Friedrich Duerrenmatt's 'Die Stadt': Analysis and Significance of Duerrenmatt's Early Early Prose.

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FRIEDRICH DUERRENMAtt'S DIE STADT:
ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DUERRENMAtt'S EARLY PROSE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Foreign Languages

by

Judith Mary Melton
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1966
May, 1972
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Edward J. Newby for his guidance and invaluable criticism throughout the preparation of this dissertation. Sincere gratitude is also extended to Dr. Thomas Di Napoli for his interest and helpful suggestions.
ABSTRACT

This study establishes the significance of Dürrenmatt's early prose collection Die Stadt by an analysis of the nine stories of the volume and by a comparison between these early stories and Dürrenmatt's mature works. The work on Die Stadt which extends over the first ten-year period of the author's writing career coincides with and documents Dürrenmatt's artistic development.

Following a brief introduction, the study examines Dürrenmatt's creative approach, emphasizing his Weltanschauung and the methods he employs in incorporating his Weltanschauung into his works. Dürrenmatt views the present-day world as chaotic. Modern man, suffering the detrimental effects of the chaos, usually despairs. According to Dürrenmatt, however, man need not despair, if he has the courage to endure the consequences of the world by summoning strength from his inner being. Dürrenmatt's "man of courage" embodies this positive approach to the tumult of the twentieth century. The courageous individual, although he himself is a victim and incapable of ordering the relentless chaos, desists from any futile attempt to alter the chaos. Displaying rare perception, he stands back and accepts defeat, remaining defiant. The perspective the "man of courage" achieves introduces an aspect of one of Dürrenmatt's more
important concepts—the necessity for distance. Early in his career, Dürrenmatt recognized the writer's need for distance—distance from a pessimistic outlook of the contemporary world as well as the need to sustain distance in his works. The emergence of his "man of courage" indicates that Dürrenmatt himself had acquired the distance necessary to cope with the chaotic world. His unique use of the comedy as his primary art form and the satiric grotesque as a distancing technique indicates that he had found the technical means to preserve distance in his works.

The analysis of the world of man portrayed in Die Stadt clearly shows that the majority of characters illustrate a negative reaction to their worlds. They despair, lacking the distance to perceive the unyielding reality of their situations. Only one figure, the student in "Der Tunnel," chronologically the last story, exhibits certain attributes of the "man of courage." Dürrenmatt examines the despair of the remaining characters by emphasizing the wounds each character sustains in his encounter with his world. At the same time he exposes the severe limitations of man's existence.

Dürrenmatt stresses the resultant despair of three negative reactions by the individual to the philosophical, political or spiritual oriented worlds in Die Stadt. He shows the defeat of individuals who try to ignore their worlds by reason or action, and he illustrates the defeat
of those individuals who recognize the chaotic nature of
their worlds but do not have the courage to endure it.

Subsequently, a comparison between Die Stadt and
the mature works substantiates the new perspective
Dürrenmatt acquired during the early period of his career.
In contrast to Die Stadt, the treatment of the themes of
death and grace in the mature works reflect Dürrenmatt's
characteristic distancing techniques, particularly the
grotesque. In addition, a comparison delineates the
validity for Dürrenmatt's designation of Die Stadt as the
"Vorfeld" for his mature works. Not only is the term
appropriate in regard to consistent thematic material,
but also the protagonists' positive and negative reactions
in Die Stadt build the basis for the dialectic of characters
Dürrenmatt illustrates in his mature works.

The study of Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt's first prose,
not only illustrates his early treatment of theme and
character, but also delineates his rejection of despair as
man's only pose in the twentieth century—a highly significant
turning point in Dürrenmatt's artistic career.
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INTRODUCTION

The well-known Swiss dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt is a writer of great complexity. He is not only a skilled craftsman, but also a challenging writer, as the scope of his provocative, but entertaining works indicate. Although his fame rests primarily on his ingenious dramas, an early work, the collection of short stories entitled Die Stadt, is a vital and essential source of information for the serious student of Dürrenmatt. These early stories, chronologically coinciding with the formative phase of Dürrenmatt's career, illuminate the origin and synthesis of his Weltanschauung—his concern for modern-day man and his role in the twentieth century. Acknowledging the importance of this early prose, it is the intention of this study to show the significance of these early stories in Dürrenmatt's literary development, for the attitudes pertaining to twentieth century man expressed in his mature works emerge within the framework of Die Stadt. Since a discussion of Dürrenmatt would be incomplete without ascertaining the sentiments he prompts by his unorthodox methods, this chapter will not only serve as an introduction to Die Stadt, but will also briefly summarize Dürrenmatt's relationship to his critics, particularly
in regard to his most recent endeavors.

Dürrenmatt is perhaps the most well-known author among the post-war German-speaking writers. Since he began writing in 1943, he has published fourteen plays, a volume of radio plays, three novels, two mystery novels, a volume of short stories and two volumes of speeches and theoretical articles.¹ His writing has earned him many awards and literary prizes, among others the Schiller prize in 1959. In 1969, Temple University conferred an honorary Doctor of Literature degree on the Swiss-born author. Primarily a dramatist, his plays are performed in many countries of the eastern bloc.² According to recent statistics of the German Theater Guild, two of his latest plays, König Johann and Play Strindberg were among the most performed plays in the German-speaking world. Play Strindberg alone was performed 700 times in

¹Komödien I (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1963); Komödien II und Frühe Stücke (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1963); Gesammelte Hörspiele (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1964); Die Stadt (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1961); Die Wiedertäufer (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1967); Der Meteor (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1967); and Theater Schriften und Reden (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1966). These works by Dürrenmatt will be cited parenthetically in the text by the following abbreviations: Kom I; Kom II; Hörspiele; Stadt; Wiedertäufer; Meteor; and TSR.

²Many of Dürrenmatt's works have been performed in Poland, and Dürrenmatt himself has visited Poland. In an interview with Violet Ketels at Temple University in 1969, Dürrenmatt remarked that one of his greatest successes, Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon, only played well in Poland. "Friedrich Dürrenmatt at Temple University," Journal of Modern Literature, 1 (1970), p. 104. The text of this informative interview by Dürrenmatt was published in English.
thirty-three theaters during 1970.3

Although Dürrnamm is well-established as one of the leading dramatists of the post-war period, he is, nevertheless, a somewhat controversial writer. The nature of his works and his actions have many times brought him adverse criticism. Dürrnamm, however, certainly does not eschew controversy. Much of his sarcasm and many of his bizarre techniques have purposely been intended to jar his audience out of its complacency. He once remarked: "Das Schlimmste, was ich mir vorstellen kann, ist in einem Schaufenster einmal ein Buch ausgestellt zu sehen: Trost bei Dürrnamm."4 The première of his first published play, Es steht geschrieben, caused a near riot in Zürich in 1947. According to his wife, the former Lotti Geissler, Dürrnamm was enthralled by the events.5 In the late sixties he disturbed many of the learned theologians of his country by the religious views he expressed


in the drama *Der Meteor*. He recently offended the city of Berne, which had bestowed a literary prize on him, first, by inviting the Rockers, an objectionable anti-establishment youth group, to the ceremony, and secondly, by announcing that he was giving away the prize money—fifteen thousand francs—to rather controversial individuals. He gave a third of the money to a young historian, who intends to write a history of the city of Berne, which Dürrenmatt suggests would correct some of the myths concerning the city's history.

Although Dürrenmatt has many times invited adverse criticism, he has also shown that he feels he has been misunderstood by his critics. He has indicated some of his bitterness concerning critics in such pithy statements as: "Kritiker haben immer auch, nie nur recht" (TSR, 88). Or, by the statement: "Es ist noch keinem Kritiker eingefallen, dass er vielleicht nicht lesen könnte" (TSR, 88). To forestall misinterpretations of some of his methods, Dürrenmatt, as early as 1952, began publishing his major ideas in a series of theoretical essays. In addition, he has appended notes that defend or explain certain aspects of a particular work to almost every one of his major works. Murray Peppard, in his monograph on Friedrich Dürrenmatt, maintains that the failure of his play *Frank*.

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6 Ketels, pp. 99-100.

7 Ibid, pp. 91-92.
V shows a turning point in Dürrenmatt's career, and that since the premiere of that play, Dürrenmatt has more and more become his own interpreter.\footnote{Murray Peppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Twayne's World Authors Series. (New York: Twayne Publisher, Inc., 1969), p. 147.} There is no doubt that Dürrenmatt is a provocative writer. His works frequently are purposefully sarcastic, blasphemous and shocking both in content and in style.\footnote{Christian M. Jauslin in his book, Friedrich Dürrenmatt Zur Struktur seiner Dramen (Zürich: Juris-Verlag, 1964), speaks of Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy as a "Dramaturgie der Provocation," pp. 119-128.} Doubtless one of the themes most attractive to the scholars who have written about Dürrenmatt is his use of the grotesque, his method of conveying the aberrations of the modern world.\footnote{Perhaps the three most pertinent discussions of the grotesque are Reinhold Grimm, "Parodie und Groteske im Werk Dürrenmatts," in Der unbequeme Dürrenmatt, eds. R. Grimm and W. Jäggi (Basel-Stuttgart: Basilius Presse, c1962), 71-96; Peter Johnson, "Grotesqueness and Injustice in Dürrenmatt," German Life and Letters, XV, 3 (1962), 264-273; and Robert E. Helbling, "The Function of the 'Grotesque' in Dürrenmatt," Satire Newsletter, IV, 1 (Fall, 1966), 11-19. Other studies concerning the grotesque are listed by author in the bibliography.} According to critics, the grotesque atmosphere that permeates his works initially disturbs his audience, a calculated effect on Dürrenmatt's part.\footnote{One volume of essays concerning Dürrenmatt bears the title Der unbequeme Dürrenmatt; Werner Oberle who writes the introductory article, "Grundsätzliches zum Werk Friedrich Dürrenmatts," begins his essay simply: Dürrenmatt ist unbequem (p. 10). Johnson notes that Dürrenmatt's use of the grotesque has an uncomfortable effect on the audiences of his plays. Johnson, p. 264.} But, as the range of criticism
indicates, his works are not merely sensational. Robert E. Helbling suggests that Dürrenmatt's "hallmark is a multiplicity of styles,"\(^\text{12}\) and Peppard notes that Dürrenmatt achieved fame for his highly imaginative use of the stage in his plays.\(^\text{13}\)

Dürrenmatt's writings follow what he terms "die empirischen Regeln" (TSR, 93). And the development of his works consistently illustrates his experimentation. For example, in his dramas he explores and utilizes various dramatic structures and techniques. The complex structure of the play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi best illustrates the wide range of experimentation he employs. In this play Dürrenmatt has incorporated an assortment of disruptive techniques and has purposely distorted time. By way of contrast, the later play Die Physiker adheres strictly to the traditional chronological structure of drama and even to the unities of time and place.\(^\text{14}\)

In addition, Dürrenmatt continually reworks material to insure good dramatic interpretation. After starting rehearsal on Die Physiker for presentation in Munich,


\(^{13}\)Peppard, p. 137.

\(^{14}\)For the most complete work dealing with the structures of Dürrenmatt's dramas, see Jauslin's Friedrich Dürrenmatt Zur Struktur seiner Dramen. See also Edward Diller's article, "Dürrenmatt's Use of the Stage as a Dramatic Element," Symposium, XX, 3 (1966), 197-206.
he rewrote the major character's role, changing it from a male lead to a female lead. Many of his plays exist in several versions—his early play Romulus der Grosse has undergone four revisions. His recent drama Die Wiedertäufer is an up-dated version of his first published play Es steht geschrieben. The production of one of his latest dramas Play Strindberg shows how strongly Dürrenmatt feels about practical experimentation. In the program notes to this play he says:

. . . . During the work with the actors the script is partly developed and constantly changed. The final script emerges from an exhaustive use of various theatrical situations.

Although Dürrenmatt is a superb experimental dramatist, constantly concerned with the possibilities of effective stagecraft, he is also a perceptive and meticulous


16 According to Peppard, the first version of Romulus der Grosse presented in Basel on April 25, 1949, has never been published (p. 137). The second version was published in 1957 by the "Arche Verlag" in Zürich. Two subsequent versions are Romulus der Grosse, Eine ungeschichtliche Komödie, Dritte Fassung 1961 in Komödien I and Romulus der Grosse, Ungeschichtliche historische Komödie in vier Akten, Neue Fassung 1964 (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1964). The text of this study refers to the 1963 version in Komödien I.

17 For a comparison of these two plays see Margareta N. Deschner's article, "Dürrenmatt's 'Die Wiedertäufer': What the Dramatist has Learned," German Quarterly, XIV, 2 (March, 1971), 227-234.

thinker. In various interviews Dürrenmatt has spoken of his interest in philosophy and theology. As a student he completed ten semesters in these two fields.\footnote{Ketels, p. 93.} The influence of these interests can readily be seen in his works. Many critics feel that Dürrenmatt should be regarded primarily as a religious writer.\footnote{See the essays by Edward Diller, "Despair and the Paradox: Friedrich Dürrenmatt," Drama Survey, V (1966), 131-136; Robert Holzapfel, "The Divine Plan Behind the Plays of Friedrich Dürrenmatt," Modern Drama, XIII (1965), 237-246; Jenny C. Hertnienbach, "Biblical Echoes in Dürrenmatt's 'Der Besuch der alten Dame,'" Monatshefte, LVII, 4 (April-May, 1965), 145-161; Günter Waldmann, "Dürrenmatt's paradoxes Theater Die Komödie des christlichen Glaubens," Wirkendes Wort, XIV (1964), 22-35; Kurt J. Fickert, "Dürrenmatt's The Visit and Job," Books Abroad, XLI (Autumn, 1967), 389-392; and Fritz Buri, "Der 'Einfall' der Gnade in Dürrenmatt's dramatischem Werk," Der unbequeme Dürrenmatt, 36-69.} Other students of Dürrenmatt concentrate on major philosophical questions that he touches upon his works, such as the concept of justice or the philosophical question of death.\footnote{Two critics view death as one of the major themes in Dürrenmatt's works. Carl E. Carrier, "The Comedy of Death in the Early Plays of Dürrenmatt" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1962), and George E. Wellwarth, "Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch: Two Views of the Drama," Tulane Drama Review, VI, 3 (March, 1962), 14-42. Hildegard Emmel best states Dürrenmatt's view of justice in her book Das Gericht in der deutschen Literatur des 20. Jahrhundert (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1963), 151-168.} These related interests of Dürrenmatt, however, are subordinate to the primary concern in his works: modern-day man. Religious and philosophical attitudes in his works are
important in so far as they relate to his treatment of man, for consistently, Dürrenmatt has concentrated on the individual and his relationship to his world, to God and to his fellow man. The role of modern-day man is the underlying theme in the complex panorama of Dürrenmatt's works.

Dürrenmatt began his investigation of man in Die Stadt, the short stories primarily written during the years 1943-46 but not published until 1952, i.e., after extensive revision and additions. These stories include the earliest published writings of Dürrenmatt, and consequently, reveal his initial thought concerning man and his world.

Dürrenmatt began to write seriously, when he realized that he did not possess the talent to pursue a career as a painter. Wanting to free his mind of plastic images that gripped him, he turned to another means of expression. Die Stadt shows the influence of his attraction for visual art, but as he becomes more involved

22Robert Holzapfel in his dissertation, "Three Facets of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's Drama: The Way of the Individual to God--the Way of the Individual in the World--the World as Chaos," (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1965) stresses that Dürrenmatt first emphasizes God, in his dramas Es steht geschrieben, Der Blinde; he next emphasizes the individual in Romulus der Grosse, Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon and Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi and finally worldly chaos in Der Besuch der alten Dame, Frank V and Die Physiker. Although the emphasis may shift, the relationship of the individual to his world and his God is still Dürrenmatt's major concern.
with creating by means of the written word the influence recedes, although it never leaves him entirely, even in his later work.\textsuperscript{23} At the same time, an examination of the stories in \textit{Die Stadt} shows the first stage of Dürrenmatt's literary development, since it parallels the first ten year period of his career.

Although many critics have discussed \textit{Die Stadt}, the stories have never been thoroughly examined as a unit, particularly as the unit coinciding with the formative years of Dürrenmatt's career. The secondary works written about Dürrenmatt naturally concentrate on his mature works, in particular the dramas. The short stories in \textit{Die Stadt} are quickly passed over, or regarded as the early and unsuccessful attempts of the writer. The critics dealing with the total development of Dürrenmatt's career, of course, point out themes or stylistic techniques which reappear in the more mature works and suggest certain literary influences which are more discernible in these early stories. Bänziger, Brock-Sulzer and Peppard all bring out in their discussions of the stories the influences

\textsuperscript{23}Overt references to art and art figures abound in the works of Dürrenmatt. See Peter B. Gontrum's article "Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Protagonists and Antagonists in the Prose Works of Friedrich Dürrenmatt," \textit{Seminar}, I (Fall, 1965), 88-98, for the influence of Albrecht Dürer. In addition, the influence of art can be seen in the stage settings Dürrenmatt creates and in the abstract ideas he presents in visual form, i.e., grace in the form of the young girl Kurrabi in \textit{Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon}. 
on Dürrenmatt by such authors or philosophers as Kafka, Ernst Jünger or Plato. Peppard and Brock-Sulzer both stress the early approach to the use of the grotesque, a device Dürrenmatt consistently uses in his dramas. Even the author's view of the tragedy and comedy which he expresses in "Theaterprobleme" has been traced to the theater presented in the story "Der Theaterdirektor." Furthermore, many of the writers have commented on Dürrenmatt's prose style in these stories, for example, by contrasting the early expressionistic sentence structure of "Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht" with the more fluid style of the later works. Only two stories have been examined individually. Edward Diller has published a two page article delineating the religious view of the short fourteen-line story "Weihnachten." "Der Tunnel," regarded as the best story in the volume, has been thoroughly investigated by Karl Moritz in his article, "Friedrich

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27 Boyd, pp. 56-59; Peppard, p. 18.

Dürrenmatt: Der Tunnel Umarbeitung zu einem Hörspiel in einer Unterprima."\(^{29}\)

Peppard terms *Die Stadt* Dürrenmatt's "practice prose," a name that perhaps is not entirely justified.\(^{30}\)

Certainly, his earliest prose, as exemplified by "Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht," does not show the polish of his later works, but, "Der Tunnel," written in 1952 and chronologically the last story Dürrenmatt completed before the publication of *Die Stadt*, reveals the mature Dürrenmatt in all respects. Examination of the nine stories of *Die Stadt* as the document of Dürrenmatt's early career not only shows the initial unrefined attempts of the provocative writer but also reveals the emergence of a serious and significant writer, whose positive statement concerning modern man stands out among the writers of his generation. The ensuing chapters of this study will delineate the significance of *Die Stadt* in the development of Dürrenmatt's career. After a brief look at Dürrenmatt the creative artist, the study will analyze the stories of *Die Stadt* and focus on Dürrenmatt's view of modern man--the role of the individual in relationship to God and to his world. A contrast between the earliest stories of this volume and Dürrenmatt's later, mature works,

\(^{29}\) *Der Deutschunterricht*, XII, 6 (1960), 73-80.

\(^{30}\) Peppard, p. 145.
including "Der Tunnel," will help to illustrate the importance of Die Stadt in Dürrenmatt's development.
CHAPTER I

DÜRRENMATT: THE CREATIVE ARTIST

A discussion of Dürrenmatt as a creative artist is a necessary prerequisite to an investigation of Die Stadt as representing the initial period of Dürrenmatt's career, for such a discussion illuminates the facets of his overall approach to writing which develops and crystallizes during the writing of the nine short stores of Die Stadt. In examining Dürrenmatt as a creative artist, it is important, first, to establish his Weltanschauung, i.e., his interpretation of the modern world and man's role within this world, for Dürrenmatt's Weltanschauung is the basis of his creative approach. A brief summary of his ideas concerning the modern-day writer is pertinent in order to show how Dürrenmatt incorporates his Weltanschauung into his works. Important also to the understanding of Dürrenmatt as a creative artist is his view of "Distanz." It is precisely "Distanz" that Dürrenmatt achieves through the writing of the stories of Die Stadt.

Dürrenmatt is a writer of powerful imagination who readily gives in to his fancy and creates plays and stories which are filled with action, events and ideas. He creates worlds which are bizarre, grotesque and shocking, but which at the same time mirror many aspects of modern life:
Dürrenmatt's ability to portray the complexity of the modern world in his works sometimes causes him to be misunderstood and makes it difficult to delineate a consistent Weltanschauung in his writing. Early in his career, some of his critics attempted to align him with certain identifiable ideologies and philosophical tenets expressed in his works. In his essay "Theaterprobleme," written in 1954, he defends himself against those critics who identified him with labels such as "nihilist" or "existentialist":

Dann möchte ich bitten, in mir nicht einen Vertreter einer bestimmten dramatischen Richtung, einer bestimmten dramatischen Technik zu erblicken, oder gar zu glauben, ich stehe als ein Handlungsreisender irgendeiner der auf den heutigen Theatern gängigen Weltanschauungen vor der Tür, sei es als Existenzialist, sei es als Nihilist, als Expressionist oder als Ironiker, oder wie nun auch immer das in die Kompottgläser der Literaturkritik Eingemachte etikettiert ist. (TSR, 92)

Dürrenmatt stubbornly maintains that he is not propagating any particular theory, idea or doctrine, although the characters in his works may appear to illustrate aspects of popular ideas or doctrines:

Natürlich kommen in meinen Stücken auch Personen vor, die einen Glauben oder eine Weltanschauung haben, lauter Dummköpfe darzustellen, finde ich nicht interessant, doch ist das Stück nicht um ihrer Aussage willen da, sondern die Aussagen sind da, weil es sich in meinen Stücken um Menschen handelt und das Denken, das Glauben, das Philosophieren auch ein wenig zur menschlichen Natur gehört. (TSR, 93)

Dürrenmatt writes about man, his beliefs and philosophies. He believes in presenting the multiplicity of the world,
which includes the multiplicity of man's beliefs and ideas. Such a range, however, can sometimes obscure the underlying consistency of his works. The panorama of Dürrenmatt's work, particularly the plays, seems initially to defy any consistent approach to man and his relationship to his world. Nevertheless, in his works Dürrenmatt does illustrate a constant attitude toward man and his world. Although Dürrenmatt's Weltanschauung may not be summed up by a philosophical doctrine or even a philosophical system, he does have a basic viewpoint concerning the modern world and man's place in the modern world.

