

Revisions June-July 2021

**INTERNAL FICTIONS:  
GÜNTER GRASS' USE OF PROJECTION IN HIS  
AUTOBIOGRAPHICALLY-INFORMED FICTION OF THE 1970s AND 80s**

**JEREMY POINTS**

**MA dissertation  
College of Arts and Humanities  
University of Swansea**

## **DECLARATION**

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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31 December 2020

### **Authentication statement**

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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### **Abstract**

I argue that *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972), *Der Butt* (1977) and *Die Rättin* (1986), Grass' main autobiographically-informed fictions of the 1970s and 80s, portray the internal workings of a male narrator's mind as he creates and tells stories, a process which entails psychological projection. Grass constructs his narrators' stories as ambiguous projections that combine the fictive strands of an overtly constructed narrator with the more concealed elements based on Grass himself. In employing projection and, in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*, dreamwork to structure his narratives, Grass draws on Freud's theory of the unconscious to imply that the narratives manifest latent material, which Freud describes as 'der latente Trauminhalt', which will explain them. That latent material – the repressed, unconscious impulses informing projections – emerges as a group of interrelated concerns embedded in all three fictions associated with, on the one hand, the narrator and on the other, the author. As projections based on a highly ambiguously constructed narrator, they imply doubts about how change can be effected (through revolution or reform) as well as whether dominant economic and political interests make progress impossible, condemning societies to a cyclical history (a fundamentally Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean view). Similarly, what appear to be authorial projections suggest a persistence of Grass' wartime guilt and shame, rooted in a failure to have questioned or challenged National Socialism. I suggest that Grass exploits, rather than simply employs, Freud's concept of projection to raise questions about what it reveals. He underlines the provisionality of 'his' social and political critique, expressed through the narrators' projections, and raises questions about the relationship he has with a past he struggles to identify with. The uncertainties exposed through Grass' exploitation of projection and its Freudian rationale takes readers to the edge of an epistemological argument by exposing the limitations of human knowledge – the limitations of the power of rationality and irrationality to validate any claims to knowledge as authoritative and definitive.

### ***Bibliographical note***

I have aimed to be as complete as possible in my bibliographical references. Owing to Covid restrictions, I have been unable to check some references and have not always been able to consult the editions I would ideally have used.

# 1 Introduction

I want to explore what is arguably a central feature of Grass' three main autobiographically-informed fictions of the 1970s and 80s, *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972), *Der Butt* (1977) and *Die Rättin* (1986): psychological projection.<sup>1</sup> Each of these three works portrays the internal workings of a male narrator as he tells stories, stories which I argue represent projections. I will be suggesting that Grass draws on Freud's conceptualisation of projection, which Freud had originally observed in the context of paranoia and which he concluded arose from repressed anxieties and emotions (see chapter two). Freud argued that projected images and fantasies provide a defence mechanism against the harmful effects of anxieties and desires that cannot be realised.

In each of these superficially different fictions, the projections – ranging from Zweifel in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, the plethora of figures based on the male narrator and his Ilsebill in *Der Butt* to a female rat, Oskar, Damroka, Malskat and fantasy fairy tale figures in *Die Rättin* – gradually reveal a cluster of anxieties which appear to inform them. There are firstly fears that dominant economic and political interests threaten the possibility of social and political change, condemning societies to a cyclic repetition of history (which Grass, or at least his narrators, express in terms of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche). Secondly, each of the fictions betrays what appears to be an individual wartime guilt and shame, based on Grass himself and resulting from complicity with, and thus a failure to have challenged, National Socialism. I argue, however, that Grass does not incorporate these projections primarily to uncover repressed anxieties about himself (or his constructed narrators). He exploits this 'Freudian rationale' to cast doubts about what the projections reveal. He calls into question the tenability of what effectively corresponds to a social and political critique over the role dominant economic and political interests play in society. In addition, he raises questions about the

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<sup>1</sup> References to Grass' works are to the Göttingen edition, 2007, in twelve volumes. Owing to the number of different authoritative editions, I quote in the following way: *title*, [volume number] section/month/chapter as appropriate: page number. I abbreviate *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* to *Aus dem Tagebuch*.

significance of his own wartime guilt and shame, which appears to be embedded within his projections. In other words, Grass plays with the expectations that projection raises in order to expose the impossibility of resolving the products of his – or at least the narrators' – thinking. Grass recognises – in a way perhaps his narrators do not – the limitations of knowledge, that is, the limitations of the rational and irrational forms of knowledge we develop. Knowledge – the products of conscious and unconscious processes – entails claims to a certainty that can never be validated as *Die Rättin* most bleakly outlines through its depictions of the failure of an empiricist rationalism (Damroka's feminist research ship) and all forms of fictional irrationality (the fairy tale worlds Oskar attempts to enlist through his film projects and Malskat's fresco work). As his unresolved narratives and the constantly repeated assertions of *Der Butt*'s narrator suggest: 'Das ist die Wahrheit, jedesmal anders erzählt' (*Der Butt*, [6] 9: 693).

Projection is therefore integrally related to a number of important issues, ranging from the implications of an internal, autobiographically-informed narration to what is close to an epistemological argument. The full dimensions of this epistemological argument – which I consider draws on a conception of the dialectical process as constantly evolving and irresolvable – lie outside the scope of this dissertation, although I hope to give some indication of it in my concluding chapter. I concentrate instead on projection and particularly on how and why Grass incorporates it in his work. This will involve considering two closely related issues: the internal nature of Grass' fictions and the deliberate ambiguities surrounding the identity of the autobiographically-informed narrators. I consequently start with a discussion of these issues to provide the context for considering projection in Grass' three main fictions of the 1970s and 80s.

## Autobiographically-informed fiction: Grass' main works of the 1970s & 80s

As is well-known, Grass first adopted an autobiographically-informed narrator in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972). This form of narration, subsequently labelled 'auto-fiction', characterised his writing of the 1970s and 80s up to and including *Zunge Zeigen* (1988).<sup>2</sup> Prior and subsequent to that phase of his writing, he employed first-person narrators and refracted issues through them and their frequently damaged psychologies to produce narratives with a high degree of ambiguity, both on the narrators' part and, I suspect, on Grass'. As he stated in a well-known 1977 interview with Fritz Raddatz first published in *Die Zeit*, Grass felt this shift to autobiographically-informed fiction opened up new narrative possibilities:

Mit diesem Buch habe ich mir durch die Einsetzung des Ich, des handelnden, politisch handelnden Ich des Erzählers neue Prosaformen erarbeitet und neben der politischen Erfahrung Schreib-Erfahrung gesammelt, ohne die der 'Butt' nicht möglich gewesen wäre.  
– Fritz Raddatz (1977), 29-30

Grass here talks about the creation of new prose forms through the establishment of an 'active, politically active' first-person narrator. He adds that the 'writing experience' he gained led to the creation of *Der Butt*, which suggests that Grass' experimentation with the form in *Aus dem Tagebuch* enabled him to broach issues he had previously struggled to find a way of expressing. These new possibilities would appear to stem from the intentionally-created ambiguity of the narrator's identity.

Grass relishes playing with the ambiguity of the first-person narrator's identity in his fictions of the 1970s and 80s. Readers can never be sure whose perspectives are being reflected. Do the parodies, ironies and considerable exaggerations point towards a construct which Grass creates, one which plays with aspects of his public image, as Stuart Taberner (1997) and Rebecca Braun (2008a) argue? Does this construct, on the other hand, represent a persona intended indirectly to convey significant aspects of Grass' experiences but in an expanded, more psychologically complex and generalised

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<sup>2</sup> Serge Dubrovsky (1977) introduced the term.

perspective, as Michael Minden (1990) implies in his emphasis on ‘subjectivity’ and ‘persona’?<sup>3</sup> The many identifiable references to Grass’ own life – his electioneering role in the 1969 campaign for Willy Brandt, his visit to Dachau reflected in *Aus dem Tagebuch* together with his role in a North German documentary on the historical Danzig, his trips to India and his relationship with Veronika Schröter incorporated in *Der Butt* – appear at the very least to play with a direct autobiographical basis for the fictions (although nothing in the works confirms this). Alternatively, Grass may be creating a blend between the two – a blend which Michael Minden (1990) neatly characterised as a ‘pronominal mobility’. In other words, it remains uncertain whether the first-person narrator represents a construct, Günter Grass or some irresolvable blend between the two.

Grass was not alone in exploring the ambiguities of the autobiographically-informed narrator at this time. Writers such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Thomas Bernhard, Max Frisch, Peter Handke, Peter Schneider, Botho Strauß, Peter Weiss and Christa Wolf all experimented with some form of autobiographically-informed fiction, mainly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although Peter Weiss’ *Abschied von den Eltern* (1961) represents an early example.<sup>4</sup> In *Nachdenken über Christa T* (1968), Christa Wolf, for example, exploits the ambiguity between the narrator and her subject in reporting on Christa T’s struggles to be herself (‘selbst zu sein’) and to be able to say ‘I’ (‘die Schwierigkeiten “ich” zu sagen’).<sup>5</sup> How far ‘Christa T’ and Christa Wolf are to be identified is left unconfirmed.

Christa Wolf subsequently placed this struggle to be able to say ‘I’ in an arguably more overtly auto-fictional context with *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), where she identifiably draws on her own recognisable

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<sup>3</sup> See my discussion of these views in chapter two.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Paaß (2009), 194, reminds that this impulse towards an ‘autofiction’ - a ‘Rückzug auf das eigene Ich, zu einer Konzentration auf den Bereich des Privaten und Alltäglichen’ – has been characterised as ‘neue Subjektivität’ or ‘neue Innerlichkeit’ (by, for example, Peter Pfaff, 1980). He refers to writers such as Christa Wolf, Ingeborg Bachmann, Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke, Wolfgang Koeppen and Botho Strauß. He also quotes Nikolaus Förster’s (1999) characterisation of ‘die autobiografisch geprägte Literatur der 70er Jahre im Hinblick auf “ein modernistisches Verlangen nach Authentizität”’. The reasons for exploiting ‘auto-fiction’ appeared to vary from the apolitical modernist to the more politically committed. See a brief overview in Braun (2008a), 4 & 5.

<sup>5</sup> Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T* (1969), 9 (preface), 167 (chapter 19).



past. Another of Grass' *Gruppe 47* co-participants, Ingeborg Bachmann, portrayed the emotional atrophies of a highly ambiguous first-person narrator in *Malina* (1971). The narrator develops a series of fantasies and fairy tale-like fictions, all of which strongly resemble projections, in response to suspicions about her father's wartime past.<sup>6</sup> In both these cases, the recourse to ambiguously, autobiographically-informed narrators seems symptomatic of the extreme difficulties of coming to terms with a postwar collective guilt and of being able to establish any 'authentic' authorial identity untainted by the atrocities committed under National Socialism.

Whereas confronting collective guilt and finding a way of expressing a personal sense of shame represented factors in Grass' turn to autobiographically-informed fictions, I will be suggesting in this dissertation that Grass' reasons for the shift extend significantly beyond a way of articulating a sense of wartime collective and individual guilt and shame, raising, as noted above, bleak questions about the possibility of social and political change and the limitations of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Grass, in other words, uses this new form of writing, which relies on the fluidity between the autobiographical and the fictional, in a highly individual and distinctive way. Autobiographically-informed fiction gave him access to the 'personal' conditions giving rise to his fiction as well as the fiction itself. It enabled him to consider the terms under which we develop our 'knowledge' of issues and of ourselves.

### **Internal and projected narration**

Grass' ambiguously autobiographically-informed narrators, like all Grass narrators, constantly tell stories. Indeed they constantly tell us that they are telling stories. What is not immediately apparent, however, is that they are telling their stories to themselves. Grass' fictions are in other words internal. One of the features that camouflages their internal nature is their address. In *Aus*

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<sup>6</sup> Sylvia Plath's poem 'Daddy' and her novel *The Bell Jar* provide some striking parallels with *Malina*. Interestingly, Ingeborg Bachmann reviewed *The Bell Jar* and was clearly familiar with Plath's work. See Bachmann (2005), 450-452.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Minden (2008) discusses the pervasiveness of Grass' wartime shame throughout his fictional writing.

*dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*, for example, the address appears to be direct: the narrator constantly addresses his children in *Aus dem Tagebuch* and, in *Der Butt*, his partner Ilsebill. Whilst never confirmed, the address seems, on closer inspection, implied and internal. The children's questions – characteristically set out in the stylised form of a quatrain of queries – provide a rationale for the fiction and seem indicative of the way the young of the late 1960s and early 1970s questioned the role of their parents during the National Socialist past.<sup>8</sup> But no communicative exchange takes place between them: they merely serve to prompt the narrator to a series of reflections. This gives a different complexion to *Aus dem Tagebuch's* overall narrative. It indicates that the narrative is psychologically motivated: the narrator feels guilt about his past which he needs to express, dramatising it through his children's questioning. Similarly, in *Der Butt*, Ilsebill's interjections are always reported by the narrator. They initiate a debate about his own potentially patriarchal nature and the wider arguments about patriarchy which the novel entertains. As with *Aus dem Tagebuch*, the narrative registers the narrator's anxieties that give rise to the various stories related in the novel. With *Die Rättin*, the female rat's apocalyptic scenarios are overtly signalled as dreams of the male narrator (using an impersonal formulation suggestive of Jean Paul - 'von der mir träumt') and the male narrator's stories are related in response. The address to the female rat is therefore self-evidently internal.

As already stated, I argue that the stories and internal debates Grass' autobiographically-informed narrators relate are projections, where Grass draws on Freud's concept of projection, developed in the 1890s and 1900s, and on his theory of the unconscious on which it rests. In *Aus dem Tagebuch*, to take a conspicuous example, Grass seems to experiment with the possibilities of projection through the narrator's creation of Hermann Ott, suggestively nicknamed 'Zweifel', who represents a projection of the narrator's psychological reflections and, in particular, his uncertainties. *Der Butt's* narrator and his partner Ilsebill prompt a plethora of historical female cooks, their male partners,

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<sup>8</sup> See Ingo Cornils (2016), in particular chapter four 'Tale Spinners and Poets', for literary representations.

alter egos, a female tribunal and a patriarchal, pontificating flounder. In that work, as Noel Thomas (1982) pointed out, Grass 'project[s] a fictional narrative ego into the past', a process which means that 'each cook is a projection of Ilsebill [...] and that each man with whom the cook associates is the narrator in a different guise (254 & 259).' Thomas however does not consider the possibility that Ilsebill herself represents a projection of the male narrator, providing the means by which he debates, not to say dialectically explores, patriarchy and the possibility of subverting it. In *Die Rättin*, the narrator's dreams of a female rat's apocalyptic declamations together with his narrative responses to them (the four main story strands) appear to represent projections of the narrating writer, who listens to and comments on educational broadcasts in the company of his pet rat. *Die Rättin* even takes projection a stage further as Grass dramatises a projection based on Oskar Matzerath, whom he resurrects from *Die Blechtrommel*. Now a film producer, the various filmic, fairy-tale scenarios Oskar constructs (a process which will eventually involve a literal, filmic projection) appear to be projections of a concealed guilt surrounding his involvement in the 'defence', that is to say, for Oskar, the 'surrender', of the Polish Post Office, which had of course been depicted in *Die Blechtrommel*, notably in two contrasting and contradictory versions ([3] 'Das Kartenhaus' & 'Er liegt auf Sasse': 304-333).

In addition to these (fictional) projections, some highly indirect and frequently ironised references to Grass' sense of wartime guilt and shame emerge. The narrator in *Aus dem Tagebuch* alludes to a visit he made to Dachau as an American Prisoner of War and refers to an area, on his return from Prague, where he was wounded in the closing stages of the war, both of which Grass describes in his (stylised) 2006 autobiography, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (respectively [5] 'Mit Gästen zu Tisch': 403,4 and [4] 'Wie ich das Fürchten lernte': 357-359). Similarly, details such as the reference to Grass' former teacher who was deported to Stutthof, Danzig's concentration camp situated on the edge of the city (*Der Butt*, month 2 and discussed in chapter 4), as well as Oskar's attempts to repress a sense of failure and guilt in *Die Rättin* (discussed in chapter 5) seem to be symptomatic of an

individual wartime guilt and shame, however more broadly they may serve to register collective guilt and shame. This gives the impression that embedded within what appear to be the 'fictional' projections of Grass' constructed narrators are a set of projections emanating from Grass himself, which I argue are rooted in his failure to have challenged any aspect of National Socialism.<sup>9</sup> Both these sets of impulses for projection emerge within the context of an individual's 'constructed' psychology whose identity is difficult to establish.

If the identity of the narrator is difficult to determine, then any projections based on him are equally fraught with ambiguity. It remains uncertain how far the projections could be considered 'fictional', related to a fictional construct, and how far they may be 'factual', relating to Grass himself. I will be suggesting that they are intentionally constructed to be ambiguous, echoing the questions raised by what the narrators' projections reveal. In these circumstances it might seem artificial to make a distinction within what is arguably an integrated, albeit ambiguous, process. However, I develop my argument on *Aus dem Tagebuch*, *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* in terms of a dual projection. I distinguish between what I describe as 'narratorial', fictional projections and 'authorial' projections, arguably based on Grass himself, in an attempt to understand how and why Grass uses projection in these works.

### **The significance of the approach taken in this dissertation**

Drawing attention to the role of projection in Grass' autobiographically-informed fiction is important for several reasons. Firstly, and surprisingly, projection as a concept has received no direct attention in Grass criticism. The internal nature of Grass' fiction, to which it is related, is similarly under-represented.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, and importantly, focusing on projection places a significantly

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<sup>9</sup> See chapter six for a more detailed discussion of the way *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) highlights aspects of an individual guilt and shame.

<sup>10</sup> Little explicit critical attention has been given to the potentially internal nature of Grass' fictions. Three notable exceptions are Volker Neuhaus (1992) on *örtlich betäubt*, Klaus-Jürgen Roehm (1992) on *Die Rättin* and Christian Auffenberg (1993) on *Die Blechtrommel* and *Die Rättin* as examples of an 'immanente Poetik'.

different emphasis on how Grass' work from the 1970s and 80s can be interpreted. To see Ilsebill, for example, as not merely a partner but a projection shifts the emphasis from feminist arguments for subverting patriarchy and achieving a radical social and political change to an internal, and I argue, unresolved debate about the *possibility* of subverting patriarchy and achieving change. Ilsebill and her demands for immediate, revolutionary change – the 'great leap forward', which emerges in month 5 of *Der Butt* – provides a case in point. As a projection, her demand for revolutionary change becomes the reflection of an internal debate over the feasibility and appropriacy of revolutionary change. It represents scepticism over whether such change is either possible or desirable (at least in the form feminism proposes). Furthermore, if China's 'great leap forward' arises in the narrator's mind as a result of a Freudian dream logic – I will be claiming that Ilsebill's reckless leap over a ditch provides the linguistic basis for the connection – then the argument he ascribes to her is manifestly self-generated.

The emphasis of the social and political 'arguments' of *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* – the need for patriarchy to be subverted (*Der Butt*), for politics to avert the threat of nuclear and environmental devastation (*Die Rättin*) – similarly changes. Because the arguments are internal and essentially subjective, they suggest scepticism rather than certainty. Indeed, the psychological context in which they emerge argues for a pessimism about the human capacity to establish social and political development. For both *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* seem to stress the limitations of the capacity to validate claims to knowledge and thus to be able to argue, with any degree of rational authority, the case against dominant economic and political interests.

In addition, as I discuss in chapters two, four and five, the way Grass exploits both Freud's concept of projection and, notably, the theory of the unconscious on which it rests, suggests a way of reading the narratives of *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* as reconstructions of the male narrator's unconscious. The

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transformative role of displacement and condensation (which Freud described as ‘Traumarbeit’ – see chapter two) consequently structures the narrative. As Paul F Reitze noted of *Die Rättin*, the narrative is constructed according to Freud’s rules for the formation of dreams.<sup>11</sup> This has the added implication that the assertions and claims which projection reveals are necessarily provisional as they are not consciously articulated. In this, they resemble Grass’ characterisation of creative ideas as ‘Windhühner’, the neologism from Grass’ early, manifesto-like poem, ‘Die Vorzüge der Windhühner’ (first published, 1956). He sees his ideas in terms of potential: liminal, formative and dynamic. They are significantly provisional and always open to modification.<sup>12</sup>

### **Chapter organisation**

I begin my argument, in chapter two, by clarifying Freud’s concept of projection. Although I will be arguing that Grass draws on Freud’s thinking, as well as on Freud’s conception of the unconscious on which projection relies, I am not arguing for a psychoanalytic interpretation of Grass’ work, as does Thomas Kniesche (1992). My claim will be that Grass exploits Freud’s concepts of projection and the unconscious in order to construct his narratives and to raise questions about what projection reveals. As that exploitation rests on a necessary ambiguity and pluralism in Grass’ work – an ambiguity and pluralism which promotes scepticism and provisionality – I then consider Grass’ poem ‘Die Vorzüge der Windhühner’ which articulates these issues. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of key critical writing which raises issues relevant to projection and to my argument. I suggest that Grass’ highly ambiguous and ‘constructed’ narrators promote a dual projection: a combination of essentially fictive ‘narratorial’ projections and carefully concealed, but calculatedly perceptible, authorial projections.

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<sup>11</sup> See Brunssen (1997), who quotes Reitze (100), and chapter two below. Both Brunssen and Kniesche (1991) recognise Grass’ appeal to Freud’s ‘Traumarbeit’ in his narrative construction.

<sup>12</sup> See my discussion of this important poem in chapter two.

In the following three chapters, I develop a reading of Grass' major autobiographically-informed fiction of the 1970s and 80s that highlights how Grass incorporates projection. Drawing on Freud's concepts of projection and the primary elements of his theory of the unconscious (dreamwork), I explore how Grass exploits projection and its rationale in his fictions. I have divided my discussion of each work into a consideration of the narratorial projections and then on the embedded authorial projections to highlight the different issues each raises. Chapter three explores how Grass experiments with the idea of psychological projection in *Aus dem Tagebuch* to convey the uncertainty he feels about the possibility of social and political progress whilst at the same time projecting (and betraying) wartime guilt and shame. In the following chapter, on *Der Butt*, I aim to show how psychological projection and dreamwork are blended together to register doubts about whether patriarchal perspectives can be subverted. This is accompanied by an anxiety over the limitations of a male and, arguably, necessarily patriarchal perspective, which itself may be related to, if not the product of, wartime guilt and shame. In chapter five on *Die Rättin*, I consider how psychological projection and dreamwork, which take the form of a dream and a series of interrelated stories in response, combine to expose the powerlessness of fiction, rationality and 'irrational' fantasy in challenging political power and the vested interests it protects. In that work, too, an authorial projection appears to be informing the story of Oskar, who is resurrected from *Die Blechtrommel*. In all three fictions, the same fundamental issues are revealed to be underlying both narratorial and authorial projections.

In chapter six, I draw attention to the way Grass in his stylised autobiographies, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) and *Die Box* (2008), confirms the features I have highlighted in this dissertation. I underline the pervasiveness of his wartime guilt and shame, which *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* describes, whilst also pointing to the internal nature of his fictions and the potential role projection plays in them.

In the concluding section I aim to clarify why Grass uses projection and its Freudian rationale – an essentially indirect narrative method – in his autobiographically-informed fiction. I conclude that the overall psychological context in which both ‘critique’ and ‘confession’ emerge raises questions and creates uncertainty about them. Indeed, although it lies outside the scope of this dissertation, I claim that Grass’ fictions take readers to the edge of an epistemological argument by questioning the validity of any claims to knowledge.



## 2 Internal fictions: Freud, Grass and relevant critical writing

### Introduction

In this chapter, I consider the Freudian roots of the concept of projection and the theory of the unconscious on which it rests as well as broadly setting out how those elements emerge in Grass' work. As I think that Grass effectively exploits this Freudian thinking in order to cast doubt on what it reveals, I discuss Grass' early, manifesto-like formulation of the role of ambiguity and pluralism in the creative process expressed in his poem 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner' (*Die Vorzüge der Windhühner*, [1] 9). I conclude the chapter with an overview of key critical writing which raises issues related to projection and to my argument.

### Freud's conception of projection and the unconscious

Projection externalises the internal. Although the roots of the concept reach back to Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841) and his claims that religion represents a projection of internal psychological needs, it was Freud who gave the concept its psychological accent and explicitly talked in terms of 'Projektion' rather than the cluster of neo-Hegelian terms Feuerbach used.<sup>13</sup> Freud initially developed the concept within the context of paranoia and paranoid delusions and saw it as a form of defence:

Es ist nun in der Tat so: die chronische Paranoia in ihrer klassischen Form ist ein pathologischer Modus der Abwehr wie Hysterie, Zwangsneurose und halluzinatorische Verworrenheit.  
[...]

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<sup>13</sup> For Feuerbach, projection primarily represents an externalisation of internal psychological needs. Feuerbach first articulated the concept in the context of his critique of Christianity, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841). He claimed that the idea of God – and thus religious belief – represented a projection of human needs, an externalisation or objectification ('Entäußerung', 'Vergegenständlichung') of essential human attributes. Feuerbach tended to use the more Hegelian language of 'Vergegenständlichung', 'Verfremdung' and 'Entäußerung' rather than 'Projektion' and 'projizieren', although there are instances when he used those terms. Freud read Feuerbach in 1873, as he noted in his letters to Silberstein, and emphasised the 'voluntarist' strand of Feuerbach's sense of essential human attributes, i.e., will and feeling, in his development of the concept (Peter Gay [1988], 28–9). Interestingly, for English language readers, George Eliot translates the majority of Feuerbach's various neo-Hegelian terms as 'projection' in her *The Essence of Christianity* (1852).

Die Paranoia hat also die Absicht, eine dem Ich unverträgliche Vorstellung dadurch abzuwehren, daß deren Tatbestand in die Außenwelt projiziert wird.

– Freud (1950): 119–20

At this point, Freud simply notes how paranoia serves as a defence mechanism by ‘projecting its substance into the external world.’ His understanding of projection anticipates the way he discussed dreams: both entail the transformation of latent material, which he increasingly equated with repressed material, into different, but related, manifest forms. When he formulates this process in *Die Traumdeutung*, he talks in terms of ‘Traumarbeit’, emphasising through the metaphor of ‘work’ the active and dynamic nature of this process (see Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 283–512).

In Freud’s most extensive discussions of projection, his ‘Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)’ (the Schreber case, 1911) and *Totem und Tabu* (1912–13), projection is seen both in terms of a defence mechanism and an attempt to restore psychological equilibrium, where inner conflict appears irresolvable. Working with Schreber’s autobiographical *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* (1903), Freud saw Schreber’s fantasies (in part a messianic mission to save the world requiring a change of sex) as a ‘coherent set of transfigurations designed to make the unbearable bearable’ (Peter Gay (1988), 281).

Freud described the process of projection in these terms:

An der Symptombildung bei Paranoia ist vor allem jener Zug auffällig, der die Benennung *Projektion* verdient. Eine innere Wahrnehmung wird unterdrückt und zum Ersatz für sie kommt ihr Inhalt, nachdem er eine gewisse Entstellung erfahren hat, als Wahrnehmung von außen zum Bewußtsein. Die Entstellung besteht beim Verfolgungswahn in einer Affektverwandlung; was als Liebe innen hätte verspürt werden sollen, wird als Haß von außen wahrgenommen.

– Freud (1964), ‘Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia’, VIII: 302–3

This description of projection raises several interesting points: Freud talks in terms of the ‘symptom-formation’ *deserving* the name of ‘projection’. This seems to suggest that Freud equates the process of projection with the formation of symptoms (comparable, therefore, with dreams). He similarly indicates that the content of a suppressed internal perception undergoes a kind of ‘distortion’, some

form of transformation. And that distortion, with paranoia, takes the form of a reversal: in a paranoid delusion, an internal perception is projected as its opposite – ‘love’ is thus projected as ‘hate’. Freud concludes by recognising that the root causes of projection are not to be found in others but ‘in ourselves’ (‘in uns selbst’):

Wenn wir die Ursachen gewisser Sinnesempfindungen nicht wie die anderer in uns selbst suchen, sondern sie nach außen verlegen, so verdient auch dieser normale Vorgang den Namen einer Projektion.

