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978-0-521-70019-1 - The Cambridge Companion to Gunter Grass

Edited by Stuart Taberner

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
GÜNTER GRASS

Günter Grass is Germany's best-known and internationally most successful living author, from his first novel *The Tin Drum* to his recent controversial autobiography. He is known for his tireless social and political engagement with the issues that have shaped postwar Germany: the difficult legacy of the Nazi past, the Cold War and the arms race, environmentalism, unification and racism. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1999. This *Companion* offers the widest coverage of Grass's oeuvre across the range of media in which he works, including literature, television and visual arts. Throughout, there is particular emphasis on Grass's literary style, the creative personality which inhabits all his work, and the impact on his reputation of revelations about his early involvement with Nazism. The volume sets out, in a fresh and lively fashion, the fundamentals that students and readers need in order to understand Grass and his individual works.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of the book.

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GÜNTER GRASS'S PROSE WORKS

A number of Grass's prose works are discussed in detail in two or more chapters:

- The Tin Drum* [1959] (chapters 3, 4, 5, 14)
- Cat and Mouse* [1961] (chapters 3, 5, 14)
- Dog Years* [1963] (chapters 3, 5)
- Local Anaesthetic* [1969] (chapters 3, 5)
- The Flounder* [1977] (chapters 3, 6)
- The Rat* [1986] (chapters 8, 14)
- The Call of the Toad* [1992] (chapters 9, 14)
- Too Far Afield* [1995] (chapters 3, 9)
- Crabwalk* [2002] (chapters 3, 5)

Other prose works are discussed in the chapters listed:

- From the Diary of a Snail* [1972] (chapter 7)
- The Meeting at Telgte* [1979] (chapter 7)
- Headbirths or The Germans Are Dying Out* [1980] (chapter 8)
- Show Your Tongue* [1988] (chapter 8)
- Dead Wood: An Epitaph* [1990] (chapter 8)
- My Century* [1999] (chapter 9)
- Peeling the Onion* [2006] (chapter 10)

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DAVID BARNETT is Senior Lecturer and Head of Drama at the University of Sussex. His research is concerned with politics, representation and aesthetics in contemporary drama, directing and theatre and focuses on metadrama, political and postdramatic theatre, primarily in the German and English-language traditions. He has written extensively on Heiner Müller and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and has published articles and essays on Elfriede Jelinek, Werner Schwab, Heiner Goebbels, Howard Barker, Michael Frayn, Brian Friel, Heinar Kipphardt, René Pollesch, Albert Ostermaier, Rainald Goetz, Joseph Goebbels, Urs Widmer, Rolf Hochhuth, Franz Xaver Kroetz, Oliver Czeslik, Falk Richter and Katrin Röggla. His book *Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the German Theatre* appeared in 2005.

REBECCA BRAUN currently holds a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at the School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Liverpool. She has published widely on Günter Grass: the monograph *Constructing Authorship in the Work of Günter Grass* (2008), the edited volume (with Frank Brunssen) *Changing the Nation: Günter Grass in International Perspective* (2008), and various articles, including 'The Art of Self-Construction: Günter Grass's Use of Orwell and Camus in *Headbirths* or *The Germans Are Dying Out*' (2004) and "'Mich in Variationen erzählen": Günter Grass and the Ethics of Autobiography' (2008). A monograph on German authors and the media from 1960 to the present is in preparation.

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HELEN FINCH is a Lecturer in German at the University of Liverpool. She has published articles on W. G. Sebald and Günter Grass, and is currently working on a monograph comparing the works of W. G. Sebald with those of Peter Handke and Botho Strauß.

FRANK FINLAY is Professor of German at the University of Leeds and currently President of the Conference of University Teachers of German in Great Britain and Ireland. His publications include books and articles on literature, culture and aesthetics in postwar Germany and Austria, with a recent focus on writing since the *Wende*. He is a member of the editorial team nearing completion of the 27-volume *Kölner Ausgabe der Werke Heinrich Bölls* and is joint Director of the Leeds–Swansea Colloquia on Contemporary German-language Literature.