The world of man for Dürrenmatt includes not only the everyday world of experience, but also the distant world--the universe. In an article entitled simply "Dokument," Dürrenmatt relates that as a child the mystery of the cosmos was more attractive to him than the mundane life of his Swiss village: "Das Entfernte war wirksamer als das Unmittelbare" (TSR, 36). "Das Unmittelbare," the village, its inhabitants and even glimpses into the wider world which filtered into his vision could not compare with "das Entfernte," the mysterious inner workings of the cosmos, which he learned about from astronomy, history, myths and sagas (TSR, 36). His attraction for the physical universe, the stars and the planetary systems is readily apparent in his works. Brock-Sulzer notes that, "kein Dichter benutzt häufiger als er [Dürrenmatt] die Sterne zu Bildern."^1

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^1Brock-Sulzer, p. 30.
Dürrenmatt even portrays the universe on the stage. Two of his plays present graphic depictions of the universe: his first play *Es steht geschrieben* and a later work *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon* (*Kom II*, 53; *Kom I*, 173). In speaking of his desire to portray heaven on the stage, Dürrenmatt comments:

> Damit versuche ich zu erreichen, dass der Himmel, das Unbegreifliche, Unerforschliche, auf der Bühne Gestalt annimmt, Theatergestalt. (TSR, 106)

Dürrenmatt stresses that man cannot understand the cosmos: he must simply accept it. In the article "Dokument" he says:

> Die Welt der Erfahrung war klein, ein lappisches Dorf, nicht mehr, die Welt der Überlieferung war gewaltig, schwimmend in einem rätselhaften Kosmos ... durch nichts zu überprüfen. Man musste diese Welt hinnehmen. (TSR, 37)

All of Dürrenmatt's later references concerning the modern-day world emphasize man's inability to understand his world. The cosmic world as well as the every-day world remains alien to man: "Die Welt steht für mich als ein Ungeheures da, als ein Rätsel an Unheil, das hingenommen werden muss ..." (TSR, 123). Dürrenmatt cannot find universal unity in the world, as he says: "... ich nehme es als Chaos hin" (TSR, 123). According to Dürrenmatt, man living within this chaos can discern no order; the world remains for him a strange riddle: "Der Mensch lebt heute in einer Welt, die er weniger kennt, als wir das annehmen" (TSR, 60). Dürrenmatt points out that man suspects modern science could possibly project a picture of the world, but only the scientists
can begin to see it. For the layman, the world has no order. Dürrenmatt's attitude toward the modern world is the basic stance behind all of his writing.

The effects of such a seemingly despairing view of the modern world on the individual becomes the primary aspect in Dürrenmatt's Weltanschauung. The Dürrenmattian man finds himself in a cluttered world he cannot understand. He can project no understandable picture of his immediate world; he sees only that part of his world which presses in on him—the visible world of technology or the great monoliths of government. That which is beyond, the cosmos, remains a mystery to him. He is surrounded by a world which disrupts his life, but which he can neither order nor understand:

Der mensch versteht nicht, was gespielt wird, er kommt sich als ein Spielball der Mächte vor, das Weltgeschehen erscheint ihm zu gewaltig, als dass er noch mitbestimmen könnte; was gesagt wird, ist ihm fremd, die Welt ist ihm fremd. (TSR, 60)

The world remains incomprehensible to the individual, and he is at the mercy of the unpredictable and baffling forces around him. Nevertheless, it is the individual's task to withstand the chaos: "Der einzelne hat die Welt zu bestehen" (TSR, 63). The question is: How does the individual endure such a world? Ideologies or philosophical systems based on abstract intellectual thought have no impact on the chaos, for it resists ordering. The individual cannot change the world by such abstract means. Nor can he change his world by physical courage. Instead, the individual must
accept the chaotic state of the world. Such a position naturally can lead to despair, as many individuals in Dürrenmatt's works illustrate, but Dürrenmatt offers another possibility:

Gewiss, wer das Sinnlose, das Hoffnungslose dieser Welt sieht, kann verzweifeln, doch ist diese Verzweiflung nicht eine Folge dieser Welt, sondern eine Antwort, die er auf diese Welt gibt, und eine andere Antwort wäre sein Nichtverzweifeln, sein Entschluss etwa, die Welt zu bestehen, in der wir oft leben wie Gulliver unter den Riesen. (TSR, 123)

Dürrenmatt goes on to state how this is possible:

Auch der nimmt Distanz, auch der tritt einen Schritt zurück, der seinen Gegner einschatzen will, der sich bereit macht, mit ihm zu kämpfen oder ihm zu entgehen. (TSR, 123)

The individual can take a step back in order to evaluate his opponent. In this way he can recognize his limitations before he begins to fight.

As Deschner points out, Dürrenmatt does not name the opponent; he merely speaks of the world in general terms. His specific opponent is that aspect of the world which confronts him in crisis, the paradox he runs into headlong—the manifestations of his world, that limit his action. Dürrenmatt names the blind Duke, Akki, Übelohe and Romulus as examples of his "men of courage" (TSR, 123). The order of the world is lost to them, but they succeed at least in recognizing their ludicrous and frustrating situations.

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2Deschner, "Friedrich Dürrenmatt's Experiments with Man: An Analysis of His First Five Plays," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1967), p. 34. Subsequent references to Deschner refer to this work.
Although the chaotic world can cause the individual to despair, Dürrenmatt maintains that an individual can endure the world without despair, if he can gain distance from the overwhelming forces around him. It is this distance that allows him to recognize his own limitations in relationship to his world and to accept its chaotic nature without trying to order or to alter his world. This view of man and his world becomes the consistent approach shown in all of Dürrenmatt's mature writing. According to Dürrenmatt, such a view is the only positive attitude man can adopt in the twentieth century. In order to see how Dürrenmatt incorporates his view of man's relationship to his world in his works, it is pertinent to turn briefly to Dürrenmatt's thoughts concerning the modern creative artist. In this regard, it becomes apparent that distance is not only an important concept for the "man of courage" in Dürrenmatt's works, but that distance is a basic concept to all facets of Dürrenmatt's works.

As a creative artist, Dürrenmatt feels that it is the writer's task to capture in his works the "Mannigfaltigkeit des Rätsels, das wir Welt nennen" (TSR, 64). In the short article "Vom Sinn der Dichtung in unserer Zeit," Dürrenmatt elaborates on the task of the writer:

Was soll der Schriftsteller tun? Zuerst hat er zu begreifen, dass er in diese Welt zu leben hat. Er dichte sich keine andere ... (TSR, 63)

According to Dürrenmatt, however, the modern world is chaos, with no discernible order. Man, as well as the creative
artist, stands within this chaos and, consequently, can never hope to see its totality:

Man kann heute die Welt nur noch von Punkten aus beobachten, die hinter dem Mond liegen, zum Sehen gehört Distanz, und wie wollen die Leute denn sehen, wenn ihnen die Bilder, die sie beschreiben wollen, die Augen verkleben? (TSR, 45)

The task of the creative artist, then, is to express the chaos in concrete terms (TSR, 120). And yet, the creative artist does not have the option of placing himself outside his world. He cannot become omniscient in order to gain distance:

Die Welt ist grösser denn der Mensch, zwangsläufig nimmt sie so bedrohliche Züge an, die von einem Punkt ausserhalb nicht bedrohlich wären, doch habe ich kein Recht und keine Fähigkeit, mich ausserhalb au stellen. (TSR, 123)

Since Dürrenmatt believes that the creative artist cannot place himself outside the world, he must give up the goal of reproducing the world (TSR, 185). Without the distance necessary to recognize the shape of the world, he can never define the world. Dürrenmatt does believe it possible, however, to gain enough perspective in order to give form to the chaos that confronts the creative artist. If he cannot portray the world, he can create worlds for his characters, fictional worlds—possible worlds—which portray possible human relationships. These worlds are not attempts to portray the modern world realistically, but are only "mögliche Welten" which contain "mögliche menschliche Beziehungen" (TSR, 185).

These "possible worlds" of Dürrenmatt are only
inventions, but he feels that they can still reflect reality: "Die Fiktion muss auch die Realität in sich schliessen, die 'mögliche Welt' muss auch die 'wirkliche Welt' in sich enthalten" (TSR, 186). It remains for the audience to recognize the reality of the "possible world" the author creates: "Ich stelle mit einem Theaterstück nicht die Wirklichkeit dar, sondern für den Zuschauer eine Wirklichkeit auf."  

Dürrenmatt considers himself to be an author like the author in his radio-play Der Doppelgänger who says, "Ich bin Schriftsteller, ich stelle dar" (Hörspiele, 36). Dürrenmatt maintains that he does not try to explain the world or to predicate the truth of the world, but his critics or his audience can attempt what he forbids himself to do--to see the reality and truth of their own world reflected in the imaginary worlds he presents. In this respect Dürrenmatt denies that he is a moralist, although his audience may draw morals from his works. He considers himself to be simply an inventor of tales. But, he feels that reality and truth can be revealed to the audience obliquely, by the audience's involvement with his "possible worlds."

The creation of "possible worlds" in his works

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4Some critics have labelled Dürrenmatt a moralist, although he consistently maintains that he does not create in order to present morals. See Peppard, p. 133 and Wellwarth, p. 14.
allows Dürrenmatt to show modern man in a variety of situations. These fictional accounts of modern man's confrontation with his world show how the modern world affects the freedom of the individual, and in turn, show Dürrenmatt's audience the bitter realities of their own existence.

From the preceding discussion it is easy to see that distance is not only important for Dürrenmatt's "man of courage," but that it is also essential to the writer, who, in order to create, must first gain enough distance from the threatening picture he sees of the modern world. Very early in his career Dürrenmatt realized the need for distance—distance from his subject matter, his world. As has been shown, again and again in his theoretical writings he refers to the importance of creating enough distance, of having enough perspective. Concerning distance, Deschner notes that Dürrenmatt feels having distance from his preoccupying themes is prerequisite to being able to write at all. In the early period in his life he, like his later "man of courage," had to gain distance from despair in order to see a more positive outlook for the position of modern man. But, the need for distance did not end there. He also needed to convey the horrendous picture of man's limited position in the modern world with enough perspective, so that the picture of the world would not overwhelm and lead only to despair.

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5Deschner, p. 37.
The basic techniques Dürrenmatt adopts for maintaining distance in his works are the use of the comedy as his primary art form, the use of comic elements, and the use of the grotesque. All of these techniques allow him to state the predicament of modern man convincingly, but in such a manner that his statement is not oppressive. An examination of Dürrenmatt's works reveals that it is precisely these techniques, particularly the use of the grotesque, that mark the difference between his earliest work, the first stories of Die Stadt, and his later works, including "Der Tunnel." In her study Deschner notes that the later works present essentially the same man and the same predicament that were shown in Die Stadt, but with one importance difference—the individuals in the later works no longer need despair. Although the external situation of the individual has not changed perceptibly, Dürrenmatt in his later works is able to show an individual who has more positive options. He is able to do this because the intolerable situation of the individual is no longer stated in the same painful terms of the earlier works, an effect achieved primarily by the use of the grotesque. His means of creating distance make it possible for Dürrenmatt to speak of the chaotic world of today and its painful effects on the individual who is struggling to survive without despairing. At the same time, the incorporation of these

\[^6\text{Ibid.}\]
techniques into his works indicates that Dürrenmatt himself had gained the needed perspective in regard to his subject matter.

A brief look at Dürrenmatt's definitions of the comedy and the grotesque will help to clarify his meaning for the term "Distanz" as well as show how completely "Distanz" as a creative concept is incorporated into his works.

Dürrenmatt discusses his theories of the comedy primarily in two essays, "Theaterprobleme" and "Über die Komödie." In "Theaterprobleme" he contrasts the basic differences between the comedy and tragedy; at the same time he points out that the comedy is the only form which can depict today's world:

Die Tragödie, als die gestrengste Kunstgattung, setzt eine gestaltete Welt voraus. Die Komödie . . . eine ungestaltete, im Werden, im Umsturz begriffene, eine Welt, die am Zusammenpacken ist wie die unsrige. Die Tragödie überwindet die Distanz . . . Die Komödie schafft Distanz . . . (TSR, 120-121)

Tragedy presupposes a well-defined world, but according to Dürrenmatt the contemporary world is chaotic, without form. The modern world can only be depicted in terms that minimize its formlessness; thus, terms which lessen the threat that chaos poses. In the same paragraph Dürrenmatt defines what he means by "Distanz schaffen" with an analogy to the dirty joke:

Die Zote hat zum Gegenstand das rein Geschlechtliche, das darum, weil es das rein Geschlechtliche ist, auch
gestaltlos, distanzlos ist und, will es Gestalt werden, eben Zote wird. (TSR, 121)

Pure sexuality cannot be discussed in its own terms: therefore, the dirty joke has become the mode of expressing it. As Dürrenmatt says, the dirty joke is "die einzige Möglichkeit, die es heute gibt, anständig darüber zu reden . . ." (TSR, 121). The dirty joke, because it suggests rather than describes its subject, allows enough distance so that the subject can be tolerated. Accordingly, the creative artist's material, i.e., the world he is writing about, needs some means of expression which would allow it to be spoken about. The comedy becomes such a means of expression because it creates distance.

One of the ways the comedy is able to create distance according to Dürrenmatt is that the comedy, unlike the tragedy, stems from "Einfälle." Interpretation of this term has presented some difficulty for the critics of Dürrenmatt's writing, particularly for his English-speaking critics, since there is no precise translation for the German term. Murray Peppard occasionally translates it as "inspiration;" others have used the word "invention," or "notion." Helbling gives perhaps the best definition of the term:

While there is no exact English equivalent for the German term, it could be translated as 'invention,' but even this approximation should be understood in

7Peppard, p. 123.
Dürrenmatt discusses its meaning in relationship to the Greek dramatist Aristophanes. Aristophanes did not base his works on myths, the subject matter well-known to the Greek audience, as did the tragedians of his time. Instead, he invented his plots. They stemmed from his own "Einfälle," and by such means he was able to create enough distance to present works that mirrored his time. In his discussion of "Einfälle," Dürrenmatt says:

Es sind Einfälle, die in die Welt wie Geschosse einfallen (um ein Bild zu brauchen), welche, indem sie einen Trichter aufwerfen, die Gegenwart ins Komische umgestalten: mit dem Reich der Vögel ist das tollkühne Sizilienabenteuer des Alkibiades gemeint, an dem Athen zu Grunde ging. (TSR, 133)

On various occasions Dürrenmatt has also discussed the basic "Einfälle" for two of his plays: Der Besuch der alten Dame and Romulus der Grosse. In an interview with Horst Bienek, he talks about the impetus for the drama Der Besuch der alten Dame:


Peter Wyrisch points out that the "Einfall" for Romulus der Grosse occurred to Dürrenmatt on the same day he destroyed

8 Helbling, Introduction to Die Physiker, p. xiii.
9 Bienek, p. 107.
the partially completed manuscript for the play "Der Turm von Babel." On his way to the village Schernelz to buy some milk, Dürrenmatt remembered that the last emperor of Rome raised chickens. According to Wyrisch, this thought led to the writing of his play about the fate of Romulus, Dürrenmatt's emperor who fusses with his chickens while his empire falls. From these two examples, it is easy to see that Dürrenmatt is led by his imagination. In speaking about the writing of the play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi Dürrenmatt states:

Ich wagte es, mich meinen Einfälle hinzugeben, denn es ist eine meiner künstlerischen Überzeugungen, dass sich ein Schriftsteller vor allem dann der Welt aussetzt, wenn er es wagt, sich seinen Einfällen auszusetzen . . . Ich will gleich gestehen, dass ich nicht wusste Wohin ich zielte, als ich den "Mississippi" zu schreiben unternahm. (TSR, 240-41)

Led by his "Einfälle," Dürrenmatt constructs imaginary worlds which reveal to the audience the paradoxes of the modern world, and he lays bare for them the world's frightening reality. As has been shown, his comedies are not attempts to duplicate reality: "Ich glaube, dass Wirklichkeit an sich nie erkennbar ist, sondern nur ihre Metamorphosen." Rather, his comedies are comedies in the sense of Aristophenes. They are written about the contemporary world, but in terms which achieve distance. As

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Dürrenmatt says of Aristophanes:

Da sich seine Komödien in der Gegenwart abspielen, schafft er Distanz, und ich glaube, dass das für eine Komödie wesentlich ist. Daraus wäre zu schliessen, dass ein Zeitstück nur eine Komödie im Sinne des Aristophanes sein kann: der Distanz zuliebe, die nun einmal in ihm zu schaffen ist, denn einen anderen Sinn als diesen kann ich mir für ein Zeitstück gar nicht denken. (TSR, 136)

Dürrenmatt begins his argument for the comedy by contrasting the differences between it as an art form and the tragedy, building his discussion on the two forms as they were used by the Greeks. Aristophanes' method, the comedy that is a "Zeitstück" based on "Einfall," becomes for Dürrenmatt the only possible method for the modern writer. The world of today is too formless to be expressed in the terms of a tragedy, a "form" which overcomes distance. The comedy is, above all, the means that allows enough distance to give form to the twentieth century world. However, the question arises: what belongs in a comedy? In the recent interview with Ketels, Dürrenmatt speaks again of what constitutes a comedy:

Dürrenmatt: Comedy and tragedy, they are old concepts. A comedy is funny and a tragedy is sad . . . These are old concepts which have long ago become useless. . . . I call a piece comedy in the old sense of Dante's Divine Comedy: comedy is simply play and awareness that it is simply play, that it is not divine, that it generates a feeling of alienation.12

For Dürrenmatt comedy is more than the opposite of tragedy in the traditional sense of the terms. Comedy, as Dürrenmatt

12Ketels, p. 95.
defines it, can encompass many things: "I call my play
simply theater piece. And to that belongs fun and laughter
and anything you wish." Comedy is the mode of expression
of the author. It is his play--the worlds he creates from
"Einfälle." For Dürrenmatt this means not only all the
elements of comedy, but also the elements of the tragic,
for the tragic is part of the world he is describing through
his means of expression--the comedy.

Although Dürrenmatt feels that the form of the
tragedy is too restrictive to convey the chaos of the modern
world, he nevertheless believes that the tragic can be
expressed by the modern-day comedy. In the essay
"Theaterprobleme" he notes: "Doch ist das Tragische immer
noch möglich, auch wenn die reine Tragödie nicht mehr
möglich ist" (TSR, 122). Ill, whose death is demanded by
a malicious old lady and whose execution is carried out
by a group of greedy old men, is a tragic figure because he
accepts the justice that befalls him as commensurate with
his sins. Ill is able to accept his guilt, although his
repentance and the acknowledgment of his death as atonement
for his guilt in no way affect the order of his world. On
the contrary, the completion of his execution only plunges
his executioners into guilt. As Dürrenmatt says: "Wir
können das Tragische aus der Komödie heraus erzielen,
hervorbringen als einen schrecklichen Moment, als einen

13 Ibid.
sich öffnenden Abgrund . . ." (TSR, 122-123). Such tragic moments are an extremely important part of Dürrenmatt's play and are achieved within the comedy.

Dürrenmatt employs stylistic techniques to further create distance. His conception of the comedy is flexible enough to allow distancing techniques within the form--techniques which center around his deft use of comic elements. Dürrenmatt uses almost every type of comic effect in the fantastic worlds he creates in his dramas. He exploits both physical and verbal comedy to achieve distance. The plays are filled with a wide variety of slapstick and parodistic scenes. The welcoming committee of Güllen must use one top hat which is rapidly passed around to each speaker. Much of the comedy of the first act of Die Physiker is blatant slapstick. The inspector pursues his investigation of the corpse amidst interruptions by the madmen popping in and out of doors. In some instances there is repetitive action which provides a humorous effect. Romulus der Grosse opens with the entrance of Spurius Titus Mamma who has traveled a great distance to bring the news of battle to Romulus. Staving off sleep, he utters the disastrous statement, "Das römische Weltreich kracht zusammen!" (Kom I, 12), and demands to see the emperor, only to be told that he will have to go through channels and perhaps he can see Romulus in a few days. Before the end of the first act, however, he manages to see Romulus but learns to his dismay that the emperor chooses to ignore his news. In the third
act of the play the assassination attempt on Romulus' life parodies the death of Caesar, particularly since it takes place on the Ides of March. At the same time the scene takes on aspects of a farce, since the would-be-assassins all hide in the bedroom of Romulus—in the closet, behind the curtain, under the beds.

Aside from the pointed and sarcastic retorts prevalent in the dialogue of his characters, Dürrenmatt's use of verbal humor includes entire scenes which have double-edged meanings, individual examples of the double entendre and parodistic wordplay. Several critics have commented on the double meaning of the vegetable woman's speech in Es steht geschrieben. Many of Dürrenmatt's choices of names for characters and places in his works are good examples of the double entendre. "Güllen," for instance, means liquid manure. Dürrenmatt parodies well-known

14P. 38, Komödien II: the vegetable woman is hawking her heads of lettuce, suggesting the impending beheading. See Beda Allemann, "Es steht geschrieben," in Das deutsche Drama, vol. II, Benno von Wiese, ed. (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1960), p. 435; and Jauslin, p. 35. Dürrenmatt's most ambitious experiment with language involving a double meaning is to be found in the play Der Blinde. Im Blinden ging es mir darum, dem dramatischen Ort das Wort entgegenzustellen, das Wort gegen das Bild zu richten... Der dramatische Ort ist der gleiche, aber durch das Spiel, das man dem Blinden vorspielt, wird er ein Doppeltes, ein Ort, den der Zuschauer sieht, und ein Ort, an welchem sich der Blinde glaubt (TSR, 106). The play, however, was not successful, and Dürrenmatt felt compelled to withdraw the production rights.

quotations from many authors, including Schiller and Hölderlin. Dürrenmatt also incorporates stage devices and disruptive dramatic techniques to provide humorous effects. In the play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi, Übelohe, in order to introduce himself, calls the audience, on its way out during an intermission, back into the theater. During the play one character enters through a large grandfather clock, and many characters enter through windows. The play begins with the assassination of St. Claude who immediately revives to give the first speech of the drama. According to him, his death was shown first, so that, "eine der schlimmsten Szenen ist dann gleich vorweggenommen" (Kom I, 93). These techniques serve to create distance within a play because they disrupt the continuity of action. They distract the audience. They are in many ways reminiscent of the Romanticist's use of irony to destroy the illusion, or Brecht's techniques for alienation. It must be noted, however, that Brecht and Dürrenmatt use such disruptive techniques for entirely different purposes from the Romanticist's. But even Dürrenmatt and Brecht differ in the intent of these techniques. As Brock-Sulzer points out, Dürrenmatt was interested in creating distance not


17Allemann, p. 425.
alienation."\(^1\) Brecht wanted his audience alert, critical and uninvolved with the story, so that they could readily judge critically what steps man could take to alter the injustices his plays presented. Dürrenmatt, on the other hand, prefers a naive audience, an audience that easily accepts any disruptive techniques as part of the play. Dürrenmatt considers theater as performing a critical function, in that theater can give man insights into the reality of his world.\(^2\) But he feels that the audience only realizes the critical aspects of a drama after reflecting upon the conflicts of the drama. For this reason, Dürrenmatt compares his type of comedy to a mousetrap: "Die Komödie ist eine Mausefalle, in die das Publikum immer wieder gerät und immer noch geraten wird" (\textit{TSR}, 124).\(^3\) According to Dürrenmatt, the fable of a drama transforms the spectators into "eine Masse, die . . . angegriffen, verführt, überlistet werden kann, sich Dinge anzu hören, die sie sich sonst nicht so leicht anhören würde" (\textit{TSR}, 124). Dürrenmatt's whimsical use of comic elements may destroy the illusion on the stage, but it does not destroy the naiveté of the audience. On the contrary, they create distance for the audience, so

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\(^1\) Brock-Sulzer, \textit{Der unbequeme Dürrenmatt}, p. 126.