– Freud (1964), ‘Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia’, VIII: 303

In *Totem und Tabu*, he explicitly blends projection with his principles of dream formation when he discusses Animism (in the lecture ‘Animismus, Magie und Allmacht der Gedanken’). He talks of the ‘transformations’ of dreamwork as in essence an ‘Umordnung’, a ‘reorganisation’ of latent, unconscious thoughts and stresses that projection can only be an externalisation of the internal:

Was wir so, ganz ähnlich wie der Primitive, in die äußere Realität projizieren, kann kaum etwas anderes sein als die Erkenntnis eines Zustandes, in dem ein Ding den Sinnen und dem Bewußtsein gegeben, *präsent* ist, neben welchem ein anderer besteht, in dem dasselbe *latent* ist, aber wiedererscheinen kann [...].

– Freud (1968), *Totem und Tabu*, IX: 115

Projection, then, like a dream, manifests internal transformative processes.

Freud’s discussion of the transformative processes of dreamwork, in particular of condensation and displacement, begins with his assertion that there is a link between latent, repressed content and manifest form in dreams:

An uns tritt darum auch als neu eine Aufgabe heran, die es vordem nicht gegeben hat, die Aufgabe, die Beziehungen des manifesten Traum Inhalts zu den latenten Traumgedanken zu untersuchen und nachzuspüren, durch welche Vorgänge aus den letzteren der erstere geworden ist.

– Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 283

This means, as Freud notes, that dreams the formation of dreams relies firstly on a process of condensation (‘Verdichtung’). They condense content by omitting details:

Wenn man erwägt, daß von den aufgefundenen Traumgedanken nur die wenigsten durch eines ihrer Vorstellungselemente im Traum vertreten sind, so sollte man schließen, die

Verdichtung geschehe auf dem Wege der *Auslassung*, indem der Traum nicht eine getreuliche Übersetzung oder eine Projektion Punkt für Punkt der Traumgedanken, sondern eine höchst unvollständige und lückenhafte Wiedergabe derselben sei.

– Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 287

A dream represents a ‘highly incomplete and fragmentary version’ of the latent ‘dreamthoughts’ which promote them. Secondly, in addition to condensation, dreams exhibit displacement, ‘die Verschiebungsarbeit’, which Freud explains in terms of ‘recentering’ the dream, where elements become divorced from their original focal point:

Der Traum ist [...] *anders zentriert*, sein Inhalt um andere Elemente als Mittelpunkt geordnet als die Traumgedanken.

[...]

[Das Thema des Traums wurde] in andersartiger Verknüpfung und ohne Erwähnung des Sexuellen, also aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen und dadurch zu etwas Fremdem umgestaltet.

[...]

Solche Träume machen dann mit gutem Recht einen ‘*verschobenen*’ Eindruck.

– Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 310–11 (Freud’s emphases)

Although the manifest content of a dream appears fragmented and disconnected, Freud’s claim is that they bear a logical relationship to the latent dream thoughts which give rise to them:

Die einzelnen Stücke dieses komplizierten Gebildes stehen natürlich in den mannigfaltigsten logischen Relationen zueinander. Sie bilden Vorder- und Hintergrund, Abschweifungen und Erläuterungen, Bedingungen, Beweisgänge und Einsprüche.

– Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 316–7

That logic operates in terms of associative links and trains of thought and it is those links which analysts need to uncover. A dream is therefore constructed as a result of a ‘kind of manipulative or revisionary process’, where the work of ‘Traumarbeit’ also entails ‘Bearbeitung’.<sup>14</sup> Understanding the manifest content of a dream therefore involves understanding the transformations which dreamwork puts into practice.

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<sup>14</sup> ‘die ganze Masse der Traumgedanken unterliegt einer gewissen Bearbeitung’, Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 290.

## Grass and Freud

Freud's description of this manifest surface is strikingly similar to Grass' own narratives, which constantly bring individual, superficially arbitrary elements to the fore, entail digressions (such as those the narrator is constantly making in *Aus dem Tagebuch*) and hint at conditions that determine perceptible features such as the narrator's discussion, even if parodic, of all the mainly psychological conditions which govern narratives in month 5 of *Der Butt*. This suggests that Grass' narratives are constructed according to the 'rules' governing dreams (which Kniesche, Brunssen and Reitze all draw attention to – see below). Indeed, I will be claiming in chapters four and five that Grass' narratives in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* represent reconstructions of the unconscious, conceived in Freudian terms.

The most significant point, however, is that Grass' narratives *exploit* projection and the transformative processes of the unconscious to create narratives where repressed material determines them, without ever confirming their validity.<sup>15</sup> This has the effect of raising questions about what the projections reveal. Projection, as well as dreamwork, both imply reference to latent, repressed material which provides the conditions for the manifest form that projections and dreams take. For Freud, as that repressed material is unconscious, it is inaccessible to the subject except through psychoanalysis, which 'enables' the subject to pursue the relations between manifest form and repressed content. Grass effectively dramatises that process by providing the psychological conditions that inform projection and dream in his narratives. Readers are thus put in the position of reconstructing repressed material without any *certainty* that what they uncover represents anything more than an individual's exaggerated anxieties with limited validity.

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<sup>15</sup> In this, he replicates subjects dreaming, or psychoanalytic subjects, who cannot themselves gain access to the underlying causes of their manifest symptoms. Although I will not be pursuing this myself, the parallel between psychoanalytic interpreter and reader is clearly suggestive. For me readers are positioned more in dialectical relationship with the text, being forced to develop interpretive ideas which nevertheless resist any unambiguous resolution.

Grass' projected figures in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* incorporate several elements of Freud's concept of projection as a fundamentally defensive mechanism. The projected male figures of *Der Butt*, for example, demonstrate both defensiveness against the charge of patriarchy which disturbs the narrator – partly as he can see the validity of the charge – as well as an attempt to restore equilibrium. Similarly, the exaggerated ineffectuality, not so say impotence, of the historical male figures arguably represents a reversal of the narrator's potential patriarchy as Freud claimed projection entails. Similarly, in *Die Rättin*, the male narrator's projected narratives in challenging the female rat all represent a defence against the female rat's apocalyptic claims.

In more general terms, Grass' projections manifest the transformative processes instituted by latent and repressed material. However, the impulses for the projections associated with narrator and author differ. As I have already noted – and will be developing in chapters three to five – anxieties about the possibility of social and political change inform all three works but those anxieties are explicitly associated with the constructed narrators. The anxiety that precipitous, revolutionary and doctrinaire left-wing change will merely replicate the mistakes of the past underlies *Aus dem Tagebuch's* narrator's insistence on 'snail-like' incremental change. Similarly, the concern that exchanging patriarchal for female power will merely replicate patriarchy in female guise represents the fear at the root of *Der Butt*. And the fact that empirically-based rationality, fantasy or art ('media' which draw on the full range of conscious and unconscious processes) are all powerless to institute change informs *Die Rättin's* narrative. However, each of the fictions also witnesses anxieties related to Grass himself – a wartime guilt and shame. Perceptible but muted references to details of Grass' past emerge in all three works. As I have already suggested, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* confirms the 'factual' basis of Grass' visit to Dachau as an American Prisoner of War recalled 'fictionally' in *Aus dem Tagebuch*. Similarly, the autobiography draws attention to his former Gymnasium teacher Dr Stachnik (incorporated in *Der Butt*, month 2) and to Grass' acquiescence in National Socialism and his consequent failure to challenge it (displaced in Oskar's repeated

avoidance of reference to the defence of the Polish Post Office and his film scenario – see chapter six for discussion and relevant references to *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*).

I have not been able to ascertain whether Grass' incorporation of projection and dreamwork results from explicit reading of Freud or represents a more general response to prevalent Freudian ideologies.<sup>16</sup> However, Grass is clearly sufficiently familiar with his work to make frequent references to Freud in these autobiographically-informed fictions, even though they are characteristically refracted parodically through his narrators (where the parody is generally at their expense). His incorporation of projection and 'dreamwork' in his work, which I highlight, suggests to me that he was more interested in the conceptual aspects of Freud's work – primarily Freud's conceptualisation of how the unconscious relates to the conscious, which represents the earlier development of Freud's theories to 1915 – rather than any explicit psychoanalytic explanations of those processes. Grass' parodies tend to be reserved for explicit psychoanalytic explanations of behaviour rather than to the principles governing the workings of the unconscious. In *Der Butt*, for example, the narrator refers to Freudian male castration anxieties in month 1, via his condescending comments to Ilsebill, to Margarete Rusch's biting off and swallowing Hegge's testicle in month 3 and to Ilsebill and Griselde Dubertin's speculations on the narrator's potential Oedipus complex in month 6. The first month also portrays the narrator's dependence on Aua's alleged 'third breast' as a male 'Wunschprojektion' (*Der Butt*, [6] 1: 11).

I argue that Grass does not simply incorporate projection and the transformative processes of the unconscious in these autobiographical fictions but that he exploits them in order to emphasise the ambiguity, provisionality and pluralism of the internal processes they characterise. Grass effectively underlines the necessarily subjective basis of all 'perceptions' that can be developed internally. The

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<sup>16</sup> As noted below, Frank Brunssen (1997) and Thomas Kniesche (1991) both suggest that Freud and in particular the processes of 'dreamwork' inform his writing of this period without having recourse to Grass' reading materials, none of which is available in public archives.

claims to knowledge they represent become unverifiable, open to doubt and subject to revision and modification.

The creative process for Grass neither gives rise to nor justifies single, fixed and definitive meanings. It generates a pluralism, which renders any single point of view a distortion, a dangerous imposition, which at its most extreme becomes totalitarian fascism or communism. As already noted, *Der Butt*'s narrator constantly reminds us that all 'stories' (including the 'stories' of history, the two terms elided, of course, in German 'Geschichte') are provisional and open to modification: 'Die Märchen hören nur zeitweilig auf oder beginnen nach Schluß aufs neue. Das ist die Wahrheit, jedesmal anders erzählt' (*Der Butt*, [6] 9: 693).

### **Ambiguity, pluralism and scepticism: 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner'**

The roots of these ideas emerge in the mid-1950s in the context of his poetry, plays and prose which seem to represent Grass attempting to establish a rationale for his writing that balances aesthetic and political demands. Dieter Arker (1989) sees this early work as establishing an artistic scepticism of single meanings (see the section 'Zur Genese einer skeptischen Muse', 42-58), which Ann L Mason (1976) had also previously explored. As will become significant for his subsequent fiction, many – if not all – of these early pieces exploit internal worlds with suggestively surreal, absurdist and dream-like qualities, which become replicated in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*. Many additionally seem to refer to the creative process itself, such as the short prose piece, 'Meine Grüne Wiese' (1955). This piece features a giant snail that can sustain extreme violence and anticipates its use as an image of gradual social and political progress in *Aus dem Tagebuch*. As an expression of the challenges of the creative process, the story casts doubt on how far fiction can adequately represent society's contradictions and violence. In the manifesto-like, titular poem of his first published poetry collection, *Die Vorzüge der Windhühner* (1956), Grass focuses on ambiguity and pluralism. He subverts the possibility of single meanings. The initial stanza outlines the *advantages* of



‘Windhühner’, Grass’ neologism for the conditions of creativity, which draws on the linguistically related ‘Windfahne’ or ‘Wetterhahn’ as well as the generative potential of ‘Hühner’. Because of all their ‘advantages’ – their ambiguities and openness to multiple interpretation expressed in a series of conditionals – he nourishes these creative ideas (‘Weil sie...nähre ich sie.’). The internal nature of these ‘pregnant’ ideas is stressed:

Weil sie kaum Platz einnehmen  
auf ihrer Stange aus Zugluft  
und nicht nach meinen zahmen Stühlen picken.  
Weil sie die harten Traumrinden nicht verschmähen,  
nicht den Buchstaben nachlaufen,  
die der Briefträger jeden Morgen vor meiner Tür verliert.

– ‘Die Vorzüge der Windhühner’, [1]: 9

They inhabit an internal space, which does not entail any real ‘pecking’ of the chairs on which he sits. They do not spurn the ‘hard cortex of his dreams’ or pursue any transformation into the kind of communicative script which ends up in functional forms of writing (such as the post delivered each morning). With a hint of Nietzsche’s *Morgenröte* (1881), as Werner Fritzen (2010) has commented, they always leave open the possibility of other perspectives, favouring the suggestive and possible such as allegory entertains (Fritzen 2010, 169):

Weil sie die Tür offenlassen,  
der Schlüssel die Allegorie bleibt...

– ‘Die Vorzüge der Windhühner’, [1]: 9

Meaning is here revealed as process: it is constantly evolving, developing from suggestive, only partially formed, images (represented by the ‘Windei’). Grass’ artistic creations do not remain static with a single fixed meaning. They are open to change, just as the linguistically related ‘Windfahne’ or ‘Wetterhahn’ are subject to changing rushes of air (‘Zugluft’) and are as fragile as the ‘Windei’ itself. As Fritzen (2010) explains, a ‘Windei’ is an egg produced without a protective shell and that therefore remains undeveloped. Any final form it might take can only be surmised.<sup>17</sup> As a result, with every new creative venture, full of pluralistic possibility, he can lean happily on the ‘fence’ that

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<sup>17</sup> Fritzen speculates that Grass derives his neologism ‘Windhühner’ from ‘Windei’. See Fritzen (2010), 168–9: ‘Das Titelgebende Kunstwort, wohl aus der Vorstellung der ‘Windei’ (ovum zephyrium) entwickelt, deutet auf die Leichtigkeit, Freiheit und Fruchtbarkeit der lyrischen Phantasiegebilde.’

provides the border between internal and external, protectively guarding the suggestively paradisaic potential of 'fantasy':<sup>18</sup>

Oft bei Ostwind,  
wenn die Zwischenwände umblättern,  
ein neues Kapitel sich auftut,  
lehne ich glücklich am Zaun,  
ohne die Hühner zählen zu müssen –  
weil sie zahllos sind und sich ständig vermehren.

– 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner', [1]: 9

It is important to emphasise that the writer only nourishes these ideas enabling poetic creation because they form part of a dynamic process that sustains ambiguity and pluralism. He can only 'contentedly' inhabit the liminal world between external and internal because of its potential pluralism. Interestingly, his drawings, etchings and bronzes of this time (depicted in the opening section of *Vier Jahrzehnte*, 1991) illustrate the potential of images to evolve. Apart from the variety of 'hens' (bronzes, drawings, plaster casts), the line drawings of reiterated upright 'Hühner' with their extended necks metamorphose into a variety of figural images. These range from accompaniments to sensual female figures, which echo the supple, sensuality of 'das Fleisch am Kinn einer Venus' which the contemplative 'Stille' of poem's creativity provides ('Die Vorzüge der Windhühner', [1] 9), to the more geometrical, near-abstraction of the cover image for *Die Vorzüge der Windhühner*.

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<sup>18</sup> As both Frizen (2010), 169 and Stolz (1994), 28 point out, the connotations of the 'east wind' and of a 'fenced' enclosure suggest a prelapsarian garden (Genesis 2, 8), an image Grass explores further in *Hundejahre* (1963), where 'Amsel' sites his 'Vogelscheuchen', another highly ambiguous creative product, which (in the context of my argument) also seems to mimick projection. The poetic version of scarecrows breeding, from *Gleisdreieck* (1960), seems to draw on the intangible and uncertainly formative image of the 'Windei' from 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner': 'Ich weiß nicht, was in Hüten brütet,/ welchen Gedanken was entschlüpft/und flügge wird und läßt sich nicht verscheuchen [...]', 'Die Vogelscheuchen', [1] 78.

## Relevant critical writing: projection and the problematic nature of the autobiographically-informed narrator

### (a) Projection

Critical writing on Grass has not directly considered projection in any book-length studies or articles dedicated to the concept but several writers refer indirectly to projection whilst others have drawn attention to the role of Freudian thinking in Grass' fictions. Taberner (1997 & 2008), Braun (2008a & b) and Gwyer (2019), as discussed below, make an argument that the self is a social and illusory construct and emphasise the play Grass makes with a public, constructed self in his fictions in a way which is comparable with my claims about his use of projection.

Those writers who do refer directly to projection tend to use the term descriptively as if it were self-explanatory. As I have already noted above, Noel Thomas (1982) observed in relation to *Der Butt* that Grass 'project[s] a fictional narrative ego into the past', a process which means that 'each cook is a projection of Ilsebill [...] and that each man with whom the cook associates is the narrator in a different guise' (254 & 259). He does not go on to consider the psychological implications of projection and indeed what the term implies when the narrator 'projecting' is autobiographically-informed in a highly ambiguous way, variously described as 'semi-fictive' (Sabine Moser, 2000), a 'construct' (Rebecca Braun, 2008a), an 'authorial persona' (Michael Minden, 1990) or 'author-narrator' (notably Grass himself [Raddatz, 1977] and Volker Neuhaus, 1992)?<sup>19</sup> Volker Neuhaus, who saw Grass' individual works as part of a larger 'confession', seems to equate projection with fantasy and the 'imagined' when he discusses *örtlich betäubt*, a novel which is an important forerunner of the autobiographically-informed fiction I am considering.<sup>20</sup> In so doing, he consequently

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<sup>19</sup> I have opted to describe the narration as 'autobiographically-informed', which aims to emphasise that there is a continuity between author and narrator even though the nature of that continuity is highly ambiguous and never completely confirmed. However, I will be drawing a distinction between what I see as an overtly constructed narrator and authorial elements – not in any ordinary sense 'autobiographical' – which are intentionally concealed or codified within that constructed narration.

<sup>20</sup> '...das einzelne Werk [erweist sich] "als Bruchstück einer großen Konfession", als Fragment im romantischen Sinne, das über sich hinausweist, vor und zurück in einen größeren Zusammenhang, den es selbst nur dunkel erahnen läßt.' In alluding to Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Neuhaus seems to want to capture the

recognises the internal nature of the fiction, a point which underlies my approach. Having confirmed that both Starusch's fantasies and his debate with his dentist are internal ('der Einbildung Staruschs zu[zu]schreiben' and thus an 'inner[es] Dialog'), he talks of the way Starusch's fantasies are 'projected' onto the television screen, exploiting the film metaphor Grass uses repeatedly (notably in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*):

In solchen Projektionen seiner Phantasien 'auf die blinde Mattscheibe oder in den laufenden Film hinein' [Grass' words] erscheinen vor allem die zurückliegende Geschichte seiner Verlobung in immer neuen Variationen und die fast ebensooft variierte Vorstellung von der Ermordung seiner Verlobten [...].

– Neuhaus (1992), 102<sup>21</sup>

I suspect the main reason why critical focus seems rarely to fall on projection itself, as here with Neuhaus, rests on its interrelationship with several other complex characteristics of Grass' fiction which tend to attract more attention: the narrative techniques employed in his works, the ambiguity of the autobiographically-informed narrator, the desire to call into question the 'authority' of the author as any guarantor of meaning and the way issues are refracted through the narrator's psychologically unreliable perspectives (for example, where competing versions of the same incident accentuate uncertainty).<sup>22</sup>

Two examples of writers who refer very suggestively to projection within the context of the ambiguously 'autobiographically-informed' first-person narrator (in both cases referring to *Der Butt*) are Michael Minden (1990) and Gertrud Bauer Pickar (1983). Although they both (like Thomas and Neuhaus) seem to see projection as self-explanatory, their provocative discussions raise interesting issues about projection. Minden questions the emphasis most other writers place on the first-

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ambiguity of autobiographically-informed narration, a technique Thomas Mann also employs in his similarly Goethe-influenced *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (1954). See Volker Neuhaus (1992) and his commentary to volume one of Daniela Hermes' and his own 1987 ten-volume edition of Grass' works.

<sup>21</sup> Neuhaus quotes Grass' words, which come from an interview cited by KL Tank (1974), 81ff.

<sup>22</sup> I have therefore drawn on writing which discusses, or implies, projection in the context of some of these related issues: Minden (1990), Bauer Pickar (1983), Taberner (2008 and 2009) and Braun (2008a and 2008b), who all offer distinct readings of the 'autobiographically-informed'; Roehm (1992) on the internal nature of Grass' fiction; and Kniesche (1991), Brunssen (1997) and Hall (2007) (who all offer readings related to Freud or Lacan).

person narrator as a construct at the expense of any reference to Grass himself.<sup>23</sup> In his ‘Implications of the Narrative Technique in *Der Butt*’ (1990), Minden registers the continuity between narrator – the author’s ‘persona’ as he phrases it – and the projected, fictional guises that the narrator adopts:

[...] a pronominal mobility is initiated [by the claim ‘Ich, das bin ich jederzeit’] which introduces the author’s persona into the fiction at all levels, but with the prior knowledge that this persona will, as it were, be fictionalised by the demands of what Grass calls his ‘epischer Stoff’ [...].’

– Minden (1990), 187–8<sup>24</sup>

Minden recognises that Grass plays with this ‘pronominal mobility’ and sees connections – albeit not direct connections – between the autobiographical frame of reference and the fictional frame of reference each historical set of conditions provides. He wants to keep open the possibility that the construct of the ‘author-persona’ is intended to set up a relationship with Günter Grass, albeit one which is indirect and constrained. He draws attention to the ‘honesty’ of this openness via a comment Heinz Ludwig Arnold makes in his 1978 interview with Grass:

‘Für mich liegt in dem, was Sie eben skizziert haben, auch eine Art von Ehrlichkeit des Erzählers, nämlich die Ehrlichkeit des auktorialen Erzählers, der seine allwissende Position offen preisgibt, im Gegensatz zu jenem sich verbergenden Erzähler, der seine Figuren an seinen Fäden tanzen läßt, aber die Fäden nicht zeigt.’

– Minden (1990), 190, quoting Arnold (1978), 28-9

For Minden, however ‘fictional’ this first-person narrator becomes, he always bears some relation to the author’s ‘persona’ and, as both Arnold and Minden imply, to Grass himself. Minden focuses on the limitations the autobiographically-informed narrator experiences whilst narrating (190): those of subjectivity (an individual’s socially and culturally conditioned conscious and unconscious processes), of gender (his necessarily male-oriented perspectives) and violence (the three rapes). Later Minden talks of the degree to which individuals are as much subject to others’ discourses as they are subjects of their own, and how the ‘story-telling pursuits of the “I” and its various projections’ are

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<sup>23</sup> Minden, in this same 1990 article, provides a good summary of the main discussions of Grass’ first-person narration in *Der Butt* at the opening of his essay, referring to Osman Durrani, Gertrud Bauer Pickar, Helmut Koopmann, Patrick O’Neill, Guy Stern, Manfred Jürgensen and Noel Thomas (188–9).

<sup>24</sup> ‘[E]pischer Stoff’ refers to Grass’ 1977 interview with Fritz J Raddatz. See Raddatz (1977).

‘vitiated by male sexuality’ (190-92). He argues for a fundamentally psychoanalytic understanding of fiction and fantasy as compensatory, referring to Norman N. Holland’s 1975 article, ‘Unity Identity Text Self’ to underline how ‘identity creates and recreates itself as each of us discovers and achieves the world in his own mind’, a psychic economy based on ‘defense, fantasy and ego style’ (196, referring to Norman N. Holland (1975), 813-20). Minden sees the historical projections merely as ‘self-indulgent escapes’. He claims:

The historical projections are self-indulgent escapes, yet in the expansive space of self-indulgence the masculine ‘I’ visualises women of substance and power, although [as compensation...is] reduced itself to positions of relative weakness. Hence the projections of the ‘I’ around the historical cooks tend to be abject, subordinate, or despicable, or otherwise limited in some way. The women invented in the present, however, are defensively imagined [as objects of a dominant male sexuality]. [...] The same dual attitude can be discerned in the novel’s implied poet (the voice of the lyric poems), between a ‘feather-blowing’ marginal persona, and an assertive, concerned, aggressive one.

– Minden (1990), 196

Whereas I do not consider the historical projections can be limited to ‘self-indulgent escapes’, mainly because I see the narrator as an overtly constructed patriarchal figure, I do think that Minden’s psychoanalytic frame of reference – which I consider is consistent with Grass’ exploitation of a Freudian conception of projection, dreamwork and the unconscious – rightly points to the compensatory and defensive nature of those projections as I pointed out above when referring to the ideas Grass adopts from Freud. He also sees the presence, in however concealed a form, of the author within his narratorial construct as a necessary ambiguity, which is what he thinks problematic about the majority of the critical analyses of Grass’ narrative technique in *Der Butt*. He claims that they ‘seem intent upon keeping the “real” Günter Grass out of his own fiction, and that they thus reconstruct the omniscient narrative intelligence [...] which was, [he] believe[s], precisely what Grass intended to avoid in developing this technique’ (188). For him, ambiguity is crucial to Grass.

Gertrud Bauer Pickar, whose approach Minden partly questions, also incorporates reference to projection in her essay, ‘The Prismatic Narrator: Postulate and Practice’ (1983). She identifies three levels of narration in *Der Butt*: the central narrator (whom Bauer Pickar labels the novel’s

‘protagonist-narrator’), the various ‘projected historical identities’ and the ‘personalised authorial voice’, which Minden summarises in this way:

Gertrud Bauer Pickar coins the term ‘prismatic narrator’ and speaks of a ‘fracturing of the narrative consciousness and its identification with the novel’s protagonist-narrator’ who has ‘projected historical identities’ which are to be distinguished from ‘the personalised authorial voice’ that occasionally intrudes.

– Minden (1990), 188, citing Bauer Pickar (1983)

I am unclear whether Bauer Pickar considers the ‘personalised authorial voice’ – which I would argue is equally constructed – to be unambiguously the voice of the author.<sup>25</sup> She continues by using the term ‘projection’ to describe Grass’ ‘experimentation with narrative perspective’ which characterises his prose works ‘from the beginning’ and which is broadened in *Der Butt* to create a series of ‘projected’, historically distinct ‘narrator-protagonists’:

From the beginning, Günter Grass’s prose works have been marked by experimentation with narrative perspective, exploration of the ambiguities and potentials inherent in a protagonist-narrator, and interaction of the projected and the experienced realities thus engendered. [...] [In *Der Butt*] this apparent multiplicity of narrative perspectives is [...] the manifestation of but a single, narrative consciousness, itself projected within the novel and contained by it; and the multiple narrator-protagonists are but the refracted personalities of that single narrative consciousness.

– Bauer Pickar (1983), 55

She sees the range of projected ‘narrator-perspectives’ – those of the male narrator, his Ilsebill and the range of cooks, partners, alter egos, flounder and members of the female tribunal – as a reflection of a ‘single narrative consciousness’, the author’s. In other words, Grass the author ‘projects’ a narrator through whom the multiple projections he creates are refracted prismatically.

Thomas W. Kniessche (1991) and Frank Brunssen (1997) both draw on Freud’s ‘Traumarbeit’ to characterise Grass’ narrative technique in a way similar to my reading, although Brunssen also

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<sup>25</sup> I suspect Bauer Pickar reads those moments where the narrator appears as the author Günter Grass to be an authenticating voice. The obvious examples of this ‘appearance’ are when ‘Grass’, in public-image mode, discusses the North German documentary he is presenting, months 2 and 9, or the moments where he discusses his current work and attends a conference on socialism in Bièvres (months 3 and 5). I would argue, like Rebecca Braun (2008a) and Stuart Taberner (1998), that these represent ‘public’ versions of a highly constructed narrator.

discusses the possible role of Bloch's more liminal 'Tagträume'.<sup>26</sup> Kniesche, for example, explores how Freud's condensation and displacement, as well as intertextuality, are used in *Die Rättin*, which leads him to proposing an 'orthodox' Freudian reading, one which places (Grass') guilt and storytelling impulses within an Oedipal context. He does, however, insist, as in effect I do, that '[d]ie Rolle des Unbewußten und seiner Manifestationen spielt für das Werk von Grass eine kaum zu überschätzende Rolle' (22). Brunssen, also discussing *Die Rättin*, talks in terms of a 'Poetik des Traums' which draws both on Freud's dreamwork and Bloch's concept of 'Tagträume' to account for a narrative that encompasses the explicit dream of the female rat as well as the story strands created in response (those based on Oskar, Damroka, Malskat and the fairy-tale world). He states that '*Die Rättin* ist [...] aus einer Vielzahl von Traumsequenzen konstruiert, die in ihrer Summe dem Text den Charakter eines Traumgeflechts verleihen' (98). Brunssen goes on to point out, noting Paul F Reitze's observation, that '*Die Rättin* ist komponiert nach den Regeln von Träumen', that Freud's dream theory rests on the distinction between manifest dream surface and latent meaning and represents, in essence, 'Wunscherfüllung' (100).

