide acclaim, however, rests largely on two dramas that have been canonized and anthologized as 20th-century classics of the world stage: "The Visit" (1956) and "The Physicist" (1962). In "Understanding Friedrich Durrenmatt", Crockett treats the acclaimed masterworks as well as the failures, following Durrenmatt's conviction that the latter are often as revealing about an author as the former. In addition to his thorough appraisal of Durrenmatt's dramatic canon, Crockett also provides careful readings of the dramatist's prose works. This introductory volume explores the playwright's chaotic universe, where God has retreated beyond the stars and where blind chance is the real prime mover, justice is corruptible, ideologies useless and tragedy no longer possible. Yet despite the overriding pessimism of Durrenmatt's "Weltanschauung", the author argues that the playwright remains a genial master of comedy. Through the laughter he allows his reader to see that all is not lost, that there are virtues worth fighting for, and that there are still courageous Don Quixotes worthy of the title "hero". Crockett contends that as a theorist of the modern German stage, Durrenmatt stands toe to toe with Bertolt Brecht.



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