\(^2\) Ketels, p. 92.

\(^3\) See Everette M. Ellestad's article "Friedrich Dürrenmatt's 'Mausefalle,'" concerning this aspect of Dürrenmatt's dramatic theory. \textit{German Quarterly}, XLIII, 4 (November, 1970), 770-779.
that the audience does not realize at the time the importance of what is being said. The real art of the dramatist, according to Dürrenmatt, can be summarized by the following quotation: "Die Kunst des Dramatikers besteht darin, das Publikum erst nachträglich zum Nachdenken zu bringen" (TSR, 221). In this respect, Dürrenmatt's use of the grotesque is particularly effective, for Dürrenmatt's grotesque scenes with their accompanying humorous effects first entertain, but in reflection provoke chilling revelations.

The grotesque is one of the most persuasive techniques Dürrenmatt employs in his works. Dürrenmatt's visual mind perceives the modern world in a series of grotesque images. As he says in the essay "Theaterprobleme":

Unsere Welt hat ebenso zur Groteske geführt wie zur Atombombe, wie ja die apokalyptischen Bilder des Hieronymus Bosch auch grotesk sind. Doch das Groteske ist nur ein sinnlicher Ausdruck, ein sinnliches Paradox, die Gestalt nämlich einer Ungestalt, das Gesicht einer gesichtslosen Welt . . . (TSR, 122)

In another place he states: "Das Groteske ist eine der grossen Möglichkeiten, genau zu sein" (TSR, 137). Many critics have discussed Dürrenmatt's use of the grotesque, and almost all of them have based their discussions on Wolfgang Kayser's treatment of the theme in his book, Das Grotesk Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung. Kayser observes that three periods of literary history have in common the use of the grotesque: the sixteenth century, the era between Sturm und Drang and the Romantik and,
lastly, the twentieth century. He characterizes all of these periods as periods of social chaos, when grotesque images seem to convey the temper of the times. Kayser attempts to delineate all facets of the grotesque and in the last chapter sets forth some of the general characteristics concerning the theme. He characterizes the grotesque partially as follows:

Das Groteske ist die entfremdete Welt . . . Dazu gehört dass, was uns vertraut und heimisch war sich plötzlich als fremd und unheimlich enthüllt. Es is unsere Welt, die sich verwandelt hat.23

It is the ordinary and familiar world, but seen out of focus, so to speak. Robert Helbling, in his discussion of Dürrenmatt's treatment of the theme, has summed up the grotesque as follows:

The original forms of our sensory impressions are destroyed, and reshaped as it were by combining disparate, though known, elements into alien, yet recognizable forms . . . The grotesque structure may also consist of an inversion of known functions; inanimate things come to life, human beings being reduced to automata.24

The grotesque is the portrait of the alien world, the estranged world, and most important for Dürrenmatt, it 's the means to express the chaos of the twentieth century in an exact way.

For Dürrenmatt, however, the grotesque is also a

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23 Ibid., p. 198.
primary method of creating and sustaining distance. In his discussion of the grotesque, Dürrenmatt recognizes two distinct types of the grotesque—attitudes which are analogous to Kayser's categories of the fantastic and satiric grotesque:25

Es ist wichtig, einzusehen, dass es zwei Arten des Grotesken gibt: Groteskes einer Romantik zuliebe, das Furcht oder absonderliche Gefühle erwecken will (etwa indem es ein Gespenst erscheinen lässt), und Groteskes eben der Distanz zuliebe, die nur durch dieses Mittel zu schaffen ist. (TSR, 135)

The latter type, which corresponde to Kayser's satiric grotesque, is a technique for creating distance. It is the grotesque combined with comic elements which together provide an uncomfortable effect:

Sie [die Kunst des Groteskes] ist eine Angelegenheit des Witzes und des scharfen Verstandes . . . nicht dessen, was das Publikum unter Humor versteht, einer bald sentimental, bald frivolen Gemütlichkeit. Sie ist unbequem, aber nötig . . . (TSR, 137)

It is important to define Dürrenmatt's use of the term "Humor." In the notes to Der Besuch der alten Dame, Dürrenmatt speaks of Claire as possessing "Humor":

Die Dame hat Humor, das ist nicht zu übersehen, da sie Distanz zu den Menschen besitzt als zu einer käuflichen Ware, Distanz auch zu sich selber, eine seltsame Grazie ferner, einen bösartigen Charme. (TSR, 182)

He does not mean the English equivalent humor, as one translator indicates.26 Rather, he means that Claire has

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25 Kayser, p. 203.

26 Paul Kurt Ackermann, ed. Der Besuch der alten Dame (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, c1957), p. 188.
the intellectual objectivity to perceive the humorous or ironic aspects of a serious situation. For Dürenmatt "Humor" implies intellectual distance—in-tellectual self-realization. His use of the satiric grotesque provokes self-realization on the part of his audiences. For Dürenmatt the grotesque is the apt method to express the contemporary time precisely because it allows his audiences critical distance:

Das Groteske ist eine äusserste Stilisierung, ein plötzliches Bildhaftmachen und gerade darum fähig, Zeitfragen, mehr noch, die Gegenwart aufzunehmen, ohne Tendenz oder Reportage zu sein. (TSR, 136)

Again and again illusions are carefully drawn in Dürenmatt's works, only to be undercut by the grotesque. Among the plays for example, two scenes in Der Besuch der alten Dame stand out as truly grotesque. Early in the play, when Clair and Ill meet in the forest, Ill, in attempting to recapture the feeling of their youthful love, is continually jarred back to the reality of their ages whenever he touches Claire, for he discovers in place of her pliant youthful skin the unyielding surfaces of her artificial limbs. At one point he even places his hand on a sharp protuberance and recoils in pain, while Claire casually explains that it is only the hinge of her prosthesis. According to Dürenmatt, such a scene, the "Annäherungsversuch eines alten Mannes an eine alte Frau," is a difficult scene and one that needs to be expressed in terms that would not make it painful (TSR, 180). For this reason,
too, he chooses to have the trees of the forest played by the citizens of Güllen. Ill's trial scene discloses Dürrenmatt's masterful use of the grotesque. Led by the mayor, the townspeople of Güllen sentence Ill to death in the presence of a mass of reporters by using exalted phrases which carry a double meaning. Ill, the townspeople and the audience understand the full import of the scene— that the townspeople are justifying their impending murder of Ill. The news reporters do not. As the tension of the scene increases, the Gülleners begin to chant their unanimous support of the verdict, repeating the words of the mayor. The gravity of their actions elicits the horrified cry from Ill, "Mein Gott!" (Korn I, 342). At this point, however, a cameraman interrupts, exclaiming that because of a mechanical failure the last of the speeches were not recorded:


Der Bürgermeister: Noch einmal?

Der Kameramann: Für die Filmwochenschau.

Der Bürgermeister: Aber natürlich. (Korn I, 342)

Quickly and easily, the Gülleners repeat exactly their condemnation of Ill before the cameras, reinforcing their crassness. Unfortunately, the cameraman cannot get Ill to repeat his "Freudenschrei 'Mein Gott'" (Korn I, 343). Treated in such a way, the trial for Ill's life becomes ludicrous, robbing Ill's death of its meaning. At the same
time the audience is not allowed to dwell very long on the implications of the scene. By the repetition of the sequence the dramatic tension of the chorale between the mayor and the townspeople is dispelled for the audience just as it is for Ill.

Although the grotesque is one of the most characteristic aspects of Dürrenmatt's works, it is also the most disturbing aspect of his works. Dürrenmatt's use of the grotesque disturbs his audiences because he incorporates it in the treatment of even his most serious themes, as the discussion of the last scene aptly shows. His method presents critical themes such as death almost callously and flippantly, a technique which has an uncomfortable effect on his audience, as Johnson points out.27 But, Dürrenmatt maintains that serious themes must be stated in terms of the grotesque, because otherwise they would be too painful. Precisely because the effect is uncomfortable, the grotesque provides the necessary distance for such themes.

Dürrenmatt's means of creating distance--the use of the comedy as his basic art form, which includes the use of disrupting comic elements, and the use of the satiric grotesque--become characteristic of his mature works. These distancing techniques are the terms Dürrenmatt employs in reflecting the reality of the modern world in his writing. His use of these techniques also indicates the perspective

27Johnson, p. 264.
he himself had acquired. Although his view of the modern world always remains the same—the modern world is chaos—the chaos becomes tolerable. By gaining some perspective in his outlook and by finding the means to preserve this distance in incorporating his view into his works, Dürrennatt was able to produce his masterpieces, the series of works that stunned his audiences. In his earliest work, on the other hand, in particular the initial short stories of the volume *Die Stadt*, Dürrennatt does not exhibit the necessary distance. He has not yet refined the means of maintaining distance. The work in *Die Stadt* can be designated as the "Vorfeld" for his later work and is distinguished from the later work by the all-important concept "Distanz."

In the notes appended to *Die Stadt*, Dürrennatt himself refers to the material of *Die Stadt* as the "Vorfeld" for his later writing. Dürrennatt seems to base his reference on the chronological inception of the short stories:

> Die hier vorliegende Prosa ist in ihrer Anlage zwischen den Jahren 1943-46 entstanden, also im Wesentlichen vor den Dramen, deren Vorfeld sie sind. (*Stadt, 197*)

He also points out, however, that he worked on these stories until their publication date in 1952, after his initial success as a dramatist.28 *Die Stadt*, then, reflects not just the early period from 1943-1946,29 but roughly a ten

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28 For the chronology of Dürrennatt's writing, see Urs Jenny, *Friedrich Dürrennatt, in Dramatiker des Weltheaters*, vol. 6 (Hannover: Friedrich Verlag, 1968), pp. 7-9.

29 In 1946 Dürrennatt completed his first drama that was produced, *Es steht geschrieben.*
year period of the author's early career, and specifically the formative period of his writing career. Although Dürrenmatt himself does not elaborate on the stories as the "Vorfeld" for the dramas, many of the critics who have dealt with his work have indicated in what ways the stories may be seen as the "Vorfeld" for his dramas. Murray Peppard sums up their importance as follows:

The book is clearly written in an immature style, but for the student of Dürrenmatt it is important for two reasons: first, for the influences that are evident and not yet completely assimilated; and second, for the basic viewpoints which emerge in these early works and continue, often in more fully developed and sophisticated form, throughout all of his artistic career.30

Peppard, Brock-Sulzer, Bänziger and Deschner among others have all dealt with various literary influences apparent in the stories, or with themes and techniques which point toward the dramas. Certainly, these stories are important in regard to initial treatment of the thematic material of Dürrenmatt's works, as will be explored in this study; however, when the stories are considered as representing the first stage of the author's development, they take on added significance. Adolph D. Klarmann notes that Dürrenmatt considers these stories Dürrenmatt's "early attempts to come to grips with himself."31 Brock-Sulzer suggests they show "eine überwundene Stufe innerhalb dieses Werks."32

30Peppard, p. 17.
32Brock-Sulzer, Dürrenmatt Stationen Seines Werkes. Subsequent references refer to this work by Brock-Sulzer, p. 226.
Both authors apparently base their remarks on Dürrenmatt's own description of the stories, as "ein notwendiger Versuch, mit sich selbst etwas auszufechten, oder, wie ich vielleicht besser, nachträglich, sage, einen Kampf zu führen, der nur dann einen Sinn haben kann, wenn man ihn verlor" (Stadt, 198). The direction indicated in Die Stadt was the wrong direction for Dürrenmatt. To continue, he had to find a new direction. Such a statement would indicate that a comparison between his later work and Die Stadt would show a change in perspective, a positive change. If one considers "Der Tunnel" as one of his mature works, this change in perspective becomes apparent within the volume of short stories themselves. As Brock-Sulzer points out, the volume indicates "eine überwundene Stufe innerhalb dieses Werks."33 Die Stadt, then, shows not only early characteristics of the author, but shows his development from an immature to a mature writer.

Giving in to despair was the battle Dürrenmatt had to lose, if he were to win. Peppard has characterized Die Stadt as the "dialectics of despair," through which Dürrenmatt had to pass before he was able to "free himself sufficiently to achieve the grotesque humor and the comic effects of his mature works."34 Exploring the predicament of modern man in these stories, Dürrenmatt illustrates how easily man's circumstances can end in despair. Despair, however, is a

33Ibid.
34Peppard, p. 23.
dead end for man. As Dürrenmatt himself implies in the notes to _Die Stadt_, he had to overcome this tendency toward despair. He had to find another perspective from which to view man's predicament. At this time in his career he had to achieve distance from the attitude that despair is the only characteristic of man's condition in the twentieth century. _Die Stadt_ reflects this change in the author's Weltanschauung.

Dürrenmatt's initial impetus for writing these stories is the first indication that these stories would reveal a change in the author's perspective. Dürrenmatt intended to pursue a career as a painter, but during his student years he realized that he lacked the talent. In an interview with Martin Esslin, he speaks of this realization as a "crisis," yet a "crisis" which led him to a writing career. In the notes to _Die Stadt_, he comments on those years:

_Ich versuchte in jener Zeit, nachdem ich mich, als Zeichner, nur im Bilde wohl gefühlt hatte (eine für mich nicht unbeträchtliche Gefahr), . . . mir vom Bilde, das mich besass, eine . . . Distanz zu schaffen, eine Distanz, in der ich wenigstens etwas atmen konnte._ (Stadt, 197)

At that time Dürrenmatt felt possessed by the attraction art had for him. The stories of _Die Stadt_ are the result of his efforts to free himself from art by the study of philosophy. Writing became a new creative outlet for him,

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helping him to achieve the necessary distance from art, but at the same time involving him in questions of man and his world which the study of philosophy had posed.

In directing his attention from one form of artistic expression—visual art—to another form—verbal art—Dürrenmatt had to adjust his artistic approach. He did this by immersing himself in the study of philosophy, which led him to a wide range of metaphysical and theological questions. In his attempt to answer or at least to sort through the essential questions of man's existence, he was able to define his own attitudes concerning the contemporary milieu.

The stories of Die Stadt show the influence of Dürrenmatt's philosophical studies, but the philosophical themes Dürrenmatt incorporates into the stories are always delineated in terms of the individual and his position in the world. The very first story, "Weihnachten," expresses this tension in a mere fourteen lines:

Calling to mind Nietzsche's tenet that God is dead, Dürrenmatt shows the stultifying experience of a man confronted with this thought, a man totally out of contact, physically and mentally with his world. It is interesting to note that Dürrenmatt employs five of the six senses to illustrate the total lack of contact this man experiences with his world. Although he is provoked to scream out against such a world, he does not admit despair. He simply says, "Ich ging weiter." This early protagonist expresses the dogged stubbornness of many of Dürrenmatt's later heroes, and even Dürrenmatt himself in search of a means to withstand a chaotic world. The portrayal of an alienated individual who is not ready to give in to his intolerable world, however, is only the beginning. The hero of the last story, "Der Tunnel," achieves the desired goal: a way to live and die without despairing. The remaining characters in the volume all despair from the effects of their worlds. Although they resort to a variety of measures to alleviate the pressures of their incomprehensible and alienating worlds, in the end they succumb to despair. But this is not the case with the student in "Der Tunnel" for he is able to achieve some insight into his situation—he acquires some distance from the despair his condition warrants. This

change in outlook reflects the author's change in perspective. It illustrates his basic idea that the condition of modern man can be viewed optimistically.

Reflecting many ideas that stem from his interest in philosophy, Dürrenmatt delineates in the stories of Die Stadt several of man's interpretations concerning the composition of the world and the role of God. Basically he presents man trying to understand his world in one of three ways—politically, philosophically or spiritually. He may show a protagonist who is confronted with an amorphous state that challenges his existence. Or, he may show a character who must come to grips with his own religious or philosophical beliefs. Such an orientation reveals the limited capacity of man to understand the world.

Focusing on individuals who face a crisis in their encounter with the world, Dürrenmatt defines the limitations of man. He consistently shows a protagonist, who despite his actions, suddenly finds himself on the edge of a precipice, staring into the abyss opening at his feet. The image of the abyss is very prevalent in the works of Dürrenmatt, particularly in these early stories, and may reflect his early preoccupation with Nietzsche. In Die Stadt the image of the abyss accompanies the moment of crisis in which the individual experiences frightening

37Dürrenmatt also employs the image of the abyss in speaking of the tragic in "Theaterprobleme" (TSR, 122-123).
insights into the nature of his existence. Dürenmatt's "man of courage" in such a crisis has the ability to step back, to accept his fate consciously, admitting his defeat. He gains spiritual freedom, even if he cannot avoid the abyss. The others, however, stand paralyzed, incapable of reaching for freedom. These individuals react negatively to the effects of their worlds. They do not display the courage of Dürenmatt's positive figures. Within Die Stadt only the student in "Der Tunnel" shows the reaction of the "man of courage"—the protagonist, who by recognizing his limitations can, despite overwhelming odds, endure without despairing.

In the attempt to present Dürenmatt's new perspective that emerges within Die Stadt, the remaining chapters of this study will examine the world of man as Dürenmatt portrays it in his early prose. First, considering the "possible worlds" Dürenmatt creates in these stories, and then the individual's negative and positive reactions to these "possible worlds," this study delineates Dürenmatt's rejection of despair as the only condition of modern man. Subsequently, a comparison of Dürenmatt's earliest work and his mature work will illustrate the

38Similar to Schiller, Dürenmatt emphasizes man's freedom in his tragic characters, although the Dürenmattian hero is drawn in an entirely different context from that of Schiller. In the speech held on November 9, 1959, Dürenmatt discusses Schiller, stressing the unsuitability of Schiller's mode of tragedy for the modern author (TSR, 214-233).
importance of distance for the author's writing, both in relationship to his Weltanschauung and to the thematic material prevalent to both phases of his writing career. Thus, the study establishes the significance of Die Stadt for the development of Dürrenmatt's artistic career.
experiences in the head-on clash with his world. Such settings becloud his thinking and obscure his vision. In modern man's attempts to achieve understanding, paradoxically, he only becomes more confused, and even more at odds with his world.

The worlds which confront man in these stories are essentially poetic projections of abstractions. As has been shown, Dürrenmatt was interested in clarifying his ideas with respect to man and his position in the modern world. For this reason, he experiments in these stories with the effects of some established ideas and attitudes concerning man and his world which arose from his philosophical studies. He concentrates on ideas that man has advanced in interpreting his world. For example, in the short story "Die Stadt," Dürrenmatt depicts a situation based on the cave parable of Plato's Republic, characterizing man's attempts to understand his world by his powers of reasoning. Murray Peppard comments on the allegorical nature of two other stories, "Der Hund," and "Der Theaterdirektor."

The effects of worlds based on abstractions on the life of the individual stress how limited man's efforts are in trying to comprehend his world. In those cases in which the individual tries to endure his world by adopting

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1See Chapter I, p. 42ff.

2In the notes to Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt specifically states that he was influenced by Plato (Stadt, 197).

3Peppard, p. 19.
a philosophical position, his efforts are futile. No encompassing idea can explain his world to him, nor can any tenet help to mitigate the effects of his world. Similarly, the individual's attempts to withstand a world which represents an abstract idea, such as power, end in total frustration. Understanding is beyond the scope of the characters in this volume. The individual ends in despair, defeat and alienation. According to the author, it is only when the individual accepts the severe limitations on his existence that he can possibly find a way out of his despair, as is illustrated in the story "Der Tunnel," the only story which does not show a man reduced to despair, yet does show a man defeated.

The author is primarily concerned with three divisions of man's thought concerning his world--the philosophical, the political and the spiritual. Orienting the worlds of the stories in one of these three ways, Dürrenmatt is able to delve into some aspects of man's interpretations of his world. In these stories he shows many facets of man's delineations for the world. "Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht," for example, show divergent and contradictory views of man's interpretation of God. These stories, however, represent only a partial consideration of man's spiritual relationship to his world. By presenting man's endangered freedom in a variety of treatments, Dürrenmatt focuses on the restricted position of modern man.

The author's penchant for illustrating several
fictional accounts of man's relationship to his God, his cosmic world or his immediate world provides the unity of the volume. The superficial aspects of the stories give an impression of contradiction, as Brock-Sulzer suggests in her discussion of the volume. It is only by examining the volume as a whole that the apparent contradiction is resolved by the actual unity of the material, i.e., the investigation of man's philosophical, political, and religious relationship to his world. Examining man's position in regard to his world in this way reveals an important aspect of Dürrenmatt's creative approach, which he terms "writing dialectically." Dürrenmatt says that he thinks dialectically and that he can only tell the story of the world dialectically. He believes that he can only portray the reality of modern life by "showing the other side," i.e., by creating characters who show contrastive positions to one issue, or by creating stories that "take the worst possible turn." Dürrenmatt does not try to reproduce reality, but he believes he can suggest it by showing the paradoxes, the contradictions of modern life. He creates in his works a dialectical arrangement of possibilities which presents the reader with an impression of reality. The stories of Die Stadt show this dialectic arrangement. When examined

5Ketels, pp. 92-95.
6Ibid. See Chapter IV for Dürrenmatt's dialectic arrangement of characters, pp. 140-142.
as a whole, they illuminate the bitter reality of the limitations of modern man.