Klaus-Jürgen Roehm emphasises, as I do, the internal nature of *Die Rättin*'s narrative in his *Polyphonie und Improvisation* (1992) although he does not go on to consider projection within the internalised narrative. He puts forward a persuasive argument that *Die Rättin* dramatises a writer in the process of creating his own fiction. He argues that it is self-reflexive and stresses the element of Barthes-like play in the narrator's (and Grass') delight in the fictional status of ideas that are constantly being developed and revised. He similarly appeals to Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque to characterise this immersion in 'play'. For me, however, his fictions are not limited to a sense of play or the carnivalesque. There may well be an unavoidable sense of play predicated

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<sup>26</sup> Brunssen suggests that Bloch's 'Tagträume' from *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1959) provide a significant intertextual context, if not rationale, for the narrator's counter narratives to the female rat's apocalyptic declamations, registering a tenuous hope for the future. Bloch's blending of Marx and Freud in his concept of the daydream makes the parallel with Grass' fiction suggestive. Brunssen outlines his 'Poetik des Traums' on 96–109 in particular.



on the potential futility of all fiction to contribute to political change, but I consider Grass still wants to raise political issues, however indirectly and provisionally.

Katharina Hall, in *Günter Grass's 'Danzig Quintet'* (2007), bases her approach (to what she conceives as a quintet of novels) on memory. She therefore tacitly accepts that the narratives are fundamentally internal. Her work draws similarly on Freud's claims of the transformative nature of psychological 'experience'. She emphasises that, in creating his fictional work, Grass has to rely on the mediation of memory, which, as a fundamentally representational form, is prone to modification. She distinguishes between what she describes as Freud's 'material' approach to memory and Lacan's insistence on memory as a process of recollection. For Lacan, memory is fundamentally representational and constantly being restructured, implications he felt Freud may have recognised but did not sufficiently pursue.

Katharina Hall's emphasis on memory as process – an essentially dynamic process – and therefore on a distrust of a single underlying cause resonates with what I am aiming to demonstrate. Although she also wants to draw attention to collective as well as individual memory, our approaches rest on similar assumptions: that Grass recognises the dynamic nature of the mind and is sceptical of the terms of his own perceptions, essentially an epistemological concern as I noted in my introductory chapter. Grass seems to be suggesting that whatever issues he 'superficially' investigates, he cannot avoid confronting wartime shame or his perceptions that hegemonic economic and political interests militate against social and political change, condemning societies to an endless repetition and a resultant compulsion to create which runs the risk of futility.

## **(b) The problematic nature of the autobiographically-informed narrator**

Rebecca Braun and Stuart Taberner, in drawing attention to the problematic nature of the autobiographically-informed narrator, question the relevance of any concept of self in underwriting meaning. Their conclusions complement the way I think Grass exploits projection. Both approaches argue for a way of understanding subjectivity that entails ambiguity and indeterminacy. Rebecca Braun, in her *Constructing Authorship in the Work of Günter Grass* (2008a), underlines the problematic nature of the authorial position in his writing and stresses that the ‘autobiographically-informed’ narrator is a construct ‘exploring the literary possibilities of an overtly constructed authorial self’ and aware of the need to negotiate with his public image and not be defined by it.<sup>27</sup> Grass, in other words, plays with the expectations of his audience(s) who increasingly seek the reassurance of an author whose biography will explain the text. She compares him with other writers of the period who similarly experimented with the potential ambiguities of an authorial first-person narrator in fiction:

Individual writers such as Arno Schmidt, Max Frisch, and Christa Wolf share with Grass a broad focus on identity issues, exploring the problematics and possibilities of manipulating the authorial ‘I’ within literature from the late 1950s and 1960s onwards. Their reflections, however, do not generally go beyond the literary, that is to say, their texts deal extensively with the literary and at times even philosophical aspects of authorial identity [...]. Grass’ works, on the other hand, place the relationship between the author and the public sphere very squarely at their centre. The author is not just examined as a largely literary construct, but also as a product of the media-led public sphere.

– Braun (2008a), 4–5

Braun goes on to contrast the structuralist and post-structuralist devaluation of the authority of the author to guarantee meaning – authors merely become the cipher between the ideologies informing their texts and the ideologies informing readers’ reception of the texts – with a more popular tendency, represented by mainstream media, to want to know more about writers’ backgrounds in order adequately to ‘understand’ their writing (that is, interpret their fiction in terms of what they know about writers’ experiences).<sup>28</sup> Braun complains, correctly I think, that many interpretations of

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<sup>27</sup> Rebecca Braun (2008a), 4.

<sup>28</sup> See Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’ (1968) in Barthes (1977) and Foucault’s ‘What is an Author?’ (1969) in Foucault (2000). As is well-known, Grass makes a comparable point in relation to Döblin – and suggestively

Grass' early works tend to imply a direct correspondence between biography and text, or at least

Grass' politics and text:

There is no allowance made for the idea that he might be playing with his own image, that the image of the author projected into the fictional text is perhaps not to be directly equated with the real author who has 'disappeared' behind it.

– Braun (2008a), 7

Although I agree with Rebecca Braun that the autobiographically-informed narrator is a consciously created construct rather than autobiographical, I do not think this construct is completely explicable in terms of Grass' playful 'negotiation' with his public image.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, I am not convinced that Grass, in any ordinary sense, is focusing on identity issues in his writing. For me, the highly selective autobiographical detail incorporated in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* has a psychological focus distinct from questions of identity and self in a way which links with what Minden is pointing towards. Grass certainly implies that the psychological impact of collective wartime guilt and an arguably individualised shame lead to his postwar politics, his confrontational stance to the manipulative and exploitative power structures in both his art and his writing (his compulsion to create) and his increasing sense of the impotence of rationality and the futility of any 'artistic' challenge. However, I will be arguing that the main claims he makes in his fictions – those registered through structures informed by Freud's projection and his theory of the unconscious – promote uncertainty.

In their 2008 and 2009 responses to *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) and *Die Box* (2008), Rebecca Braun and Stuart Taberner also focus, with slightly different emphases, on how Grass instrumentalises questions of self-identity.<sup>30</sup> They talk in terms of 'self-presentation' (Taberner) and

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to himself – in 'Über meinen Lehrer Döblin', *Essays und Reden 1955-1979*, [11] 272: 'Döblin wußte, daß sein Buch mehr sein muß als der Autor, daß der Autor nur Mittel zum Zweck eines Buches ist und daß ein Autor Verstecke pflegen muß [...].'

<sup>29</sup> Stuart Taberner (1998), whom Braun cites, drew attention to these ideas in relation to Grass as well as to Uwe Johnson and Martin Walser, although as Braun points out, Taberner claims this is fundamentally a means of raising political issues.

<sup>30</sup> Taberner (2008) and (2009) and Braun (2008b).

the 'endless self-images' (Braun) in Grass' writing. They emphasise self-presentation, however, in the knowledge of Grass' awareness that the concept of self is both a socially-mediated construct and illusory. In Braun's exploration of Grass' use of the 'onion' metaphor, she demonstrates how it implies that Grass recognises there can be 'no such thing as a quintessentially true self' and that the 'self' has 'keinen sinnstiftenden Kern' (a phrase from Grass' own commentary on Peer Gynt).<sup>31</sup>

Braun summarises:

[...] the self is a multi-layered product of constantly changing and often contradictory times. There is no one essential core of meaning that can be invoked to make sense of the subject and his actions.

– Braun (2008b), 1065

The self is, thus, socially and culturally determined, albeit in a non-deterministic way where individual and society interact reciprocally. When Braun suggests that the self is a 'multi-layered product of constantly changing and often contradictory times', I would argue that the social and cultural conditions 'producing' this dynamic self do change, but in what Grass fears (or at least perceives) may be a cyclical way. Similarly, when Taberner comments that the 'focus in [*Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*] on larger political issues either distracts from [Grass'] flaws or generalises them, for example, as "male"', I want to invert this and argue that Grass aims to exploit an apparent 'focus on questions of self and identity' in order to reveal his perceptions of larger political issues alongside his doubts about their potential validity.<sup>32</sup> I am claiming that, whilst clearly integral to Grass' fiction, questions of self and identity are subsidiary to the questions of provisionality and uncertainty they raise. Grass takes readers to the edge of an epistemological argument by creating ambiguity, pluralism and uncertainty as well as a scepticism about the validity of the terms of his own 'knowledge'. His own social and political critique developed within that framework must necessarily be provisional and open to modification just as his fictions are.

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<sup>31</sup> Braun (2008b), 1061.

<sup>32</sup> Taberner (2009), 513.

## Summary of key critical views

Michael Minden, in insisting on recognising the relevance of the reference to Grass himself in his ambiguous, constructed narrator, argues for a broader concept of subjectivity, one which recognises the role of authors in providing the conditions for what they create. My reading is influenced by Minden's thinking. I too talk in terms of an autobiographically-informed narrator and consider that the dual projection, narratorial and authorial, arises from the ambiguity over the degree of 'constructedness' of the narrator. However, the fact that the source of the projections remains ambiguous promotes an intentional uncertainty, which I argue Grass exploits and leaves (equally intentionally) unresolved.

Bauer Pickar claims that Grass himself provides the ultimate framework for understanding the projections which emanate from him, even though they are 'prismatically' refracted through a narratorial construct and his projections. Although I am sympathetic to this point of view, like Minden (1990) I feel it does not do justice to the ambiguities and scepticism Grass aims to promote. Brunssen and Kniesche argue for the role of the transformative processes of dreamwork – the logic governing dreams – in the construction of Grass' narratives whilst Roehm emphasises their internal nature, seeing them as carnivalesque and playing with the possibility of meaning. Hall highlights the role of memory (with hints of collective memory) in relation to Freud but argues for its dynamic and indeterminate nature, invoking Lacan. Taberner, Braun and Gwyer all argue, with slightly different emphases, for the elusive and illusory nature of the socially-constructed self, suggesting that the self is unstable and necessarily changeable and thus provides no way of guaranteeing significance.

My argument starts from the premise, at the root of Minden's and several others' arguments, that Grass' narratives are autobiographically-informed but not autobiographical and are intentionally

designed to be ambiguous constructs.<sup>33</sup> This ambiguity has the effect of almost 'dividing' the narrator into constructed and authorial strands, which give rise to a similarly 'dual-stranded' projection, narratorial and authorial. The constructed narrator, in other words, produces fictional projections which mask underlying authorial ones. I will therefore be concentrating on projection, despite its interconnectedness with other key issues, and exploring *Aus dem Tagebuch*, *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* in terms of narratorial and authorial projections.

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<sup>33</sup> See Minden (1990), who references Durrani, Koopman, Bauer Pickar and O'Neill.

### 3 *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972): the need for incremental change – experimenting with the possibilities of projection

*Wenig genau sagen [...] Jetzt schon: und Zweifel melken.*

– *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, [5] 20: 481

#### Introduction

*Aus dem Tagebuch* was of course the first work where Grass exploited the ambiguous, autobiographically-informed narrator and, as I have already noted, the narrative techniques he used in this work made *Der Butt* possible (Raddatz, 1977, 12). Indeed, having experimented with making a clear distinction between the autobiographically-informed narrator and his narrated story in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, Grass went on to integrate narration and projected narratives more seamlessly in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*. In this first autobiographically-informed fiction, however, Grass appears to be experimenting with the fictional possibilities of projection in a way that balances fiction with what appears to be his continued need to give expression to a wartime guilt and shame and the way they have shaped his subsequent thinking and politics. *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin* continue to uncover these connections. In broad terms, *Aus dem Tagebuch* points to how Grass' understanding of the conditions that made National Socialism in Germany possible underlies his commitment to a politics of gradualist socialist reform. Indeed, he appears to consider that the revolutionary left-wing politics of a younger generation and totalitarian communism emanated from similarly undemocratic impulses – the ideological promise of an illusory utopia, as *örtlich betäubt* and such poems as the contemporary 'Zorn Ärger Wut' from *Ausgefragt* (1967) imply. *Der Butt* similarly juxtaposes the oppression and the atrocities to which patriarchy gives rise with images of the narrator's, and Grass', individual wartime guilt and shame (most evident in the Stachnik references, the two versions of Lena Stubbe's Stutthof death and the flounder's refusal to take responsibility for 'diesen Hitler und diesen Stalin', *Der Butt* [6] 7: 572). And the intensity of Grass' dramatisation of apocalyptic warnings in *Die Rättin* appears to act as a sublimation of Grass' own failure to question (or to resist in any form) the rise of National Socialism. This makes these fictions of the 1970s and 80s distinct from his previous novels, where any explicitly individual accent on the issues raised remained

absent. The Danzig Trilogy and *örtlich betäubt*, for example, all exploit fictive narrators, through whose disturbed and guilt-ridden psychology Grass refracts the collective and individual legacy of National Socialism and the Federal Republic's dubiously achieved postwar economic recovery ('dubiously achieved' at least for Grass' narrators in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Hundejahre*).

I am going to explore *Aus dem Tagebuch* in three stages. First of all, I briefly highlight how the ambiguous status of the narrator gives rise to what is effectively a dual projection, of narrator and author. I subsequently go on to consider the Zweifel narrative as a narratorial and then as an authorial projection.

### **Ambiguous status of the narrator and his 'dual' projection: 'wenig genau sagen...und Zweifel melken'**

What I am calling a dual projection arises from the ambiguity over the male narrator's status, which can be expressed in the following way: the narrator is overtly autobiographically-informed without being autobiographical; he is constructed without being completely fictional. It therefore remains uncertain how far the Zweifel story relates to Grass' autobiographically-informed but constructed narrator, whose psychological features Grass carefully foregrounds, or how far the story might relate to Grass himself. A sense of the way Grass plays with, and confounds, readers' expectations emerges in section 8.<sup>34</sup> There, the narrator's children demand that he tells them about himself (without making anything up):

'Erzähl mal von dir. Über dich. Wie du bist.'  
'Aber ehrlich und nicht erfunden.'  
[...]  
'Nein! Über dich!'  
'Wie du bist, wenn du dich nicht erfindest.'  
'Wie du wirklich bist.'  
'Na einfach wirklich.'

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 354

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<sup>34</sup> Braun (2008b) comments in detail on this section, making similar points.



What the narrator chooses to tell them amounts to a series of teasing images – a series of onion skins. He describes himself in political terms (through Bernstein, revisionism, scepticism, writing politically challenging stories and opposing all distorting ideologies) before claiming he is a ‘social democrat’.<sup>35</sup> He then provides a chronological overview, not without parody, which includes his obsession with reading (at fourteen), a desire to kill his father with a Hitler Youth dagger (at fifteen), love from a distance (at sixteen), his learning of fear and hunger as a soldier (at seventeen) and his sense of the political deceptions which accompanied postwar ‘freedom’ (at eighteen). After this, he opts for a metaphor of becoming a repository for the most diverse of details (‘Sammelstelle für Zerstreutes’, [5] 8: 359, which is demonstrated by his parodic survey of what is identifiably Grass’ fictional work to date) before adopting a further image – the famous person (‘Seitdem beherbergen wir den Ruhm als Untermieter. [...] Mein Ruhm, liebe Kinder, ist jemand, für den ich um Nachsicht bitte...’, *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 359–60).<sup>36</sup> His attempt at an ‘Enthäutung einer Person’ (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 355) concludes with a series of brief, pithy statements suitable for a younger audience as his children demand (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 361 - ‘Haste nich noch was?’/‘So kurze Sachen. Was du magst, was du nich magst.’).

All these layers are of course just that: varyingly stylised and always ironic ways of characterising himself. They also however represent a highly selective account of what the narrator *wants* to declare about himself. They insist on the socially-mediated and illusory nature of the ‘self’ – for which there can be no essential core – whilst at the same time offering a narrator who is conspicuously constructed together with his equally constructed projection.<sup>37</sup> In so doing, the

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<sup>35</sup> Grass did not formally become a member of the Social Democratic Party until Autumn 1982 and then resigned approximately a decade later. See Jürgs (2007), 335 and Preece (2001), 151.

<sup>36</sup> This is one of the references to the construct of the ‘famous Günter Grass’, which prompts Taberner (1998) and Braun (2008) to claim that his autobiographically-informed construct plays constantly with the public image audiences all too willingly require as a guarantor of authenticity.

<sup>37</sup> See also Kirstin Gwyer (2019).

narrator significantly draws attention to what is omitted ('Manches verschweige ich: meine Löcher.')

as this group of assertions suggests:

Vorerst Ausflüchte, Hakenschlagen auf dem Papier [...].

[...]

Außer Geschichten und Geschichten gegen Geschichten erzählen, kann ich Pausen zwischen halbe Sätze schieben [...].

[...]

Manches verschweige ich: meine Löcher.

[...]

Wo beginnt die Enthäutung einer Person? Wo sitzt der Zapfen, der die Bekenntnisse unter Verschuß hält?

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 354–355

This opens up the possibility that gaps in the narrative arise owing to some material the narrator knowingly represses. Revealingly, not only does he refer to the start of the process of peeling away the layers of the self ('Wo beginnt die Enthäutung einer Person?'), anticipating his most overtly autobiographical work of 2006, but he also refers to how the flow of 'confessions' can be controlled ('Wo sitzt der Zapfen [...]').

Which brings us to another ambiguity: the internal nature of the narrative. The overall narrative (of narrator and the fiction he creates) appears to unfold internally, as (in my view) Grass' narratives characteristically do. The address to his children, for example, boldly proclaims its directness but, whilst never confirmed, it could equally be interpreted as indirect. The questions are presented in a stylised form – frequently as a quatrain of queries.<sup>38</sup> The questions always, however, suggest an internal prompt for the narrator in a comparable way to the role the children's curiosity and queries play in *Die Box* (2008), as highlighted in my introduction. Raoul and Franz's questions could therefore be generated by the narrator, which would suggest an almost literal 'self-consciousness' about a past he needs to incorporate in his story of Zweifel. From this point of view, it remains

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<sup>38</sup> The narrator explicitly describes the onslaught of his children's questions as a multiple of four in section 14: 'Jetzt werde ich viermal in Frage gestellt [...].', *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 14: 417. The characteristically fourfold presentation of questions seems to play with an internal resonance of both Dürer's 'magic square' in *Melencolia I* – a four by four square – and Schopenhauer's *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde*, 1813.

interestingly ambiguous who makes the connection between the odd word the television throws up (like 'Biafra') and the fate of Jewish people during the Second World War – his children 'Franz oder Raoul', or the narrator, if not Grass himself:

[...] wenn das Fernsehen ein Wort (über Biafra) abwirft, höre ich Franz oder Raoul nach den Juden fragen:  
'Was war denn los mit denen?'  
Ihr merkt, daß ich stocke, sobald ich verkürze. Ich finde das Nadelöhr nicht und beginne zu plaudern [...].

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 1: 293

The narrator's verbal inhibitions, which prevent him from expressing clearly the fate of Jewish people under the Third Reich, hint at the inescapable, individual shame this awareness brings.

A similar ambiguity arises when the narrator enters into dialogue with himself to provide a self-reflexive commentary on his creation of Zweifel. He wanted to start with Zweifel (section 1) but the election results get in the way. He wants to use him as an illustration of almost meaningless statistics of concentration camp exterminations (sections 1 and 2) but it is doubtful whether a Zweifel narrative can fulfil that aim (even though Zweifel's Kashubian protector, Stomma, who believes Zweifel to be Jewish, demonstrates violent and seemingly irrational persecution). The narrator also draws attention to how Marcel Reich-Ranicki's story of being harboured in a Warsaw cellar during the war had lain dormant in his mind and now provides a framework for his Zweifel narrative.<sup>39</sup> This overt reference to the occasion in 1958 when Grass first met Marcel Reich (as he then was) suggests the psychological significance the story held for Grass, and which he incorporated into his narrator's frame of reference. At another point, as if to emphasise how Zweifel gives expression to the psychological concerns of the narrator, he is delighted to observe how much 'fictional' potential the figure holds ('vielseitiger als geplant'):

Seitdem Zweifel an der Rosenbaumschen Schule denkbar und als Lehrer tätig ist, gerät er mir vielseitiger als geplant [...].

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<sup>39</sup> The details of Marcel Reich-Ranicki's story of being harboured in a Warsaw cellar are provided by Volker Weidermann (2019), 'Im Keller', 86–101. Reich-Ranicki relayed the story, with some hesitation, to several writers, including Grass, over some wine at the 1958 Gruppe 47 meeting in Großholzleute im Allgäu. See 'Wiedersehen in Deutschland', 144.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 4: 321

Indeed, the psychological correspondence between the narrator and Zweifel represents a crucial feature of the overall narrative's development.

In addition to his self-reflexive commentary, the narrator enters into a dialogue with his fictional creation at several points. In section 14, for example, he discusses details of his fiction with Zweifel:

Zweifel kommt oft, ich muß ihn nur rufen. Wir bereden, was querliegt. Ich rate ihm, nicht mit dem Kopf zur feuchten Nordwand des Kellers zu liegen; er rät mir, zuerst einmal seinen Gastgeber Stomma und dessen Tochter Lisbeth den Kindern vorzustellen.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 14: 415

The narrator – and presumably Grass as well – plays with the doubts surrounding the creative process as well as with the more deep-seated, political doubts *Aus dem Tagebuch* gives voice to. He effectively casts doubt over the authority of the author as the character contributes to his own development: 'Nicht mehr ich rede; es redet aus mir: "...überzeugt....nämlich....immerhin..."' (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 20: 480), where the narrator elides the doubts he experiences in front of his political microphone with his fictional creation, 'Zweifel'. He plays with a heritage of Barthes and Foucault which argues for minimising the role of the author in favour of determining linguistic – and through them, social and cultural – processes which structure an author's thinking.<sup>40</sup> This serves to stress the limits of conscious control over what the narrator creates whilst at the same time emphasising a narratorial, if not authorial, scepticism. Psychologically, as well as politically, scepticism constantly accompanies the narrator, as he points out when talking of the family's plans to travel to the woods of Czechoslovakia:

Dort will ich Pilze sammeln, eine neue Rede schreiben, in mein Sudelbuch nachträglich Fußnoten setzen und mir Zweifel ausdenken; ihr wißt ja, Kinder, den werde ich nirgendwo los.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 14: 417

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<sup>40</sup> See Barthes (1977), 'The Death of the Author', dating from 1968, 142-148, and Foucault (1998), 'What is an Author?', dating from 1969, 205-22.

In section 18, he even plays with the idea that the relationship between the two might be dialectical, which stresses the internal nature of the relationship, giving it at the same time a Hegelian, even Adorno-like, cast. Typically, Grass leaves plenty of room for parody – as if questioning the validity of the concept of dialectic at the same time.

Grass intentionally creates a highly ambiguous relationship between author, narrator and ‘their’ fictional creation, Zweifel, which, in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, I consider can best be understood as a projection. Zweifel can admittedly be thought of as fictional creation, as ‘mere’ invention (as Grass points out in his frequent references to what is ‘ausgedacht’ and ‘erfunden’) or as the embodiment of doubt (which always accompanies him, is sewn into his linings – section 9) but the way Grass exposes the psychological conditions that give rise to the fictive creation in subtly changed form suggests to me that Grass is exploiting the idea of psychological projection. Grass takes the core ideas underlying projection from Freud – that projections represent a ‘transformed’ externalisation of the internal – and exploits their fictional possibilities. He appears primarily interested in the transformative nature of projection, which plays a more central role in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*. This process is encapsulated in the narrator’s ruminations in section 20: ‘Wenig genau sagen. Die nahe Distanz. Mir Gelegenheit schaffen. Jetzt schon: und Zweifel melken’ (my emphases). *Aus dem Tagebuch*’s narrative relies on exploiting the fictive potential of Zweifel as much as possible (‘melken’ – the narratorial projection) and on combining that with ellipsis (‘wenig genau sagen’ – the authorial projection). The narrative is informed by this dual projection.

### **The Zweifel narrative as narratorial projection**

What then are the features of Hermann Ott and his narrative which are to be exploited (‘melken’) as much as possible? Most conspicuously, his nickname ‘Zweifel’ registers circumspection, his characteristic uncertainty and scepticism of all ideologies. Although not himself Jewish – he comes from a minority Christian, Mennonite sect – he lives under the threat of persecution as a Jewish-

sympathising teacher in a Jewish Gymnasium. He is savagely beaten up on at least two occasions – sections 3 and 13). He is obsessed with snails – an interest he pursues with the empirical rigour of a Lichtenberg- or Schopenhauer-informed Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>41</sup> He similarly takes a direct interest in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, whose ‘Preisschrift über die Freiheit des Willens’ of 1839 argues in materialist terms for the illusory nature of free will, prompts a philosophical paper as well as a parodied rationale for his superficially aimless bicycle escape from Danzig and his equally parodic ‘argument’ to convince the Kashubian Stomma to harbour him in his cellar. He is additionally prone to depression (expressed as melancholy, underlined by the print of Dürer’s *Melencolia I* he takes with him). Whilst being sheltered in Stomma’s cellar (section 16), he succumbs (with apparent acquiescence) to Stomma’s corporal chastisement to induce him to continue relaying stories and later for teaching him how to read (using newspaper reports – a literal, as well as metaphorical, lesson in ‘reading’). As the war progresses, Zweifel takes to ideological translation of the newspaper reports, converting Nazi triumphalism into news of imminent defeat. By the end, he has also developed a sexual relationship with the mute Lisbeth. He ‘cures’ her of her muteness, brought on by the loss of her husband, through what is effectively a form of sexual, Reichian therapy (with the aid of a distinctive species of snail, whose sexual connotations the narrator makes clear – section 25). Importantly, what eventually happens to Zweifel is itself cast in doubt as the narrator provides two potential endings (sections 28 and 29): the first sees Zweifel being committed to a psychiatric institute (a fate that resonates with Oskar’s) and becoming mute before his death (whilst Lisbeth metamorphoses into a postwar reactionary); the second sees the two of them living a contented, albeit conventional bourgeois life, in the Federal Republic with their son, Arthur, named in gentle parody of his father’s obsession with Schopenhauer.

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<sup>41</sup> This is a heritage the narrator explicitly draws attention to: ‘Schopenhauer [soll] den Schneckensammler Ott gelehrt haben, vor dem Erkennen anzuschauen’ (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 5: 328).

Each of these features, which make up Zweifel and his narrative, corresponds to psychological concerns of the narrator. Most conspicuously, Hermann Ott's nickname, Zweifel, and his obsession with collecting and investigating snails with an Enlightenment penchant for sceptical questioning, highlight the narrator's self-declared scepticism. He voices doubts, for example, about the tenability of social and political progress and constantly asserts his 'langwieriges Prinzip', his snail principle, i.e., his commitment to democratic and thus necessarily incremental social and political change. Even at the point of Heinemann's close electoral victory, which anticipates Brandt's a few months later, the narrator uses his snail metaphor to betray his doubts:

Als die Schnecke, Fühler voraus, die Zielmarkierung ahnte, zögerte sie: sie wollte nicht ankommen, wollte unterwegs bleiben, wollte nicht siegen.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 1: 286

The narrator also reinforces this same doubt about whether electoral victory – a democratically achieved gain – can lead to permanent social and political progress when he glosses his image of the snail:

'Und was meinst du mit Schnecke?'