KATHARINA HALL is Lecturer in German at the University of Swansea. She has published widely on contemporary German literature, history and culture, including articles on the work of W. G. Sebald, Bernhard Schlink and Zafer Şenocak. Her monograph, *Günter Grass's 'Danzig Quintet': Explorations in the Memory and History of the Nazi Era from Die Blechtrommel to Im Krebsgang*, and an edited volume, *Esther Dischereit*, appeared in 2007. She is currently the principal investigator on the major research project 'Detecting the Past: Representations of National Socialism in English- and German-language crime fiction, television and film', and is co-editor, with David Basker, of the volume *German Crime Fiction*.

ROGER HILLMAN is Reader in Film Studies and German Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra. Research interests span European cinema, film in relation to music and to history, and Turkish-German authors and directors. Recent publications include *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, Ideology* (2005); (co-ed.) *Reading Images, Viewing Texts: Crossdisciplinary Perspectives* (2006); (co-authored) *Transkulturalität: Türkisch-deutsche Konstellationen in Literatur und Film* (2007).

KAREN LEEDER is Professor of Modern German Literature at the University of Oxford and Fellow of New College. She has published widely on modern German literature, especially poetry, and has translated work by a number of German writers into English: most recently: *After Brecht: A Celebration* (2006). An edited volume, *Schaltstelle. Neue deutsche Lyrik im Dialog* appeared in 2007 as did a

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special edition of *German Life and Letters: Flaschenpost: German Poetry and the Long Twentieth Century*. A collection of essays, *The New German Poetry* is due out in 2008 and a volume on poetic lateness is in preparation.

PATRICK O'NEILL is Professor of German at Queen's University at Kingston, Canada. Among his books are *Günter Grass: A Bibliography, 1955–1975* (1976), an edition of *Critical Essays on Günter Grass* (1987), *Günter Grass Revisited* (1999) as well as other books and articles on German, English, and comparative literature and on aspects of narratology and translation studies.

STUART PARKES is Emeritus Professor of German at the University of Sunderland. He has published widely on contemporary German literature, especially Martin Walser. He is the author of *Writers and Politics in West Germany* (1986) and *Understanding Contemporary Germany* (1997), as well as co-editor of a series of seven volumes on contemporary literature.

JULIAN PREECE is Professor of German at Swansea University and author of *The Life and Work of Günter Grass: Literature, History, Politics* (2001, 2nd edn 2004) and *The Rediscovered Writings of Veza Canetti: Out of the Shadows of a Husband* (2007). Also editor and ghost-writer of *Nine Lives: Ethnic Conflict in the Polish–Ukrainian Borderlands* by Waldemar Lotnik (1999) and editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Kafka* (2002). He represents Western Europe on the Advisory Board of the Günter Grass Foundation Bremen and edits (with Frank Finlay) the Leeds–Swansea Series in Contemporary German Literature.

RICHARD E. SCHADE is a Professor of German Studies at the University of Cincinnati. He came to his focus on Grass through research on early modern literary culture, Luther to Lessing, and has published widely on Grimmelshausen and the iconographic imagination. He has been the Managing Editor of the *Lessing Yearbook* since 1986. Additionally, he serves as Honorary Consul of Germany, a presidential appointment.

MONIKA SHAFI is the Elias Ahuja Professor of German and the current Director of Women's Studies at the University of Delaware, USA. She is the author of *Utopische Entwürfe in der Literatur von Frauen* (1989), *Gertrud Kolmar: Eine Einführung in das Werk* (1995), *Balancing Acts: Intercultural Encounters in Contemporary German and Austrian Literature* (2001) as well as articles on nineteenth and twentieth century German literature. Most recently, her edition, *Approaches to Teaching Grass's The Tin Drum* was published by the Modern Language Association of America (2008).