In order to see the dialectical framework of the collection, it is necessary to look briefly at the specific worlds Dürrenmatt creates in these stories and to examine the underlying ideas which each world encompasses. Three stories—"Das Bild des Sisyphos," "Die Falle," and "Die Stadt"—illustrate possibilities of man's philosophical relationship with his world. "Der Theaterdirektor" and "Die Stadt" point out man's relationship with modern, totalitarian governments. Five of the stories—"Weihnachten," "Der Folterknecht," "Pilatus," "Der Hund," and "Der Tunnel"—emphasize man's spiritual relationship to his world.

The three stories which pertain to man's philosophical outlook deal with two thoughts man can adopt in trying to endure his world—nihilism, and Plato's idea that man has the ability to rationally understand his world. In reference to nihilism, Dürrenmatt shows individuals who try to cope with the chaos of their world by clinging to nihilistic beliefs. The second idea is illustrated by an individual who feels that his intellect will guide him to an understanding of his world.

In the two stories "Das Bild des Sisyphos" and "Die Falle," originally titled "Der Nihilist" (Stadt, 197), Dürrenmatt constructs worlds in which he explores the possibility of nihilism as an answer to the world. Each
story concerns an individual who tries to exist in his world by adhering to a nihilistic creed. Both fail miserably. "Die Falle" shows a self-styled nihilist who leads himself into a trap because the goal of his nihilism—death, i.e., ultimate oblivion—turns out to be a false goal. All of his actions are directed toward his own death, but eventually he must admit that his goal presents no comfort for him. Dürrenmatt vividly points this out in a dream sequence, which, at the same time, graphically portrays the idea of nihilism. In the dream the nihilist finds himself in a state totally removed from the world of man, but the great emptiness he experiences does not console him as he had anticipated; on the contrary, it overwhelms him:

Er stand im Leeren. Er taumelte ... Nun war er allein. Er stieg weiter, mühsam, weil das Leere ihn verwirrte. Er dachte, dass es besser wäre, sich in völliger Finsternis zu bewegen, da die sonderbare Durchsichtigkeit der Nacht seine Bewegungen lähmte ... Er bemühte sich, seine Gedanken auf etwas zu lenken. Er versuchte, seinen Leib zu beobachten und sich so an einen Gegenstand zu halten. (Stadt, 93-94)

Alone in the diffused darkness, the nihilist begins to seek something stable so that he can orient himself. His anxiety does not lessen, as he had hoped; rather the great void begins to close in on him:

Das Leere klebte an ihm, er war eingesogen vom blutleeren Schlund des Nichts ... Es war unmögliche, allein zu sein, nur sich selbst gegenüber, Auge in Auge mit sich selbst, ohne Distanz, ohne Welt, ohne Möglichkeit zu reden, zu beten, zu fluchen, zu schreien, denn alles, was er tat, verschluckte lautlos der Raum und zerrieb zu nichts die leere Zeit. (Stadt, 97)

This symbolic picture filled with nihilistic images of a
man confronting "das Nichts" points out that nihilism is no effective answer to the world, for nihilism has no values with which man can orient himself. Contrary to the nihilist's expectations, "das Nichts" becomes intolerable for him. In the dream the nihilist returns to mankind, although mankind is plummeting into Hell, for "das Nichts" affords him no consolation.

The story "Das Bild des Sisyphos" also deals with the possibility of nihilism. This story presents a man, Rotmantel, who patterns his life on the nihilistic belief, namely, the ability to make something out of nothing. Rotmantel builds his fortune on the money he received for a painting he himself forged. He reaches the pinnacle of financial success, but his success is incomplete. In order to carry out his intention, "Aus dem Nichts, etwas zu machen . . ." (Stadt, 55), he must repossess the painting. He regains the painting, but in the process he must destroy his fortune as well as himself. His attempts to create meaning out of nothing end in futility, as he himself says, when he realizes his defeat:


Rotmantel's desire to build a fortune on nothing fails. He and the nihilist learn that a negative approach to the world will not work. Nihilism provides no answer to the
problem because it strips away all the values that could help support man.

"Die Stadt" is the third story which emphasizes man's philosophical relationship to his world. In this story Dürrenmatt deals with many ideas found in Plato's Republic. He not only portrays a state which shows some aspects of Plato's perfect city-state, as will be shown later, but also deals with Plato's idea that by rational thought man can ultimately see the supreme reality of his world and thereby bring about an ordered world.

Man's attempt to interpret his world by reason is illustrated by the major figure of the story when he begins his job as a guard for the city's prison. The prison becomes his world, and it is this world which suggests the cave parable of Plato's Republic. In Book VI of the Republic, Socrates relates:

Imagine mankind as dwelling in an underground cave with a long entrance open to the light across the whole width of the cave; in this they have been from childhood, with necks and legs fettered, so they have to stay where they are. They cannot move their heads round because of the fetters, and they can only look forward, but light comes to them from fire burning behind them higher up at a distance. Between the fire and the prisoners is a road above their level, and along it imagine a low wall has been built, as puppet showmen have screens in front of their people over which they work their puppets . . . See, then, bearers carrying along this wall all sorts of articles which they hold projecting above the wall, statues of men and other living things, made of stone or wood and all kinds of stuff, some of the bearers speaking and some silent, as you might expect.⁷

Socrates points out that such prisoners would only see shadows of the images of real things, such as the shadow of a model of a tree. These shadows, however, would be reality to such prisoners. If a prisoner were forced up from the cave, light would at first confuse his vision. He would have to get used to the new reality very slowly. First, he would most easily look upon shadows, after that the images of mankind, and finally the things themselves, such as a real tree, instead of its image or shadow of its image. Socrates compares this rough ascent upwards to the ascent of the soul of man into the world of the mind, where he can glimpse the idea of the good, or understand the true reality of the world. According to Socrates, the rough ascent into the world of the mind is accomplished by the dialectic method of the philosophers. These philosophers, who are the guardians of Plato's city-state, must also be willing to descend into the cave, i.e., the world of ignorance, in order to set free the minds of the people through the dialectic method. Their descent will not be easy, for in passing from light into darkness their vision will again be confused. After they become accustomed to the darkness, however, their sight will be so much keener than those who live there. They can distinguish the shadows from the images. These philosophers, by relying on their reasoning which leads them to the idea of the good, will then be able to exalt justice and bring order into the city-state, to perfect it.
The world of the prison that the guard enters resembles the world of the cave. It is a world of shifting shadows and images in diffused darkness which confuses a newcomer. Appearances are deceiving as the guard quickly learns: "Es bot sich mir ein langer Korridor dar, der sehr schmal zu sein schien, doch täuschte dieser Eindruck, denn als ich . . . durch die blaue Dämmerung schritt, die ihn erfüllte, erwies er sich als sehr breit" (Stadt, 129).

When the guard descends into the prison, his vision in passing from one reality to another becomes confused, but he is not at first overwhelmed by this confusion. An aware man, he also knows the value of man's reasoning process. He relies on his reason in order to establish for himself the true reality behind the shadows he sees. Very carefully and logically he proceeds to analyse his situation. He entered the prison as a guard, but since no one explained his job to him, he cannot carry out his duties in this bewildering setting. As time goes by and no one comes to help him, he begins to consider his predicament. He remembers his clothes are the same as those of the prisoners, and this leads him to think that perhaps he is not a guard but a prisoner. To prove to himself that he is a guard becomes his major task. Very carefully he tries to ascertain how the prison operates, and how he as a guard should carry out his job. By using his reason, he tries to interpret his world and his place in it, but unsuccessfully. He
can establish no rational pattern in his world. Symbolically, the world of this prison becomes a representation of man's world. Appearances are deceiving; no pattern emerges which man can see. Man within such a world cannot comprehend the make-up of the world around him. His reason fails to guide him to understanding.

These three stories present individuals who try to endure their world by adopting an idea which they feel will help them to sustain the effects of their worlds. The nihilist in "Die Falle" employs the idea of "das Nichts" as a shield against the grotesque world he sees. Rotmantel in "Das Bild des Sisyphos" and the guard in "Die Stadt" try to succeed in overcoming their worlds by using a specific thought as a guideline. These men's efforts are futile. Nihilism provides no solution to the world, and Plato's method is useless in trying to ascertain the order of the modern world's chaotic nature. Such abstractions do not help these individuals. They remain at the mercy of their worlds.

In examining man's political relationship with his world, Dürrenmatt concerns himself with the concept of absolute power as it is seen in a totalitarian state. In the story "Die Stadt" he portrays an amorphous state which encroaches on the freedom of the individual. Although in this story he projects a city which shows attributes of Plato's utopian city-state, the state he creates is not a desirable one. The power of the state is complete. Without
the appearance of force, the city is able to destroy the freedom of the individual. In the story "Der Theaterdirektor" the author depicts the rise of a state of absolute power by portraying the actions of an individual who usurps the power of a city and forces its inhabitants to submit to his power.

In the story "Die Stadt," the city which confronts the young man and eventually defeats him shows parallels with Plato's city-state. For example, the guard notes that the city is "unverändert seit Menschendenken und kein Haus verschwand oder kam hinzu" (Stadt, 109-110). In Book IV of the Republic, Socrates relates that the physical size of the city-state should be limited. It may grow only as long as it holds unity, but no further. According to the guard, there are neither rich nor poor in the city (Stadt, 110). Also in Book IV, Socrates emphasizes that there shall be no wealth or poverty. Since, however, this utopian projection in Dürrenmatt's story is revealed to the reader through the prejudiced mind of the guard, it is more than a perfect land area housing people or even a governmental apparatus maintaining order. Seen from his subjective viewpoint, the city becomes alive and threatening, for he sees it as a faceless monster which sucks out the life force of its citizens. Whenever he shows an ideal aspect

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8 Great Dialogues of Plato, p. 221.

of the city, he immediately attaches a negative reaction to the trait, in order to mitigate its desirability. For example, he says: "Ich ahnte, dass sie sich selber genügte, denn sie war vollkommen. . . ." but he immediately adds "und ohne Gnade" (Stadt, 109). He uses a similar technique in his physical description of the city:

> Die Gebäude waren unabänderlich und keiner Zeit unterworfen und die Gassen nicht winklig wie in den andern alten Städten, sondern nach festen Plänen gerade und gleichgerichtet, so dass sie ins Unendliche zu führen schienen . . . (Stadt, 110)

This description suggests an open, spacious city, lending freedom of movement, but he quickly points out:

> . . . doch gaben sie keine Freiheit, denn die niedrigen Lauben zwangen die Menschen, sich gebückt innerhalb der Häuser zu bewegen, der Stadt unsichtbar und ihr so erträglich. (Stadt, 110)

In describing the people of the city he notes: "Niemand kannte den Hunger, es gab weder Arme noch Reiche, niemand war ohne Beschäftigung" (Stadt, 110). But, he adds "... doch drang nie das Lachen der Kinder an mein Ohr" (Stadt, 110). Superficially the city would seem to be ideal. It is perfect, without poverty. Even its physical plan should seem desirable. The guard, however, quickly finds flaws with these attributes. To him this attractive outer covering only serves to conceal a powerful state that crushes the freedom of its citizens.

The unending power of the city is illustrated by the hopeless revolt the citizens initiate against the city. Led by a drunken old man, the citizens march on the city
in an attempt to overthrow its power. The utter futility of their actions is shown by the lack of force they encounter on the part of the city. When they enter the streets of the city, they are not met by a throng of armed guards, but only by a lone crazy man:

Es war nicht der Anblick des Irren, der uns lähmte. Es war die Erkenntnis, die uns mit Grauen erfüllte, dass die Stadt uns so sehr verachtete, und dass sie ihres Sieges so sicher war, dass sie uns nichts anderes entgegensetzte als einen hilflosen Verrückten. (Stadt, 122-123)

Only the terrifying scream of this pathetic figure is needed to repel the rebels. The city never has to show its face:

Doch blieb die Stadt tot und leer, wie unbewohnt, und nur der Schrei war da, dieser unbegreifliche, gleichbleibende Schrei, vor dem die geduckte, zerlumpete Masse immer mehr zurückwich, nüchtern und bleich, um dann, wie der Schrei nicht abnahm, von einer Panik ergriffen mit einem Mal davonzurennen, aufheulend in gigantischer Angst, Weiber und Greise zertrampelnd. (Stadt, 124)

This bizarre sequence shows the far-reaching power of such a state. To the individual it remains faceless, vague, without a definite shape, but precisely for that reason invincible. Although the power is an intangible force, it nevertheless destroys the freedom of the individual to act independently.

"Der Theaterdirektor" also delineates the concept of power embodied in a totalitarian state and how it affects the freedom of an individual. In this story, however, Dürrenmatt does not portray a state that has already achieved power, but rather he illustrates the emergence of a state of power by portraying the rise of a tyrant who adopts the
guise of a theater director in order to achieve his purpose—to gain complete control of a city and inhabitants. By assuming this relatively harmless guise, the theater director succeeds in establishing a tyranny before the inhabitants of the city are able to understand his real motives. The narrator, himself one of the townspeople, realizes how the theater director was able to employ a theater for his own purpose:  

Indem er das Theater missbrauchte setzte er an, die Menge an einem Ort zu verführen, wo niemand eine Gefahr vermutete . . . In Wahrheit war es jedoch so, dass ihm von Anfang an das Theater nur als Mittel diente, jene Macht zu erlangen, die sich später als eine rohe Herrschaft der schrecklichen Gewalt enthüllen sollte. (Stadt, 60-62)

When his victims grasp the true reasons for the actions of the theater director, it is too late, for they have already surrendered themselves to his power. On his account, they have stirred themselves to murder and given up their own freedom by their actions. As he intended, they fall into his trap and become his tools in murdering a young actress, the only individual who defies him.

The theater director is able to succeed because his power misleads the townspeople. It is a power "die zwar alles zermalmt, aber auch jede Sünde entschuldigt und jede Verantwortung aufhebt" (Stadt, 69). In commenting about

10Dürrenmatt's portrayal of the capacity of the theater to deceive in this story calls to mind his later thoughts concerning the theater as a "Mausefalle:" See Chapter I, p. 34. Also in this story he speaks of the possibilities of expressing the tragic through comedy (Stadt, 62).
the effect of this type of power, the narrator remarks: "und ich begriff, dass dies der eigentliche Grund war, durch den die Menge verführt wurde, auf die Freiheit zu verzichten . . . denn Schuld und Sühne gibt es nur in der Freiheit" (Stadt, 69). The townspeople are willing to accept the theater director's power because the power he offers them removes the responsibility for their own actions. They gladly give up their freedom, for in this way they can avoid the despair of their own guilt. His power offers them the power over life and death without the responsibility such power demands. They prefer this god-like feeling to remaining victims of their own despair, although their choice also means complete renunciation of their freedom as individuals. As the narrator notes:

Er hatte einen Abgrund geöffnet, in den sich die Menge stürzte, gierig nach Blut, um immer wieder neuen Mord zu verlangen, weil nur so der besinnungslose Taumel zu finden war, der allein befähigt, nicht in unendlicher Verzweiflung zu erstarren. (Stadt, 69)

The townspeople submit totally to the power of the theater director. Their choice, however, leads them into tragedy. As the narrator points out before the entrance of the actress, whom they shortly destroy:

Wir sassen nicht als Menschen, sondern als Götter in seinem Theater. Wir ergötzen uns an einer Tragödie, die in Wirklichkeit unsere eigen war. (Stadt, 68)

In both stories, the concept of power is depicted in a manner calculated to deceive the individual. In "Die Stadt," power is masked by a desirable outer covering; in "Der Theaterdirektor," power is deceptive in that it offers
false promises. In both cases, however, the effect of the power is the same, for the individual cannot elude it. Although the guard in "Die Stadt" has the perception to see through the mask of the city, his efforts against the city have no impact. The townspeople, on the other hand, do not have the perception of the guard. Hoping for a way out of their despair, they remain blinded by the deceptive power confronting them. By accepting the power of the theater director, they plunge themselves even deeper into despair—the opposite of what they had intended. The power Dürrenmatt depicts in these two stories is all-encompassing. The position of the individual in both cases is tragic. Ultimately he never achieves freedom.

Dürrenmatt emphasizes man's spiritual relationship to his world in five stories of the collection, "Weihnachten," "Der Folterknecht," "Pilatus," "Der Hund," and finally "Der Tunnel." In these stories Dürrenmatt is primarily concerned with two aspects of man's religious view—man's interpretation of God and man's faith in God. The first two stories—"Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht"—show two portraits of God made by man. Although the next three stories deal with man's interpretation of God, the portrait of God is not as well-defined. In the latter stories God becomes inscrutable, incapable of being comprehended or defined by man. The emphasis of these stories shifts to the concept of man's faith in God. Dürrenmatt depicts man's faith by concerning himself with man's ability or
torturer, and makes a pact with him. God and the torturer change roles. God becomes the executioner, and the torturer assumes the identity of a worldly gentleman, taking up a comfortable life with home and family. In trying to persuade the torturer to exchange roles, God explains why he wants to become the new torturer:


The destruction inherent in the occupation of executioner attracts him. After the torturer accepts his proposal and leads him to the torture chamber, God becomes a repulsive figure as the new torturer:


In the end, when the torturer himself is under the torture device, he finally realizes the implications of God as the executioner:

Der Folterkammer ist die Welt. Die Welt ist Qual. Der Folterknecht ist Gott. Der foltert. (Stadt, 20)

Man's world is a torture chamber, which brings only agony to man. A man in such a world is reduced to a screaming animal. The torturer cries out to the torturer-God, seeking an answer to the monstrous plight of man: "Warum bist du nicht gekommen? . . . Was quälst du mich?" (Stadt, 20). The repulsive God only laughs at him.

The two views of God expressed in these two early
salvation." Barth defines this faith: "Faith is awe in the presence of the divine incognito; it is the love of God that is aware of the qualitative distinction between God and man and God and the world; . . . it is the affirmation of the divine 'No' in Christ, of the shattering halt in the presence of God." The man who has this faith is the "believer . . . who puts his trust in God, in God Himself, and in God alone." Barth makes it very clear, that faith is not to be confused with "piety."

In three stories of Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt depicts the relationship between God and man in the terms of Barth. Unlike the well-defined God depicted in "Der Folterknecht," God in these stories remains hidden from man. Man's attempts to understand Him are futile. The major issue in the stories becomes the delineation of man's faith in such a God. The stories involve a crisis of the individual's own beliefs and faith. "Pilatus" presents the anguish and complete despair of a man who cannot believe in a God he cannot understand. "Der Hund" reveals the defeat of an individual who deludes himself by constructing an inaccurate picture of God, although his construction of God is based on a sincere and pious faith. In the face of his crisis, his faith splinters apart revealing a deep well of fear.

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16Ibid.
which he cannot overcome. It is only in "Der Tunnel" that Dürrenmatt portrays an individual who is able to place his faith in a God so totally removed from man.

In the Biblical account of Pontius Pilate, certain passages strongly point to an ambivalent feeling on the part of Pilate in ordering the crucifixion of Jesus. Dürrenmatt focuses on this ambivalence in his portrayal of Pilate and attributes the Roman leader's hesitation in ordering the death of Jesus to the fear Pilate experiences in his confrontation with Jesus. When Jesus is brought before him, Pilate in Dürrenmatt's story recognizes him to be a god, but he cannot show faith in this god. Pilate believes that Jesus has come to destroy him. Pilate is aware of the great abyss between God and man. For this reason, he feels that God would bridge this gap, (by sending his son to man) for one reason only--to destroy man:

Der Abgrund zwischen Mensch und Gott war unendlich gewesen, und nun, wie der Gott diesen Abgrund überbrückt hatte, und Mensch geworden war, musste er an Gott zu Grunde gehen und an ihm zerschmettern wie einer, den die Welle an eine Klippe schleudert. (Stadt, 177-178)

According to Pilate, the relationship between God and man can only be a negative one: "weil es zwischen Gott und Mensch keine Verständigung gibt als der Tod, und keine Gnade als der Fluch, und keine andere Liebe als der Hass" (Stadt, 184). Pilate constructs an incomprehensible God,

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18 See Matthew 27:11-26; Luke 23: 3-25; and John Chapters 18 and 19.
whom he can see only as menacing to man. His fear of such a God prevents him from having faith, for he believes that man could never obtain grace from this God so different from man: he could only receive death, condemnation and hatred.

In the story "Der Hund," Dürenmatt emphasizes the ineffectiveness of "piety." The story's major figure, convinced that the Bible contains the ultimate truth, feels that his mission is to disseminate this truth. His actions follow almost exactly Jesus' precept, "Verkaufe alles, was du hast, und gieb es den Armen, so wirst du einen Schatz im Himmel haben; und komm, folge mir nach." This man leaves family and wealth behind in order to devote his life to preaching the "truth" of the Bible. He is a man of "piety," by the standards of Christianity an admirable one. He remains secure in his faith until it is tested by the unexpected, symbolized in this story by a large, frightening black dog who one day appears at the preacher's side. At first he is unperturbed by the dog, but eventually his fear surfaces, and in the face of this frightening animal, his faith shatters. The image of God the preacher had constructed dissolves in the face of his crisis, for the God he conceived did not encompass such an ineffable event as the

\[\text{Knipperdollinck, one of the major figures of Dürenmatt's first drama Es steht geschrieben also follows this precept of Jesus. See Chapter IV, p. 137.}\]
appearance of the horrible dog. He ends in total despair because he can no longer believe. His fear of the world and the inscrutable God behind this world overwhelms him.

The main character of "Der Tunnel," on the other hand, maintains his faith in the face of the ineffable. Although the young student's world literally shatters, he does not despair. The student is consoled because he recognizes that man is unable to reach or to understand God, but if he, nevertheless, places his trust in God, he will receive his grace. Suddenly finding himself on a train which is inexplicably plunging to the center of the earth, he stops trying to change the direction of the train. He accepts his own limitations, and he accepts the irrationality of his world. He has the insight to cease struggling and to see that God's "no" is actually His "Yes." Despite the impending disaster, he is able to utter the last line of the story: "Gott liess uns fallen und so stürzen wir denn auf ihn zu" (Stadt, 167). He accepts his grotesque world as unalterable and meets his fate, without cursing his world.

The worlds Dürrenmatt creates dealing with the spiritual outlook of man are worlds based on views of God that alienate man. Man is removed from God and can experience no empathy with Him. He only experiences despair in his attempts to understand God. But, according to Dürrenmatt, the search for meaning and purpose in the twentieth century will always be futile. The universe,
represented by the nine worlds Dürrenmatt creates in these stories, is too complex for man to understand it or to have an impact on it. In the confrontation with his world man can only feel the tight bands of his limitations. Man's position is one of defeat which leads to despair. To overcome his despair, he must accept his defeat. He must accept the fact that he cannot understand his world philosophically, politically, or spiritually. The faith that Dürrenmatt advocates as the means for overcoming despair is the unqualified belief in a God which cannot be understood by man. Man can do nothing to alter the infringement of the world on his life, but he can endure, if he can accept it.