'Die Schnecke, das ist der Fortschritt.'

'Und was isst der Fortschritt?'

'Bißchen schneller sein als die Schnecke...'

...und nie ankommen [...].

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 1: 287

He seems pessimistic about whether either snail or social and political progress will ever reach their destination ('...und nie ankommen [...]') and returns to this same metaphor of the snail's failure to arrive when he resolves the work's narrative (with the alternative conclusions I have already referred to):

Werden sie vorwärts kommen? – Ein Stück.

[...]

Werden sie etwas ändern? – Mehr als sie selbst begreifen.

Werden sie irren? – Nach Plan.

[...]

Werden sie ankommen? – Nie.

Werden sie siegen? – Ja (im Prinzip).

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 29: 576

These formulations, cast rhetorically in terms of question and assertive response, reinforce the narrator's sense of the barely perceptible gains of democratically-attained progress. All snails are condemned to their slow creeping pace even if they 'speak and dream of a great leap forward' (a metaphor, picked up and associated with Ilsebill in *Der Butt's* fifth month, which I will be considering in the next chapter):

[...] sie alle sind zum Kriechen verdonnert und reden (träumen) vom großen Sprung...  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 29: 576

The snails never fulfil their aims even though they may in principle achieve some kind of victory. As I have already commented, the alternative narrative endings serve to reinforce this uncertainty surrounding the possibility of social and political progress.

Zweifel's scepticism and obsession with snails embody the projected version of the narrator's psychological doubts – his doubts about the tenability of incremental and democratically-achieved reformist progress. Grass, however, does not limit himself to revealing this correspondence through his fable-like snail image: through his narrator, he underlines the psychological nature of that parallel. He draws attention to how the snail metaphor, as much as Zweifel, is a product of his conceptual powers. 'Ich kann das, Kinder, mir deutlich was ausdenken' he claims, before 'projecting' the snail onto the expanse of the 'empty East Prussian hall':

Noch vor ihrem Auftritt, ihr Eigengeräusch: schaumiges Knistern. Dann sah ich sie unterwegs in der leeren Ostpreußenhalle. Ich versuchte, meinen Atem ihrer Eile anzupassen, mußte atemlos aufgeben.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 1: 286

He similarly envisages the snail's dramatically slow progress as it passes by teaching institutes preaching finely conceived theories and revolutions which have already 'fizzled out', emphasising that democratically-achieved slow progress is superior to apparently instant revolutionary change:

Sie siegt nur knapp und selten. Sie kriecht, verkriecht sich, kriecht mit ihrem Muskelfuß weiter und zeichnet [...], abseits schöngelagerter Theorien, seitlich Rückzügen und vorbei an versandeten Revolutionen ihre rasch trocknende Gleitspur.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 1: 287



The narrator's scepticism and his sense of the precariousness of the course of incremental change thus provide the primary psychological conditions for the projection of Zweifel.

The narrator makes clear that his political doubts do not merely arise from a generalised scepticism but are rooted in a quite specific anxiety: that the progressive achievements of social and political change are prone to marginalisation and appropriation by 'vital interests' (to use the language of *örtlich betäubt*, many of whose concerns are restated and reshaped in *Aus dem Tagebuch*).<sup>42</sup> The narrator's deliberations during the family trip to Prague some ten months after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia dramatise this. He observes how the daubed slogans of 'Freedom' and 'Dubček' are already fading, a mere ten months later:

[...wir] sahen, daß die weißen, mit eiliger Quaste gesetzten Notzeichen – 'Svoboda!' – 'Dubcek!' – an Bretterzäunen und Fabrikwänden, über Torbögen und auf brüchigen Fassaden schon grau und verwaschen, von der Zeit (zehn lumpige Monate) angegriffen waren; also ist es die Zeit, die den Terror gewöhnlich werden läßt; gegen die Zeit schreiben.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 425

The invasion itself prompts connections with the Red Army's brutal suppression of the Kronstadt and St Petersburg sailors' uprising in 1921 (in the same section 15) and, less conspicuously, with an arguably too-well tended Theresienstadt (a hint at the threat commodification poses to history, also section 15). It seems that the invasion disturbs the narrator so deeply because it ranks as an example of oppressive socialism (anticipating, too, the attacks on striking Gdańsk shipyard workers, which figure prominently in *Der Butt*). And oppressive socialism is just as disturbing as the National Socialist fascism that the narrator failed to challenge in any way. These reflections indicate that the passage of time results in a gradual marginalisation of the past, suggesting what looks like a Gramscian fear that dominant powers – economic and political – will appropriate any reform in

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<sup>42</sup> *örtlich betäubt* (1968) stages a dialogue between Starusch and his student Scherbaum, where Scherbaum claims he knows there are always 'vital interests' of major powers to consider, whether of the Americans or the Soviets, but hints *that* is precisely the problem. 'Weiß ich doch, daß alles erklären läßt. Wie heißt es schon? Weil die vitalen Interessen der Amerikaner berührt sind...' [...] 'Genau so ist es. Leider. Als vor mehr als zehn Jahren beim Aufstand in Budapest die vitalen Interessen der Sowjetunion berührt wurden, hat man mit aller Härte...', *örtlich betäubt*, [5] 2: 176.

order to maintain their own power.<sup>43</sup> As the narrator makes clear, the passing of time is exploited and manipulated to ensure that historical events take their place in a historical narrative established by dominant powers:

Der bekannte Trick. Schon vor der Tat berechnen Verbrecher, wann ihre Tat verjährt, von den Taten anderer Verbrecher überbaut und nur noch am Rande Geschichtsstoff sein wird. Ob [...] Täter Stalin oder Hitler hießen (ob Ulbricht seinen Stalin überlebte, Kiesinger seinen Hitler verdrängte), die Zeit, die vergehende Zeit vergeht zugunsten der Täter; den Opfern vergeht die Zeit nicht.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 425

This disturbing management of the historical past is captured in the image of the stolen rear-view mirrors (section 15) when the family return home ‘mit zu wenig Rückspiegeln’ (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 428). They lack the means of looking back clearly onto the ‘Prague Spring’ and the ensuing Soviet invasion.

The narrator responds with a self-imposed imperative to ‘write against the passing of time’: ‘Ein Schriftsteller, Kinder, ist jemand, der gegen die verstreichende Zeit schreibt’ (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 426). What form that writing might take is hinted at as he outlines the speech’s key points:<sup>44</sup>

Meine Rede [...] heißt ‘Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten’. [...] Ich setze Skepsis gegen Glauben. Ich bestreite, daß irgend etwas Bestand hat. Mein Ekel vor dem Absoluten und ähnlichen Daumenschrauben. Warum ich gegen die Ansprüche des ‘einzig Wahren’ und für Vielfalt bin. [...] Gegen schon wieder dämmernde Verdunkelung und für etwas sprechen, das in seiner Begrenztheit vernünftig ist [...zum Beispiel] das Entwicklungshelfergesetz [...].

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 427–8

He implies that fiction, like politics, needs to concentrate on limited possibilities. It requires emphasis on scepticism as opposed to total belief, on pluralism rather than absolutes and on a

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<sup>43</sup> See Gramsci (1971). Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is not quite as coherent as is sometimes claimed. It emerged in several contexts. See 12–13 for hegemony in the context of Gramsci’s concept of the role of the ‘Intellectual’ in society. 53–5 set out the concept in the context of the role of the ‘subaltern’ class and pages 173–78 discuss the term in the context of the economic-corporate phase of the state and ‘relations of force’, where Gramsci talks of ‘vital forces’ and ‘vital interests’. This phrasing may have influenced Grass’ formulation in *örtlich betäubt* (although Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man*, 1964, which Grass refers to intertextually but not without parody, talks in similar terms).

<sup>44</sup> The speech was given during the election campaign on 28 August 1969 in Osnabrück. See ‘Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten’, *Essays und Reden 1955-1979*, [11] 508–523.

reasonable, if limited, policy such as a 'Developmental aid' law. Arguably this is what *Aus dem Tagebuch* aspires to, as much as to Zweifel and his stories.

For it is this range of reference which is projected as Zweifel's storytelling. Zweifel's stories suggest a literal and politically pragmatic challenge to the passing of time – a focus on what is possible within the circumstances:

Seinem Gastgeber Stomma, dessen Tochter Lisbeth und sich selbst zerstreut er die Zeit. [...] Alles [...] kann als Geschichte erzählt werden. [...] Wenn Zweifel nichts einfiel, mußte er, besorgt um seinen Ruf als Zeitzerstreuer, Neues erfinden.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 434–5

He turns all his experiences culled from teaching, including such details as 'die Freiheit des Willens' and 'Schopenhauers Flucht vor der Cholera' (*Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 434), into stories, because 'everything can be told as stories'. In the same way that the narrator is himself 'zerstreut' – allowing him to sort out the debts of his past 'for pages and pages' – so Zweifel alleviates time with stories drawn from the most various of sources.<sup>45</sup> Both the narrator and Zweifel rely on transforming detail into story. As a further impetus for storytelling, Stomma beats Zweifel, resorting to violence as the only way he knows. Zweifel additionally adapts his stories pragmatically to call into question German victories. And, of course, he also uses fables about the snail, via Aesop, to hint at the advantages of slow but sure progress, notably in the context of German defeat:

[...] sprach ihm langsam [...] Äsopsche Tierfabeln vor. Manchmal versuchte Zweifel, Fabeln zu erfinden. Dann erzählte er von der Schnecke und vom Wiesel, von der Lerche, die hoch über der Schnecke stand, vom schnellen Pferd, das sich nach jedem gewonnenen Rennen wünschte, eine Schnecke zu sein. [...] Indem er die Reste der Napoleonischen Armee [...] quer durchs Kaschubische hetzte [...] gelang es ihm, die Blitzsiege deutscher Waffen fragwürdig zu machen [...].

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 435–6

These main components of the narrator's projection – the doubts, obsession with snails and a capacity for storytelling embodied in the Zweifel narrative – set the stage for an authorial projection.

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<sup>45</sup> *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 8: 355: '[...] immer bin ich zerstreut, so sehr ich mich seitenlang auflese, sortiere und als Summe, samt Außenständen, aufrechne'. This compares with the several references to Zweifel's role as 'Zeitzerstreuer', e.g., *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 435–6.

## The Zweifel narrative as authorial projection

The concealed authorial projection embedded within the narratorial projection emerges elliptically and turns on Grass' wartime guilt and shame. The projection takes different forms. Firstly, there is the wish-fulfilment of Zweifel's frequent association with Willy Brandt (a 'Wunschprojektion').<sup>46</sup> Then there is suppression, suggested by the exclusion from the Zweifel projection of the Augst narrative, condensation (the unsettling Dachau visit) and compensation (his storytelling, a compulsion to write and challenge politically). All the cases show modifications and transformations of material Grass psychologically struggles to accept and thus represent the fictional symptoms of authorial anxieties.

### ***Wunschprojektion: the 'fußnotenhafte Ähnlichkeit' with Brandt***

The narrator is keen to relate 'Zweifel' to Willy Brandt. Initially, it is Brandt's nervous hesitancy, possibly denoting an underlying doubt about an eventual electoral success, which the narrator singles out as linking the two. The narrator almost playfully wonders whether Zweifel, in order to 'pass the time' in his wartime cellar, might have invented the 'Spiel mit den Streichhölzern' to which Brandt constantly resorts:

(Fast möchte ich meinen, es habe Zweifel, als er später im Keller saß, dieses akkurate Zurechtrücken verschachtelter Refugien als Spiel gegen die Zeit erfunden.)

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 3: 306

Following several references to 'Willy' and his 'Schneckenkarriere', his commitment to social democratic change and his ideological probity, the narrator explicitly notes the resemblance between the two:

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<sup>46</sup> Arguably, this 'Wunschprojektion' is conceptually related to the narrator's desire for a 'third breast' in the first month of *Der Butt*, psychoanalytically a desire always for more. The narrator, however, parodies these stereotypical male desires: 'Männliche Wunschprojektion! Mag ja sein, daß [die dritte Brust] anatomisch nicht möglich ist' (*Der Butt*, [6] 1: 11). Freud of course saw the dream – and I would argue, projection – as a wish-fulfilment.

Übrigens, Kinder, hat Zweifel eine beiseite gesprochene und fußnotenhafte Ähnlichkeit mit [Willy Brandt]: beide höre ich in meinem Stummfilm vom Wesen der Zwitter, vom Wandel durch Annäherung sprechen.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 19: 467

Revealingly, the narrator describes ‘hearing’ them in his silent film, once again emphasising the internal nature of the images, which resemble an individual psychological screening – an internal projection. (The same metaphor of silent film for a psychological projection emerges again in *Die Rättin*, where Oskar at one point considers his planned film could take the form of a silent film.)

And almost as a culmination of the many suggestive parallels, Brandt is described as from the ‘Stamm Zweifel’, a fine ambiguity between Zweifel the figure and Zweifel as scepticism.

This connection between Zweifel and Brandt appears to respond to the author’s desire to have acted differently during the war. The author attempts to identify himself with Willy Brandt, who left Germany to fight in the Norwegian resistance, and hence project his image of ideological challenge onto Zweifel, who also removes himself from National Socialism, challenging it in his own pragmatic way. Projection therefore takes the form of wish-fulfilment, where the subject projects how he would like to have acted rather than how he did act. As Freud put it, the subject projects the opposite of what preoccupies him.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Brandt, Grass had neither dissociated himself from National Socialism nor challenged it. As he implies in section 25, he could have been one of the bystanders witnessing, if not gleefully celebrating, the deportation of Danzig’s Jewish people. And as he subsequently betrays in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, he supported the regime to the point of active participation. The question ‘why’ is conspicuously part of Zweifel’s character in a way that it was not of Grass’ younger self, another imprint of a wish-fulfilment:

Das Wörtchen ‘Warum’ verdinglichte sich Hermann Ott zur Botanisiertrommel, in der er alles, was sich als gegeben betrug, als gültig benahm oder als bewiesen zur Ruhe gesetzt hatte, sammelte, um es mit Präpariernadeln zu spießen und in Säurebädern anzuzweifeln.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 5: 328

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<sup>47</sup> See my introduction.

As he also makes clear in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, and noted above, Grass failed to ask 'why' or indeed to ask any questions about, for example, his friend Wolfgang Heinrich's left-wing father or his teacher at the Conradinum, presented as Dr Stachnik in *Der Butt* (month 2), who both disappear to Stutthof. The first section of *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* in fact reverberates with the failure to ask questions, starting with the question 'why'. Guilt over this failure arguably motivates the writing of the stylised autobiography.<sup>48</sup>

### **Suppression: Direct exclusions and indirect inclusions (Augst and Dachau)**

Similarly significant is the narrative based on Augst, a fictionalised version of Wolfgang Scheub, which the narrator explicitly excludes from his Zweifel projection, suggesting a wilful suppression of detail.<sup>49</sup> In the same way that the self-reflexive narrator comments teasingly over the potential similarities between Zweifel and Brandt, the narrator reports how Augst tries to insert himself into the writer's development of the Zweifel figure. The phrasing resembles the gradual emergence of Oskar in *Die Rättin*, who wants to be part of the story. Augst wants to be an exemplary case, more than a footnote:

(Augst sagt: 'Da bin ich wieder. Bitte darum, erwähnt zu werden. Als Fall, exemplarisch.')

[...]

[Augst] will nicht Fußnote sein, will auftreten (figürlich) immer wieder mit seinen Fläschchen.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 20: 477–8

The narrative did in fact almost impose itself on Grass, as he witnessed the dramatic suicide by cyanide pills of Wolfgang Scheub, a former member of the SS, during an election campaign event in Stuttgart.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the Reich-Ranicki story had lain dormant for several years before providing a framework for Grass' projection, this similarly 'real' story is portrayed in its formative stages as Grass, via his narrator, shows himself needing to understand more from Augst's family about the

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<sup>48</sup> See for example: *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 1: 218, 223, 225 and my introduction.

<sup>49</sup> See Nicole Thesz (2018), 78.

<sup>50</sup> Thesz (2018), 78-80, gives an interesting reading of the suicide and Augst's inability to articulate his past. She sees this as a failure to communicate in contrast to Grass' dramatisation of the need for communication, which she argues, via speech act theory and Habermas, underlies Grass' fiction.

circumstances leading to his suicide. Grass nevertheless excludes it from his Zweifel projection, dramatising how the narrator suppresses, if not represses, material. For the story of a former SS member's suicide conceals details of Grass' individual sense of guilt, which, in 1972, remained even more elliptical than it does in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* itself. Only after Grass' subsequent revelation in 2006 that he had served in the SS as a young conscript towards the end of the war do readers see the parallels Grass only alludes to. Augst's naïve progression from aspirant member of the SS to Christian pacifist – a progression (at least from the narrator's perspective) from one kind of specious idealism to another – superficially (and uncomfortably, critics would say) echoes Grass' own progression from SS member to oppositional writer.<sup>51</sup>

Whilst the links between the Zweifel narrative and the Brandt and Augst 'narratives' both in their different way conceal reference to Grass' own wartime guilt and shame (one as wish-fulfilment projection, the other as denial), the visit to Dachau during the election campaign (section 16) points to what amounts to a condensation of his wartime guilt and shame (disbelief, the only gradual recognition of his failure to ask questions and to want to have known more). The narrator reveals he had visited Dachau before, aged seventeen:

Vor der Veranstaltung [...] war ich auf dem Gelände des ehemaligen Konzentrationslagers. (Schon einmal, als siebzehnjähriger POW, wurde ich, um erzogen zu werden, in diesen Bereich gebracht: wir wollten nicht begreifen; wir sahen die Duschen, die Öfen und glaubten nicht.)

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 432

The 'Kurzbesuch nach Dachau' for the purpose of re-education ('Umerziehung') in fact elicited some scepticism from Grass, according to his account in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*. Not only did he, like other US-held German prisoners of war, find it impossible to believe the images of Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück they were shown, but they also looked for reasons to question what they were

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<sup>51</sup> Stolz (1999), 152, describes Augst's progression as 'problemlos von Möchtegernmitglied der Waffen-SS zum überzeugten Ostermarschierer'.

seeing in Dachau. Grass relates how a mason pointed out that the shower rooms showed traces of fresh cement:

‘Habt ihr die Duschräume gesehen mit den Brausen, angeblich für Gas? Waren frisch verputzt, haben die Amis bestimmt nachträglich gebaut...‘

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 5: 404

This description of the seventeen-year old’s inability to believe in such wartime atrocities precedes the section I quoted in the introduction with its haunting phrasing ‘unwissend oder, genauer, nicht wissen wollend’:

Es verging Zeit, bis ich [...] mir zögerlich eingestand, daß ich unwissend oder, genauer, nicht wissen wollend Anteil an einem Verbrechen hatte [...].

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 5: 404

The unsettling nature of this visit represents a condensed version of Zweifel’s temporal disorientation. The narrator cannot reconcile past and present: as a seventeen-year-old, stubbornly and unrepentantly clinging onto his naïve incredulity (‘harthörig und verstockt’), and as a forty-two-year-old, unavoidably haunted by guilt and shame:

Mehrmals sah ich mich in verschiedenen Rollen, sah mich mit siebzehn, harthörig und verstockt, sah mich mit zweiundvierzig ins Gästebuch schreiben. Ich sah die Schnecke zwischen der bewahrten Ordnung des Lagers. Anhängliche Spuren. Das ist gut verpackt Schuld. Ich laufe mir hinterdrein: lästig...

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 433

The almost vertiginous psychological disorientation, caused by his inability to reconcile his seventeen-year-old self with his forty-two-year-old self (a significant motif in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*), is projected onto Zweifel as a temporal disorientation. He can only see his memories as an undifferentiated mass (‘Zweifel konnte sich nur noch komplex erinnern’, *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 433) and cannot order his memories chronologically.

Further hints that there are impulses for the authorial projection below the constructed narrative surface emerge early in *Aus dem Tagebuch* when the narrator tells his children that they are ‘innocent’ in a similar way to him (or so he claims):



Ihr seid unschuldig. Auch ich, halbwegs spät genug geboren, gelte als unbelastet. Nur wenn ich vergessen wollte, wenn ihr nicht wissen wolltet, wie es langsam dazu gekommen ist, könnten uns einsilbige Worte einholen: die Schuld und die Scham; auch sie, zwei unentwegte Schnecken, nicht aufzuhalten.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 2: 295

The phrasing is revealingly ambiguous: he was born ‘halfway’ late enough; he ‘counts’ as ‘unbelastet’ but not, we note, ‘unschuldig’. If either he or his children no longer ‘wanted to know’ how it all came about, then guilt and shame would relentlessly overcome them. The phrasing ‘wenn ihr nicht wissen wolltet’ – together with ‘die Schuld und die Scham’ – is of course the phrasing underlying Grass’ psychologically-charged formulations I have just referred to where he talks of the gnawing persistence of guilt and shame. The authorial accent is emphasised further if the address to the children is interpreted as indirect: Grass voices the centrality of guilt and shame to his far from ‘unburdened’ self through his fear that either they or he might stop asking questions.

### ***Displacement as authorial projection***

Grass’ continuing need to ask questions, as a compensation (if not sublimation) for his previous wartime failure to do so, informs his compulsion to create challenging fiction, arguably the most conspicuous feature of the projected narrative. This is somewhat bizarrely dramatised through Stomma’s ‘gentle persuasions’ (‘Bißchen nachhelfen!’) to induce Zweifel into telling stories, which I referred to earlier. The passage quoted on page 49 continues:

Wenn Zweifel nichts einfiel, mußte er [...] Neues erfinden. Denn wenn [Zweifel] keine neuen Geschichten kamen, ließ Stomma [...] seinen Lederriemen aus den Schlaufen eilen. [...] Mit seinem Hosenriemen, später mit Fahrradspeichen. ‘Bißchen nachhelfen!’ sagte Stomma und legte seinen Gast erzieherisch [...] über den Tisch. Danach erzählte Zweifel neue Geschichten.

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 16: 435

Underlying the potentially homoerotic overtones of beating Zweifel with a leather belt or bicycle spokes is an almost choreographed representation of compulsion informed by Schopenhauer’s arguments over the illusory nature of free will. Embedded within this particular aspect of the projection, however, is an image of the writing process – essentially determined, manifesting itself

as a compulsion. Whether chastisement leads to 'new stories' (section 16) or the ones which are blended with contemporary political comment (notably German military failures) or his cellar theatre narratives (both section 21), Zweifel's storytelling is the projected version of the narrator's commitment to write against 'die verstreichende Zeit' and 'den Mief':

Ein Schriftsteller, Kinder, ist jemand, der gegen die verstreichende Zeit schreibt.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 15: 426

And:

Ein Schriftsteller, Kinder, ist jemand, der den Mief liebt, um ihn benennen zu können, der von Mief lebt, indem er ihn benennt; eine Existenzbedingung, die der Nase Schwielen einträgt.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 23: 514

'Mief' – an image which fuses corruption and atrocity with the passing of time, a process which results in forgetting, marginalisation and suppression – provides motivation: the writer lives from the 'Mief' whilst identifying and describing it ('Ein Schriftsteller [...] ist jemand, [...] der von Mief lebt, indem er ihn benennt'). It is a condition of existence ('Existenzbedingung'), which he reiterates when declaring his all-consuming compulsion to write:

^Was schreibste denn da? [...] Kannste nich aufhören endlich?  
[...] Überall immerzu. Ich schreibe, während ich rede zuhöre antworte.  
Ich schreibe, während ich irgendein Schnitzel zerkaue, [...] mich woanders erfinde...  
[...]  
(Es stimmt Laura: oft schreibe ich nur, um mir zu beweisen, daß ich bin und daß ich es bin, der da Wörter auf Zettel und aus dem Fenster heraus schreibt.)  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 23: 517–8

This suggests that the compulsion to write represents the most significant element of the Zweifel projection, a need to write which lies outside any conscious control of either the narrator or, by implication, Grass:

Was nicht geschrieben steht.  
Sätze, die liegenbleiben, mir nachlaufen, lästig sind und auf Bleiguß bestehen.  
[...]  
Auch wenn ich jetzt [...] durch Zweifels Keller muß, meine ich mich, wie ich überall, [...] immerzu nur über den Mief schreibe.  
– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 23: 519

In other words, the compulsion emanates from issues that constantly pursue and burden both narrator and Grass.

This compulsion to write is, additionally, accompanied by a fear of its potential futility, a fear registered through the image of melancholy. Lisbeth suffers from 'melancholy', an extreme depression resulting from the loss of her Polish husband on the fourth day of the war. Her melancholy echoes that of Dürer's engraving, which the narrator, elucidating it to his children in section 13, bleakly interprets as a social as well as an individual condition. Grass explicitly draws on Panofsky's famous 1939 explication of *Melencolia I*, which interpreted the engraving as an image of artistic potential and a newly conceived creativity.<sup>52</sup> The figure Melancholy is represented as poised between a traditional medieval philosophy of planetary influence on human behaviour (through the four temperaments, of which Melancholy is one) and a Renaissance openness to creative possibility, the instruments of which lie all around her (the builder's instruments and the magic square enabling the calculations underlying construction). Melancholy's embodiment of a debilitating sense of ennui, which stultifies her potential for artistic creation, arises thus from an ideological conflict between medieval philosophy and a Renaissance thinking which unleashes an 'awe-inspiring' creative potential, a potential expressed by Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is Man!'.<sup>53</sup> Grass, via his narrator, depicts what she surveys:

Alles klingt hohl und zählt sich hohl auf: *die Sinnlosigkeit, der ewige Kreislauf, die Vergeblichkeit aller Mühe und die Wiederkehr immer der gleichen Puppen, das Einerlei und die Käuflichkeit der Worte, der Zerfall wie der Aufbau, das Unendliche and das Endliche, die Regelmäßigkeit und der stotternde Zufall, natürlich auch Produktion und Konsum, das unabänderliche, schon programmierte, wie auf der Achterbahn Tempo vortäuschende und doch nur gezirkelte Schicksal und Schneckendasein...*

– *Aus dem Tagebuch*, [5] 13: 401–2 (my emphases)

Melancholy can only see vacuousness and futility around her, a vacuousness and futility expressed in terms of cyclicity. The images of cyclicity are given a political accent: the agents who repeatedly

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<sup>52</sup> Erwin Panofsky (1939) and (1943).

<sup>53</sup> Written c.1600, some 75 years later than Dürer's engraving, *Hamlet* also represents a melancholic figure caught between medieval and Renaissance philosophies.

return are ‘puppets’ – a metaphor suggestive of politicians being manipulated by more powerful interests; words are ‘venal’, implying that all forms of communication are subject to economic appropriation; and the cycles of ‘production and consumption’ suggest that societies are ‘bought off’ by their immersion in consumption, which deflects them from recognising the underlying power interests behind their own production and consumption. The cyclicity of social processes is ‘immutable’ and ‘already programmed’, rushing by with rollercoaster speed, which prevents individuals from recognising the course their ‘destiny’ and ‘snail-like existence’ is actually taking. All these images of exploitative economic policies look back to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Hundejahre* with their representations of an exploited postwar consumerist society (only too pleased, it would seem, to participate in their own exploitation) and forward to *Die Rättin* and its diatribes against those same ‘falsche Fuffziger’.

In addition to the political connotations of these images of cyclicity, there are strong echoes of Nietzsche’s ‘ewige Wiederkehr’: ‘der ewige Kreislauf’, ‘die Wiederkehr immer der gleichen Puppen’, ‘das unabänderliche [...] gezielte Schicksal und Schneckendasein’.<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche initially explored the concept of ‘eternal recurrence’ in the context of a nihilism resulting from the absence of the possibility of religious belief. Grass’ dramatisation of the figure Melancholy’s perceptions of cyclicity in the extract quoted above seems an expression of this nihilistic form of ‘ewige Wiederkehr’. In his Notebooks from the 1880s, assembled by his nationalistic sister, Elisabeth Förster and Heinrich Köselitz, as *Die Wille zur Macht* (posthumously published in 1906), he imagines what would be the most terrifying form existence could take in such a nihilistic world:

Denken wir diesen Gedanken [einer Welt ohne ‘Ziel und Zweck’] in seiner furchtbarsten Form: das Dasein, so wie es ist, ohne Sinn und Ziel, aber unvermeidlich wiederkehrend, ohne ein Finale in’s Nichts: ‘die ewige Wiederkehr’.