STUART TABERNER is Professor of Contemporary German Literature, Culture and Society at the University of Leeds. His most recent monograph *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond* appeared in 2005 and he is editor of a number of

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collections, including *Recasting German Identity* (2002, with Frank Finlay), *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation* (2004); *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization* (2006, with Paul Cooke) and *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic* (2007).

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I am especially grateful, of course, to all the contributors to the volume for their hard work and tolerance of my editing. As always, I am indebted to my colleagues at Leeds, and particularly to Professor Frank Finlay and Professor Paul Cooke. Friends as well as colleagues, Frank and Paul have always been willing to discuss, offer advice and provide inspiration. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Ali for her forbearance while I was busy at my computer with this book – we now have a new, shared project, and I promise to turn all my energies to that enterprise!

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1927 Born on 16 October in Langfuhr in Danzig (now the Polish city of Gdańsk) to Wilhelm and Helene Grass.
- 1933 Hitler comes to power. Grass begins primary school.
- 1935 The Nuremberg laws formalise the Nazis' anti-Semitic measures.
- 1937 Grass begins secondary school.
- 1938 German troops move into Austria as the country is incorporated into Hitler's Reich (*Anschluß*). In September, following the Munich conference, the British and French allow Hitler to annex the Sudetenland (the German-speaking region of Czechoslovakia). On 9 November, the Night of the Broken Glass takes place (*Kristallnacht*) during which Jewish premises are burned down.
- 1939 Hitler invades Poland on 1 September. The first shots are fired in Danzig. On 3 September Britain and France declare war against Germany.
- 1940 France is invaded and defeated. Much of western Europe has already fallen, or will be defeated soon. British troops are forced to evacuate at Dunkirk.
- 1941 Hitler invades the Soviet Union, formerly allied with Germany during the joint invasion of Poland in 1939.
- 1942 Grass leaves school.
- 1943 Grass joins the Luftwaffe (airforce) auxiliary.
- 1944 Grass carries out wartime work service (*Arbeitsdienst*) and is subsequently called up into the army. In 2006, he revealed that he had been a member of the 10th SS Panzer Division Frundsberg.

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- 1945 Grass is wounded at Cottbus and subsequently captured by the Americans in hospital in Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně). He is briefly interned as a prisoner-of-war.
- 1946 Grass works in a mine near Hildesheim where he is introduced to social-democratic politics and attends a rally by the Social Democratic leader Kurt Schuhmacher. He is reunited with his parents and his sister.
- 1947 Grass starts an apprenticeship as a stone mason in Düsseldorf. The first meeting of what would become the Group 47 is organised by Hans Werner Richter.
- 1948 The Deutschmark (German mark) is introduced as a new currency into the three western occupation zones in Germany. This solidifies the growing division between the western zones and the Soviet zone. Grass enrolls at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art.
- 1949 The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) is founded in May. The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) is founded in the Soviet zone in October.
- 1951 Grass hitch-hikes around Italy.
- 1952 Grass meets Anna Schwarz in Switzerland. They are married in 1954.
- 1953 Grass moves to West Berlin and begins study at the Academy of Fine Arts. He witnesses the uprising in East Berlin against the communist authorities.
- 1954 Grass's mother dies.
- 1955 Grass wins third prize in a poetry competition organised by the radio station Süddeutscher Rundfunk. He is invited to attend the Group 47 and reads there. He signs a contract for his work with Luchterhand publishers and has his first art exhibition in Stuttgart.
- 1956 Grass publishes the poetry collection *The Advantages of Wind-Chickens*. He moves to Paris.
- 1957 Grass's first play (*Flood*) is performed in Frankfurt. His sons Franz and Raoul are born.
- 1958 Grass reads from *The Tin Drum* at the Group 47 and is awarded its prize.