Now that the outlines of the specific worlds of Die Stadt are established and the abstractions they symbolize examined, it is pertinent to discuss in detail the various reactions of the individuals to these specific worlds. The following chapter will show the measures the individuals adopt in order to withstand the effects of their worlds. Such a study will help to crystallize Dürrenmatt's positive attitude regarding modern man by analyzing what steps the Dürrenmattian man must take in order to overcome despair.
CHAPTER III

THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REACTIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE "POSSIBLE WORLDS" OF DIE STADT

After examining the reactions of the individuals to the "possible worlds" Dürrenmatt creates in Die Stadt, it becomes apparent that most of the figures in the collection may be regarded as reacting negatively to their worlds, in that they despair when they realize that they are defeated. However, one character, the student in "Der Tunnel," reacts positively, since he does not despair, although his experiences justify despair. Since the latter figure parallels Dürrenmatt's "man of courage," the leading figure in his works who embodies his positive Weltanschauung, the inclusion of the student within the framework of Die Stadt indicates the positive turn in the author's approach to man and his world. This chapter, by clarifying the ways man can react negatively and positively to his world, will present a detailed study of the various reactions of the individuals in the stories to their "possible worlds."

In discussing his views concerning the role of modern man as he is portrayed in the theater, Dürrenmatt says: "Man ought to be free. But first he has to find out that
he is a victim. And the function of the theater is to show that, to show man that the only action that makes sense is an action toward freedom."\(^1\) Although Dürrenmatt was speaking here as a dramatist, his observation concerning modern man is applicable to the stories of \textit{Die Stadt}, for in these stories he concerns himself precisely with the question of man's freedom. The bitter confrontations that the individual experiences within the "possible worlds" of \textit{Die Stadt} reveal the severe limitations of modern man. Any action man takes toward freedom is limited, for his actions bring him into a confrontation with a world which defeats him, causing him to despair. Nor can the individual avoid a confrontation with his world, for eventually his defenses become useless against the jarring realities of his world. Man is at the center of an alienating world, which from his perspective can be seen only as a tormenting one. Fear and despair overcome him. And yet even in such circumstances, man can achieve freedom, for he can overcome his fear and despair if he has the courage to accept his defeat and to endure in spite of his defeat. Man is a victim, but if he recognizes that he is a victim, he can still be free. Despair need not be the only answer for the predicament of modern man.

Basically Dürrenmatt presents four reactions of the individual to the circumstances of his world. Three of

\(^1\)Ketels, p. 94.
these reactions are negative ones which lead the characters into despair. The first reaction can be seen in the individual who tries to escape a confrontation with his world by constructing a defense that would effectively allow him to ignore his frightening world. This reaction is only a temporary measure, for the characters who delude themselves eventually must face their situations. The second reaction may be illustrated by the character who tries to overcome the disorder of his world by either interpreting it through an ideology or philosophical tenet or by trying to impose order upon it by futile action. This character, too, despairs, for in the end his efforts prove meaningless. The third reaction is shown by that character who recognizes the chaotic nature of his world and who understands its immutability, but who is too afraid to accept his defeat. These negative reactions are contrasted with the only positive reaction Dürrenmatt sees for man in the twentieth century. This last reaction is illustrated by the individual who can endure his enigmatic world. He can achieve some distance, and realizing that his actions against his world are futile and his position ridiculous, he can, nevertheless, accept his fate. He does not despair.

The following discussion will concentrate on the individuals in Die Stadt who illustrate these four reactions. Many of the characters in the volume show more than one reaction; indeed, the student in "Der Tunnel" shows a distinct development and demonstrates very clearly the negative
as well as the positive reactions. Since "Der Tunnel" is the only story in which a character shows the positive reaction, and since "Der Tunnel" illustrates very sharply the contrast between the negative and positive reactions, the student and the other passengers on the train will be dealt with last.

There are five individuals in the collection who demonstrate the first reaction, namely, trying to escape the confrontation with the world by defense mechanisms. This reaction is best shown by the major figure of the story "Die Falle." In this story a man who ostensibly leads a well-ordered existence—he is married, he has a good job—can only lead this existence because of a delusion he has constructed. He has given order to his life by centering all his actions around the nihilistic idea that death is soothing oblivion. All of his concentration is directed toward reaching nothingness, crossing the line into death. Only when he is actually confronted with his lifelong desire does his deeper conflict become apparent. At this point he must admit that his obsession was only a mask for the true conflict of his soul—his fear of death.

Dürrenmatt carefully shows how the powerful delusion of the nihilist builds a meaningful existence for this character. On a superficial level this man is characterized as having an ordered life in the terms of society. While adhering to certain patterns of life, however, he secretly
nurses his desire for death. He becomes fascinated by death and rivets all his attention on it. He decides very early in his life that he will commit suicide. This becomes his goal. For this reason, he concerns himself with all aspects of death. He builds model guillotines, studies rare poisons and buys an assortment of lethal weapons. He seems fascinated with everything connected with death, which explains why he later finds comfort from the "Raubvögel" (Stadt, 83) which follow him—birds which ordinarily would bring an opposite reaction. Even though he concentrates on death, and specifically his own death, it becomes apparent he hedges in bringing about his death. He compensates by saying that he needs the right time and the right place to take his own life. Eventually, however, the obsession compels him to leave his outward mold and to seek what he terms the "Stätte meines Todes" (Stadt, 80).

Abandoning his structured life, the nihilist begins his pilgrimage toward death, a pilgrimage which falls into three stages and emphasizes his subconscious equivocation concerning his intended act. Consciously he surrenders completely to his obsession and thereby removes himself from the distractions of the outer world in order to fully contemplate his long desired death. He no longer remains, even tacitly, a member of the everyday world, but retreats into his inner world. Physically he also retreats, since in the first stage he removes himself from the crowded city to a small, rather remote village close to a heavily guarded
border to await his death. The setting as well as the tone of the story at this point move onto a more surrealistic plane and reflect the withdrawal of the nihilist into his subjective world. The keynote of the setting is death. He begins his pilgrimage in the middle of winter. The village he seeks out experiences death continually, since people trying to cross the border are often shot. This place, however, is only a backdrop which helps to show the emotional state of the nihilist, for the nihilist merely moves through this landscape and does not feel a part of it. He becomes completely enveloped in the contemplation of his own death.

This first stage is a period of waiting for him, a period in which he waits for the sign of his death.

In the next stage he feels that the sign has finally manifested itself and feels himself a step closer to his goal. This stage takes place in the forest surrounding the village, where the nihilist now spends most of his time; he has retreated even further from society and people. One day as he is wandering close to the border, a man attempting to escape across the border is fatally shot and falls at the feet of the nihilist. The corpse, left untended, lies directly across the border. The nihilist is strangely comforted by this dead man, for his death signifies to the nihilist that the hour of his own death is close at hand. He camps beside the corpse to await the bullet which will strike him down and thus bring him to the fulfillment of his lifelong desire:
sphere of influence. For this reason, he takes a room on
the outskirts of the city. He considers his room a refuge.
At the beginning of the second episode of the story, the
guard tells how important refuges are for man:

Wir brauchen immer wieder sichere Höhlen, in die wir
uns zurückziehen können und sei es auch nur jene des
Schlafs; erst in den untersten Verliessen der
Wirklichkeit werden uns auch die genommen. So war
es vor allem mein Zimmer, dem ich vieles verdanke und
in welchem ich immer wieder Zuflucht fand. (Stadt, 112)

His room becomes a refuge for him to which he desperately
clings. From a distance, i.e. from his window, he can
watch life. He can watch men going to prison, to death,
and feel infinite sadness for them, but he is not a part
of it. When he witnesses unpleasant scenes, he can con-
veniently retreat by no longer looking out of his window.

This man further removes himself from his world
by avoiding contact with people. The people living in his
house are known to him only as names on doors, and he makes
little effort to find out who they are. His one pitiful
attempt to approach his neighbors quickly ends when he
perceives the distant tones of their conversation behind
the closed doors. Similarly, he establishes no contact with
the two groups of city workers who come to his room from
time to time. He is relieved that they do not question
him or delve into his background. When he finds himself
among a group of people that are going to revolt against
the city, he hesitates and tries to avoid the confrontation,
but the crowd makes it impossible for him to remain behind.

The guard's efforts to remove himself from the odious world of the city are unsuccessful. He eventually understands the supreme power of the city and his own limitations in the face of this power. When the city offers him a job, he has to accept it.

The preacher in "Der Hund" also avoids facing the true nature of his world. As has been shown, he seeks refuge in his faith, which becomes his defense against the outer world.\(^4\) Completely immersed in his faith, he is at first not affected by the large black dog who begins to follow him.\(^5\) He shows no fear of this frightening animal. The effect of the dog's presence on the other characters is quite different. The narrator of the story brings out the frightening aspects of the dog's appearance in his initial description of the dog:

\[\ldots\text{ es war von tiefenfarbener, glattem,}
\text{schweissbedecktem Fell} \ldots\text{ Seine Augen waren}
\text{schwefgelb, und wie es das riesige Maul öffnete,}
\text{bemerkte ich mit Grauen Zähnen von ebendaselben Farbe,}
\text{und seine Gestalt war so, dass ich sie mit keinem der}
\text{lebenden Wesen vergleichen konnte. (Stadt, 25)}\]

\(^4\)Chapter II, pp. 70-71.

\(^5\)The symbolic meaning of the dog has been interpreted in various ways. Brock-Sulzer sees the dog as the personification of evil. (Brock-Sulzer, p. 232.) Ursel Boyd interprets the dog as the abstract element, truth. (Boyd, p. 60). This writer interprets the dog as representing the unnamed, uncontrollable forces of the world, which alienate man, but with which man must deal, i.e., a concrete expression of the chaotic world. Consequently, the meaning of the story hinges on the impact of the dog, the inexplicable, on the preacher, since the dog specifically attaches himself to the preacher.
With the apparent exception of the preacher, the dog elicits a feeling of uneasiness in all of the characters. The narrator finds it difficult to observe him for very long, and he is amazed that the self-effacing preacher could tolerate such an animal. The narrator learns from the preacher's daughter that she is terribly afraid of the dog, as were her mother and brother. Throughout the story, however, the preacher shows no fear of the dog. He is convinced that he has found ultimate truth in the Bible, and his whole existence is directed toward preaching this truth to his fellow man. The intrusion of the dog into his life does not seem to threaten him. At the end of the story, however, it is learned that his outer actions were a mask. Indeed, the preacher had always been frightened of the dog, and one day he breaks down completely in the face of his fear. He is literally paralyzed. The daughter describes him to the narrator:

Der Vater liegt auf der Matratze, den ganzen Tag, ohne sich zu bewegen, so sehr fürchtet er sich, nicht einmal beten kann er . . . (Stadt, 32)

The preacher's consuming faith does not support him in his crisis; he cannot even pray. He is completely alienated, unable to maintain even his integrity in the situation. When the dog attacks him, he succumbs completely. The individual in this story is totally defeated. Frightened and emotionally shattered, he dies a horrible death. The faith he had was only an illusion, a fearful façade.
The torturer in the story "Der Folterknecht" also tries to escape the reality of his world, the torture chamber. He gladly accepts the proposal of the dapper gentleman to change places with him. He begins a new life, a quiet family life, but his respite is brief. Very soon he realizes that his new world is only a larger torture chamber, where God is the torturer. The torturer's attempts to avoid the reality of his world are clearly shown by the imagery Dürrenmatt employs in the story. The distortion of time and his physical surroundings, reflecting his torment when he must torture, are not present when he assumes his new role. But the grotesque images quickly return when the torturer must again face the reality of his world. The torturer's attempts to withdraw from a hideous world are in vain. In the end he must face the reality of his situation.

The final figure who tries briefly to avoid the confrontation with his world is the central figure of the story "Pilatus." The acute mental anguish Pilate undergoes is brought about by his confrontation with Jesus. The story opens in Pilate's throne room when the Jews bring Jesus to be sentenced. Throughout the first episode of the story, Pilate is haunted by his experience of seeing Jesus face to face, and for this reason he desperately avoids meeting Jesus' glance again during this episode. He lets

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6 See below Chapter IV, pp. 112-114.
his eyes rove over the entire room, concentrating on the legionnaires who are standing guard, or the crowd which has pressed into the room. He stares down at the scroll in his hands and again at the soldiers and the crowd. Pilate, whose first brief look at Jesus had made him very much afraid, tries to avoid another encounter with the god, but eventually he must direct his attention to him.

All of these characters try to shield themselves in some way from a painful confrontation with their worlds, and all are unsuccessful in their attempts. The delusion the nihilist maintains is an ineffective defense. Nor do the refuges of the guard and preacher provide effective protection against their worlds. Similarly, the ploys the torturer and Pilate use, in the end, only grant them brief respites from a confrontation with their worlds.

A second way the individual may react in these stories is illustrated by characters quite unlike the individuals who try to avoid the forces of their worlds. These characters prefer to stand face to face with their worlds and react by trying to understand or order their worlds. They may try to impose an abstract ideology or pattern of thought on their worlds in order to make them understandable, or they may try to overcome their worlds by action. Both of these attempts fail because the forces they deal with are too vast to show the impact of one man or even to be comprehended by one man. If the individual is to endure, he must first learn to accept the fact that he cannot understand or change his world.
Two individuals in the stories employ a rational system in dealing with their worlds, the character Rotmantel in "Das Bild des Sisyphos" and the guard in "Die Stadt." Drawing a parallel to the cave parable in Plato's *Republic*, Dürrenmatt illustrates the inability of man to logically understand his world by the actions of the guard in the prison episode of the story "Die Stadt." As was pointed out in Chapter II, very quickly it occurs to him that he is dressed exactly like the prisoners, and he begins to fear that he is not a guard but a prisoner. To prove to himself that he is a guard becomes his main occupation. While he is sitting in his alcove, the first conclusion he draws is that the corridor leads to the rest of the prisoners, and that he is the guard entrusted with the greatest responsibility, for he is in the alcove closest to the entrance, the escape route for the prisoners. Growing more accustomed to the dark, however, he quickly realizes that there are other alcoves behind him closer to the door. This realization changes his conclusion. He is still a guard, but not one of rank. He then perceives that the hall is lined on both sides with symmetrical alcoves. This new perception opens up many possibilities for the arrangement of guards and prisoners. There could be guards across from guards or guards across from prisoners.

Next he unsuccessfully tries to work his way back to the entrance of the prison in order to go upstairs and

7See Chapter II, pp. 57-60.
ask the authorities to confirm his appointment as a guard. Proceeding out of his alcove, he approaches the open door, but then finds that the wall is curved, not straight, as he had thought. After a tedious journey he comes to a new alcove, but the man he finds there is so frightening to him that he rushes back into his own alcove. Later he even considers the possibility that the anxious man he saw was only a reflection of himself. Reconsidering his position, he concludes that he can only know that he is a guard and, therefore, free by completely trusting the city authorities who named him as a guard, even if his trust is founded on fear instead of faith. He does not give in to this thought, though, for he immediately has a new thought: "Ich musste die Anordnung der Wärter anders denken, Ich musste . . . " (Stadt, 145). At this point the narrative breaks off, as the subtitle of the story had indicated:

Aus den Papieren eines Wärters, herausgegeben von einem Hilfbibliothekar der Stadtbibliothek, die den Anfang eines im grossen Brande verloren gegangenen fünfzehn-bändigen Werkes bildeten, das den Titel trug: Versuch zu einem Grundriss. (Stadt, 108)

The portion extant is only the beginning of the gigantic fifteen volume work, as the preface states. It would indicate that there are volumes and volumes of his reassessment of his position, but the words "Versuch zu einem Grundriss" would also indicate that he gets no closer to his goal. His position remains the same, for he cannot prove if he is a guard or a prisoner.

The guard tries to understand his world and his
relationship to it by using Plato's dialectical method. But, this man is completely stymied in his attempts to fathom the reality of his world. Dürrenmatt points out that Plato's method fails to present a solution to the predicament of modern man, for in this episode, so closely akin to the cave parable in the Republic, the method does not even allow the guard to penetrate the reality on the lowest level in Plato's philosophy, i.e., by revealing reality behind images and shadows.

A second individual who takes a stand against his world is Rotmantel, the central figure of "Das Bild des Sisyphos." He adopts as his guideline the nihilistic thought: "Kann man aus nichts etwas machen?" (Stadt, 54). His whole life is directed toward this goal, but like the mythological figure referred to in the title of the story, his action proves futile. Sisyphus was a cunning thief who was confined to Hades as punishment for robbery and betrayal. In Hades his task was to roll a large stone up a hill and tumble it down the other side. But, he is never able to accomplish this feat. Just before he reaches the top of the hill, the rock crashes back to the bottom. He must begin again. Sisyphus' hell is the futility of his actions. Dürrenmatt uses this image to illustrate the

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9Although Camus also uses the mythical figure Sisyphus as a symbol for modern man, Hans Bänziger discounts the possibility that Dürrenmatt's character in this short story
futility of man's endeavors in a world which is too vast to be affected by one man's actions. In this case Dürrenmatt has chosen a nihilistic idea that his character tries to impose on his world. In later works he shows the futility of man's actions through characters who try to impose potentially useful ideas on their worlds. For example, Übelohe in the play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi tries to impose Christian principles on his world. Paradoxically, both of these men are defeated. Rotmantel ends up in the same ragged clothes he wore when he started his financial career. Übelohe's attempt to start a hospital in the tropics ends in disaster. He is forced to return to his homeland a broken man, both physically and mentally.

Rotmantel and the guard pattern their actions on abstractions. Whereas Rotmantel adopts a nihilistic belief as his guiding principle, the guard bases his actions on a mode of thought. Both of these characters, however, are defeated, for no idea or abstraction can effectively order the chaos of their worlds. The efforts of these characters has an affinity with Camus' work "The Myth of Sisyphus." (Bänziger, p. 130.) Later characters of Dürrenmatt such as Übelohe, show closer parallels to Camus' representation of Sisyphus as a symbol for modern man. According to Camus, although Sisyphus' actions are futile, he does not despair. "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays, tr. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, c1955) p. 91. Übelohe, too, recognizes that his actions are meaningless, but he does not despair. For further parallels between Camus and Dürrenmatt see Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's work Interpretationen zum Drama Friedrich Dürrenmatts (Munich: Verlag UNI-Druck, 1965).
to impose their own ideas on their worlds prove to be futile. Similarly, however, those characters who battle against the forces imposed on them are also defeated. The revolt of the citizens against the power of the authorities in the story "Die Stadt" becomes ludicrous. The efforts of one individual who tries to change the established patterns of his world are even more grotesque, as Dürrenmatt illustrates by the actions of the actress in the story "Der Theaterdirektor." The theater director in this story represents abstract power, and therefore, his characterization is not that of an individual at odds with his world.

The young actress rebels against the power of the theater director in that she does not practice the new methods the theater director advocates for his actors. Innocently she proceeds with her own method, but her attempts to remain free of his influence, in reality, turn out to be part of his diabolical plot to bring into his control the citizens of the town. He uses her to further his own ends, for as his influence and power become more overt, her deviation from his methods become more noticeable. This contrast eventually causes the townspeople to believe that she is the offender—precisely the result the theater director had anticipated. His calculations are so exact that during the climactic scene, the townspeople demand her death. The narrator, one of the townspeople, points out the effect of

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her entrance on the townspeople during her last performance:

Dann aber erschien sie, und ich sah sie nie so unbeholfen, wie in jenen Augenblicken, die ihrem Tod vorausgingen, doch auch nie so rein. Brach die Menge zuerst in ein Gelächter aus, als sie die Bühne betrat—so genau berechnet war ihr Auftritt, dass er wie eine obszöne Pointe wirken musste—, so verwandelte sich dieses Gelächter bald in Wut. (Stadt, 68-69)

The narrator goes on to show that the townspeople are now ready to order her death because they see her as a criminal:

Sie stand mitten unter den Menschen, die sich in Bestien verwandelten, als eine Verbrecherin. Ich sah, dass es schreckliche Momente gibt, in denen sich eine tödliche Umwälzung vollzieht, wo der Unschuldige den Menschen schuldig erscheinen muss. (Stadt 69)

It is at this point that a particularly diabolical apparatus is lowered from the ceiling, and amid calls of "Töte sie!" (Stadt, 70) from the audience, the actress is beheaded by this device. The efforts of the actress to free herself from the power of the theater director lead directly to her death, and what is even more grotesque, her actions indirectly cause the enslavement of the townspeople.12 In calling for her death, the townspeople give up their freedom. They must submit totally to the will of the theater director, precisely as the director had calculated. Her battle was futile and, paradoxically, brought about the reverse of what she had sought.

12 The townspeople's action in demanding the death of the actress anticipates the action of the Gülleners in the play Der Besuch der alten Dame. Peppard suggests other parallels between the early story and the play. Peppard, p. 22.
These characters—the guard, Rotmantel and the actress—who try to understand or overcome their worlds do not have the perception to realize that their worlds are incapable of being altered. They do not ignore their worlds as some of the characters do, but they too, react negatively because they pursue paths of meaningless activity against chaos. Their reactions are negative because the modern-day individual must be aware of his limitations. He must accept the fact that he cannot understand or change his world; he must accept it as it is.

The third negative reaction which Dürrenmatt illustrates in this volume is shown by the individual who has enough perception to sense that his world is unchangeable, but he does not have enough courage to accept what he perceives. This individual knows that it is beyond his power to affect his world, but he cannot achieve enough distance to realize that he need not despair. He does not have the awareness to realize that he can endure and yet be free by reordering his own inner world.