– Nietzsche (1911), Vol XV, para 55, 182

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<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche uses both ‘Wiederkehr’ and ‘Wiederkunft’ interchangeably although Stambaugh (1972), 29-31, claims that he reserves ‘Wiederkehr’ for the most crucial usages. In *Die Wille zur Macht*, for example, he uses both terms in Book I, para 55 but heads the final section of Book IV ‘Die ewige Wiederkunft’. See Nietzsche (1911), Vol XV, para 55, 182 and Nietzsche (1911), Vol XVI, paras 1053–1067, 393–412.

Starusch significantly reads from *Die Wille zur Macht* in the closing moments of *örtlich betäubt* ([5] 3: 278). His vengefully destructive ‘Wellenbad’ fantasies lead to a narrative resolution which also represents recurrence as Starusch’s dental pains return: ‘Nichts hält vor. Immer neue Schmerzen’ (*örtlich betäubt*, [5] 3: 280). Grass’ images of cyclicity are not only, however, suggested by Nietzsche. They also reflect Schopenhauer’s fundamentally Platonic conception of history, set out in the ‘Supplements to the Third Book’ of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.<sup>55</sup> The Platonic roots of Schopenhauer’s cyclic conception of history echo the internal nature of Grass’ fiction. In other words, what for Schopenhauer is Platonic and ‘idealist’ is for Grass psychological. Schopenhauer claims that history is ‘in essence’ immutable. Despite superficial social and political change ‘we always have before us the same identical, unchangeable essence’:

Während die Geschichte uns lehrt, daß zu jeder Zeit etwas Anderes gewesen ist, die Philosophie bemüht, uns zu der Einsicht zu verhelfen, daß zu allen Zeiten ganz das Selbe war, ist und sein wird.

[...]

Die wahre Philosophie der Geschichte besteht nämlich in der Einsicht, daß man, bei allen diesen endlosen Veränderungen und ihrem Wirrwarr, doch stets nur das selbe, gleiche und unwandelbare Wesen vor sich hat, welches heute das selbe treibt, wie gestern und immerdar, - d.h. die Ideen (in Plato’s Sinn) erkennen.

– *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol II, chapter 38, 504, 8

Grass, via his narrator, does more than reveal history to be a series of recurrent cycles. He politicises Nietzsche and Schopenhauer’s conceptions. The narrator in *Aus dem Tagebuch* emphasises that it is economic and political interests which impose cyclicity on social and political development. This idea, as I shall be pointing out, re-emerges in both *Der Butt* and *Die Rätin*, and takes the form of what is, in effect, a social and political critique.

Grass therefore fuses the possibility of artistic creativity with social and political development in the bleakest of ways. Even though the instruments of artistic creativity and a new social system lie

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<sup>55</sup> Volume II, Chapter 38, ‘Über Geschichte’, supplementing Volume I’s Section 51 on poetry. According to Werner Fritzen (1988), 174, Grass first started reading Schopenhauer in 1970. His conception of simultaneity, ‘Vergegenkunft’, which is voiced in *Aus dem Tagebuch* [section 9], looks to be similarly influenced by Schopenhauer.

symbolically all around the figure of Melancholy in Dürer's engraving, she is trapped in indecision and contemplation, and unable to take advantage of them. At its most optimistic, this image of the dilemmas underlying a melancholic disposition could be interpreted as a moment of 'stasis' within a barely perceptible progress (a 'Stillstand im Fortschritt' as Grass expresses it in his Dürer lecture, reproduced as section 30 of *Aus dem Tagebuch*). At its most pessimistic, melancholic inaction could demonstrate a creativity whose challenge against the 'Mief' and 'die verstreichende Zeit' is marred by external factors – notably, the threat of being absorbed by dominant economic and political interests. This condemns all political and artistic challenge to a Sisyphean illusion of progress (Camus' image which Grass explicitly incorporated in *Kopfgeburt*, 1980) or, as already noted, to a Nietzschean 'recurrence of the same'.<sup>56</sup> History can only ever repeat itself if economic and political powers recurrently appropriate and marginalise social and political change.

### **Projection and the psychological conditions giving rise to it**

I have been arguing that Grass depicts the psychological conditions giving rise to the Zweifel story he creates and that the close relationship between narrator's psychology and story suggests that he is experimenting with the idea of projection. The narrator's doubts about the possibility of even incremental social and political progress and more explicitly the anxiety that any social and political change may be absorbed by dominant political interests are both reflected in the creation of 'Zweifel'. The figure of Zweifel, together with the narrative based on him, embody uncertainty. Just as the identity of the narrator is rendered ambiguous, so Zweifel's name, narrative and its resolution are all cast in doubt. What impact Zweifel's stories have on Stomma, for example, is left uncertain (albeit with strong hints that Stomma will continue to be pragmatic whichever political power takes over) and Zweifel's impact on Lisbeth is deliberately cast as uncertain with two versions

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<sup>56</sup> Stolz (1994) recognises that a Sisyphean, existentialist sense of the continual need to write alongside its futility informs all Grass' work and acknowledges its further philosophical roots in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. See, for example, the continual references to all three in Stolz's sections on *Die Blechtrommel* and *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, 253-314.

of its narrative conclusion – either Zweifel’s eventual muteness and death in a psychiatric hospital or his successful bourgeois marriage to Lisbeth and the birth of a son.

The ambiguity of the narrator’s identity, however, also allows Grass to incorporate a projection of his own wartime guilt and shame. All of these elements emerge highly indirectly, refracted through psychological features of the narrator and his creation. Zweifel, for example, appears to represent how Grass would like to have acted during the war (the identification with Brandt) whilst his reference to Augst, which he actively suppresses from contributing to Zweifel’s character, suggests a desire to conceal what Augst stood for (guilt over membership of the SS). The narrator’s visit to Dachau and the complex feelings of guilt and shame it induces are also reflected in his construction of the figure Zweifel – it corresponds to a significant moment of disorientation (section 16).

Grass, therefore, exploits the ambiguity of the narrator’s identity as well as the uncertainties leading to his creation in producing a fiction which relies on doubt, ambiguity and pluralism in just the way Grass initially set out in his early manifesto-like poem, ‘Die Vorzüge der Windhühner’ (discussed above in chapter two). For both the poem and this first autobiographically-informed fiction dramatise a creative process marked by doubts and ambiguities in a way which recalls the poem’s rejection of single, fixed meanings in favour of the dynamic and pluralistic. What *Aus dem Tagebuch* adds to this picture is the suggestion that Grass’ wartime guilt and shame both inform the ambiguities and doubts that are integral to his creative process and compel him to write against ‘die verstreichende Zeit’.

Grass takes up these issues – a highly ambiguous narrator and his equally ambiguous projections – in *Der Butt*. Whereas *Aus dem Tagebuch* portrays both the psychological conditions giving rise to the fictions and the projected fictions themselves, *Der Butt* conflates the two. *Der Butt* features a more overtly fictionalised male narrator who metamorphoses into a variety of projected figures from a

compendious sequence of historical periods. Whereas the narrator in *Aus dem Tagebuch* creates just one fictive figure, *Der Butt's* narrator promotes a proliferation of projected figures and their stories. Nevertheless, as he had done in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, Grass plays with, and questions, the distinction between narratorial and authorial projection whilst at the same time accentuating the constructed nature of the central male narrator, a parodically and exaggeratedly male-oriented, if not patriarchal, individual. In so doing, the novel emphasises not only its fictionality but also the provisionality of all the social and political claims it makes.



#### 4 *Der Butt* (1977): trapped in patriarchal perspectives – projection and dreamwork

*Writing she can be anyone. On the page she dissolves, becomes amorphous, proliferates wildly.*  
– Olivia Laing, *Crudo* (2019)

##### Introduction

Like *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, *Der Butt* combines narratorial and authorial projections. *Der Butt*, however, incorporates two significant developments from Grass' experimentation with projection in the earlier work. Firstly, the narrator of *Der Butt* is more conspicuously 'constructed' than the ambiguously autobiographically-informed narrator of *Aus dem Tagebuch*. This allows Grass to exploit the perspectives of his narrator – and consequently his projections – in a more overtly ironic and parodic way. He displays a 'robustly male point of view' (to use Julian Preece's phrase), which is always prone to parody (as in month 2, where he comments to Sieglinde Huntscha how the tribunal affects him 'nicht nur als Autor, sondern auch als Mann' [*Der Butt*, [6] 2: 184] before rushing off to bed with her).<sup>57</sup> That perspective gives rise to 'wild proliferations' of male-oriented projections, which attempt to build up a defence of patriarchal attitudes. Following Freud's conception of projection, they not only represent defensiveness but project the opposite of the narrator's male-centred thinking in an attempt to compensate for it.<sup>58</sup> The projections therefore range from a compensation of his patriarchal perspectives – the challenges of '[his] Ilsebill', the assertive and independently-minded cooks themselves (Agnes Kurbiella being an arguable exception) and their feminist echoes in the female tribunal – to overcompensation (the cooks' ineffectual male partners and their alter egos, the Lud figures, alongside the wily, exaggeratedly patriarchal flounder). It is through the flounder and the female tribunal that the constructed narrator effectively dramatises a self-interrogation of his own patriarchal views in claiming that women, as exemplified by the cooks, *can* achieve an emancipated, independent existence even within a patriarchal society. He plays out in his mind a trial of the flounder, who

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<sup>57</sup> Julian Preece (1995), 955.

<sup>58</sup> See introduction.

portrays a parodic form of patriarchy and claims that the female cooks achieved emancipation. The flounder's arguments are judged by a female tribunal, a comparably parodic form of feminism, which exposes the contradictions of his arguments. The narrator makes cameo appearances as the author Günter Grass (in months 2, 3 and 7, for example), all of which revel in a self-parody of his public image.

The second significant development from *Aus dem Tagebuch* is the introduction of what Frank Brunssen has called a Freudian 'dream poetic', a narrative which manifests the transformations of 'dreamwork', to which it is subject.<sup>59</sup> This could be put another way: that Grass' narrative in *Der Butt* reconstructs the unconscious in Freudian terms, witnessing the 'work' of dreams ('dreamwork') and the formative processes leading to projection. As Freud argues in *Traumdeutung*, the psychic mechanisms of dreamwork, primarily condensation and displacement, transpose latent material into dream representations, where latent material may take the form of repressed feelings, anxieties or desires. *Der Butt's* narrative thus brings together two Freudian concepts in its reconstruction of the unconscious: projection and dreamwork. Both rely on the same essential rationale stemming from Freud's theory of the unconscious. Whereas Freud tended to see the relationship between unconscious material and conscious manifestation in terms of chains of association, whose connections required psychoanalytic reconstruction, Grass seems to conceive projection in *Der Butt* more in terms of his onion-layer metaphor. For the projections in *Der Butt* conceal several layers of potentially repressed material although Freud did talk of the unconscious in terms of geological layers.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Frank Brunssen (1997), 96–109 in particular. He coins this term in relation to *Die Rätin* but the technique informs the narratives of *Der Butt* as well as *örtlich betäubt* where, for example, Starusch's debate with his dentist is internal and the dental treatment provides linguistically-mediated examples of condensation and displacement.

<sup>60</sup> See Katherine Hall (2007), 26-29 for a discussion of Freud's recurrent use of the geological metaphor in the context of Lacan and remembrance.

The initial layer of material informing the narrator's projections stems from his patriarchal points of view. He claims that emancipation and independence are possible, even within a morally reprehensible ideological framework, as each of his cooks' stories tries to argue. Underlying those claims is a concern that one form of patriarchy will merely be replaced by another if the revolutionary and systematic change women demand succeeds. The eighth month's Vatertag episode most grotesquely illustrates that. Embedded within that concern over the persistence of patriarchy seems to be an anxiety that political change may be impossible: that any potential change will always be open to manipulation by economic and political interests, which appropriate change to maintain their dominance. This is expressed through the brutal, reactionary suppression of the Gdańsk shipyard workers' strike, which reprises the 14th century patricians' manipulation of the beer-workers' and coopers' strike (month 2). The two together provide a warning against the potential consequences of female challenge, such as Maria's in month 9, as well as an example of cyclical history, similar to that raised in *Aus dem Tagebuch*. Those three 'levels' of latent impulses are all articulated through narratorial projections. On the other hand, the authorial projections (visible, for example, through Dr Stachnik, month 2, and the contradictory accounts of Lena Stubbe's death in Stutthof concentration camp, month 7) question whether the author's wartime guilt and shame mask an involvement in that most grotesque product of patriarchy, National Socialism and its consequences in the Second World War. In *Der Butt*, however, the basis of the authorial projection extends beyond Grass' wartime guilt and shame to a recognition of the limitations of a patriarchal ideology he is immersed in and which prevents him from being able to conceive of a means of superseding it. It represents a fear that Grass, as a male author, does not have the capacity to envisage social and political change from a manifestly unjust patriarchal society.

In this chapter, I follow through this argument by exploring how narratorial and authorial projections combine with dreamwork to point to the psychological conditions that inform them. I initially consider the narrator's projections by focusing on a single section (the story of Amanda Woyke,

month 5) to demonstrate how the narrative is symptomatic of a series of embedded impulses before commenting on other parts of the novel. I then go on to consider how Grass uses authorial projection in *Der Butt* to suggest that a radical doubt about the possibility of social and political change underlies the wartime guilt and shame he cannot escape. Both narrator and author are arguably trapped in patriarchal perspectives.

### **Narratorial projection: recursion and cyclicity**

Amanda Woyke's story, at the centre of the fifth month, provides a good example of how the narrator's dizzying range of projections combines with a 'dream poetic' to suggest several interrelated levels of anxieties. Her story at first seems a simple one of female self-determination and political idealism: although her soup kitchens prevent revolution in Bavaria, her wider political aims can apparently only be completely fulfilled in heaven. It does not augur well, however, that her heavenly soup kitchens are fuelled by the 'fires of hell'. It is not, therefore, a surprise that several aspects of her story are called into question.

First of all, the flounder's conspicuously patriarchal claims of independent female emancipation are questioned by the female tribunal, which recognises Amanda Woyke to be subservient to Romford and a cluster of other male figures:

Was dem braven Frauchen zum heimeligen Küchenherd an naiver Erfindung gelingt – zum Beispiel: die westpreußische Kartoffelsuppe – , gerät dem Mann zur sozialpolitischen Großtat – zum Beispiel: die Romfordsche Armensuppe [...]. Mit anderen Worten: hier sollen die Bescheidenheit des erfinderischen Muttchens, der Glanz innerer Freiheit bei andauernder Leibeigenschaft, die dienende Unterordnung als Gleichberechtigung belobigt gefeiert verewigt werden.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 407

Romford's plans are gradually revealed to involve financing armaments production as well as exploiting the poor by using a diluted version of the soup recipe for his workhouses. Romeike (the initial version of her partner and father of her children before his metamorphosis into Thompson and then Romford) exploits labour with stringent methods of serfdom in order to mass-produce the

potatoes for her soup. And 'Olle Fritz' (der 'alte Fritz', Frederick the Great) facilitates increased potato production on the state farm where she works only to be exposed in 'heaven' as a militaristic reactionary responsible for the death of her children.<sup>61</sup> The idealism of ample production is however revealed to be controlled by unseen powers ('Herren am Tisch' who are 'woanders'), as 'Am Hungertuch nagen' puts it:

Als aber endlich genug war  
und Amanda Woyke mit Korb, Hacke und ihren Töchtern  
in die Kartoffeln ging, saßen woanders Herren am Tisch  
und sorgten sich um den fallenden Preis der Hirse.

Es ist die Nachfrage, sagt Professor Bürlimann,  
die immer alles am Ende regelt –  
und lächelte liberal.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 416–7

'Professor Bürlimann' smugly declares ('lächelte liberal') how supply and thus demand can be artificially regulated, providing another example of how vested interests superciliously control economic conditions. Amanda's story of political idealism is thus beginning to appear as the expression of political naivety (at least from the narrator's point of view).

Secondly, Amanda's story is questioned and contextualised by the section's opening. The flounder reminds audiences that all stories are shaped by their social and cultural conditions, citing Boccaccio's *Decameron*, whose stories were written in response to the Black Death. Although the flounder invokes scholarly references to support his argument, these remain undeveloped and the role of social and cultural conditions in shaping stories is merely asserted. The narrator goes on to draw attention to the psychological contexts of storytelling. His insistence on the psychological context of stories and their narrative style hints that his own stories are precisely that: psychologically constrained. Echoing the inconclusiveness of the flounder's claims, the narrator's lengthy discussion of the potential elision between a narrator's occupation and their style collapses into parody. Amanda Woyke's potato-peeling gives rise to a parodic demonstration of spacious and

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<sup>61</sup> Grass reworks the metaphor of restaging lost battles from *örtlich betäubt*.

elaborate stories; Margarete Rusch's feather-light and funny stories supposedly derive from her feather-plucking; and Mestwina's staccato narratives result from her pounding of acorns. The detail may give rise to parody but what the narrator indirectly points towards is that stories – like his own internally projected stories – reflect psychological factors and need to be understood in that context.

Grass and his narrator add a similarly ironic commentary on audience expectations of stories, which hover between a demand for 'truth' and a disbelief of anything claiming to be true:

Über das Erzählen von Geschichten ist viel geschrieben worden. Die Leute wollen die Wahrheit hören. Kommt aber Wahrheit vor, sagen sie: 'Ist ja doch nur alles erfunden.'  
– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 368

All this provides the context in which we, as readers, respond to Amanda Woyke's story (and to all the stories of the novel). Storytelling necessarily reflects the psychology of its narrator, whether Grass or his male-oriented narrator. That psychological orientation similarly reflects social and cultural factors. All narratives can therefore only represent 'versions' of the 'truth' as they will always be retold and reinterpreted. Amanda recognises this, echoing that major leitmotif of the novel with a long potato-peel of a sentence. These are its opening and closing clauses:

Denn Amanda wußte, daß die Geschichten nicht enden können, [...] daß jede Geschichte erzählt werden will, solange Kartoffeln genug im Korb sind.  
– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 369

The narrator, too, underlines the provisionality of narratives, stressing they are always subject to the revision of the 'as yet unformulated next version' (as will be demonstrated in the following month when the narrator recounts the circumstances surrounding which version of the Grimm fairy tale 'Von dem Fischer un syner Fru' was printed):

(Jenes Märchen aber, das der Butt über ein altes Weib [...] lieferte, war als letzte Fassung druckfertig und eindeutig gemacht worden, während das ungedruckte Erzählen immer die nächste, die ganz anders verlaufende, die allerneueste Geschichte meint.)  
– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 373

Amanda's simple projected story is thus becoming anything but. It is not quite the demonstration of feminist emancipation it superficially aims to be and its political idealism is exposed as

questionable. Readers are alerted to consider the role of social, cultural and psychological factors in its production.

Reference to the role psychological factors play serves as a reminder that Amanda's story takes place inside the narrator's mind: his projected story reflects his own psychological perspectives – notably, his patriarchal attitudes which are a product of his social and cultural environment. But it also points to the psychological significance of the concerns that Ilsebill prompts. She makes a reckless leap over a ditch, which becomes blended with the narrator's socialist conference in Bièvres, where 'die Zukunft des Sozialismus Punkt für Punkt' was discussed (*Der Butt*, [6] 5: 417):

[...] an einem klaren sonnigen Tag [...] sprang meine Ilsebill, obgleich ich rief: 'Bitte, spring nicht! Nein! Spring nicht!', über einen der vielen Gräben, Wetter genannt, die das Weideland [...] entwässern.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 417

The connection with his political thoughts is immediately made apparent:

Später stellte sich die Schuldfrage: Ich soll den Sprung ausgelöst haben durch mein tickhaftes Beharren auf langsamen, schrittweisen, bewußt verzögernden Veränderungen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 417

His compulsive insistence on incremental change is seen to be in conflict with Ilsebill's demand for more rapid social and political progress, notably through feminism. He is in the middle of expounding how the Prague Spring was precipitously introduced when Ilsebill interrupts:

'Du mit deiner Schneckenphilosophie. So kommt doch nie Fortschritt zustande, wenn man immer nur kriechen darf. Denk mal an Mao und China. Die haben den großen Sprung gewagt. Die sind uns voraus. Die sind über den Bach.'

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 418

The conflict the narrator internally dramatises thus represents a conflict between his rational desire for gradual progress and his recognition of the need for change. His projection of Amanda Woyke and her naïve political idealism to solve the world's hunger (reflecting China's contemporary policies) registers his scepticism. Overall, the story seems informed by his doubts over how social and political change can be put into practice.

These psychological relations reflect condensation and displacement. The Amanda Woyke story represents a condensed version of details displaced from several contexts. Her cultivation of potatoes, support of the poor, derives from China's aims of 'Weltverköstigung'. Amanda's pragmatic action links with the spontaneous action of Ilsebill and her foolhardy leap (in her fifth month of pregnancy). And her 'Sprung' is linguistically wrested from China's 'großen Sprung'. The threats to the success of such political idealism – Romford, 'Olle Fritz', those 'Herren' who control economic supply and demand – are culled from the narrator's own suspicions that such thinking is threateningly reactionary. Patriarchal elements in society will always find a way of reasserting themselves. He fears – as becomes apparent in months 8 and 9 – that a precipitous feminist, revolutionary change will either replicate patriarchy or induce political reaction intent on maintaining its power.

The focus of the narrator's scepticism over revolutionary change – the identification of Ilsebill's leap with the Chinese great leap forward – is displaced onto Amanda Woyke's naïve political idealism. The image of Ilsebill's leap reappears four times in this section, suggesting the significance it holds. It resembles Freud's 'overdetermined' symptom, whereby latent material constantly reasserts itself in order to attain expression in a dream. Freud later described this as the compulsion to repeat ('Wiederholungszwang').<sup>62</sup> It is also a small example of recursion, which will be reflected in the overall narrative, where months 2–7 replicate the same basic structure.

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<sup>62</sup> For 'Überdeterminierung' or, more frequently, 'mehrfache Determinierung', see Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 301, 312. A similar 'Wiederholungszwang' emerges with the formulation 'Über das Erzählen von Geschichten ist viel geschrieben worden', which is repeated twice and reappears as 'Gegen den Hunger ist viel geschrieben worden' in the poem 'Am Hungertuch nagen' (*Der Butt*, [6] 5: 368, 416). See Freud, 'Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten' (1914), *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), where the concept is expressed in arguably more mechanistic terms and in 'Angst und Triebleben' in *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (1932) where the compulsion to repeat rests on more biogenetic assumptions. See Frank J Sulloway (1979) for discussion of this shift towards a more 'biogenetic' trend in Freud.



One of the (four) repetitions of Ilsebill's leap emphasises its identification with Amanda Woyke and the narrator's distrust of political idealism. Before attempting to grasp the significance of her fall, he wants to celebrate the 'high point' of the leap:

Doch bevor ich mich mit Ilsebills Sturz befasse, möchte ich sie einen gedehnten Augenblick lang auf dem Höhepunkt ihres Sprungs feiern. [...] Ich hätte sie als eine springende Melencolia (frei nach Dürer) in Kupfer stechen mögen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 423–4

The narrator's appeal to Dürer's *Melencolia I*, a central image of *Aus dem Tagebuch*, evokes an anxiety over the transition from an outmoded social and political system to a more progressive one. In *Der Butt*, an outmoded, morally tainted patriarchy is potentially poised to usher in a more progressive feminised system.<sup>63</sup> The narrator confirms that seeing Ilsebill's leap brought up images of Aua, Dorothea, Amanda Woyke and Lena Stubbe, suggesting that each of those figures represented women arguing for social and cultural change. But the aesthetic beauty of this suspended image, interwoven with references to the Bièvres socialist conference (e.g., *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 424, 426), suggests that the narrator favours a gradual striving for change rather than a leap into it. And to seal the identification of Ilsebill's leap with an unrealistic political idealism, where plans for change are not fully developed, the narrator adds the detail of a similar jump Amanda Woyke made:

‘Das hätte schlimmer kommen können, Liebste. Als Amanda mit ihrer jüngsten Tochter, dem Annchen, schwanger ging, [...] stürzte sie beim Pilzesuchen, als sie über einen Waldbach sprang, [...] was zur Frühgeburt führte.’

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 426

The premature birth of Annchen elicits reference to the failed, because not adequately prepared-for, Prague Spring, which he claims also occurred too early. His conference proposes – or more precisely, with typical Grassian irony, ‘gives birth to’ – a resolution that the continual struggle for democratic socialism, for a ‘Prague Spring’, should never cease:

Abseits wird eine Resolution geboren. [...] Es geht um den Prager Frühling: Er will nicht aufhören.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 5: 426

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<sup>63</sup> See previous chapter.

Amanda's story, therefore, gradually reveals its psychological significance for the narrator. Her emancipation and self-determination are illusory as she is exploited by a range of patriarchal figures (Romeike/Thompson/Romford, 'Olle Fritz' and the 'Herren' controlling supply and demand). She additionally displays a political idealism which is identified with Ilsebill's plea for immediate revolutionary action. Both are represented negatively beside the narrator's desire for more gradual, democratic change. Her story consequently represents a condensed and displaced version of the narrator's political uncertainties – an uncertainty over how to progress from a patriarchal society.

The narrator's defensive stories of female emancipation and self-determination, judged by the female tribunal to be illusory, masks uncertainty about social and political progress. Essentially, each of narratives in months 2–7 replicate those ingredients, forming a cyclical series that is framed by the matriarchal society of Aua in the first month and the projection of female subversion in months 8 and 9. The narrator's naïve projection of stories suggesting female emancipation and self-determination is therefore fundamentally questioned by the trial structure. The trial demonstrates contradictions the narrator is aware of: the flounder's arguments seem to represent an ideological version of the patriarchy he and his historical constructs have been subject to. He projects an interrogation of the contradictions of his patriarchal ideology. It is perhaps not surprising that the novel demonstrates how, at each historical juncture, the same circumstances arise. It also however shows how his attempts to develop the argument (a kind of gestation) are limited by his own patriarchal thinking. Before considering what limits his male thinking, I will briefly highlight how stories and trial effectively restate the same arguments.

The first month establishes the framework for this self-imposed trial. The feminist argument that society is patriarchal in structure and that women are systematically oppressed initially takes the form of querying the reasons behind the suppression of one version of the Grimm fairy tale 'Von

dem Fischer un syne Fru'. Feminist accusation requires the flounder to explain why he allowed the misogynist version of the fairy tale to be promulgated at the expense of a more female-oriented version:

'Warum, angeklagter Butt, haben Sie das dem Volksmund ausgelieferte Märchen so frauenfeindlich in Tendenz gebracht? Warum haben Sie zugelassen, daß die Verunglimpfung der Frau Ilsebill den Protagandisten des Patriarchats immer wieder zum Triumph verhalf? Man muß ja nur den diffamierenden Kehrreim zitieren. Seitdem kennen wir bis zum Überdruß das Klischee von der ewig unzufriedenen Frau, die immer neue Wünsche hat. Die Konsumhyäne. Ihr Schrei nach dem Pelzmantel. Ihr einziger Herzenswunsch: die angeblich geräuschlose Geschirrspülmaschine.'