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- 1959 *The Tin Drum* is published. The prize awarded by the City of Bremen is subsequently retracted on account of the novel's 'immorality'.
- 1961 The Berlin Wall is erected, prompting Grass's first public intervention in an open letter to Anna Seghers, the chairwoman of the East German Writers' Union. *Cat and Mouse* is published in October. Grass's daughter Laura is born.
- 1963 *Dog Years* is published. Grass is elected a member of the Academy of Arts.
- 1965 Grass's son Bruno is born. Grass speaks at 52 public meetings in support of the Social Democrats during the election campaign. Willy Brandt's SPD loses the election.
- 1966 Grass's play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* is staged for the first time. Hansjürgen Pohland's film version of *Cat and Mouse* is released. The Grand Coalition between the CDU (Christian Democrat Union) and the SPD is formed, sparking widespread protests amongst students who believe that there is now no effective parliamentary opposition.
- 1967 Grass travels to Israel. His collection of poetry *Cross-Examined* is published.
- 1968 Student protests intensify and Grass is caught up in the debate about the extent to which such extra-parliamentary protest is legitimate. The collection of short stories *Stories, Stories* is published under the pseudonym Artur Knoff (the name of a brother of his mother, who was killed in the First World War).
- 1969 Grass speaks 94 times in support of the SPD in the election campaign. His *Local Anaesthetic* is published. Willy Brandt becomes Chancellor.
- 1970 Grass goes to Warsaw with Willy Brandt, where Brandt famously falls to his knees in a gesture of apology to the Polish population and also the murdered Jews of the city.
- 1972 *From the Diary of a Snail* is published. Grass is separated from his wife Anna and begins a relationship with Veronika Schröter.
- 1974 Grass leaves the Catholic Church.
- 1975 Grass travels to India.
- 1976 Helmut Schmidt becomes Chancellor.

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- 1977 Wave of terrorist kidnappings and murders by the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*).
- 1979 Grass publishes *The Meeting at Telgte*. He marries Ute Grunert. Volker Schlöndorff's adaptation of *The Tin Drum* wins the Golden Palm prize at the Cannes film festival and an Oscar for best foreign film. Grass's daughter Nele is born (her mother is Ingrid Krüger).
- 1980 *Headbirths or The Germans are Dying Out* is published.
- 1983 Grass becomes President of the Academy of Arts.
- 1984 The collection of speeches *Learn to Resist* is published.
- 1986 Grass travels to Calcutta. *The Rat* appears.
- 1987 Grass's collected works in ten volumes is published, edited by Volker Neuhaus. Helmut Kohl becomes Chancellor.
- 1988 The multi-media work *Show Your Tongue* is published.
- 1989 The Berlin Wall is opened on 9 November. Grass speaks out against Kohl's plans for the unification of Germany.
- 1990 Grass continues to speak out against the prospect of a rapid unification of the two German states. Unification takes place on 3 October. *Dead Wood* appears in October.
- 1991 Grass's collection of graphic art, *Four Decades. A Report from the Workshop* appears.
- 1992 Grass publishes *The Call of the Toad*.
- 1993 *Novemberland* is published.
- 1995 The novel *Too Far Afield* is published.
- 1997 Martin Buchhorn's film adaptation of *The Rat* appears.
- 1998 Gerhard Schröder becomes Chancellor.
- 1999 Grass's *My Century* is published. He is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in September.
- 2001 *Five Decades. A Report from the Workshop* is published.
- 2002 *Crabwalk* appears.
- 2003 The illustrated book of poetry *Last Dances* appears.
- 2006 Grass reveals in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 12 August that he had served with the Waffen SS

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- from late 1944 to May 1945. The publication of his autobiographical work *Peeling the Onion* is brought forward.
- 2007 The collection of poems, *Everyone's Fool*, a response to the media and political furore surrounding Grass's Waffen SS revelation, is published.
- 2008 The autobiographical prose work *The Box* is published, taking up where *Peeling the Onion* leaves off in 1959.