This negative reaction is illustrated very well by the central figure Pilate. The subtitle of the story, which recalls a quotation from the Bible\(^{13}\) points out the inability of Pilate to accept the world as it actually is:

\begin{quote}
Denen aber Draussen widerfährt es alles
Durch Gleichnisse, auf dass sie mit
Sehenden Augen sehen und doch nicht
\end{quote}

\(^{13}\)See Mark 8:18.
The characterization of Pilate in Dürrenmatt's story is revealed in a series of scenes beginning with the Jews delivery of Jesus to Pilate and their demand that the Roman leader sentence Him to death. The beginning lines immediately reveal the basis of the internal struggle Pilate undergoes:

Wie die schweren Eisentüren geöffnet wurden, die seinem Throne am andern Ende des Saales gegenüberlagen, und wie sich ihm aus den offenen Riesenmäulern die Menge entgegenoss, mühsam nur von den Legionären zurückgehalten, welche die Hände zu einer Kette geschlossen hatten und sich mit dem Rücken gegen die Rasenden stemmten, erkannte er, dass der Mensch der ihm vom Pöbel wie ein Schild entgegengeschoben wurde, niemand anders war als ein Gott; doch wagte er ihn nicht ein zweites Mal mit seinem Blick zu streifen, weil er sich fürchtete. (Stadt, 171)

Pilate is motivated by fear. As the story unfolds, the fear Pilate expresses becomes more defined, and in each successive scene the lack of understanding between Jesus and himself becomes greater. He misinterprets God's presence in the human form of Jesus. He sees the surrender of Jesus as a conscious trick and feels that the God before him has assumed a human form out of hatred:

Er sah, dass diese Gestalt des Gottes die grausamste war, die den Menschen täuschen konnte, und dass es dem Gott nur in einem unvorstellbaren Hass hatte einfallen können, in dieser niedrigen Maske zu erscheinen. (Stadt, 174)

As his fear mounts, he feels that he has been singled out as Jesus' victim. Not understanding what he sees, he feels that Jesus is a vengeful God who has come to kill him. Throughout the rest of the story, he is consumed by the
fears that his confrontation with Jesus have brought about. During the torture and crucifixion scenes, he lives in terror that at any moment Jesus will carry out His revenge on him. When he sees Jesus suffering on the cross, he feels that his own death is near:

Er wusste, dass nun der Gott mit schrecklichen Wundertaten vom Kreuz gestiegen war, um endlich seine Rache zu vollziehen. (Stadt, 191)

In the end, when he learns that Jesus has risen from the grave, he is paralyzed with fear. As he stares into the blackness of the cave which housed the body of Jesus, it is as if he were peering into the abyss between God and man. He waits for a vengeful God to cross this abyss and annihilate him. When he turns away from the grave, a slave sees the almost catatonic transformation of Pilate:

Ein Sklave aber stand hinter ihm, und der sah dann des Pilatus Gesicht: Unermesslich war es wie eine Landschaft des Todes vor ihm ausgebreitet, fahl im frühen Lichte des Morgens, und wie sich die beiden Augen öffneten, waren sie kalt. (Stadt, 193)

Pilate cannot overcome his fear of this incomprehensible God. He cannot attain peace of mind in his world, because he cannot accept his world as he perceives it.

The characters presented thus far in this study illustrate three basic ways man reacts negatively to his world. All three reactions lead to despair. The individual can try to avoid his world by shielding himself from a confrontation with its forces. Or, he can futilely attempt to understand or in some way change his world. Even though he may have the perception to realize the immutable nature
of his world, he still reacts negatively if he cannot accept his position in such a world without fear and despair. In Dürrenmatt's works these negative reactions are contrasted with the reaction of the "man of courage," the individual who illustrates the only positive reaction one can assume in the twentieth century. The "man of courage" can accept his limitations and can achieve enough distance from his world in order to persevere. In the last story Dürrenmatt wrote for this volume, he presents all of these negative reactions, but, for the first time, he contrasts them with a positive reaction of the individual. Within the characterization of the central figure of the story, he shows a series of reactions which illustrate the contrasting negative and positive reactions of man in the twentieth century. Unlike most of the characters in the stories who react negatively when they are threatened by their worlds, the student in "Der Tunnel" is able to endure his world without despair, even when he is threatened. Confronted with the abyss, he is able to achieve enough distance to allow him to gain personal, though limited, freedom.

"Der Tunnel" centers around a twenty-four-year-old university student who suddenly finds his carefully composed existence breaking up because of an inexplicable occurrence. The terrifying occurrence of the story involves the disastrous trip of an ordinary passenger train enroute to Zürich. The train, filled to capacity, enters a tunnel, but
never emerges. Once inside, the train begins to pick up velocity at a steady pace and begins a descent, ultimately plunging to the center of the earth. The importance of the story revolves around the reactions of the various passengers to this incomprehensible event, and in particular the student's reaction. Since the portrayal of the student is the most complex characterization of the collection, his reaction must be thoroughly scrutinized.

Three important aspects of the student's characterization should be stressed: his perception, his basic motivation and his physical description. All of these characteristics are clearly brought out in two descriptive passages:

Ein vierundzwanzigjährige, fett, damit das Schreckliche hinter den Kulissen, welches er sah (das war seine Fähigkeit, vielleicht seine einzige), nicht allzu nah an ihn herankomme, der es liebte, die Löcher in seinem Fleisch, da doch gerade durch sie das Ungeheuerliche hereinströmen konnte, zu verstopfen, derart, dass er Zigarren rauchte (Ormond Brasil 10) und über seiner Brille eine zweite trug, eine Sonnenbrille, und in den Ohren Wattebüschel: ... (Stadt, 151)

This beginning passage is followed a few pages later by another description of the student:

(alles, was er tat, war nur ein Vorwand, hinter der Fassade seines Tuns Ordnung zu erlangen, nicht die Ordnung selber, nur die Ahnung einer Ordnung, angesichts des Schrecklichen, gegen das er sich mit Fett polsterte, Zigarren in den Mund steckte, Wattebüschel in die Ohren) ... (Stadt, 153-154)

From the two passages it becomes clear that this perceptive young man, who is aware of the chaos of the modern world, does not dare face this chaos. Instead, he is highly motivated
to shield himself against any contact with the world. He does this by placing buffers between his world and himself. He effectively softens any sensory contact by blocking his senses—the body fat, the sunglasses, the cigars and the earplugs. He staves off any intellectual confrontation by concentrating on superficially ordering his life. In this way he mitigates the disorder of the world which he perceives intellectually. This preoccupation with superficial order shows a parallel with the nihilist who also shows a preoccupation with order, in the story "Die Falle," but with one important difference. The nihilist deludes himself, whereas the student does not, as the phrase "... nicht die Ordnung selber, nur die Ahnung einer Ordnung, angesichts des Schrecklichen" (Stadt, 154) shows. The student is aware that his engrossment with superficial order is only a thin façade against the horror of the chaos. Most of the characters of the short stories do not have his perception, and yet he makes a conscious effort to shield himself from the world, just as many other characters do.

On the day the student boards the train to Zürich, his carefully preserved shield splits apart, and he is directly confronted with inexplicable disorder. The ordinary train which he has ridden many times goes out of control. The descent of the train, however, is neither swift nor sudden. Most of the passengers, unlike the student, do not even notice the unusual length of the tunnel until it is apparent that the train is falling. Only the student
becomes concerned. But, even his realization—that the occurrence is of catastrophic proportions—is slow. At first he stubbornly tries to ascertain what is happening.

Confronted with an unusual situation, the inordinate length of the tunnel, the young man, in the beginning, seeks logical and lucid explanations for this phenomenon. Remaining true to his conscious motivation—establishing order, he tries to order his world by reason. In this respect his actions parallel the actions of the guard in "Die Stadt," as Moritz has shown in his discussion of "Der Tunnel."\(^{14}\) Just as the guard tries to assess his position within the environment of the prison, so does the student try to assess his position on the train. By theorizing rational explanations for the unusual length of the tunnel, he tries to dispel his uneasiness. At first he attributes his cognizance of the length of the tunnel to a heightened awareness. He has taken this train many times, but never before had he noticed this particular tunnel outside of Burgdorf as being unusually long. When he boarded the train this day, the sun was extremely bright. In contrast to the brilliance of the day, he reminds himself, the blackness of the tunnel would make it appear longer. His first assumption, then, hinges on a set of circumstances peculiar to one trip. Satisfied with this explanation, he anticipates seeing a shaft of daylight at any moment. When the

\(^{14}\)Moritz, p. 76.
tunnel still does not end, he theorizes a second explanation. He concludes that he has taken the wrong train. To confirm this explanation, he questions one of his fellow passengers, who immediately answers that the destination of the train is indeed Zürich. Not satisfied with this answer, the student questions the ticket taker. To his dismay the ticket taker only confirms that he is on the correct train. Now more confused and concerned than ever, the young man demands to see the conductor. Although the conductor can offer no explanation to satisfy the student, he does try to calm the agitated student by carefully assessing the situation:

Mein Herr, ich habe Ihnen wenig zu sagen. Wie wir in den Tunnel geraten sind, weiss ich nicht, ich habe dafür keine Erklärung. Doch bitte ich Sie zu bedenken: Wir bewegen uns auf Schienen, der Tunnel muss also irgendwo hinführen. Nichts beweist, dass am Tunnel etwas nicht in Ordnung ist, ausser natürlich, dass er nicht aufhört. (Stadt, 159)

To the conductor the situation is still an unknown. It is unusual and out of the ordinary, but there is not enough evidence to indicate that it is serious. On the contrary, the evidence, i.e., the fact that the train is on tracks and therefore must lead somewhere, should be taken as a good sign, according to the conductor. The young man at this point, however, realizes that rational explanations will not account for the situation. He adopts another approach— one of action. He demands that the emergency brakes be pulled. The conductor does not comply; instead, he leads the student forward to the locomotive. Their arduous
trip through the train only ends in disappointment, for they find the engine unattended and the instruments out of control. They also discover that it is impossible to stop the train. Both reason and action have failed to alleviate the unusual circumstances. Reason cannot account for the event, and action cannot stop it. The young man is now faced with impending doom and disaster. His final reaction is, of course, capitulation, but it is not a negative reaction. It is the only positive reaction in the face of such circumstances, according to Dürrenmatt. The young man simply ceases to struggle against the fate that has befallen him. Unlike the conductor he does not despair. Instead, he graciously and willingly accepts the abyss which is closing over him, as his final words to the conductor would indicate:

'Was sollen wir tun?' schrie der Zugführer . . .
'Nichts' antwortete der andere . . . 'Nichts. Gott liess uns fallen und so stürzen wir denn auf ihn zu.'

(Stadt, 167)

Before accepting his limitations in the face of his world, the student illustrates many of the negative reactions shown by other characters in Die Stadt. When he boards the train, he has fortified himself with many defense mechanisms in an attempt to guard himself against the forces of his world. But very soon after the trip begins, his defenses prove ineffective. The defensive sensory structure this young man has carefully constructed is steadily torn down throughout the trip. He must first remove his sunglasses when he realizes that the darkness of the tunnel is not
by the actions of the student that reason and action have no impact on the individual's world. What differentiates the student from these other characters is that he has the perception to realize that he is defeated, and the courage to accept his defeat without despair. Recognizing his limitations in regard to the events around him, he withdraws from the battle. But although he does capitulate, he does not despair. He does not show the fear of Pilate, for he has the courage to accept his destiny.

The student's reaction to the disastrous train ride is contrasted with the reactions of the other passengers on the train, all of whom react negatively. Most of the characters try to avoid facing the reality of the situation. Throughout the story they cling to any support which staves off an awareness that something is radically wrong. The electric lights bring comfort in the beginning. The gentleman playing chess continually harks back to scientific data. It is well known to him that Switzerland has the most tunnels of any country. He has read it in an almanach. For him, the length of this particular tunnel poses no threat. The young girl completely ignores the situation. Once the lights come on, she continues reading her novel, oblivious to her surroundings. The ticket taker attributes the darkness to a storm, but steadfastly maintains that according to the schedule they will arrive on time. As the situation worsens, any respite, when things appear normal, is welcome.
The passengers find solace in anything which reminds them of their more familiar patterns of life. To the student the lighting of one of his cigars, after the perilous and frightening journey across the machinery to the engineer's cabin, brings momentary calm:

Der junge Mann war froh, nach der bedenklichen Nähe der Felswände auf etwas gelenkt zu werden, das ihn an die Alltäglichkeit erinnerte . . . (Stadt, 162)

Even in the face of unavoidable doom, the conductor tries to carry out his duties. Seeing no means to alter the unusual situation, he tries to forget it by returning to his everyday tasks.

The most radical attempt to escape the ensuing disaster is demonstrated by those characters who commit suicide. The engineer, as well as the baggage master, by leaping from the train, chose this solution, as Moritz has shown.15 This act would indicate complete withdrawal. Dürrenmatt does not consider suicide a valid reaction to the world. Suicide is not a major theme in his works. By and large, his characters are not allowed to escape from their worlds. They are either crushed by their worlds or they endure them. Dürrenmatt's cursory treatment of suicide is apparent even in "Der Tunnel," since the characters who commit suicide are not introduced, only spoken about.

The actions of these characters who try to avoid their situations are contrasted with the actions of the two

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15Moritz, p. 77.
most-aware men on the train, the conductor and the student. Although the student's characterization is infinitely more complex and more important in relationship to Dürrenmatt's total work, these two characters essentially show the positive and negative sides of the same question. Both realize the absolute horror of the situation, but in the final result it is only the student who is able to adjust to it. The conductor joins the student in his efforts to halt the train, and like the student, in the end, he has the perception to realize that their actions are in vain. But, showing a parallel to the attitude of Pilate, he cannot overcome his fear and despair when he realizes the finality of the event. Moritz points out that the conductor shows a nihilistic reaction: "Für ihn ist das Schicksal unserer Welt dunkel, undurchschaubar, hoffnungslos." The major word in the quotation is "hoffnungslos." Dürrenmatt has stated many times that he does not find the situation of our modern world hopeless--difficult, to be sure--but not hopeless. The heroes of his works, the "men of courage," demonstrate by their endurance that man's condition is not hopeless. In the tightly structured story "Der Tunnel," Dürrenmatt shows by the actions of the characters the difficult situation of modern man, but he also shows how man can maintain hope even in his difficult situation.

16Moritz, p. 74.

17See Dürrenmatt's comments in "Theaterprobleme," TSR, p. 123.
The negative and positive reactions of the characters in these stories deftly illustrate how limited man's freedom is in the modern world. Man is a victim in the twentieth century, and if he is to achieve freedom as an individual, he must accept his position. The student, whom some writers acknowledge as an autobiographical character,\textsuperscript{18} is the only character in the volume who has enough perception to understand and accept that he is a victim in relationship to his world. He first attempts to ignore it, then to understand it, then to try to change its course, but in the end he has the perception to see that all of his actions are futile. If he is to endure his world with some dignity and achieve freedom, he must accept his tragi-comic situation. When all of his efforts have failed, he steps back, sizes up his enemy, and, realizing his mistake in battling his world, accepts the end. He gains the necessary distance from his world so that he can accept his limitations without cursing his world or God; on the contrary, he is able to interpret his fate as an indication of God's "Yes."

This character who stands out against the panorama of characters who cannot achieve distance from the nightmare-worlds they experience indicates the change in the author's view of the world. It is highly significant that the student is an autobiographical character. His development, so clearly stated in "Der Tunnel," reflects Dürrenmatt's

\textsuperscript{18}Brock-Sulzer, p. 246 and Peppard, p. 23.
A comparison of Die Stadt and Dürrenmatt's later works reveals how significant this volume of stories is for the development of Dürrenmatt's career. The work on the stories, extending over the first ten-year period of Dürrenmatt's career, clearly shows the maturation of the author. It is not only a stylistic refinement, but also a significant and positive change in his attitudes toward man and his role in the twentieth century. "Der Tunnel," chronologically the last story of the volume, becomes a pivotal work in such a comparison. This story not only points backward to the earlier stories, in that the form and subject matter is characteristic of the volume,\(^1\) but it also points forward to the mature works, both in its stylistic accomplishments and its positive approach to man and his world. Indeed, the contrast between "Der Tunnel" and the earliest stories is so great that "Der Tunnel" may be regarded as one of Dürrenmatt's mature works, and

\(^1\)In the notes to Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt points out that although he completed "Der Tunnel" in 1952, the material for the story had concerned him earlier, during the years he was working on the other stories included in the volume. (Stadt, 197)
certainly his best short story. Further, a comparison of Dürrenmatt's *Die Stadt* and his mature works establishes the significance of the concept of "Distanz" for his writing—"Distanz" being one of the most important differences between his earliest efforts and his mature writing. In addition, a comparison shows the justification for terming *Die Stadt* the "Vorfeld" for his mature work, since *Die Stadt* shows the embryonic treatment of important themes in his works as well as the embryonic characterization of the individual in his works.

The chaos Dürrenmatt perceives as the nature of the modern world is reflected in the composition of images in *Die Stadt*. Deschner points out that: "Dürrenmatt is a man for whom ideas are translated into visualized images."² Dürrenmatt's early visual depiction of the chaos is described by Brock-Sulzer in her discussion of the artist Dürrenmatt. She comments on Dürrenmatt's early drawings:

Die ersten Zeichnungen Dürrenmatts, soweit wir sie kennen, sind beängstigend und tragen die Spuren eines Schaffens, das immer dicht am Scheitern steht. Es sind überexpressive Blätter, zum Bersten vollgepackt, schwer zu entziffern, mühsam und gewalttätig.³

Dürrenmatt's earliest prose of *Die Stadt* shows this same density of images, particularly the first two stories, "Weihnachtchen" and "Der Folterknecht," whose flood of horrific

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²Deschner, p. 41.

³Brock-Sulzer, p. 256.
images are divulged in short, expressionistic prose, having the effect of a bombardment. In the notes to Die Stadt, however, Dürrenmatt expressly states that these stories were the result of his attempt to free himself from art:

Ich versuchte in jener Zeit, nachdem ich mich, als Zeichner, nur im Bilde wohl gefühlt hatte . . . mir vom Bilde, das mich bessass, . . . Distanz zu schaffen. . . .

(Stadt, 197)

An examination of Dürrenmatt's imagery in the later stories of Die Stadt reveals the greater perspective Dürrenmatt sought. Although Dürrenmatt consistently uses monstrous images, he employs them to greater advantage, i.e., to heighten the atmosphere of the story in relationship to the rising dramatic tension. No longer concerned with a plastic representation, he employs images in support of his thematic material. His greater control indicates not only a stylistic refinement, but also distance from the influence of art.

It is the settings of the stories, however, which best illustrate Dürrenmatt's change in perspective. In general, the settings of the stories are oppressive. The characters are hemmed in by constrictive backgrounds. All but three of the stories, "Weihnachten," "Pilatus" and "Der Tunnel," have as a background the city, with all of its narrow and confining spaces. The characters wander through the shadows of tightly-packed buildings or find themselves in the maze of a building's dark passageways and corridors. The palace of Pilate is a labyrinth of interconnecting
rooms. For the passengers of the train in "Der Tunnel" this atmosphere is intensified; they experience a double confinement. Not only are they confined within the train, but the train is also confined within the tunnel.

The settings of the stories are not alleviated by color or light. Only rarely is the interplay of black and white brightened by color. The color of red cuts across the chiaroscuro in "Das Bild des Sisyphos," and occasionally dark red or wine red becomes a characteristic color.\textsuperscript{4} Mostly, however, the street settings are bathed in dark shadows, only infrequently penetrated by light. Reflected light diffuses the darkness by forcing its way through the windows of buildings or through the narrow spaces between buildings, but at no time is it direct. In addition, the stories are played out against a wintry landscape of black-white contrasts from the snowy scenes--mostly dirty street snow--or from the foggy nights. Fog and snow play an important role in "Das Bild des Sisyphos," for example. Much of the story-teller's narration emphasizes the winter appearance of the city streets.

These settings which make the world of the individual so oppressive are also frequently distorted. For example, in "Der Folterknecht" the torturer in a moment of crisis runs through the streets of the city:

\begin{quote}
Er springt durch die Gassen. Die Häuser pfeifen.
Die Türme wachsen pfeilschnell in den Himmel. Die
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{4}See "Der Hund" and "Der Folterknecht."
Gasse senkt sich. Die Häuser rücken zusammen. Sie versperren ihm den Weg. (Stadt, 19)

Dürrenmatt uses this surreal atmosphere to reflect the rending anxiety of his characters. The atmosphere becomes an extension of the emotional state of his characters. The backgrounds of the stories show the greatest distortion whenever the stress of the individual is the greatest. In the beginning sequence of "Der Folterknecht" the torture chamber shows the same reaction as the torturer whose distress at torturing is unbearable. Before the victim appears, the torturer is characterized as cowering in a corner, but watchful. Similarly, the room is quiet, but on guard:

Die Quader sind tot . . . die Dunkelheit lauert . . . Das Feuer glüht im Schlaf. (Stadt, 15)

As the victim is heard approaching he as well as the room come to life:

Er steht auf . . . Das Feuer erwacht und lodert rot. Die Zangen bewegen sich . . . Die Folterkammer beginnt zu atmen. (Stadt, 15)

When he tortures, time stops and the room becomes distorted:

Die Wände keuchen . . . Die Quader brüllen. Die Steinplatten winzeln . . . Die Leitersprossen biegen sich. (Stadt, 15)

When it is over, he is emotionally drained as is the chamber:

Er kauert wieder in der Ecke. Seine Augen sind leer, seine Hände wie Eis. Das Haar klebt. Die Folterkammer ist müde. Das Blut versickert. Die Quader erstarren. (Stadt, 15)

Both he and the chamber experience the suffering which has taken place. It is interesting to note, as Brock-Sulzer brings out, that the story concerns the torturer and his
suffering and not that of the victim.⁵ Although the torture episode is the beginning of the story, the story is characterized by similar distorted settings, as are other of the earlier stories. When the nihilist in "Die Falle" decides to leave his ordered life to pursue the stages of his death, the setting of the story moves onto a surrealistic plane.

In these early stories, the distortion, although it accompanies the emotional distress of the individuals, is overwhelming, for it is constant. On the other hand, in the last two stories Dürrenmatt completed before publication of the volume, he uses the technique far more effectively, thus indicating greater perspective. In the latter stories, he also depicts a greater contrast between the mundane world of the characters and the contorted world that develops as the anxiety of the characters increases. There is no longer the continuous jumble of images. Instead, he employs the distortion sparingly during the moment of the highest dramatic tension. Most of the descriptions in the story "Der Hund" are matter of fact, although Dürrenmatt still uses as his background the twisting, narrow streets of the city. Only when the narrator and the preacher's daughter are racing to the home of the preacher in the attempt to save the life of the preacher, do ordinary things begin to appear extraordinary, i.e., during a period of extreme stress for the narrator:

⁵Brock-Sulzer, p. 230.
Der Himmel war von einem tiefen, bedrohlichen Rot, wie bei einer Feuersbrunst. Die Sonne eben gesunken. Die Stadt war belebter als sonst, voll mit Menschen und Wagen, die sich wie unter einem Meer von Blut bewegten, da die Häuser das Licht des Abends mit ihren Fenstern und Mauern wiederspiegelten. Wir gingen durch die Menge. Wir eilten durch einen immer dichteren Verkehr, durch Kolonnen bremsender Automobile und schwankender Omnibusse, die wie Ungeheüre waren, mit bösen, mattleuchtenden Augen, an aufgeregt fuchtelnden Polizisten mit grauen Helmen vorbei. (Stadt, 32)

The crowded city streets at dusk threaten to block their way. Visualized in this context, the lingering dark hues of the setting sun become menacing. The people move through a sea of dark blood. The automobiles and buses take on the frightening appearance of monsters.