– *Der Butt*, [6] 1: 57–8

The patriarchal version of the tale is thus responsible for ensuring that women are stereotyped as rapaciously consumerist. The cliché of the devouring consumer collapses into the wily bathetic (but nevertheless patriarchal) humour of dishwasher desire. The flounder's response attempts to contextualise, and thus defend, the patriarchal, claiming that 'der historisch bedingte Machtverlust der Frauen wird allgemein überschätzt':

Zugegeben: Auf meinen Rat hin löste der unterdrückte Mann die vieltausendjährige Phase geschichtsloser Frauenherrschaft ab, indem er sich gegen die Zwänge der Natur stellte, Ordnungsprinzipien entwarf, das chaotische, weil inzestuöse Mutterrecht durch die verantwortliche Disziplin des Vaterrechts ersetzte, der apollinischen Vernunft Geltung verschaffte, utopisch zu denken und praktisch Geschichte zu machen begann. Oft zu herrschaftsbetont, wie ich gestehen muß.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 1: 60

The flounder continues by claiming that he too 'in principle' argues for the equality of the sexes:

Und immer wieder gegen meinen ausgleichenden Rat. Denn im Prinzip plädiere ich für die Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 1: 60

Although the flounder claims that he *in principle* supports equality of the sexes, his solution is to offer his own support to the 'women's cause', just as he had previously done for men. Hence his proposal in the ninth month to support women and his long discussion with Maria prior to her passing the narrator by on the novel's last page. Indeed, his glib, excessively pedantic and near-preposterous rhetoric suggest that change is less about radical change than finding a new role for

patriarchy in society. The discussions Maria has with the flounder are fraught with ambiguity if not foreboding.

With each cook's story, the flounder develops his ever-more elaborate (and grotesquely humorous) claims of female emancipation whilst the female tribunal resolutely demonstrates the subjugation underlying it. The structure of each story, as already noted, remains the same, each version of the projection restating the same basic conflict between the power of patriarchy and the potential of women to overcome it. The tribunal argues that Dorothea von Montau's adoption of religious mysticism and self-imposed immurement, for example, dress up subjugation as spiritual liberation. Similarly, "Dicke Gret's" humour and sexuality represent no more than prostitution masquerading as liberation. The tribunal notes how Agnes, Amanda and Sophie all succumb to the power of different forms of love, whose emotional power masks its subjugatory nature. Indeed, the flounder himself draws attention to the subjugatory power of love in his painfully ironic 'Theorie von der Liebe als Mittel, die Frauenherrschaft abzulösen' (*Der Butt*, [6] 4: 332):

'Nur wenn es gelingt, den Frauen die Liebe als erlösende Macht und die Gewißheit, geliebt zu werden, als Höchstes Glück zu suggerieren, [...] dann endlich wird die Mutterherrschaft gebrochen sein, wird das Phallussymbol siegen und alle Vulvaidole entwerten [...].'

– *Der Butt*, [6] 4: 333

Love's all-consuming emotional demands, he claims, become a compensation for lost power:

Und dann entwickelte der Butt seine Theorie von der Liebe als Mittel, die Frauenherrschaft abzulösen[.] [...] [Die Liebe] werde ein dauerndes Ungenügen säugen und doch nicht sättigen können. [...] Sie werde, als Ersatz für verlorene Macht, den Frauen zum gefräßigen Daueranspruch mißraten. Jeder Ilsebill längliche Klage werde sie sein.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 4: 332

Women are ideologically deceived: love (or any form of emancipation they experience through it) merely represents an attenuated form of patriarchy.<sup>64</sup> So Agnes Kurbiella's self-effacing love reduces her to slavery in serving poet and artist, Martin Opitz and Anton Möller. Sophie Rotzoll's

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<sup>64</sup> As it is put in month 2, 'die Institution Liebe' serves as 'männliches Unterdrückungswerkzeug', *Der Butt* [6] 2: 173.

revolutionary pose stridently clambering over the barricades, borrowed from Delacroix, makes her nothing more than a 'poster girl' ('ein mehrfarbiges Poster'):

Drauf sah man Sophie in hafenstädtischer Marktmädchentracht auf einer Barrikade stehen und den Butt linkshändig bei der Schwanzflosse fassen, während sie rechts ein Küchenmesser im Griff hatte. [...] Und vor der Barrikade entwurzelte Pilze, eindeutig anspielend, als habe ein entmannendes Massaker stattgefunden.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 6: 505<sup>65</sup>

And Lena Stubbe absorbs the appalling violence inflicted on her, recognising that it results from the powerlessness of men. Her culinary support for the proletariat embodies a sublimation of that recognition through her secret soup ingredient – the 'Nagel und Strick', remnants of her husband's failed attempt to hang himself.

All these stories reiterate the same debate (the power of patriarchy and possibilities of emancipation from it) and, within that debate, question the conception of love patriarchy engenders. The persistence of patriarchy imposes a stark choice for women: subjugation or *apparent* emancipation but no genuine subversion of patriarchy. Patriarchy effectively harnesses love in order to assert male dominance and a compliant female subjugation. All this raises questions over the psychological significance of the trial itself. For psychologically the conflict the trial enacts represents more than a self-interrogation of the narrator's patriarchy: it reveals that he is trapped inside an apparently irresolvable binary opposition and raises the question as to whether a male narrator can ever be in a position to supersede the binary terms of his own conception of gender.

The limitations of the binary distinction between male and female are made clear in the sixth month, albeit in a highly ironised and parodic version. It is a conception of gender difference the narrator (as distinct from Grass) bases on biological sex difference. Julian Preece has discussed this point in

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<sup>65</sup> Colmar-born Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi transformed the image into the Statue of Liberty, providing Grass, I assume, with a name for Sophie's revolutionary idol, Friedrich Bartholdy.

his article on the sexual politics of *Der Butt*.<sup>66</sup> He emphasises that the novel knowingly depicts, through the overtly male-oriented narrator, 'male myths about women'. Preece lists the series of binary oppositions the narrator appeals to in his heavily parodied deliberations ('Nur Töchter', *Der Butt* [6] 6: 500 ff.):

Women, for instance, represent nature, men culture; women produce naturally by giving birth, men create artificial things (like novels); the whole of Western progress and civilisation, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Strasbourg Cathedral, or the voyage to the moon, is a compensation for this biological inability to reproduce; in the beginning was 'matriarchalische Totalfürsorge', from which men liberated themselves [...]; women control the kitchen and the bedroom, where they are superior to their male partners, whereas the public realm is the exclusive territory of men.

– Preece (1995), 960

Indeed, the premise of *Der Butt* is exactly that: the narrator's creative abilities are his sole means of compensating for his biological inability to match Ilsebill's biological potential to bear and give birth to a child. This version of the manifestations and consequences of biological sex difference is, however, the narrator's and represents his patriarchal perspectives. Julian Preece summarises the point:

The author, though perhaps not the narrator, knows that these binary oppositions are male creations too: the edifices of Western thought are built upon masculine foundations.

– Preece (1995), 960

The heavy ironies of the flounder's comparison of women and men in terms of biological sex difference ('das alte Lied') and the female tribunal's verdict betray both the narrator's (and behind that, Grass') awareness of the fundamentally 'misconceived' and reactionary arguments underlying this issue:

'Das alte Lied, meine Damen! Frauen empfangen, tragen aus, gebären, geben die Brust, ziehe auf, sehe eins von sechs Kindern wegsterben [...]. Wie dürftig sind dagegen die Männer ausgestattet. Was sie empfangen, sind absurde Befehle. Was sie austragen, bleibt Spekulation. Ihre Ausgeburten heißen: das Straßburger Münster, der Dieselmotor, die Relativitätstheorie, Knorrs Suppenwürfel, die Gasmasken, der Schlieffenplan.'

[...]

Als der Butt das und noch Schlimmeres gesagt hatte [...], verließ er sein Sandbett [...] während die Besitzerinnen des feministischen Tribunals seine grundsätzliche Unterscheidung der Geschlechter als 'ausschließlich biologisch' und 'stockkonservativ' zensierten.

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<sup>66</sup> Julian Preece (1995).

But they also reflect the binary structure of the narrator's internalised projection. In articulating a reactionary argument via his projection of the flounder, the narrator is betraying his sense of the limitations of his own patriarchal thinking. The narrator can only conceive of change in patriarchal terms – a risk of women supplanting men with a different form of patriarchy or the vested interests of patriarchal power reasserting themselves. Grass' representation of the argument here reflects the contemporary feminist debate over the questionable biological basis for political, social and cultural manifestations of gender difference (the second wave of feminism). Eva Figes, arguably one of the central figures of that second wave, addressed that debate in her 1970 work, *Patriarchal Attitudes*, arguing for the role of social and cultural 'nurture' over biologically-based 'nature' in the formation of gender differences.<sup>67</sup>

Sieglinde Huntscha, presiding judge in the ninth month, is damning in her judgments of the flounder, calling him murderous and destructive, in effect the embodiment of patriarchy:

'Geist der Gewalt. Vater des Krieges. Urheber aller Kriege.' Sie rief: 'Wir kennen Sie. Sie sind das zerstörende, dem Leben feindliche, das mörderische, männliche, das kriegerische Prinzip!

– *Der Butt*, [6] 9: 660

The flounder acquiesces in the judgment reached of him and launches into a final disquisition, which ranges from the hope that wars might induce a fundamental change ('das gründliche Umdenken [...] die große Besinnung'), to the death instinct men appear to harbour (the continuation of sex by other means, thoughts courtesy of Nietzsche and Freud) to a questioning of whether conflict can be resolved other than by male ways of thinking ('außerhalb männlicher Denkkategorien'). Like Sieglinde Huntscha, the flounder is graphic in his account of the consequences of patriarchy:

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<sup>67</sup> Grass knew Eva Figes, who became a life-long friend. Her novel, *The Seven Ages: A Novel* (1986b) could be read as a feminist, even dialectical response to *Der Butt*. Her epigraph described the novel as 'from Sophie Rotzoll'. Contemporary psychological research was confirming the distinction between biological sex difference and socially and culturally mediated gender difference. See, for example, Eleanor E Maccoby, ed (1966) and Ann Oakley (1972).

Was treibt die Menschen dazu, sich gegenseitig zu vernichten? Welche Vernunft waltet, wenn ein Gutteil Lohn des Arbeiterfleißes in immer perfektere Vernichtungstechnologien investiert wird?

[...]

Das war mein Wille: Männer machen Geschichte. Männer lösen Konflikte. Männer stehen oder fallen, und zwar bis zum letzten Mann.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 9: 661–2

It appears as if the flounder is about to offer a solution to a post-patriarchal society: the climax to his proposal to break the vicious cycle of war and peace, however, merely replicates an idealisation of woman as mother (the echo of Billy's epiphany whilst being raped by her friends). He concedes that society from now on will bear a female imprint:

Das Feminal [...] sollte [...] begreifen, daß fortan den Frauen Macht zufallen wird. [...] Die Geschichte will weiblich geprägt werden. Zeitenwende! Schon fällt der Mann verdrossen aus seiner Rolle. Schon will er nicht mehr wollen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 9: 664

However, replete with an ingratiating tentativeness, he offers himself as adviser to the feminine cause, creating the suspicion that a justifiable female dominance in society will take a patriarchal form:

Fast fürchte ich, den Frauen fehlt Rat, nachhaltiger, fortwährender, ja, überirdischer Rat. Doch wie sollte ich, das verkörpert schuldhalfte, das männliche und – nachgewiesen – kriegerische Prinzip, geeignet sein, die Sache der Frauen, fortan nur noch die Frauensache zu beraten?

Ich will. Ich könnte. Schon wüßte ich wie. Das Feminal möge urteilen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 9: 666

The 'Vatertag' episode and the 'Feminal' section from this ninth month project the narrator's fear that any social change resulting in female supremacy will not only replicate patriarchal ways of thinking and behaviour but will also be prone to manipulation and appropriation by dominant (and patriarchal) power structures. In other words, the economic and political structure, which sustains the prevalence of patriarchal social and cultural ideologies, will also sustain any attempt to create a female-empowered society. This confirms again that the narrator, necessarily immersed in patriarchal ideologies, cannot envisage any change outside a patriarchal, ideological framework.



The picture that emerges from the narratorial projections is that they are informed by a set of interrelated concerns: concern over how to subvert and transcend patriarchy, whether by gradual reform or revolution; how to conceive possibilities for change outside a patriarchal framework; and how any change is threatened by the power of vested economic and political interests. The concerns look familiar: the debate over how social and political change can be achieved, an apparent pleading for gradual change, and a fear of the power of dominant reactionary interests all emerged in *Aus dem Tagebuch*. The factors underlying the authorial aspects of the projection also demonstrate continuity with the earlier novel, even though these elements are more difficult to establish in *Der Butt*.

### **Authorial projection: guilt, shame and the limitations of patriarchal ideology**

Identifying authorial projection in *Der Butt* is problematic. Explicit references to National Socialism and the second world war surface only in minor, apparently incidental detail. Precisely what that incidental detail manifests is rendered uncertain by various narrative ploys: the ambiguous status of the narrator, parody, puzzling detail and two competing versions of a single event all contribute to indeterminacy. Uncovering the significance of the projections resembles the difficulties psychoanalytic subjects experience (which is itself parodied in month 6 and discussed below). For they develop symptoms without being able consciously to articulate their root causes.

However, rather like the links between wartime guilt and shame and the compulsion to write in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, authorial projection in *Der Butt* seems to extend beyond Grass' wartime guilt and shame. It also encompasses the limitations of a patriarchal ideology Grass initially expresses via the narrator and which I have discussed in that context. For like the narrator, Grass implies that he cannot conceive of any means of superseding patriarchy, which he appears inextricably immersed in, even if not in quite the form he parodies through his overtly male-oriented narrator. This sense of the limiting and unavoidable patriarchal perspectives appears to emanate primarily from Grass' fear

that his wartime guilt and shame mark him out as patriarchal and continue to do so. However, it is tempting to agree with Stuart Taberner's reading of what he describes as a "'private" private' sense of shame. He considers Grass' relatively free sexuality and the corresponding subservience of his four partners and children to his creative work as an equally powerful source of shame.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the parodied male-orientation of his overtly constructed male narrator might mask some, perhaps more diluted, but still patriarchal tendencies in his sexuality and his behaviour towards his family. Whereas the case is more easily made in relation to *Die Box*, with *Der Butt* it remains ambiguous and irresolvable. However engrained and unconscious, the patriarchal ideology that characterises 'his' views precludes him from seeing the possibility of social and political change outside that patriarchal framework.

Motifs of guilt and shame ripple through the novel: the reference to the shame of the buggery and the flounder's recommendation to conceal it 'in print' – in plain sight, as it were – in the first month suggests authorial displacement of wartime guilt and shame; similarly, the counterbalancing of ineffectual partners with the creative, if suspect, Lud figures (highlighted particularly in month 9) point to the tendency of the written word to be (politically) marginalised.<sup>69</sup> The written word appears insufficiently tangible, unlike the plastic, sculptural arts (Grass' other creative career of course, which doubtless adds a further irony). The underlying point, however, is that all aesthetic and cultural activity is potentially open to marginalisation. Nevertheless, three details stand out: firstly, there is the puzzling significance of the flounder's refusal to take full responsibility for Hitler

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<sup>68</sup> See Stuart Taberner (2009), 506, where he talks in terms of Grass 'instrumentalising his own historical failings' that give rise to 'an arguably more "private" shame concerning ambition, lust and familial neglect'. Taberner develops this reading (507–17) in response to *Die Box* (2008), applying Karen Leeder's suggestion of 'lateness' in Grass to some form of 'late' self-revelation, and Eric Santner's and DW Winnicott's concept of the 'transitional' object, which he applies to the box camera and what it reveals.

<sup>69</sup> See *Der Butt*, [6] 1: 121 and 9: 631–635. A sense of the active, physically creative, oppositional nature of the Lud figures is suggested by the following: 'Wogegen war Lud? Gegen das Schnörkel- und Filigranwesen, gegen die feistfarbenen Stifteraltäre, gegen Plunder und Pomp, gegen jegliches Bildnis, gegen das Wort, gegen sich selbst. [...] So war Lud: gewalttätig. Hauen und Stechen. Urlaute im Gebrüll. In jedem kleinen Nazi mußte er den Teufel besiegen', *Der Butt*, [6] 9: 633.

and Stalin, which closes the seventh month. Then there is Ilsebill and Griselde Dubertin's highly parodic dissection of the narrator in month 6, which includes reference to the war (as well as to the narrator's Oedipus complex). And finally, there are two references to Danzig's Stutthof concentration camp: Doctor Stachnik in month 2, and Lena Stubbe in month 7, where alternative versions of her death in the camp are provided. I consider each of these sets of detail.

The significance of the flounder's refusal to take any responsibility for the Second World War and its aftermath, or for Hitler and Stalin, is not immediately apparent. The close of the seventh month sees the flounder denying all responsibility for Hitler and Stalin. He also does not want to hear the narrator read out his particularly brutal 'Vatertag' chapter. The narrator recounts:

Als ich ihm das nächste Kapitel, den Fall meiner armen Sibylle, vortragen wollte, unterbrach er mich: 'Jetzt ist genug gestorben!' Dann begann er Phrasen wie 'Kassensturz' und 'Stunde der Wahrheit' zu dreschen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 7: 572

It appears as if the flounder is hinting that the narrator needs to settle his own debts and confront the truth about his past. The flounder resolutely rejects responsibility for 'this Hitler and Stalin' claiming '[his] book is closed', '[his] history is over':

'Ihr könnt mir Alexander und Cäsar, die Hohenstaufen und Deutschherren, auch noch Napoleon und den zweiten Wilhelm anlasten, aber nicht diesen Hitler and diesen Stalin. Die liegen außer meiner Verantwortung. Was danach kam, kam ohne mich. Diese Gegenwart ist nicht meine. Mein Buch ist geschlossen, meine Geschichte ist aus.'

Da rief ich: 'Nein Butt! Nein! Das Buch geht weiter und die Geschichte auch.'

– *Der Butt*, [6] 7: 572

'Banding about phrases' such as 'Kassensturz' and 'Stunde der Wahrheit' strongly suggests authorial relevance. Grass appears to dramatise a need to confront the truth he has concealed, the details of his individual wartime guilt.

In projecting these details, Grass seems to be questioning how far patriarchy can fully account for the brutal totalitarianism of German National Socialism under Hitler and Soviet communism under Stalin. Representing the flounder as refusing to accept responsibility, Grass registers doubt over

whether the atrocities committed by both regimes were solely patriarchal in nature. However, that view is challenged by the narrator's retort. 'The book', a self-referential allusion to *Der Butt* as well as to Grass' need to confront the development of wartime and postwar history, has to continue. Interestingly, Grass phrases that not as 'Dein Buch', implying that the book's narratives represent the patriarchy of the flounder, but 'Das Buch', implying that Grass' own role as constructed narrator and author is fully implicated in contemporary history, which includes his involvement in "Hitler's" war. Grass seems to be suggesting that he has to be responsible for his role in history during and after the war – that he is undeniably part of a patriarchal social process.

The fact that the novel does continue right to the 1970s present emphasises that both author and narrator recognise the persistence of patriarchy even within attempts to challenge it: women's independence ends up replicating patriarchal behaviour as women cannot avoid assimilating it; and attempts to challenge communist socialism through the Gdańsk shipyard workers' strike result in patriarchal suppression aimed at furthering Soviet economic and political interests. This makes another authorial concern apparent – one raised in *Aus dem Tagebuch* (and which will re-emerge in *Die Rättin*): the power of vested interests that militate against all forms of social and political change. Here Grass suggests that this power has to be recognised as fundamentally patriarchal. The overall significance of this moment – of the flounder's refusal to accept responsibility for totalitarian National Socialism and communism – is that both author and narrator recognise there has to be a joint responsibility for more recent examples of patriarchal history. Grass' own wartime guilt and shame are integral to it. Grass recognises that there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals (such as Grass) and the ideologies they assimilate (the patriarchy embodied by the flounder). It seems a further concession that the author and, more parodically, the narrator are necessarily imbued with patriarchal ideologies.

These connections are hardly overstated. A similarly ironised but perceptible link between wartime guilt and shame, cathartic and politically challenging writing and political scepticism emerges in Ilsebill and Griselde Dubertin's discussion of the narrator in month 6. Parody dominates their discussion, making those relationships between shame, writing and scepticism more tentative. Despite the narrator's decrying any psychoanalytic treatment, Ilsebill and Griselde do not hold back from seeing him as a clear embodiment of an Oedipal complex.<sup>70</sup> Ilsebill suspects, in parodic and condescendingly pitying tones, that much of his behaviour must bear the traces of his wartime experiences and thus ironically raises the issues of wartime guilt and subsequent shame. The joke about being talked about in his absence assumes psychoanalytic, Lacan-like overtones. He becomes the absent presence, the 'gap' in the narrative which registers a significant absence:

Wo ich saß, war offenbar nichts oder ein Loch oder nur beispielhaft etwas, das zwar meinen Namen trug, aber als exemplarischer Fall mal schonend und nachsichtig – 'Die Kriegsjahre müssen ihn so verroht haben' – mal mit Schärfe – 'Eigentlich sollte man ihn entmündigen!' – während eineinhalb Stunden verhandelt wurde.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 6: 488

But this discussion is of course a projection. What Ilsebill and Griselde comment on reflects authorial concerns: that wartime guilt and shame – and the anxieties over failing to question and challenge that they mask – had an undeniably 'brutalising effect on him' ('ihn verroht'). He is similarly relating his wartime guilt and shame to his compulsion to write – a highly indirect means of catharsis as well as political challenge (as the example of Zweifel also demonstrated). Ilsebill diagnoses his 'ironic' and 'cock-eyed' writing parodically:

Es wurde mir Begabung als Geburtsfehler (und mildernder Umstand) betstätigt: 'Dafür kann er nix. Dabei kommt ja was raus bei ihm. Wenn auch ironisch und um drei Ecken nur.'

– *Der Butt*, [6] 6: 490

The extreme scepticism which marks *Aus dem Tagebuch* re-emerges at this point in the form of Ilsebill's and Griselde's comments on 'his' political failings, which he parodies further in his fluctuations between first and third person:

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Kniesche's Freudian analysis of *Die Rättin*, much of which I find persuasive and thought-provoking, claims that the novel is rooted in a broadly-conceived Oedipus complex in Grass. See Kniesche (1991), 183–204.

Was mir (ihm) trotz bester Absicht alles danebengegangen sei. Und zwar folgerichtig, weil ich (er) mich (sich) nicht eindeutig entscheiden könne: immer einerseits andererseits. Meine (seine) absurde Ideologiefindlichkeit sei ja bereits schon wieder meine (seine) Ideologie.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 6: 490

This seems to me not simply Grass' witty self-parody. It resonates with a central concern of the novel: that Grass cannot see a way of progressing from a demonstrably patriarchal society to a post-patriarchal, more female-oriented society without recourse to patriarchy or a response from patriarchal political and economic powers. Again, as with the example of the flounder's refusal to accept responsibility for Hitler and Stalin, a parodic and circumspect projection of this concern through Ilsebill and Griselde makes the relationship between wartime experience, his ironic and indirect writing and his hostility to all ideology (tantamount to an ideology itself) highly uncertain.

The third set of details involves a superficially more transparent example of authorial projection. It entails a fictionalised letter to Grass' former Latin teacher Doctor Stachnik in month 2 but it is also clouded in uncertainty as wartime guilt and shame metamorphose into doubts about the significance of projection itself. It provides a good example of how involuted and indeterminate Grass' projections become, making it (deliberately) difficult for readers to establish whether wartime guilt and shame lie at the root of both authorial and narratorial projections. The narrator's account of Dorothea's story, the only one to be based on a historical figure, appears initially to conform to the standard pattern of each month (supposed emancipation exposed as subjugation). However, the introduction of Doctor Stachnik, a former teacher, at the end of the month, reveals just how Grass confounds expectations, raising doubts about the underlying rationale of 'imaginative powers' – both Stachnik's historical reconstructions and the author's fictional projections.

The letter the narrator addresses to 'Doktor Stachnik' starts respectfully (it adopts a formal register, addressing the Doctor as 'Sie' and punctuating the communication with references to 'verehrter

Herr Doktor Stachnik'). The reference to Grass' former Latin teacher carries an authorial significance, as *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* makes clear:

Als aber ein Lateinlehrer, der [...] nicht mehr Vokabeln streng abfragte, weg, plötzlich verschwunden war, habe ich wieder einmal keine Fragen gestellt, wengleich, kaum war er weg, der Ortsname Stutthof abschreckend in aller Munde war.

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 243

Stachnik was yet another figure about whose disappearance to Stutthof the adolescent Grass failed to ask questions. As it is put in *Der Butt*, Nazi persecution followed Stachnik into the schoolroom:

Als Sie (mit wenig Erfolg) mein Lateinlehrer waren und ich ein dummer Hitlerjunge, waren Sie schon auf Dorothea von Montau und das vierzehnte Jahrhundert spezialisiert [...]. Als mittlerweile schweigender Gegner des Nationalsozialismus mußten Sie vorsichtig sein. Und doch hat man Sie bis in den Schulmief hinein verfolgt; was unseren blöden Pennälerwitz kaum gejuckt hat.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 2: 206

Grass here uses his much-repeated graphic metaphor of moral depravity, 'Mief', to characterise the unthinking naivety of the students with its potentially appalling consequences. Indeed, in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, Grass comments with ironic disingenuity ('[mein Schweigen] muß mich [...] ausreichend belastet haben') that his naïve failure to have asked questions 'must have' sufficiently disturbed him as he incorporated a reference to him in his 'aus Prinzip rückbezüglichen Roman *Der Butt*':

Dennoch muß mich mein Schweigen ausreichend belastet haben, sonst wäre ich kaum genötigt gewesen, jenem Lateinlehrer [...], dem unermüdlichen Fürsprecher der seligen Dorothea von Montau, in meinem aus Prinzip rückbezüglichen Roman 'Der Butt' ein unüberlesbares Denkmal zu setzen.

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 244

Stachnik's appearance in *Der Butt*, therefore, carries the authorial significance of Grass' persistent wartime guilt and shame, an 'unverjährte Schuld' (*Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 246).<sup>71</sup>

However, the letter in *Der Butt* does not restrict itself to a fictional apology, a fictional articulation of this guilt and shame. Grass takes the opportunity to discuss Stachnik's and his own comparable

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<sup>71</sup> As he notes in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 246, guilt motivated him to attempt to apologise to Dr Stachnik in person when he visited him in the late 1970s.

appeal to the 'imaginary' – for Stachnik, his historical research and attempt to canonise Dorothea (achieved in 1976, as noted in this section), and for Grass, his propensity to project:

Eher verlasse ich mich – der ich wie Sie, verehrter Herr Stachnik, stark im Imaginären bin – auf meine persönlichen Erinnerungen und leidvollen Erfahrungen mit Dorothea [...].

– *Der Butt*, [6] 2: 207

Grass moves away from the projection of his guilt and shame through Stachnik to develop his point about their mutual imaginative powers ('stark im Imaginären'). Grass sees that both their imaginative powers betray patriarchal perspectives: Stachnik idealises and beatifies Dorothea; Schlichting – the current product of Grass' projections of the cooks' partners – maltreats and denigrates her ('das fromme Miststück' and 'ihr hexisch[er] Freiheitsbegriff' which he hated, *Der Butt*, [6] 2: 208, 209). They represent saint and sinner, the stereotypically patriarchal myth of women. But Grass' projection, via Schlichting, goes further: he represents her as rejecting one form of patriarchy (the institution of marriage) for another as she consorts with the flounder (kissing and having sexual relations with him, *Der Butt* [6] 2: 210). Grass, via his narrator, concludes the letter with a reassertion of what both he and Stachnik know through their application of their imaginative powers:

Aber Sie und ich wissen, daß die Geschichten nicht aufhören können, immer wieder anders und anders wirklich zu verlaufen.

– *Der Butt*, [6] 2: 211

All stories are just different versions of the real, provisional and tentative. The letter's concluding comment, however, suggests that the different versions reflect the different versions of patriarchal ideology the two of them impose on 'Dorothea', for neither of them knows what she wanted: 'Wir wissen ja beide nicht, was Dorothea gewollt hat...' (*Der Butt*, [6] 2: 211). Interestingly, the narrator signs off this observation 'in Verehrung und argem Zweifel' (*Der Butt*, [6] 2: 211), just gently underlining men's inability to understand women.