Similarly, the story line of "Der Tunnel" moves from the ordinary into the extraordinary. Without provocation the simple train ride turns into a ride into Hell. The beginning realistic atmosphere changes into a surrealistic one, charged with the irrevocable doom of the train ride. To emphasize the contrast of the beginning and the end of the story, the opening descriptive passages convey a conventional almost commonplace description of Switzerland:

Die Sonne schien an einem wolkenlosen Himmel . . . Es war Sommer. Der Zug hatte sich bei diesem angenehmen Wetter zwischen den Alpen und dem Jura fortzubewegen, an reichen Dörfern und kleineren Städten vorbei, später an einem Fluss entlang, und tauchte denn auch nach noch nicht ganz zwanzig Minuten Fahrt, gerade nach Burgdorf in einen kleinen Tunnel. (Stadt, 151)

This passage in no way portends what will happen. It is almost like a cliché-filled travel guide. Even the last sentence carries with it no indication of the subsequent events. The plunge into darkness is expected. Up to this
point everything is "as usual." A sense of well-being seems to be present. Furthermore, the passengers try to hold onto this feeling. The steady blackness brought on by the tunnel is easily dispelled by artificial means—the electric lights come on. Although one can still see the stone of the tunnel rushing past, this fact is of no concern to anyone, except the student:

Die Menschen . . . verhielten sich ruhig, in nichts unterschied sich der Zug von anderen Zügen, die er an den Sonntagnachmittagen gefahren war, und niemand fiel ihm auf, der beunruhigt gewesen wäre . . . Auch im Speisewagen war alles wie sonst, obwohl kein Platz frei war . . . (Stadt, 157)

This atmosphere, however, soon slips into the surreal, for the normal conditions begin to break down. As the train gains velocity and begins its descent, it loses its regular shape and takes on a distorted appearance. In the baggage car the student and the conductor are thrown forward and battered by the suitcases and other movable objects which slide and tumble to the front of the car as the train begins to descend headfirst. Before long it becomes explicitly clear that the train is falling. The ordinary train ride suddenly turns into a nightmare. The commonplace no longer exists.

In contrasting Dürrenmatt's use of visual images in the early stories with those of the last stories, it is evident that Dürrenmatt employs these images with greater efficiency. In the beginning stories they bombard the reader. In the later stories the author employs surrealist
description to show the aberrations of the world which suddenly confront the individual. He achieves this by contrasting a nightmarish background in times of stress for the individual—when his ordinary world is out of control—with routine descriptions of the individual's world. By using this technique, Dürrenmatt is able to present a more closely knit work, which builds tension and makes the traumatic confrontation for the individual more dramatic. His control over his technique shows that he has gained some perspective regarding his subject matter. It shows not only a maturing of the writer and improvement of style, but also that he was able to free himself from the visual images that overwhelmed him when he first turned to writing. He has achieved the distance he desired.

Although Dürrenmatt's use of imagery in *Die Stadt* illustrates that he was able to obtain greater perspective, his later methods for creating distance in his works, namely the distancing grotesque, are noticeably lacking. Only "Der Tunnel" foreshadows his mature, expert use of the grotesque. One method ostensibly used to create distance—his use of the first person narrative—is generally regarded as unsuccessful by critics.

Both Brock-Sulzer and Deschner comment on Dürrenmatt's use of the first person as a means to create distance.\(^6\) As Brock-Sulzer notes, the first person narrative is mostly categorized as the personal narrative, the voice of the

\[^6\text{Brock-Sulzer, pp. 227-228. Deschner, p. 38.}\]
author, but as she points out, it can also be a storyteller the author places between himself and the reader. This is the case in the stories of Die Stadt that are told in the first person, since the narrators who use the first person are not the central figures of the stories. Brock-Sulzer also notes, by way of contrast, that the most blatant autobiographical character of the collection, the student in "Der Tunnel," is not the narrator.

As Deschner suggests, this technique is not necessarily successful as a means for creating distance. These first person story-tellers are not impartial, for they are generally bound in some way with the central figure of the story. In the story "Die Falle," for example, the story-teller is the intended victim of the nihilist. In the story "Der Hund" the story-teller becomes the lover of the preacher's daughter and tries futilely to save the preacher's life. In the story "Das Bild des Sisyphos," the story-teller's role is extremely important, for the events concerning Rotmantel are filtered through his mind and are revealed not according to their importance for Rotmantel directly, but for their importance for the story-teller. The story-teller's objectivity is clouded; for, even if the events of the story do not affect him personally,

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7 Brock-Sulzer, p. 227.
8 Ibid.
9 Deschner, p. 38.
he is never entirely free from the effect of the world on the character he is describing.

Dürrenmatt's most important method of creating distance in his mature works, the distancing grotesque, is not present in these stories, with the important exception of "Der Tunnel." Boyd, whose work delineates Dürrenmatt's use of the grotesque in conjunction with the theme of faith and grace, points out that Dürrenmatt's early use of grotesque images falls more in Kayser's category of the fantastic grotesque. The images of fright and horror in the early stories are not mitigated by comic elements producing an uncomfortable effect—the aspect of the grotesque which Dürrenmatt feels is so important for the concept of "Distanz." "Der Tunnel," however, does show examples of the satiric grotesque. Many small scenes in this work show this form of the grotesque. For example, as the velocity of the train increases, and the student and the conductor find themselves pummelled by flying objects in the baggage car, the door of the dining car flies open for a brief moment and reveals the passengers as they toast one another. This brief vignette reveals the rather macabre picture of passengers plunging into Hell with a drink in their hands. Also the final moments show this type of the grotesque.

The student expresses a certain "gespensterhafte Heiterkeit" at the progressive crack-up of the train (Stadt, 167). It is at this moment that his earplugs are lifted out by the wind to perform their eerie dance. Such scenes are in marked contrast to the grotesque images of the other stories which do not have a comic, if ironic, tone. The torture scene in "Der Folterknecht" or the crucifixion scene in "Pilatus" are certainly grotesque, but they are unrelieved by humor. Most of the imagery and scenic treatment of the earliest stories have a suffocating effect. It is only when Dürrenmatt adds comic elements that the effect changes and produces another mood, an uncomfortable one, but one that lessens emotional involvement. In this regard, "Der Tunnel" is an extremely important work, for within the collection of short stories, it is the only one which contains this additional element. The grotesque images of the other stories tend to overwhelm, but scenes conveyed by grotesque images divulged in comic situations have a different effect. Certainly they are uncomfortable, but they do not oppress.

Dürrenmatt's use of the satiric grotesque is one of the most pervasive aspects of his mature works and occurs with great frequency in connection with two prevalent themes of the mature works--death and grace. These two themes are also dominant in Die Stadt. Contrasting the treatment of these two themes in Dürrenmatt's earliest
work with that of his mature work establishes not only the importance of these two themes for the development of the author, but also the importance of his use of the grotesque as a distancing technique. In contrast to Die Stadt, the attitudes concerning death and grace in the mature works are almost always conveyed in sardonic terms, a technique which maintains distance.

In relationship to the individual and his outlook on the modern world, Dürrenmatt consistently introduces certain themes that affect the existence of modern man. Themes such as modern man's approach to death, his belief in God and his involvement with justice take a prominent position in Dürrenmatt's works. These themes, with the exception of justice, are also extremely important in his earliest work, Die Stadt. Justice, which plays such an important role in his dramas and later narrative prose, is not a dominant theme in the early stories. A statement by Dürrenmatt in the recent interview with Ketels helps to explain the omission of justice as a central idea in the early stories. In the interview Dürrenmatt asserts that "justice is a logical concept" and is a problem of society and man's relationship to society. As he says: "When a man is alone on an island the problem of justice doesn't pose itself."\footnote{Ketels, p. 102.} In the stories of Die Stadt Dürrenmatt concentrates on the existential outlook of the individual, not his interpersonal relationship with his fellow man.
The dramas, on the other hand, deal not only with the existential attitude of the individual but also his relationship with his contemporaries, and, therefore, justice becomes a problem of primary importance. The themes of death and grace, however, do affect the basic individuality of man, and in Dürrenmatt's attempts to delineate man's basic approach to his world in the early stories, these themes play a significant role, as they do in the mature works. The ensuing discussion will concentrate on these two important themes, illustrating first the changing treatment of death in Dürrenmatt's works.

Dürrenmatt shows a definite preoccupation with the subject of death in his works. Many writers have pointed out that death is thematically woven into Dürrenmatt's works and must be considered a major aspect in the overall approach in his writing. George Wellwarth, for example, feels that death is one of the two major themes that run through the various worlds Dürrenmatt creates in his dramas. In this regard, Dürrenmatt shows a strong affinity to the writers and thinkers of his century. Theodore Ziolkowski in his recent book Dimensions of the Modern Novel points out that "To the uninitiate, a catalogue of the important works of modern German literature reads like a necrophile's delight. . . ." The same is true of the

12 Wellwarth, p. 15. See also Klarmann, p. 77; Allemann, p. 426; and Carrier, p. 3.

writers of other western countries. R. W. B. Lewis in the introduction to his book *The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction*, a discussion of major English, French and Italian authors, even suggests that the two or three literary generations of the twentieth century may be distinguished from one another by the manner in which they treat death. J. Glenn Gray in his article "The Problem of Death in Modern Philosophy," asserts that after a lapse of many centuries the problem of death has once again become a major philosophical question. In his article he delineates the integral role death plays in the philosophies of Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidigger. Ziolkowski, too, notes the preoccupation of the existential philosophers of the century with the subject of death.

In his work Ziolkowski has clarified the meaning that death has for modern writers and thinkers. He begins his discussion by contrasting the modern attitude of death with those of previous centuries. Basing his discussion on Walter Rehm's book *Der Todesgedanke in der deutschen Dichtung vom Mittelalter bis zur Romantik*, he points out the two basic attitudes concerning death in earlier centuries.

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16 Ibid., pp. 52-67.

17 Ziolkowski, p. 227.

The first, which he calls "the romantic view," sees death as the culmination of man's life; the second, "the humanistic view," asserts that death must be overcome at all costs.19 These two basic attitudes show man's attempts to transcend death. Ziolkowski maintains:

The typically modern attitude turns out to be neither 'for' life nor 'for' death. Recognizing, rather, that death is immanent in life, it attempts to achieve a harmonious synthesis of the two forces in the awareness that true knowledge of life must involve a cognition of death.20

The modern individual can no longer ignore death by projecting a serene after-life, nor can he avoid recognizing death by emphasizing the magnificence of his mortal life. The modern individual must acknowledge death as the greatest limitation of his existence and cope with its restrictions.

Dürrenmatt, like most writers of the century, cannot avoid the problem of death, as is shown by the overwhelming occurrence of the theme of death in his works. Physical death occurs in almost every work he has written. In the few exceptions in which he does not depict actual death, the ideas concerning death as well as references to it are, nevertheless, present. For example, in the drama, Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon, no character dies on stage, but the characters do not escape being reminded of death. The executioner, a familiar character in Dürrenmatt's works, appears many times in this work, as well as other symbols

19Ziolkowski, p. 219.
20Ibid.
and devices which point to death. A second approach to
death which Dürrenmatt uses frequently is to portray not
physical death, but the living dead—characters, who do not
die, but are spiritually dead. The theme of death also
undergoes a change from Dürrenmatt's earliest delineation
of the effects of death on modern man to the more sophisti­
cated approach he adopts in his mature works, namely death
stated in terms of the grotesque. The treatment of death
in the early works is unrelieved and remains serious. It
may be termed grotesque, because it is gruesome and re­
pulsive, but it is not the grotesque tempered with irony,
the form of the grotesque Dürrenmatt uses to sustain
distance. Beginning with an analysis of the role of death
in Die Stadt, the following paragraphs will characterize
the change in Dürrenmatt's approach to death.

In the earliest stories of Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt
achieves an atmosphere of death that pervades the entire
story, an effect similar to the one he shows in his first

21 Dürrenmatt gives the executioner many costumes,
ranging from the splendid executioner in Es steht geschrieben
and the drunken executioner in Die Panne to the Impersonal
executioner who steals through the window in the shadowy
hours of the night in Nächtliches Gespräch mit einem
verachteten Menschen. Whatever his guise, this dreaded
figure of death is easily discernible in Dürrenmatt's works.

22 Claire Zachanassian is among the living dead.
She resembles a statue more than a human being. She herself
indicates that she no longer lives when she says: "Ich
bin die Hölle geworden" (Kom I, 280). Negro da Ponte in
Der Blinde is also spiritually dead. Palmedes astutely
points out that "Der Italiener ist ein Grab" (Kom II, 156).
two dramas, Es steht geschrieben and Der Blinde. In "Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht" he sustains an aura of death by showing everything, including inanimate objects as dead: "Die Luft war tot" (Stadt, 11). "Die Quader sind tot" (Stadt, 15). "Der Mond gestern zu Grabe getragen" (Stadt, 11). In the story "Die Falle," death becomes the keynote of the story.

In addition, the backgrounds of the stories suggest death. As this study indicated in an earlier section of this chapter, the stories of Die Stadt are silhouetted against the background of constrictive buildings, streets, gabled houses, narrow corridors or passageways. Added to this is a lack of warm sunlight, for the stories are all winter landscapes of rain, snow and fog. In placing his characters in such a background, Dürrenmatt emphasizes the constrictions placed on the individual in the modern world. In his book The Mortal No, Frederick J. Hoffmann points out that such images suggest, above-all, death:

In its speculations concerning the phenomena of death, modern literature usually contrasts the images of space and congestion (uncongested space is pure, crowded space is foul) . . . . The grave is a crowded place, and uncomfortable, as are a jail cell, a flophouse room, a hospital ward, a trench, a city street . . . . Many of the modern images which specify the loss of belief

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23Carrier, p. 32. Wellwarth, p. 15. A retort by Palmedes in the drama Der Blinde even points to the unpleasant stench of death caused by the decomposing corpses of the war victims (Kom II, 127).

24See p. 111
in immortality emphasize this kind of space-congestion: furnished rooms, gutters, passageways, subways, et cetera. As Hoffmann suggests, the congestion portrayed in these stories can specifically refer to the confining and narrow spaces of the grave. As in the mature works, Dürrenmatt emphasizes violent death in Die Stadt. In these early stories Dürrenmatt concentrates on the sheer agony of death. Three physical deaths described in this volume are the most painful deaths in Dürrenmatt's works. Taking them in chronological order, the first is the death of the torturer in "Der Folterknecht." The torturer meets his death under the hands of the torturer God:

Er ist an den Boden geschmiedet. Sein Mund brüllt. Die steinerne Decke fällt. Die Luft verklebt die Poren. Die Gewichte sind stöhrende Erdkugeln... Ein Mensch stirbt. (Stadt, 20)

Death literally crushes him. The iron machinery in the torture chamber presses out his life. Even the air of the chamber stops up the pores of his existence. The second death occurs in the story "Der Theaterdirektor." The death


26Although death by natural causes appears in Dürrenmatt's works, death brought about by some act of violence is emphasized in his works. Murders, executions, assassinations and suicides are frequent in his works. Primarily suicide may be interpreted as a form of self-execution in Dürrenmatt's works. The suicides in his works are not portrayed as escapists from overwhelming cosmic or personal pressures; rather, they are self-executioners. Octavia in Der Blinde and Traps in the prose version of Die Panne are the most important suicides in Dürrenmatt's works.
of the young actress is accomplished by a grisly piece of machinery devised by the clever theater director:

Es mochten leichte Metallstäbe sein und Drähte, an denen Klammern und Messer angebracht waren, sowie Stahlstangen mit seltsamen Gelenken, die auf eine eigentümliche Art miteinander verbunden waren, so dass die Vorrichtung einem ungeheuren und überirdischen Insekten zu gleichen schien, und zwar bemerkten wir sie erst, als sie das Weib erfasst und in die Höhe gehoben hatte. Kaum war dies geschehen, brach die Menge in ein unermessliches Beifallklatschen und Bravorufen aus. Als sich nun immer neue Klammern auf die Schauspielerin senkten und sie quer hielten, wälzten sich die Zuschauer vor Lachen. Als die Messer ihr Kleid aufzuschneiden begannen, so dass sie nackt hing, erhob sich aus den ineinandergekeilten Massen ein Ruf, das irgendwo entstanden sein musste, das sich mit der Geschwindigkeit des Gedankens immer weiter fortpflanzte und sich ins Unendliche hob, immer wieder aufgehoben und weitergegeben, bis alles ein Schrei: Töte sie! war und unter dem Toben der Menge ihr Leib durch die Messer zerteilt wurde, derart, dass ihr Kopf mitten unter die Zuschauer fiel, die sich erhoben hatten, ihn fassten, von seinem Blut besudelt, worauf er wie ein Ball von einem zum andern flog. (Stadt, 70)

The preacher in "Der Hund" also meets a horrible death. He is ripped to pieces by the large black dog which had been following him around. The story-teller discovers the mutilated body on the floor of the preacher's basement apartment:

... eine weisse Masse in einem schwarzen Tümpel, der Mann lag, vom Hunde zerfetzt, so sehr, dass er nicht mehr zu erkennen war. (Stadt, 33)

In all of these death scenes none of the gore of the violence is omitted. These deaths painfully show the trauma and immediacy of violent death.

In contrast to these brutally agonizing deaths, the violent deaths of the mature works are expressed in terms
of comic irony. The execution scene in *Es steht geschrieben* is almost a carnival. The populace turns out to see the new executioner perform the "neue spanische Stil" (*Kom II*, 42). The effect of the vegetable lady, peddling her wares in apocalyptic terms only heightens the grotesqueness of the scene. Much of the humor in the play *Die Physiker* revolves around the seemingly unending series of corpses. At the end of the play *Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi*, all three characters who have died, Mississippi, Anastasia and St. Claude, briefly right themselves for the last speeches, and it must be remembered that St. Claude undergoes death twice in the play. Even the natural death of the old lady in *Das Versprechen* has comic overtones. Almost hidden by the tubes leading out from under the bedcovers, the dying woman slowly divulges the horrifying account of her husband Albertchen and her pitiful attempts to stop his violence. The police inspector listening to her rambling account is horror-stricken realizing the ramifications of her story. The juxtaposition of the woman's senility and the seriousness of what she is saying provides the grotesque effect of the scene.

While in the mature works Dürrenmatt almost banter with death, he emphasizes the horror of death in *Die Stadt* and thus focuses on the individual's fear of death. The individual's fear of death is not stressed in the mature works; rather, death is seen more as a finality, which cannot be ignored by the individual. For example in *Der*
Besuch der alten Dame. Ill during the second act shows an increasing fear, as the threat of his death increases, but this fear is only one stage in his development. Before he appears in the third act, he overcomes this fear. Analogous to the development of Ill, the emphasis on the individual's fear of death in the volume of short stories is the initial stage of Dürrenmatt's development of his approach to death and its implications for the individual. In order for the individual to be able to cope with the phenomenon of death, the ultimate limitation of his existence, he must first overcome his fear of death. He must gain some distance from death. Most of the characters in Die Stadt lack perspective and cannot overcome their fear of death. The preacher in "Der Hund," Pilate in the story "Pilatus" and the nihilist in "Die Falle" are characters who show uncontrolled fear of death. The student in "Der Tunnel," however, summons the courage to meet death without fear. He, like Ill in Der Besuch der alten Dame and Traps in Die Panne, is able to give meaning to his death. It is extremely significant that Dürrenmatt does not show the actual crash of the train in this story. The ominous split in the windshield of the train is enough to suggest the impending death and destruction. By the time Dürrenmatt writes "Der Tunnel," he no longer states explicitly the horror of death, as he had done in the death scenes of the torturer, the actress and the preacher. He prefers to suggest the horror of death subtly, without emphasizing the gore of
traumatic death. The fear of death is no longer of primary importance. Rather, death assumes importance in regard to the individual and the meaning he can give to his own death.

In the mature works Dürrenmatt's sardonic treatment of death serves one purpose. It lessens the dignity of death. Very rarely in his works does any character die simply. More important, no character is allowed to die heroically, in a traditional sense. By the incorporation of the grotesque, each death portrayed is divested of any trappings that would enhance the demise of a human life. The few characters who are able to meet death with dignity are robbed of a ceremonial death. The author in the radio-play Nächliches Gespräch mit einem verachteten Menschen who is ready to die for his convictions, finds instead of a martyr's death symbolizing his courage, a trivial death in his room at the hands of a weary executioner.

Death as it is portrayed in the mature works of Dürrenmatt is not only imminent, (his penchant for murder illustrates how quickly a life can be extinguished), but it is also meaningless in regard to the world of the individual. The individual's death has no impact on his world. Only the individual can give his death meaning—a unique meaning in the terms of his own existence. Ill's death exemplifies this attitude. Dürrenmatt says of Ill's death: "Sein Tod ist sinnvoll und sinnlos zugleich" (TSR, 182). It is meaningful to Ill, for Ill accepts his death as just punishment for his crimes, but his death ethically
is ludicrous. It may be projected, as the teacher suggests, that the Güllener will also one day meet their "alte Dame" (Kom I, 327), but within the boundaries of the play, Ill's death does not affect the people of the town. The juxtaposition of the last two scenes of the drama show how readily the townspeople accept what they do. In the last scene the reverence they show Claire is the final irony. Death stated in the terms of the grotesque is ridiculous. Only the "men of courage" are able to find meaning in such deaths. Ill, Traps, the author in Nächliches Gespräch mit einem verachteten Menschen as well as the student in "Der Tunnel," are characters who are able to meet death without rancor, despite the ludicrous conditions surrounding their deaths. Thus, it is clear that in respect to death, the student closely parallels these later protagonists.

Dürrenmatt uses the satiric grotesque in conjunction with a second serious theme in his works—the individual's search for grace. An investigation of grace also illustrates a significant change from his early viewpoint expressed in Die Stadt and the more mature approach he illustrates in his subsequent works.

Man's search for grace is a consistent theme in Dürrenmatt's works. The anguished cry of the nihilist in his dream in the story "Die Falle": "Gnade, wo ist Gnade?" (Stadt, 97), becomes the cry of many of Dürrenmatt's characters. Only a few of his characters experience grace, however,
because for Dürrenmatt grace can only be attained through faith, and as he shows again and again in his works, sustaining faith in the twentieth century is one of the real tests of modern-day man. As was pointed out in Chapter II, Dürrenmatt demands a stern faith on the part of the individual. In his works, the individual exhibiting faith is able to believe in an inscrutable and hidden God. As Dürrenmatt says in the interview with Ketels, again showing his affinity with Karl Barth: "Like Barth, I would say: belief is grace."

In Die Stadt Dürrenmatt shows men who seek grace, but whose fear does not allow them to place their trust in a God they do not understand. The nihilist, Pilate and the preacher all seek grace, but do not experience it. They do not have the ability to understand that the grotesqueness of their lives is not God's punishment. They seek the consolation of God; when they do not experience it, they succumb. The student in "Der Tunnel," on the other hand, also experiences the effects of a chaotic world, but, he, unlike the other characters in Die Stadt, gains enough

27Although several of Dürrenmatt's dramas do not take place in the twentieth century, it is, nevertheless, clear that he intends them to reflect the problems of modern man. In the preface to Es steht geschrieben, he expressly states that he did not write an historical drama. See also his essay "Theaterprobleme" (TSR, 120-124) and the notes to the play Die Wiedertäufer (Wiedertäufer, 99-109).

28See pp. 68-70.

29Ketels, p. 99.
distance to accept his defeat. His reaction parallels those of later men of faith, such as Übelohe in Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi and Knipperdollinck in Es steht geschrieben. Although all of his actions becomes meaningless, he nevertheless believes. His attempt to withdraw from the world, his attempt to understand his world—the strange events of the train ride—and his attempt to change his world are futile. His efforts have no impact on the unfolding catastrophe around him. And yet, in accepting his fate he evokes God's name with a smile on his lips.

Both Übelohe and Knipperdollinck may be termed ridiculous figures in that their well-intentioned actions lead to naught. When Übelohe first introduces himself in a long monologue that stops the action of the drama Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi, he even refers to himself as a ridiculous figure who has led a grotesque existence: "Mein Auftritt ist lächerlich, mehr als lächerlich, unzeitgemäss, wie ich selbst, wie mein groteskes Leben" (Kom I, 124). And yet, despite the worldly events that render their lives meaningless, both men are able to sustain faith. Knipperdollinck, strapped to the wheel at the end of the drama, recognizes the mystery of God and understands that he cannot comprehend God or his justice:

Die tiefe meiner Verzweiflung ist nur ein Gleichnis Deiner Gerechtigkeit,
und wie in einer Schale liegt mein Leib in diesem Rad,
welche Du jetzt mit Deiner Gnade bis zum Rande füllst! (Kom II, 115)

Similarly, Übelohe, too, recognizes the futility of his
actions, and like Knipperdollinck he does not scorn God; on the contrary, he acclaims His supremacy. At the end of the drama, Übelohe remains the only survivor, but he presents a ludicrous picture. Dressed as Don Quixote, he gives his final speech battling a windmill.\textsuperscript{30} Dwarfed in the shadow of the giant mill, he visually suggests how little impact man and his actions have on his world. And yet, despite this grotesque and belittling position that he is forced to assume, Übelohe is able to accept it without cursing God. Ursel Boyd's thesis that the grotesque is a symbol of grace in Dürrenmatt's works seems to be born out by these two characters.\textsuperscript{31} In his mature works, it is such characters who receive grace, because these characters never lose their faith.

It must be pointed out that many characters in Dürrenmatt's works who are figures of grace are not necessarily deserving of grace by Christianity's standards, a reality which sometimes disturbs Dürrenmatt's critics. Dürrenmatt himself comments on this question in discussing one of his latest plays Der Meteor. Schwitter, the central character of the play, does not portray the Christian man of faith. Dürrenmatt describes him as follows:

\textsuperscript{30}Don Quixote is a familiar symbol for the futility of modern man's actions in Dürrenmatt's works. See also Der Verdacht (Leck-Schleswig: Rowohlt, 1961), pp. 69-70, and Hörspiele, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{31}Boyd, pp. 41-50.
Schwitter is a dying Hemingway, or someone like that. He also had innumerable marriages. He is no bourgeois figure, no Thomas Mann. He is a drunk and a rake and whatever you like. One of the funniest comments I have heard in reference to Schwitter was in a discussion when someone accused me of being incredible because such an unworthy man would not receive the grace of God. As if grace were granted according to human certificates of moral conduct. That's really smug theology.32

Although the figures who reach grace in his works are not all of the caliber of Schwitter, many are men of degradation in the eyes of mankind. In this respect, the figure of the beggar is very important. In the play Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon the beggar Akki experiences grace, symbolized in this play by the young girl Kurrabi. Although the beggar in some men's eyes is the least of men, he is the man who obtains grace in this play. His earthly appearance is of no consequence. It is his belief that is important.

On the other hand, Dürrenmatt is a relentless critic of those men who outwardly proclaim their faith, but whose faith, in reality, is insincere, such as the preacher in "Der Hund." Ketels suggests that Dürrenmatt makes the same distinction that Kirkegaard made between genuine Christianity and the insincerity of organized Christendom.

Ketels: You make the antithesis Kierkegaard makes between authentic Christianity, genuine faith, and Christendom, the institutionalized form which is watered down--bingo games in the church hall, that kind of thing.

32Ketels, pp. 99-100.
Dürrenmatt: Yes . . . There are many people who realize that Christianity is an existential question and not a matter of cult.33

The preacher in the early story "Der Hund" sincerely believes that his faith will lead him to grace, but when his faith is tested, it is not strong enough to survive the incalculable forces of the world. It is interesting to note that both Übelohe and Knipperdollinck first seek grace through pious means. Knipperdollinck, paralleling the actions of the earlier figure the preacher, gives up his wealth to live by the instruction of the Bible: "Verkaufe was du hast und gib's den Armen, so wirst du einen Schatz im Himmel haben . . . (Kom II, 26)34 Übelohe's dream of founding a hospital in the tropics for the benefit of mankind ends in disillusionment. He must return to his homeland a defeated man. Both characters only obtain grace after they abandon their well-meaning actions. Dürrenmatt's distinction between insincere piety and true faith is further exemplified in the delineation of the clergy in his works. The men of the cloth in his works are almost all portrayed as weak, ineffectual churchmen.35 They are


35The bishop in Es steht geschrieben, Utnapischtim in Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon, the pastor in Der Besuch der alten Dame and the missionary in Die Physiker stand out as examples of ineffectual churchmen.
caricatures mouthing the dogma of the church. Peppard points out that not until the play Der Meteor did Dürren­matt show a clergyman who was capable of doubts and suffering, thereby showing qualities which raised him above a cari­cature. The churchmen in Dürren­matt's works are not the figures of grace. Likewise, the individuals who seek grace through piety do not obtain grace.

Dürren­matt's use of the grotesque in conveying the most serious questions that confront man, shows the distance that he obtains from his despairing portrait of man and his world. In his mature works his characters suffer the same effects of an incomprehensible world as his earlier characters, but his later characters, unlike the figures of the stories in Die Stadt, show an awareness of their own defeat, and courage despite it. They do not despair, but, instead accept their grotesque lives with dignity and have enough resiliency to believe in spite of their own thwarted dreams. As Dürren­matt stresses, he cannot place himself outside the dimensions of the world (TSR, 123), but he can achieve distance from the chaos around him. In his mature works he shows that he achieves this distance. In connection with the thematic material, distance is evidenced by his creative use of the grotesque. Stated in terms of the grotesque, the chaotic world is no longer as frightening and as overwhelming. For Dürren­matt such distancing techniques are necessary.

36 Peppard, p. 144.
Similar to the contrast between the treatment of themes in the early stories and the mature works, the contrast between the characterization of the individual in the earliest work and the mature works, reveals not only the distance the "man of courage" displays, but also shows how important the figures of the early stories are in relation to the delineation of the individual in the mature works. The contrast of Dürrenmatt's early and mature approach to the individual illustrates best the validity for terming Die Stadt the "Vorfeld" for Dürrenmatt's mature works.

The "man of courage," who emerges within the framework of Die Stadt, i.e., the student in "Der Tunnel," becomes the leading figure of Dürrenmatt's mature works. Although he is not a traditional hero, since he is more of a victim than hero, he is the individual in Dürrenmatt's works who encompasses the only positive stand man can make in the modern world. The "man of courage" has the all-important perspective necessary to endure the bewildering world around him. Indeed, it is this perspective which distinguishes him from Dürrenmatt's other characters. Recognizing his limitations, he does not try to order or alter his world. He recognizes an external defeat, but not an internal defeat, for he maintains hope in the face of desolation. The "man of courage," however, is the rare individual in Dürrenmatt's works. He stands in contrast to the majority of characters in Dürrenmatt's works, i.e.,
the individuals who cannot achieve his distance, the individuals who never accept the immutability of their worlds and who despair because of this lack of perception. In this regard, the study of the positive and negative reactions of the individuals in Die Stadt becomes very important, for Dürrenmatt continues in his mature works to show the negative reactions an individual can have as well as the more desirable positive reaction. Further, this study reveals that the negative reactions of the individuals in Die Stadt are the same basic reactions of Dürrenmatt's later more complex individuals. This continuous line of development illustrates very clearly how important Die Stadt is as the "Vorfeld" for the mature works.

Before illustrating comparative characteristics of Dürrenmatt's early and later figure in order to trace this line of development, it is pertinent to see how ingrained the delineation of opposites is in Dürrenmatt's works and in particular his predilection for creating contrastive characters.

The dialectic arrangement of "possible worlds" in Die Stadt was pointed out in Chapter II of this study. Dürrenmatt feels that he can only present reality by writing dialectically. This idea extends also to his

37See Chapter II, pp. 53-54.

38Ketels, pp. 92-95.
characters, for in his works he distinctly shows characters who illustrate contrastive viewpoints. In the short article entitled "Bekenntnisse eines Plagiators" (TSR, 239-246), Dürrenmatt speaks of the possibility of presenting a dialectic disposition of characters. This small article, written in 1952, is Dürrenmatt's answer to Frank Wedekind's widow, who charged Dürrenmatt with plagiarism. She felt that he had copied in his play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi many elements from her husband's works, in particular from Wedekind's play, Schloss Wetterstein. In his rebuttal Dürrenmatt acknowledges his true inheritance from Wedekind. He cites Wedekind's play Der Marquis von Keith as the work of the early twentieth century playwright which influenced him the most. According to Dürrenmatt, the two characters in Der Marquis von Keith, the one a "Spiegelbild" of the other, afforded Dürrenmatt "die Möglichkeit einer Dialektik mit Personen" (TSR, 244). The characters of his play Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi illustrate this dialectic approach. Only one, Übelohe, is a protagonist in a positive sense. The other leading characters, particularly St. Claude and Mississippi, stand in contrast to Übelohe. They are negative protagonists. The five leading characters of this drama complement each other. By presenting the different points of view embodied in these characters, Dürrenmatt feels that he is able to divulge a deeper reality of the condition of man. Deschner points out that Dürrenmatt's earlier works already exhibit his dialectic approach to
characters. She cites the "dialectic tension" that exists between Knipperdollinck and Bockelson, or between the Duke and da Ponte as examples.\(^3\) "Der Tunnel" illustrates very clearly a dialectic arrangement of characters. The student's actions are not only contrasted by the negative reactions of the conductor, but also by the reactions of the lesser characters such as the girl and man in the compartment and the ticket taker. Indeed, the four basic reactions that the individual shows in the stories of Die Stadt remain integral aspects of Dürrenmatt's more complex characters, as a comparison of his early and later figures will show.

The actions of the five individuals in the early stories who try to retreat from their worlds—the nihilist, the guard, the torturer, the preacher and Pilate—may be compared to the actions of two important protagonists, Möbius in Die Physiker and Romulus in Romulus der Grosse. Möbius tries to retreat from the world by feigning insanity, thereby spending his life in an insane asylum. Although his motives for this act may be grand—he wants to prevent the world from utilizing his scientific expertise to blow itself apart—he is unsuccessful. In fact, every move he makes leads him closer to the very destruction he seeks to avoid. Möbius is defeated because he tries to influence his world by retreating from it. In a sense, Romulus does

\(^3\)Deschner, p. 125.
the same. Romulus retreats by not carrying out the duties of his office as emperor of Rome. Möbius and Romulus are, of course, much more sophisticated characters than the earlier figures who had withdrawn from their worlds. For one thing they are leaders in their worlds with responsible positions. Möbius is a world renown scientist and Romulus the emperor of Rome. The earlier characters are not illustrious figures. They retreat from the reality of their worlds because they are desperately trying to avoid the painful confrontation with their worlds. Möbius and Romulus, on the other hand, withdraw to insulated surroundings—Möbius to the artificial atmosphere of an asylum and Romulus to his shabby palace and his chickens—in order to implement well-devised plans for saving their respective worlds. Their intentions are thwarted, however, for each must eventually face reality and in their cases must also accept the bitter results of their actions—they brought about the reverse of what they intended.

The men who try to define their worlds by reason and to change their worlds by action are also characteristic figures in Dürrenmatt's works. These figures quite frequently become contrastive, if they lack the perception to understand the futility of their actions. The guard in "Die Stadt," for example, continually tries to re-think the arrangement of the prison—his world—and never acknowledges his inability to find the solution. Matthäi, the dedicated detective in the novel Das Versprechen,
aptly illustrates the downfall of a man whose belief in the infallibility of reason prevents him from recognizing the uncontrollable forces of his world. Having promised the parents of three murdered girls that he would bring in the murderer of their children, Matthäi very carefully and astutely builds a case against the murderer and sets a trap to catch him. His well-thought out plans, however, are disrupted by the unexpected death of the murderer before the trap has sprung. Matthäi cannot admit defeat. Instead, he goes insane, waiting for the murderer to fall into his trap. Similar to the guard, Matthäi cannot accept the inability of his reason to comprehend his world.

In the story "Das Bild des Sisyphos," the narrator describing Rotmantel, the central figure of the short story, foreshadows the characteristics of negative figures such as St. Claude and Mississippi: "... auch schien unter seinen Worten jener Fanatismus zu glühen, den wir bei Menschen antreffen, die entschlossen sind, ihrer Idee die Welt zu opfern" (Stadt, 43). St. Claude and Mississippi are fanatical in their attempts to change the existing order of their worlds. St. Claude would like to implement communism, and Mississippi would like to enforce biblical justice. These men fail, however, for as individuals, even individuals representing broad causes, they cannot force their worlds to conform to their beliefs. Reminiscent of Sisyphus, the image used in the story "Das Bild des Sisyphos," these characters' efforts to impose their ideas
are in vain. St. Claude and Mississippi remain negative characters, because they never achieve enough distance to realize that their ideas have no impact and cannot be put into effect. Many of the "men of courage" also show a tendency to impose their ideas in order to change their worlds. Romulus, Übelohe and the author in Nächtliches Gespräch mit einem verachteten Menschen, for example, at some point seek to bring about changes. These characters, however, do not succumb as do St. Claude and Mississippi, because they achieve the necessary distance to recognize the utter futility of their actions.

Characters such as Romulus, Übelohe and the author in Nächtliches Gespräch mit einem verachteten Menschen are much more closely akin to the student in "Der Tunnel," for efforts to change their worlds are only one stage of their development. In the end they perceive the error of their intentions. Recognizing the immutability of their worlds, they cease their struggle, not necessarily abandoning their ideas, but realizing the impracticability of implementing their ideas. Their perception gives them the strength to accept their failures without condemning the forces that brought about those failures. And more important, they accept their defeat without despairing.

The comparison of the stories in Die Stadt and Dürrenmatt's mature works revealed the significance of the early prose volume in the development of Dürrenmatt's career. First of all, the comparison showed the importance
of the concept of "Distanz" for Dürrenmatt. A study of the horrific images in Die Stadt illustrated that during the writing of the stories of Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt achieved "Distanz" from the visual images that overwhelmed his imagination. In addition, a discussion of the satiric grotesque within the bounds of the volume, particularly the use of the grotesque in connection with the serious themes of death and grace, indicated that Dürrenmatt had gained perspective concerning the world of man during the years he completed these stories. Finally, the study showed that the inclusion in Die Stadt of the "man of courage," Dürrenmatt's hero who displays distance in relationship to his world, also reflects the perspective Dürrenmatt himself had gained from the threatening portrait of the modern-day world.

The comparison also indicated Die Stadt's importance as the "Vorfeld" for the mature works. Not only did the comparison reveal the consistency of certain themes in his works, but also, and most important, the comparison showed that the basic reactions of the individual emphasized in the stories of Die Stadt remain important aspects of Dürrenmatt's complex figures in his mature works. In delineating Dürrenmatt's creative development, the collection of stories published as Die Stadt cannot be ignored.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters of this study have delineated the significance of Dürrenmatt's early short stories collected in the volume Die Stadt. The writing of these stories, extending over a period of almost ten years, documents the early, formative period of Dürrenmatt's career. The work on the volume coincides with Dürrenmatt's development as a creative artist, and, consequently, the stories reflect this maturation. Culminating with the story "Der Tunnel," the last story Dürrenmatt completed before publication of Die Stadt, the material of the short stories shows the emergence of a provocative writer, whose ensuing works established his reputation as one of the leading dramatists of recent years.

First of all, Die Stadt reflects the crystallization of Dürrenmatt's Weltanschauung—his positive outlook concerning man's role in the twentieth century. According to Dürrenmatt, man faced with a threatening and confusing world can easily despair. Man sees himself only as a "plaything" of forces beyond his control. Only by gaining distance from such a dismal picture can he endure his world without despairing. In order to pursue a writing career,
Dürrenmatt felt that he had to gain distance from this view of man's world, if he were to comment on the condition of modern man. He had to reject despair as the characteristic end-result of man's efforts. Further, as a creative artist, he had to find the means to convey the chaotic world of the twentieth century in terms that would not overwhelm. An examination of the stories in Die Stadt has shown that Dürrenmatt accomplished his goals. Not only did he gain perspective from his earliest despairing view of modern man's relationship with his world, but he also found the technical means of maintaining this distance in his works, principally by his use of the comedy and the satiric grotesque.

The contrast between the earliest stories of the volume, "Weihnachten" and "Der Folterknecht," and "Der Tunnel" could not be greater. "Der Tunnel" is a capsule statement of the mature Dürrenmatt's positive Weltanschauung. Through the characterization of the autobiographical character, the student, Dürrenmatt asserts that man need not despair—a contradictory view from that expressed through the other characters of Die Stadt. When the young student is confronted with a world that is out of control, a situation that could evoke complete despair on his part, he does not despair. He accepts his limitations in the face of his incomprehensible world, and he even displays rare courage in succumbing to his defeat without cursing
his world. The student's attitude reflects Dürrenmatt's positive option for man in the modern world. Man must withstand the assaults of twentieth century life without despairing. In his works, the "mar of courage" embodies this positive view, Akki, Übelohe, Romulus, for example. The "men of courage" see the events of their shattered lives in perspective. In the face of their defeat, they do not despair. In Die Stadt, only the student in "Der Tunnel" gains enough distance to withstand the effects of his world. The remaining characters of the volume capitulate.

In Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt investigates the possibilities of man's freedom in the twentieth century by focusing on the disastrous effects of the modern world on the existence of the individual. He creates worlds which represent abstractions and shows the effects of these worlds on the individual. Primarily creating worlds oriented either philosophically, politically or spiritually, he illustrates how ineffective the actions of the individual are against their inflexible worlds. Confronted with defeat, the individual quickly despairs. Dürrenmatt emphasizes three basic reactions which lead to despair. The individual can try to ignore the unpleasant aspects of his world, an attitude which is only a delusion, for the individual quickly learns that he cannot avoid the confrontation with his world. The individual can try to interpret his world by reason or to change his world by action, but,
both endeavors are futile, for the chaos resists shaping by the individual. The characters who react in one of these ways end-up as frightened and perplexed men. They do not have the perception to recognize the immutability of their worlds and their own limitations. A third reaction is illustrated by the individual who has the awareness to understand the immutability of his world, but he does not have the courage to accept his findings. Although he shows perception, he lacks courage. He remains incapacitated by the paralyzing effects of fear and despair. All of the characters in Die Stadt, except the student in "Der Tunnel," illustrate these negative reactions. In the crisis of confrontation, they can achieve no perspective. Stricken with fear, they succumb totally.

The student, the only character of the volume who reacts positively, parallels the later "men of courage." Although he sustains the same disastrous effects and at first reacts negatively, in the end, he is perceptive enough to realize the hopelessness of his situation. He understands the futility of his actions and gives up the hope of overcoming his world, i.e. stopping the train. Unlike the other characters in Die Stadt, however, he does not despair. He gains the necessary distance and he accepts his defeat gracefully, without fear and without rancor.

Considering Die Stadt as the record of Dürrenmatt's early career also reveals the creative maturation of the author. The satiric grotesque, Dürrenmatt's method of
maintaining distance in his later works, evolves within the framework of the volume. First, Dürrenmatt shows a chronologically improved exploitation of the monstrous images that he feels best express the chaotic nature of the modern world. Secondly, in the pivotal work "Der Tunnel," Dürrenmatt incorporates his characteristic use of the satiric grotesque--his use of horrific images in conjunction with comic elements to convey his view of the tumultuous modern world in terms that maintain perspective. The study of the treatment of the themes of death and grace best illustrates this aspect of Dürrenmatt's development.

In the early stories, Dürrenmatt emphasizes the brutal agony of death. In the mature works which includes "Der Tunnel," on the other hand, he minimizes the pain and terror of death by conveying death in the terms of the grotesque. The treatment of the theme of grace shows a similar development in his works. The modification and refinement of Dürrenmatt's creative ability is amply demonstrated in the collection.

The analysis of _Die Stadt_ is also significant in regard to Dürrenmatt's characterization of the individual in his works. The basis of many of Dürrenmatt's complex characters in his mature works can be found in the early, one-dimensional figures of _Die Stadt_. The basic reactions--both negative and positive--of these early figures build the foundation for the mature characters. Drawing on the
negative reactions illustrated by the characters in Die Stadt, Dürrenmatt creates in his later works a dialectical arrangement of characters by utilizing these negative reactions as the basis of his contrastive figures to his "men of courage."

Dürrenmatt termed these early stories the "Vorfeld" for his more mature work, an appropriate term as this study has shown. Examined as representative of the initial period of Dürrenmatt's career, the stories of Die Stadt delineate the origins of an exciting writer, whose imaginative works stand out as some of the most important works to be published in the German-speaking countries during the post-war period.
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Title of Thesis: Friedrich Dürrenmatt's Die Stadt: Analysis and Significance of Dürrenmatt's Early Prose.

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Date of Examination:

December 6, 1971