Grass provides another concrete example of the ambiguous interpretation of events through Lena Stubbe in month 7, where two versions of her death are offered. Grass here draws on his



characteristic recourse to two unsubstantiable versions of a single occurrence, which he used most conspicuously with the two versions of Oskar's role in the attack on the Polish Post Office in *Die Blechtrommel*. With the Stubbe episode, Grass makes the relationship between surface narrative and wartime guilt and shame uncertain. Lena is sent as an old woman to Stutthof, where she aids camp prisoners through her soup kitchen. Her death is depicted in two ways: one, through 'Altersschwäche', and the other, the result of a vengeful beating by a 'Küchenkapo' (*Der Butt*, [6] 7: 570–71). 'Kapo' summons up those internees, typically Jewish themselves, who were forced into concentration camp complicity with the SS by being bribed into carrying out their commands. Similar to the Augst references in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, this hints at another authorial projection concealing Grass' own 'complicity' with the SS as a seventeen-year-old conscript. By providing two unsubstantiable versions of the same event, however, Grass renders the possible connection more tenuous.

What links these authorial projections together is that they all entail some recognition of the limitations of patriarchal perspectives. It is clear that neither the male narrator nor Grass can conceive any resolution – any social and political change – which could subvert patriarchy without reinstating it. That is arguably the most insidious form of patriarchal ideology: that it establishes the framework for all thinking and does not permit any change, either in men or women.

### **Projections in *Der Butt***

The narratorial and authorial projections together suggest a series of underlying impulses. The narrator's projections point firstly to a recognition of the untenability of patriarchy and a need for social and political change. Underlying that is an anxiety over the form that change might potentially take. Feminist subversion *may* simply replicate patriarchal structures in a female guise. Revolutionary change *may* not succeed as it has not been prepared for sufficiently democratically. And hegemonic economic and political interests *may* absorb and neutralise change resulting in a

persistence of patriarchy. What emerges as arguably the most disturbing concern is that societies are locked in an ever-recurrent cycle of challenge and reactionary resumption of power. It gives the impression of being Grass' version of Nietzsche's 'furchtbarste Form' of existence (Nietzsche [1911], XV, para 55, 182 and chapter two, page 60 above). The most conspicuous examples of history repeating itself as an 'ewige Wiederkehr' are the communist authorities' manufactured Gdańsk strike of the 20th century reiterating the patricians' stage-managed Danzig strike in the 14th century. These examples of hegemonic reaction to progressive change reprise similar motifs in *Aus dem Tagebuch*: the Bolshevik suppression of the communist-supporting Kronstadt sailors in 1921 and the Soviet response to the Prague Spring, both referred to in section 15. They also anticipate similar motifs in *Die Rättin*, which suggests that the idea of history repeating itself cyclically is a conclusion the narrators, if not Grass, are constantly drawn to.

Juxtaposed with these elements informing narratorial projection is a wartime guilt and shame arising from Grass' actions during the war. It appears that whatever preoccupies the narrator – whatever social and political anxieties appear to be 'worked on' (to use Freud's metaphor) by his unconscious – Grass' shame that he acted in a way he can scarcely recognise never leaves him. Narratorial and authorial projections therefore point to two dominant concerns: authorial shame arising from Grass' wartime participation and failings and a perception of the ineluctable cyclicity of social and political development instituted by dominant reactionary interests associated with the narrator. The reiteration of these latter concerns in two autobiographically-informed works – and about to be restated with a slightly different emphasis in a third, *Die Rättin* – indicates their significance. However, the context in which they are presented – cast as the underlying, unconscious rationale instituting transformations into an uncertain, internal and projected narrative – raises questions about both the social and political critique Grass outlines and his wartime guilt and shame. The creative processes depicted resemble once again those of 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner'. Grass' social and political critique is not definitive but open to modification, just as *Der Butt's* stories are

provisional; and the persistence of his sense of shame raises questions about how far he can identify with his wartime past. *Der Butt* even reaches beyond these questions. It suggests scepticism over how far any claims to 'knowledge' can be validated, either as the socially constructed male narrator limited in his perspectives or as an individual creating provisional premises rather than definitive resolutions. I will return to these points in my concluding chapter, having first considered how these issues arise in *Die Rättin*.

## 5 *Die Rättin* (1986): ‘Wessen Logik bleibt vorgeschrieben?’ – projection and dream

*Warum sind Träume, gegen die alles spricht, dennoch zwingend?  
Und wessen Logik bleibt vorgeschrieben im Traum?*

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 4: 281

### Introduction

Whilst *Die Rättin* (1986) demonstrates much continuity with *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* and *Der Butt*, it also does something different. In this work, Grass combines projection with an overtly signalled dream. The fiction opens with a male writer – another ambiguous autobiographically-informed figure – who plans to write a poem to ‘educate humanity’ with the Enlightenment optimism of Lessing and secures a (female) rat as stimulus.<sup>72</sup> Both writer and rat metamorphose into the internal world of a constructed male narrator where optimism is all but extinguished, except for the most tenuous of hopes with which *Die Rättin* closes. This internal narrative comprises the narrator’s dream of a female rat and her apocalyptic declamations as well as a series of projected stories, which the narrator reveals himself to be constructing in an attempt to challenge the import of his dream. From a Freudian point of view, this internal narrative effectively combines two processes which represent the manifestation of latent impulses – dream and projection.<sup>73</sup>

As in *Der Butt*, however, the narrative betrays both narratorial and authorial projections: wartime guilt and shame (relating to the author via the figure of Oskar) combined with a complex of material familiar from the two previous works (relating to the narrator via the dream and the stories). The

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<sup>72</sup> Grass’ waning belief in Enlightenment rationality, reflected in *Die Rättin*, is neatly evoked in his parodic intertextual reference to Lessing’s *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780). Lessing’s confidence that ‘Erziehung ist Offenbarung, die dem einzeln Menschen geschieht: und Offenbarung ist Erziehung, die dem Menschengeschlechte geschehen ist, und noch geschieht’ (paragraph 2) is not reproduced in *Die Rättin* where ‘Offenbarung’ does not bring ‘Erziehung’. See Nicole Thesz (2018), 106–7, 114–15, for discussion of Grass’ decreasing confidence in Enlightenment rationality.

<sup>73</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Roehm (1992), 64–5, 90ff., interestingly sees the process as a demonstration of the carnivalesque relish in the play of the internal workings of the creative process. Frank Brunssen (1997), as I have already suggested, considers the narrative to be a reflection of a Freudian ‘dream poetic’, a view reflected in my own reading. See, in particular, 101–2.

narrator's dream of the rat's declamations of nuclear and environmental devastation gradually unfolds to reveal rage and fear. These are not just elicited by the threat of nuclear and environmental annihilation but also by the power of vested interests, political manipulation and ideological fraud, all of which condemn societies to cyclical history. And embedded within the narrator's attempt to challenge the import of the dream, is a reproduction of Grass' wartime guilt and shame, which emerges through Oskar. Indeed, the resurrection of Oskar from *Die Blechtrommel* – who insists on entering the narrative – re-enacts the inevitable persistence of that wartime guilt and shame whatever the circumstances. In other words, the same set of concerns that informed *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* and *Der Butt* re-emerge in this fiction. As with my previous chapters, I begin by considering the narratorial projections (dream and stories) before turning to authorial projection, which arises mainly through Oskar's ever-developing film scenario.

### **Narratorial projection: dream logic, denial and storytelling**

The writer at his desk, using his pet rat as inspiration, creates an internal narrative blended with a series of poems, creating a similar structure to *Der Butt* in particular (although *Aus dem Tagebuch* incorporates poetry as well). Although the precise status of the poems and their relationship with the prose narrative are both uncertain, they give the impression of expressing concerns which give rise to the narrative projections. Whether the poems approach the writer's avowed intent, like Lessing, to create 'ein Gedicht, das von der Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts handelt' (*Die Rätin*, [7] 1: 151) is left unresolved.

The writer does, however, place readers inside the mind of his male narrator, who is compelled both to undergo some form of education through his angst-ridden dreams and to respond to them. The male narrator constantly emphasises that he is experiencing a dream by reiterating the impersonal formulation 'die Rätin, von der mir träumt', which also emphasises that the narrator is subject to dreams he cannot control. What he is unable to control and rationalise – what therefore the rat's

apocalyptic declarations suggest – is not just a fear of nuclear and environmental disaster but rage at humanity’s (and politicians’) failure to respond to any of the warning signs. And those emotions extend, as noted above, to a range of other related concerns as well. Note how a poem in the first section demonstrates the transference of emotion to substitute objects within a dream. It is yet another example of Grass’ adoption of the transformative mechanisms at work within Freud’s theory of the unconscious:

Ertappte mich beim Vernichten von Knabbergebäck:  
[...]  
Anfangs biß ich einzelne Stangen  
immer schneller und kürzer auf den Wert Null,  
dann rottete ich in Bündeln aus.  
[...]  
Das ist deine Wut, die Ersatz,  
bei Tage und nachts Ersatz sucht,  
sagte die Rättin, von der mir träumt.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 179

The language used to describe the narrator’s reaching for pretzels witnesses him imposing the language of total devastation (as well as of the Holocaust) onto his ‘demolishing’ of his pretzels: ‘vernichten’, ‘auf den Wert Null’, ‘ausrotten’. The female rat provides the Freudian ‘analysis’: his rage is seeking some form of substitution (‘Ersatz’) and thus demonstrates sublimation. A more obvious, less sublimated, manifestation of the rage and fear the narrator is subject to emerges in the parodically grotesque depiction of the environmental detritus of a post-nuclear landscape – humanity’s residue of rubbish with the female rat on top. The narrator ‘saw what he dreamt’:

Und ich sah, was mir träumte, sah Gelee bibbern und Filmbänder unterwegs, sah rollenden Schrott und Folien von Stürmen bewegt, sah Gift aus Fässern suppen; und ich sah [die Rättin], die vom Müllberg herab verkündete, daß der Mensch nicht mehr sei. Das, rief sie, ist euer Nachlaß!

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 159

His dream voices, therefore, not only rage at politicians’ blatant and disingenuous disregard of the warnings of nuclear and environmental disaster but also a fear that global devastation will result.

Grass emphasises how these dreams trap the narrator. The narrator is initially strapped into a wheelchair whilst being subjected to the rat's 'haranguing' ('sie spricht auf mich ein', *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 154) before transferring to a space capsule in a piece of staging that draws on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel*, where Winston Smith is also strapped first to a chair and then to a bed in Room 101 whilst being interrogated and threatened with his most harrowing fear – rats.<sup>74</sup> The oval window of the space capsule allows the narrator to observe what he dreams, emphasising that the supposed external world of the dreaming narrator is mediated by, and dependent on, his own senses. These images of physical restraint thus underline the extent to which he is trapped by his rage and fears, which, in the guise of the female rat, constantly invade and control his thoughts. He even fears the degree to which he can placate his emotions through challenge: the female rat attempts to 'censor' his stories even before they have begun ('Nein, sagt die Rättin, von der mir träumt, solche Vertällchen haben wir satt', *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 166). She becomes uneasy when there is talk of Malskat (doubtless a quip at the expense of Grass' own 'authentically forged' art) although she is surprisingly tolerant of Oskar, suggesting that Oskar, as an embodiment of guilt, must be allowed to speak. She nevertheless forces assertiveness out of the narrator when determining the direction of some of the stories.<sup>75</sup> The narrator attempts to threaten the rat with waking up, or bailing out of his space capsule, but he never does (despite his threat to experience only daydreams towards the end of the narrative in section 12):

Als Space-Observer in eine Raumkapsel gezwängt. Was hindert mich auszusteigen [...]?  
Warum sind Träume, gegen die alles spricht, dennoch zwingend? Und wessen Logik bleibt  
vorgeschrieben im Traum?

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 4: 281<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See Part III, section 2: Winston's interrogation in Room 101. Orwell, like Grass, writes against both fascist and communist forms of totalitarianism, as is made explicit in O'Brien's interrogation in this section.

<sup>75</sup> These processes of censorship and a potential demand for revision echo Freud's description of the psychic processes of dreamwork. Although I do not see Grass following the full range of Freud's description of the psychic mechanisms of dreams – i.e., censorship and regression, revision and secondary revision as well as condensation and displacement – there are some interesting parallels. See Freud (1968), *Die Traumdeutung*, II/III: 283–512. For an overview of dreamwork, see Frank J Sulloway (1979). Kniesche (1991), as already noted, takes the Freud parallels further.

<sup>76</sup> He first claims he can terminate the dream by getting up with his alarm clock in section 1 (*Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 176). He subsequently threatens to experience daydreams only (*Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 595: 'Fortan werden sich alle Träume hellwach abspielen.'

By depicting the narrator's control as only apparent, Grass underlines how the emotions on which they are based exert an uncontested compulsion. Dreams are compelling because they manifest powerful, repressed emotions. The relations which make that possible – Freud's logic of the dream, the associative links which enable condensation and displacement to take effect – compel their subjects to attempt to understand them. The narrator himself raises the question of whose logic the narrator is trapped by and what is its source. Is this a dream-logic of the narrator or of the author? *Die Rättin* never resolves that. However, as I have already indicated, the logic does point to a complex of possible sources, whose pattern is familiar from *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*. *Die Rättin's* emphasis is, however, slightly different. It focuses on effacement (covering up and shifting blame), the role of powerful economic and political interests in that effacement (designed to suppress change) and the failure of rationality. This cluster of sources emerges in two different contexts, mimicking the recursive structure of dream logic: nuclear disaster replicates German wartime atrocities. Nuclear and environmental disaster is covered up whilst politicians exonerate themselves. This exposes the failure of rationality, which is increasingly being ceded to technology, which allows dominant economic interests to determine politics in the interests of the maintenance of power. This pattern reiterates German wartime atrocities and the politics of postwar recovery, where the 'falsche Fuffziger', with their rampant consumerism (dissipating the need to confront collective and individual responsibility), efface the past. Malskat's forged frescoes provide the key image of that social and political effacement. Economic and political interests, therefore, work in collusion.

This cluster of concerns, as noted, restates the social and political critique familiar from *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*. Whereas *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*, however, focus on the need for incremental social and political change and the role of dominant vested economic and political interests in thwarting it, *Die Rättin* concentrates more on the powerlessness of social and cultural



processes in the face of the economic and political. I would like to look at the two versions of this social and political critique a little more closely.

First of all the 'big bang', 'der großer Knall'. Following the accidental detonation of US and Soviet nuclear missiles, US and Soviet politicians conveniently remove themselves from any responsibility by shifting the blame onto rats:

Sie blieb dabei, es sei bis zum Schluß von den Schutzmächten behauptet worden: Nicht die eine, die andere Großmacht habe den Knopf gedrückt. [...] Doch kaum waren sich beide Schutzmächte in Sachen Schuldzuweisung einig, begannen sie auf die Drittmacht zu schimpfen: Verdammte Ratten!

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 4: 277–8

These are the female rat's claims, suggesting again that political interests always find ways of shifting blame onto scapegoats, scapegoats who are equated with Jewish people ('Dieses Doppelgezücht, Juden und Ratten sind schuld!', *Die Rätin*, [7] 4: 279). The narrator similarly underlines how contemporary (i.e., 1980s) politicians dupe people with their version of blame-shifting and falsifying language ('die Täuschersprache'). Its superficial plausibility convinces people to live with contradictions:

Erstaunlich, wie es den Macheffels, ihren Politikern gelang, die Wörter geschmeidig und sich gefügig zu machen. Sie sagten: Mit dem Schrecken wächst unsere Sicherheit. Oder: Der Fortschritt hat seinen Preis. Oder: Die technische Entwicklung läßt sich nicht aufhalten. [...] Und diese Täuschersprache wurde hingenommen. So lebte man mit dem Schrecken, lief Geschäften oder Vergnügungen nach, bedauerte die Opfer der Mahnblitze, nannte sie übersensibel und deshalb unfähig, die Widersprüche der Zeit auszuhalten [...].

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 2: 215

These all represent apologist prevarications to ensure that dominant political and economic interests are maintained. Grass brings up a grotesquely ironic variant of that process through Oskar. He claims that no-one believes in facts any more, that people are fed up with the documentary and tired of 'reality'. He proposes a new purveyor of enlightenment – Walt Disney:

'Vielleicht sollten wir das Ganze in der Manier des Altmeisters filmischer Aufklärung, des großen Walt Disney, produzieren. Der Mensch hat das Dokumentarische satt. Soviel Wirklichkeit ermüdet. An Tatsachen glaubt ohnehin niemand mehr. Nur noch Träume aus der Trickkiste bringen stimmige Fakten.'

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 3: 228

The irony here ranges over several connotations. Grass allows Enlightenment thinking to be sullied by its equation with Disney's cartoon 'Enlightenment'. He similarly downgrades fantasy and dreams to a 'Trickkiste' – a highly commercialised (and right-wing) set of cartoon fantasy narratives, which themselves serve to divert attention away from the real relations of power in society. He also contrasts his own attempts (not without irony) at creating fantasies and dreams (as, for example, in *Die Rättin* itself) with Disney's. His attempts aspire to embody a 'reality' mediated by an authentic fantasy (just as Malskat's art is an 'authentic forgery').

Human responsibility for action can also, however, be cunningly avoided by ceding rationality to computer technology and genetic engineering, indicating a failure in the possibilities of rational control:

Zwar stand Macht gegen Macht in Waffen, doch hatte sich Macht gegen Macht versichert: durch sorgsam abgestufte Schrecken, mit Hilfe sich überwachender Überwachung und durch Verlagerung der Verantwortung auf Chips und Klips, so daß dem menschlichen Pfuscher, dieser seit Noah nachgewiesenen Anfälligkeit für regelwidriges Verhalten, kein für Entscheidungen freier Raum geblieben war; jener herkömmliche Unsicherheitsfaktor [...] der a priori fehlhandelnde Mensch, war dienstleistend nur noch sekundär da: nicht mehr verantwortlich.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 4: 286–7<sup>77</sup>

Reason is simply fed, like pieces of cheese, to computer technology, whilst deep-seated fears are repressed with a self-denial that echoes Peter's denial of Christ ('dreimal geleugnet'):

Die letzten Reste Vernunft wie Käsebröcklein an nimmersatte Computer verfüttert, damit sie die Verantwortung trügen; und hattet dennoch dreimal geleugnet, verschnürte, zutiefst verpackte, in euch begrabene Angst, die nicht raus, sich nicht zeigen, nicht Mama! schreien durfte.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 5: 308

As in *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*, this sequence of ideas – shifting blame, covering up, diverting attention, abdicating rationality – leads towards a collusion between political and vested interests which provide democracy with no more than token power (as 'Bittsteller'). In one of the fairy-tale

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<sup>77</sup> The Göttingen edition I am using reads: 'durch sorgsam abgestuften Schrecken'. I assume this is a typographical error.

fantasies the male narrator creates for Oskar's film, Jakob Grimm concludes that the real power resides with money and, as one of the dwarfs ruefully observes, with capitalism:

[Jakob Grimm] sagt: 'Wir sind leider machtlos. Die Demokratie ist nur Bittsteller. Das große Geld hat die Macht!' [...Einer der Zwerge] ruft: 'Muß denn auf ewig und immer der Kapitalismus siegen!?' Verzweifelt trampelt Rotkäppchen mit roten Stiefelchen: 'Scheiße! Ich laß mich vom Wolf fressen!' und läuft aus dem Haus.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 6: 373–4

In a comparable outburst – heralding a cyclical restoration of 'business as usual', an all too mundanely Nietzschean eternal recurrence (see *Die Rättin*, [7] 8: 452) – the narrator decries the complicity between state and other institutional power interests:

Kein Wunder, daß es weitergeht wie zuvor, nein, schlimmer, weil ohne Hoffnung jetzt. Doch während die Experten streiten, als könne es anders nicht sein, während Minister und Bosse wie gewöhnlich ihre Geschäfte machen und dabei rundum gesichert werden, weil jede Maschinenpistole wieder in Anschlag gebracht ist, während noch die Generäle gesegnet werden, denn auch den Bischöfen fällt Neues nicht ein, und der Kanzler fürs Fernsehen, zudem den Journalisten zur Freude, lauthals 'Hansi! Margarethe!' ruft, laufen Hänsel und Gretel davon.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 595

Politics, industry, the military and the church – the establishment – all contribute to pursuing their own interests at the expense of society and its future. The chancellor's children, doubling as Hänsel and Gretel and an image of future generations, want no part of this corruption and run off. However, they themselves – and the future they stand for – represent a sacrifice the Chancellor is prepared to pay. Responding to journalists' questioning, he replies:

'Wir werden auch diesen Verlust zu verschmerzen wissen.'

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 596

Grass thus dramatises the claim that state politics puts nuclear, environmental and economic interests ahead of future generations.

This set of contemporary concerns is paralleled by anger over the way politicians instituted an era of consumerism bolstered by 'appeasing' political rhetoric (the 'falsche Fuffziger') in an attempt to efface Germany's wartime atrocities in the interests of maintaining dominant power. The parallel between nuclear devastation and Germany's Second World War atrocities emerges at several points

in the work, pointing towards another case of history repeating itself. When, for example, the female rat explains how people characteristically blame rats for their social problems, the 'German' propensity to opt for extreme measures to 'unburden' the country of the supposed causes of its ills comes to the fore:

Wie bequem, uns [den Ratten] menschliches Versagen aufzuhalsen. [...] Vor allen Völkern sah sich das Volk der Deutschen berufen, die Menschheit zu entlasten und zu bestimmen, was Ratte ist, und wenn nicht uns, dann die Juden zu vertilgen. Wir waren unter und zwischen Baracken dabei, in Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz. [...] Wie hätten sie uns, die wir, mit den Juden gemein, ihre billigste Ausrede waren, schonen sollen.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 4: 282–3

Again, narratorial projection via the dream of the female rat suggests fear and rage at the way 'human failings' are foisted onto scapegoats. In addition, the specifically German propensity for 'unburdening humanity' by determining the racial criteria for Jewishness, leading to the extermination of Jews, is emphasised with grotesque irony. For the narrator, this same process of politicians' dissimulating rhetoric serving to dissociate themselves from any responsibility for action characterises the 'falsche Fuffziger', where Ulbricht and Adenauer engineer a marginalisation of the past (as well as rearmament) through obsequious compliance with their respective controlling powers. The potency of the image of the 'falsche Fuffziger' is precisely that it blends effacement of the past, political deception and the maintenance of controlling interests. The narrator underlines the connection with people's former blind submission to National Socialist ideology by observing that appreciation of Ulbricht and Adenauer pales aside their former 'love' for Hitler:

Und siehe, den Greisen ['Spitzbart' Ulbricht und 'dem alten Fuchs' Adenauer] gelang es, die besiegten Deutschen zu mit den Siegern befreundeten Deutschen zu läutern [...]: Ruckzuck war man wieder wer, wiederbewaffnet. Deshalb dankte das Volk beiden Wohltätern [...] aber nicht von Herzen so liebte, wie man als geeintes Volk während zurückliegender Jahre seinen Hitler herzlich geliebt hatte.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 3: 223

That falsification and prevarication underlies the politics of 1950s regeneration is accentuated when comparisons are made with Malskat, condemned for his self-confessedly forged art, whilst the real pedlars of state deceit are considered 'genuine' and remain unpunished:

Und auch den staatsmännischen Trugbildnern wurde nirgendwann der Prozeß gemacht. [...]

Deshalb wird jener Schummel der fünfziger Jahre, den wir abgekürzt BRD-DDR nennen, immer noch als echt angesehen, während ein Gutteil der Malskatschen Kunst [...] mit Bürsten und Schrubbern abgewaschen wurden.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 11: 575

Another version of this ‘selectivity’ over history is brought up through the *Cap Arcona* disaster. The full implications of the mistaken British bombing of a ship assumed to be a military target, the *Cap Arcona*, which was carrying concentration camp survivors from Neuengamme in an attempt to conceal evidence from the oncoming Allies, are just too complicated to tell, as ‘die Alte’ says:

‘Na klar, sowas paßt nicht in die Geschichte. Ne dumme Panne. Das stört. Sowas vergißt man. Schwamm drüber! sagte man früher.’

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 2: 209

It is thus best forgotten – omitted from history.<sup>78</sup>

The interplay between the dreaming narrator and the apocalyptic visions of the dreamed rat thus reveals history repeating itself – not merely as farce but as tragedy and farce combined. The narrator does, however, attempt to challenge the import of his dream through storytelling; but perhaps the ultimate farcical tragedy arises from the failure all his stories and denials entail.

Damroka’s feminist-led empiricism and her quest for Vineta fail. Oskar’s scenario, taking in all the fairy-tale figures, including the related Pied Piper, ends in failure or irresolution. And although Malskat confesses to his forged frescoes which are consequently painted over, he ominously begins to discuss with Oskar the possibility of a collaboration, a point which underlines the dubiousness of Oskar’s film project. Together, these stories demonstrate what amounts to the grotesque failure of a full range of human resourcefulness – rational empiricism, fantasy and art – to challenge a dissimulating political power.

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<sup>78</sup> Julian Preece (2001), 167, notes that this episode (which fictionally conflates the sinking of the Russian Baltic Fleet in 1905 and the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* in 1945) ‘prefigures the atomic conflagration’ and provides an ‘*exemplum* of past horror’ which ‘negatively prefigures a utopian future’.

This is how each of the stories unfolds. The female-driven empiricism, which Damroka's story initially demonstrates (before she deflects it into a failed feminist search for the utopian ideal of a matriarchal society), is set out in the first section. The former, turn-of-the-century 'Besanewer' is fitted out as a research ship to survey and quantify jellyfish in the Baltic:

[...] das Forschungsschiff [wurde] mit Meßinstrumenten ausgerüstet, von denen eines 'Meßhai' heißt und scherzhaft 'Quallenzähler' genannt wird. Außerdem sollen die Vorkommen von Plankton und Heringslarven, was alles sonst noch die Qualle frißt, gemessen, gewogen, bestimmt werden. Eine der Frauen ist als Meeresforscherin ausgebildet.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 1: 166

The likely results of this empirical research can easily be anticipated, as the narrator points out:

Natürlich soll nicht die Ursache der Verquallung erforscht werden, einzig die Fluktuation der Bestände. Natürlich weiß man schon jetzt, daß die Meßdaten schlimm sein werden.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 1: 166

The fear of environmental destruction through the (parodic) saturation of jellyfish in the Baltic is to be countered by the powers of empirical research – indeed, female-led empirical research. But the power of empirical research is jettisoned in favour of a political idealism: to uncover and resurrect the lost matriarchal society of Vineta, a plan Damroka seems to cherish (arguably at the expense of the narrator):

Ich weiß nicht, wann Damroka den Plan gefaßt hat. [...] Dennoch ahnten die anderen Frauen – die Steuermännin voran – schon früh, daß diese Reise nicht nur mit Ohrenquallen gilt. [...]

Utopia Atlantis Vineta. [...] Es sollen in dieser Stadt während langer Zeit die Frauen das Sagen gehabt haben, bis eines Tages die Männer mitreden wollten. Die alte Geschichte.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 3: 239, 241

Despite the contribution of the women to protest against the use of animals in research, they fail both in their empirical challenge (jettisoned) and in their feminist challenge (brought to nought as Vineta remains out of reach). When witnessing the destruction of the women and Anna Koljaiczek, coupled with the emergence of a new genetically engineered strain of rats, the narrator claims that he could do nothing to prevent it. His fear and powerlessness ('Angst und Ohnmacht'), which led him to establishing the female-led research enterprise, takes over:

Ich will das so. Schließlich habe ich, Rätin, den ehemaligen Lastewer aus Angst und Ohnmacht mit Frauen bemannt.

[...]

Nun auch kein wundes Mundloch mehr. Die Frauen verröchelten. Mein Wille konnte sie nicht halten. Kein weiterer Aufschub fiel mir zu ihrem Ende ein. Erst jetzt – oder abermals – driftete das Wrack der Ilsebill unter rauchschwarzem Himmel in die offene See.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 9: 473, 475

The narrator's power – his willpower – is inadequate to stem his fears. The 'wreck' of the feminist enterprise drifts out to sea – 'abermals', the narrator qualifies, implying that such an enterprise will once again inevitably fail.

The failure of the empirical research finds an echo in the failure of fantasy – of the anarchic freedom of the fairy-tale world, which the narrator proposes to Oskar as the basis for a potential scenario, before its failure and Oskar's adoption of Malskat and his 'authentically forged art'. In an ever more anarchic but unresolved way, the fairy-tale figures end up being exploited by financial and political power while the woods, which guarantee the power of fantasy, are finally 'written off' as 'economically superfluous'.

Wie nun die Fernsehleute die Industriebosse mit vorgehaltenem Mikrofon fragen: 'Und was soll mit dem Wald geschehen?' sagt einer der Bosse: 'Abschreiben! Wir werden den Wald einfach abschreiben! Wie die Märchen, so werden wir auch den Wald.'

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 12: 596

As the ministers subsequently imply, saving the 'spirit of enterprise' is more important than saving the woods: 'Nicht der Wald stirbt, sondern der Leistungswille!' (*Die Rätin*, [7] 12: 596). A similar fate befalls the children the Pied Piper is commissioned to lead out of town. Political forces conspire to have all 130 children led to a cave where they are walled in – a chilling re-enactment of the gassing of Jews – only to consign their story to disputed history, with the town 'um eine Legende reicher':

Endlich, nun unter pfäffischem Druck, wohl auch aus Furcht vor aufständischen Gewerken, beschlossen Rat and Schöffen in geheimer Sitzung peinlichste Gegenmaßnahmen. Ein in der Stadt unbekannter Pfeifer, [...] wurde gegen Handgeld von auswärts angeworben, [...die Kinder] durchs Ostentor zum nahen Kalvarienberg zu führen, [...wo sie] zugemauert [wurden]. [...] Es soll nur wenig Geschrei aus der Höhle gefunden haben.

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 10: 543–4

As the narrator wryly comments, the Grimm forest film could be construed as having a ‘promising’ end. However, you only need to open newspapers to confirm it is anything but:

Wem aber der rückgewendete Schluß des stummen Films vom sterbenden Wald und vom Ende der Märchen zu verheißungsvoll, von Hoffnung geschönt und nicht böse genug ist, der möge, rät unser Herr Matzerath, die Zeitung aufschlagen und lesen, bis daß ihn Zorn überkommt, was des Kanzlers Experten zu sagen haben.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 599

In keeping with Grass’ claims that their fantasy is integral to reality (and a necessary part of it), fantasy and the fictional world Oskar draws on seem to represent the only way of challenging the narrator’s fears, albeit without ultimate success.

Malskat’s cover-up – the literal covering that his frescoes of ‘schadhafter Schönheit’ provide (*Die Rättin*, [7] 10: 523) – also fails. His forged art comes to be deeply implicated with contemporary political structures (both during National Socialism and in the postwar Federal Republic, full of former ‘murderers’), which in part motivates him to his confession of forgery:

Es war nun mal die Zeit des Zwinkerns, der Persilscheine und des schönen Scheins. Im Jahrzehnt der Unschuldslämmer und weißen Westen, der Mörder in Amt und Würden und christlichen Heuchler auf der Regierungsbank, wollte niemand dies oder das allzu genau wissen, gleich, was geschehen war. [...] Nun aber [...] kramte der Maler Skizzen und Vorlagen, Tagebuchnotizen und sonstige Zeugnisse zusammen, nahm sich einen Rechtsanwalt und brachte in Selbstanzeige die Wahrheit, das Unzeitgemäße ans Licht.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 10: 524–5

As the narrator subsequently notes, in a passage quoted above, the real culprits for this wholesale deception are not brought to account.

The male narrator’s projections – which combine dream and both direct and indirect responses to that dream – point to an underlying combination of fear and anger, based on a pattern of atrocity and political dissimulation in the service of economic and political interests. In other words, the focus of concern is the means by which atrocities are managed politically (as well as socially and culturally) and how that always reflects the power of vested interests.



### **Authorial projection: 'Ich bin die Fehlerquelle!'**

Within that overall structure of the narrator's dream and projections, an authorial projection emerges most prominently in the stories of Oskar and Malskat, with whom Oskar finally ends up collaborating. Oskar, who fictionally projects the 'imponderable question of [his] guilt' ('das Unwägbar der Schuld') onto his ever-changing film scenario, conceals Grass' own 'imponderable guilt'. Like Oskar, Grass' guilt and shame is projected onto an ever-changing set of fictions, all of which share with Malskat the tendency to cover up with the integrity of 'authentic forgery'.

Grass' depiction of Oskar reflects firstly the pressure on the narrator to recognise Oskar and thus the guilt the narrator attempts to repress. Oskar's resurrection from *Die Blechtrommel* reads like a reminder of the ineradicable nature of the shame Grass felt never left him, as he underlined in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*.<sup>79</sup> As an indication of just how complex and involuted Grass' fictions become, Oskar's story, as recounted by the narrator, also involves a projection. Oskar projects *his* wartime guilt and shame, depicted mainly in relation to his questionable role in the defence of the Polish Post Office, onto his ever-developing film scenario. Echoing the unremitting shame for which Oskar stands, the narrator cannot prevent Oskar entering into his mind and making himself suitable for a story that will challenge the rat's apocalyptic claims. As the narrator descends into the cellar – the fictional location of Oskar's staged fall in *Die Blechtrommel* – Oskar 'butts in' ('will dreinreden') with an assertion that humanity is in control of its destiny:

Selbst jenes bucklichte Männlein, das abermals dreinreden will, sagte noch kürzlich, als ich treppab in den Keller wollte, um nach den Winteräpfeln zu sehen: Mag sein, daß es zu Ende geht mit den Menschen, doch letztlich bestimmen wir, wann Ladenschluß ist.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 154

Oskar insists that 'we' are still in control. Even if it does turn out to be the 'end for humanity', 'we' will determine when to 'shut up shop'. This control suggests that he has the capability to challenge

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<sup>79</sup> See, for example, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 5: 404, a passage I have already referred to.

the female rat and her claims. However, despite Oskar's assertiveness, his credentials for political challenge are questioned, owing to the dubious, but unspecified, nature of his wartime past. Oskar cannot be relied on to challenge, because the 'imponderable question of his guilt' ('das Unwägbarere der Schuld') suggests a past which compromises his capacity to act appropriately:

Unser Herr Matzerath hat allerlei [...] hinter sich. Selbst wenn wir den Prozeß und die Verwahrung in seiner Anstalt, zudem das Unwägbarere der Schuld außer acht lassen, hat sich nach seiner Entlassung viel Mühsal auf Oskars Buckel gehäuft [...].

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 1: 171

The imponderable question of Oskar's guilt takes readers back to *Die Blechtrommel*. Oskar, like Störtebeker (resurrected as Starusch in *örtlich betäubt*), gives the impression of having played a role in challenging National Socialism. His self-imposed will to resist further growth, recounted in *Die Blechtrommel*, hints at resistance to the rise of National Socialism (because it resembles an inversion of the 'Führerprinzip'). Similarly, his power to shatter glass (in arguably similar, shrill tones to the female rat's) appears a dramatic demonstration of resistance. How far, however, he actually challenged either National Socialist politics or, subsequently, the corrupt postwar economic expansionism remains questionable. Oskar seems to play no active role in challenging either. His supposed 'powers' are shown to be at best dubious and at worst specious; he is exposed as 'powerless'. As Oskar himself finally admits – with an irony doubtless intended to relate both to the narrator and to Grass himself – the power of the tin drum was vastly overestimated:

Einem blechernen Ding sprach ich mehr Kraft zu, als ihm gegeben war – und scheiterte jämmerlich.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 625

The tin drum only ever offered Oskar a delusory sense of power, a delusion he seems set to continue via the film project he is currently planning with Malskat. Oskar's guilt, therefore, over his failure to resist National Socialism appears to be a displaced form of Grass' own guilt and shame over a comparable failure.

That Oskar represents a more disturbing threat to the narrator – and through him to Grass – comes up when Oskar voices his suspicion that his ‘existence bothers [the narrator]’ and that the narrator wanted to kill him off:

‘Ich begreife, daß meine Existenz stört. Ich soll nicht mehr dreinreden dürfen.’

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 10: 526

The threat he poses is psychological: for he understands that his own guilt over his failure and duplicity resonates uncomfortably with the narrator himself.

Grass goes one stage further, however, as he depicts a projection of Oskar’s to parallel his own. For Grass, via his narrator, shows Oskar projecting details of his wartime complicity with the occupying German forces onto his developing film scenario and, furthermore, portrays his subsequent attempts to conceal them through evasiveness. The narrator begins by drawing attention to Oskar’s defensiveness over details of his childhood. There are several examples of this. One significant moment is when the narrator mentions two figures from Oskar’s youth (which he thinks will attract Oskar’s interest in the project) – the leader of the ‘Stäuberbande’, Störtebeker, and his accomplice, Tulla Pokriefke (*Die Rättin*, [7] 3: 235). Mention of Störtebeker and Pokriefke, however, only distracts Oskar:

Er schweigt und gibt das Bild eines älteren Herren ab, der sich Gedankenflucht erlauben darf. [...] Doch wie ich unseren Herrn Matzerath um die Bestätigung meiner Vorschläge bitte, wirkt er zerstreut und ein wenig müde: die Rückschau in seine Kindheit hat ihn erschöpft.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 3: 235

Thinking back to his younger years exhausts him as though the recollections mask some emotional strain. The significance of this recollection of the ‘Stäuberbande’, revealed in *Die Blechtrommel*, resides in Oskar’s failure to register any political challenge to National Socialism. As is recounted in the ‘Nachfolge Christi’ section, Oskar, when set upon by Störtebeker and his Stäuberbande, claims as a joke that he is called Jesus Christ and subsequently becomes leader of the gang.<sup>80</sup> But despite

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<sup>80</sup> The three relevant chapters which develop this identification from *Die Blechtrommel* are in its Second Book: ‘Die Nachfolge Christi’, ‘Die Stäuber’ and ‘Das Krippenspiel’, [3] 2: 454-501. The image of sacred reverence is

taking on a Christ-like role with the potential to challenge National Socialism, Oskar only leads the gang into self-serving action – looting and random violence. Oskar, Störtebeker, Pokriefke and the Stäuberbande thus represent a *potential* for challenge and resistance, which is not, however, taken up.

This leads to Grass' staging of psychological projection through Oskar. Arguably the most comprehensive version of the film Oskar develops is the dramatisation of the fairy-tale figures' anarchic resistance to being bulldozed out of their forestry habitat, replete with gingerbread house. The scenario incorporates two particularly significant details from Oskar's past – both underlined by the narrator – that point towards the motivation for the projection. The first involves a detail Oskar insists on incorporating – the use of specially adapted 'flame-throwing bulldozers' for the forest clearing:

(Unser Herr Matzerath wünscht, daß diese Spezialfahrzeuge, die bisher einzig in Indien und Südamerika für das Abräumen weitläufiger Slumgebiete gut waren, [...] überdies mit Flammenwerfern bestückt sind.)

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 11, 562

Amidst cries that '[o]hne Märchen werden die Menschen verarmen', the forests and fairy-tale characters are razed out of existence (*Die Rättin*, [7] 11: 565). The power of fantasy is thus annihilated. The second relates to the somewhat ineffectual 'Prince Charming' ('der wachküssende Prinz', *Die Rättin*, [7] 11: 566), whose role, in true fairy tale fashion, is to ply a kiss to wake up Sleeping Beauty ('Dornröschen') and the Government she had previously immobilised.

The narrator elaborates on the psychological significance for Oskar of these two motifs, which both relate to his wartime experiences. The 'flame-throwing bulldozers' reflect the use of flame throwers in the battle for the Polish Post Office and the emotional impact the circumstances of the bombardment exerted on Oskar:

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later picked up in *Die Rättin* when Oskar and his grandmother are worshipped by a posthuman generation of rats in mock Pietà pose.

(Ich spreche mich gegen solch altertümliche Bewaffnung aus, muß aber damit rechnen, daß sich Oskars Frühprägungen am Ende durchsetzen; so tief hat ihn der Einsatz von Flammenwerfern beim Kampf um die Polnische Post beeindruckt.)

– *Die Rätin*, [7] 11: 562

We are left to infer that what continues to disturb him is not the use of the flamethrowers themselves but the guilt surrounding the duplicity of his own highly dubious ‘contribution’ to the Post Office’s defence. *Die Blechtrommel* provides more detail.<sup>81</sup> When the the SS Heimwehr arrives to take the prisoners following the successful attack on the Polish Post Office, Oskar makes out that he had been taken hostage by the Polish ‘rebels’, including by his biological father Jan. This saves Oskar (and his tin drum) and enables him to collaborate with the occupying German forces. His role in the siege is thus one of fear, inaction and collaboration, rather than active resistance. Oskar reenacts this dissimulation by narrating two versions of the event, a much-discussed section from the work. The first sets out what he would like to have done whilst the second witnesses the confession of his subterfuge. Oskar’s only occasional shame and reflection on Jan’s subsequent execution is cloaked in grotesque irony. He claims that Jan would not have noticed how fate had dealt him a poor Skat hand:

Ich möchte jedoch bei der Wahrheit bleiben, Oskars Feder in den Rücken fallen und hier berichtigen, daß erstens Jans letztes Spiel [...] kein Grand Hand [...] war. [...] Heute, da ich mich zeitweilig dieser unwürdigen Haltung schäme, sage ich immer wieder: Der Jan hat das nicht gemerkt [...].

– *Die Blechtrommel*, [3] ‘Er liegt auf Saspe’, 318–9

*Die Rätin*’s narrator makes a further reference to this incident from Oskar’s youth, suggesting ironically that he ought perhaps to be spared the trip back to Poland on account of the ‘painful associations’ Poland, Danzig and ‘his contribution to the defence of the Polish post office’ hold for him:

[...] sobald nach seiner Kindheit gefragt wird, weicht unser Herr Matzerath in wohnliche Nebensätze aus. Er erwähnt den Sturz von der Kellertreppe nur beiläufig und nennt sein Wachstum während der fraglichen Zeit ‘zurückhaltend’ oder ‘zögerlich’, als bereite ihm die Frühphase seines Lebens immer noch Pein. [...] Er will aber dennoch keine Episode, etwa

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<sup>81</sup> The relevant chapters from *Die Blechtrommel* are: ‘Die Polnische Post’, ‘Das Kartenhaus’ and ‘Er liegt auf Saspe’, [3] 2: 285–333.

seinen Beitrag zur Verteidigung der Polnischen Post [...] bestätigen.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 5: 304

Any questions relating to his 'contribution' to the defence of the Polish Post Office are thus evaded.

The intricacies and minutiae of this projection emphasise the psychological complexity of the authorial projection of Grass' shame and his need to embody it in such involuted fiction. Indeed, a further aspect of Oskar's (and Grass') 'imponderable guilt' is dramatised through 'der wachküssende Prinz'. He, like Oskar, 'defects'. In this version, it is to the industrialists (*Die Rättin*, [7] 11: 563), the holders of economic power who influence political power. The narrator makes the connection between Oskar and the ineffectual 'Prince' explicit when he hints that Oskar has the tendency 'if not exactly [to be] allied with', then certainly to 'share a common cause with' any enemy, whoever that might be:

(Mir ist, als habe sich unser Herr Matzerath, wie von Jugend an gewohnt, mit dem Feind, wenn nicht verbündet, so doch gemein gemacht; zwischen den Industriebossen ahne, nein, sehe ich ihn.)

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 11: 566

It is a tendency, the narrator suspects, that Oskar has displayed from his youth onwards.

All these details of Oskar's own projected guilt conceal a never-confirmed but perceptible reference to Grass' own wartime role and subsequent shame. However, another superficially slight detail, with considerable consequences, seems to bear witness to an authorial projection of guilt and shame: that the narrator might be the source of the error leading to nuclear catastrophe.

The lyrical voice of the section 6 poem 'Da stimmt doch was nicht' sets up the possibility of this projection. Grass's narrator seems to speak in bathetic, near-grotesque terms when considering whether the momentous burden of guilt for the world's release of nuclear missiles might be his error. It is as if all the various candidates for blame (the failure of rationality, political leaders, computer technology, rats, mice) start themselves to resemble some form of narratorial displacement. In verse which expands into the prose narrative, the narrator stresses that there is a

search for the source of the error and that it is 'we' (narrator, author, politicians, rats and mice) who are searching:

Jetzt suchen wir die Fehlerquelle.  
Wir suchen sie außer uns wie verrückt,  
bis plötzlich jemand wir sagt,  
wir alle könnten, mal angenommen zum Spaß,  
die Fehlerquelle oder du oder du  
könntest sie sein.

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 6: 366–7

The narrator, 'buckled to his cosmic armchair', is horrified to realise that he might be the 'Fehlerquelle'.<sup>82</sup> As he rationalises this, his descriptions blend detail with Grass' own wartime experience:

Ich bin die Fehlerquelle! Ausgerechnet mir soll es gelungen sein, spielerisch Schluß zu machen. Nein! schrie ich. Das kommt nicht auf meine Kappe. Du solltest es wissen, Rättin, daß ich kaum Glühbirnen auswechseln kann und Autofahren auch nicht. Das war immer so, schon als Pimpf, später als Luftwaffenhelfer bei unserer Achtkommaacht, wo ich als K6 mit dem Folgezeiger nie den Richtzeiger einholte, weshalb ich noch heute dies und andere Unfähigkeiten träume. [...] Ich, ohne Ahnung, was Chips and Klips sind [...].

– *Die Rättin*, [7] 6: 368

The familiar indices of Grass' wartime experience are here: his membership of the Hitler Youth (as a 'cub') and his role as 'air-force auxiliary'. These references open out the possibility that authorial projection underlies this elaborate search for the 'guilty'. They act as an internal restatement of the more extensive identification of author and narrator through Oskar.

In *Die Rättin*, as in *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt*, wartime guilt and the ceaseless shame it induces are juxtaposed with the perception of a seemingly immutable set of power relations that militate against change. Whereas *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der Butt* reveal uncertainty about the possibility of social and political change in the face of those economic and political interests, *Die Rättin* concentrates on uncovering the social, cultural and political processes that conceal them. The context of the 'revelations' remains, however, a dream and a narrator's unconscious responses to them. The ambiguities of 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner', evident in both *Aus dem Tagebuch* and *Der*

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<sup>82</sup> *Die Rättin*, [7] 6: 367: 'Im kosmischen Lehnstuhl angeschnallt, wurde ich steif vor Schreck.'

*Butt*, are therefore reinforced by this work. All that the projections reveal – the impossibility of social and political change together with a wartime guilt and shame – are rendered uncertain. By maintaining the ambiguity of the autobiographically-informed narrator and refracting these issues through a framework of projection, dreamwork and dream – through a reconstruction of the unconscious – Grass seems to suggest that his wartime shame compels him to continue to write and challenge ‘die verstreichende Zeit’ precisely because the products of his ‘own’ internal arguments are unverifiable. His assertions of the threats to social and political change represent only provisional claims concerning the power structures of societies. They are always subject to further interpretation and change.



## 6 *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) and *Die Box* (2008): authorial projection and internalised narratives

Before considering the implications of the ambiguity, uncertainties and provisionality of the authorial and narratorial projections, I turn to Grass' autobiographies *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) and *Die Box* (2008). These 'non-fictional' works themselves harbour considerable ambiguities and are arguably as fictionally-informed as his fictions are autobiographically-informed. Although revealing and, at times, seemingly confessional, they question how far it is possible to talk in terms of a single, coherent self and how far it is possible for a writer reflecting on his past to be certain of his recollections. Grass suggests that the internal processes of memory and reflection, the access they provide to the past, are limited and cannot guarantee any definitive version of that past. Nevertheless, the works seem intended to highlight specific aspects incorporated in his previous fictions, aspects which I have been drawing attention to – notably the guilt and shame over his own failures during the war, his use of projection, the transformative nature of his narratives and the indirect audience address.<sup>83</sup> It is as though Grass is attempting to provide clues to some of the problematic features of his earlier writing. *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, for example, refers to the persistence of his wartime guilt and shame and provides a conspicuous example of a 'projected fantasy', which together point to his incorporation of projection in the works I have been considering. *Die Box* incorporates a metaphor for transforming material (the development in the darkroom of box camera photographs), which highlights the transformative nature of projection and dreamwork, both of which rely on Freud's theory of the unconscious which I have been arguing Grass follows. It also provides an example of an internalised narrative which exploits audience address.

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<sup>83</sup> Taberner (2008) highlights what he considers to be the 'Künstler- and Bildungsroman' strands of the autobiography (145–46) as well as very suggestively describing its narrative as 'overdetermined' (146). All Grass' narratives could arguably qualify as 'overdetermined'.

The opening chapters of *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* all provide examples of Grass' failure to ask questions and failure to take any form of 'resistance' action in the wartime years. He relates how his family as well as he himself passed over the execution of his uncle Franz – *Die Blechtrommel's* Jan – in silence. What, in *Die Blechtrommel*, underlies the much-discussed dual version of the capture of the Polish Post Office (casting doubt on the nature of Oskar's role in the SS Heimwehr's capture and subsequent execution of the Polish resistance fighters) occasions Grass' failure even to consider asking questions:

Oder wagte ich nicht zu fragen, weil kein Kind mehr?  
Stellen, wie im Märchen, nur Kinder die richtigen Fragen?  
Kann es sein, daß mich Angst vor einer alles auf den Kopf stellenden Antwort stumm  
gemacht hat?

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 1: 217

He feels himself forced to write about 'die Schande und die ihr nachhinkende Scham', which implies that he recognises that, as a youth, he had failed to ask the question 'why' ('[ein Junge der] versäumt hat, "warum" zu sagen' – both quotations, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 1: 218). He also relates the stories of his schoolfriend Wolfgang Heinrich, his Latin teacher and Erich Maria Remarque, having remained blind to the significance of their experiences or disappearances. Heinrich, for example, challenged the children's naïve beliefs in Nazi propaganda. It is only years later that Grass understood the details of Heinrich's father's 'anti-fascism' and his disappearance to Stutthof concentration camp. Again, he had avoided the word 'why' ('[er hatte] abermals das Wort "warum" vermieden', *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 1: 225,6). He concludes, when looking back through his 'rear-view mirror', that he was inescapably a 'young Nazi' and that no form of doubt shook his beliefs ('Ich war ja als Hitlerjunge ein Jungnazi. [...] Kein Zweifel kränkte den Glauben, nichts Subversives [...] kann mich entlasten (*Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 242).<sup>84</sup> Both during and after the war, he remained silent: 'Mir gilt leserlich die knappe Inschrift: Ich schwieg (*Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 2: 235).'

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<sup>84</sup> He originally used the same metaphor of the 'rear-view mirror' in *Aus dem Tagebuch* when the family pass the area where he had been shot during the war on their return from Prague (section 15).

His failure to act or to register even the slightest resistance is encapsulated in his description of 'Wirtunsowasnicht', the conscript who refuses to pick up a weapon in the training camp and who, Grass noted, metamorphosed into *Katz und Maus'* Mahlke (*Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 3: 296). The audacity of his action and his subsequent removal to a concentration camp marked Grass in contradictory ways. He never forgot the laconic words of this refuser but, at the same time, was relieved when the conscript disappeared and he was no longer susceptible to any doubts concerning the war:

Seine nie variierte Antwort geriet zur Redensart und ist mir für alle Zeit zitierbar geblieben:  
'Wir tun sowas nicht'.

[...]

[...ich] sehe mich, wenn nicht froh, dann erleichtert, seitdem der Junge verschwunden war.  
Der Anflug von Zweifel an allem, was sich als Glaube felsenfest gab, flaute ab.

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 3: 293, 296

Only later does the guilt and shame he feels in looking back on his responses at the time become displaced in his writing and onto Mahlke in particular.

All these references to Grass' wartime past, which of course also included Grass' admission that he had been conscripted as a seventeen year old into the SS as a Panzer captain, confirm the authorial roots of Grass' collective and particularly individual wartime guilt and shame.<sup>85</sup> He draws attention quite specifically to what his guilt and shame over his active role in National Socialism were rooted in. They stemmed from not merely ignorance but his naïve failure of 'not *wanting* to know' ('nicht wissen wollend') about his participation in such a momentous crime:

Es verging Zeit, bis ich in Schüben begriff und mir zögerlich eingestand, daß ich unwissend oder, genauer, nicht wissen wollend Anteil an einem Verbrechen hatte, das mit den Jahren nicht kleiner wurde, das nicht verjähren will, an dem ich immer noch kranke.  
Wie dem Hunger kann der Schuld und der ihr folgsamen Scham nachgesagt werden, daß sie nagt, unablässig nagt; aber gehungert habe ich nur zeitweilig, die Scham jedoch...

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 4: 404

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<sup>85</sup> As is now well-known, this was an admission which predictably elicited a media frenzy, particularly from the right-wing press. See Martin Kölbel (2007).

Michael Minden (2008) emphasised that, far from denying his role in National Socialism, all Grass' writing, including his artistic ambitions, gives voice to his sense of shame over his unquestioning acceptance of National Socialist ideology. Ann L Mason (1974) reaches similar conclusions in her argument over the earlier stages of Grass' writing when she sees Grass' scepticism as a symptom of that same sense of guilt and shame.<sup>86</sup>

The other motif from his fictions of the 1970s and 80s, which Grass brings up in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, is the 'displaced' fantasy, which seems like a confirmation of the projections of his works of the 1970s and 80s. It reads like the extreme fantasy projections Grass exploited in *örtlich betäubt* through Starusch's hallucinatory narrative of murdering his alleged former fiancée, and, as Grass notes, informs Matern's vengeful protest in *Hundejahre*.<sup>87</sup> The mother of a former girlfriend had led her daughter, Annerose, to believe that Grass might have been the murdering stonemason widely reported in the newspapers at the time. He takes revenge on the mother by railing outside the family home, angrily ripping the garden gate off its hinges and flinging it into the garden. Except that he does not rip the gate off its hinges or hurl it into the garden. He recounts fantasy versions of his 'action' rather than reality. The description is rendered doubtful by the use of Grass' favourite film metaphor, exposing it as fantasy: he rewinds and stops the film to see himself standing at the gate. He is not sure whether it was dawn or dusk. Indeed he 'wishes' he could see what the film significantly does not show: his action of ripping the gate off its hinges and throwing it in the garden.

Jetzt will ich sehen, was der rückgespulte, nun abermals voran ablaufende Film aber nicht hergibt: den zornigen jungen Mann, der das Gartentor aus den Angeln hebt und beidehändig in den Vorgarten der angstbesetzten Villa wirft.  
[...]

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<sup>86</sup> Mason was one of the first to discuss how Grass utilises different conceptions of the artist, all of which employ highly ironic and parodic approaches, as a means of indirectly confronting the past. Her discussion in her final chapter of the way Grass problematises political commitment reflects an aspect of my own argument – that Grass' fiction is characterised by a fundamental scepticism which has its roots in guilt and shame. See my concluding chapter.

<sup>87</sup> The psychological status of Matern's vengeance, together with, arguably, all his postwar exploits, is open to question; in this instance, Matern's exploits are implicitly questioned by being cast in language parodying Heidegger.

Aber der Film verlief ganz anders [...]. Stumm stand der junge Mann vor verschlossenem Tor, sah, weil er – nun bin ich sicher – nachts die Villa heimsuchte, ein erleuchtetes Mansardenfenster, wartete vergeblich auf das ihm vertraute Schattenprofil und kaute unablässig seinen Kummer. Nichts bewegte sich hinter der Gardine. [...] So endete der Film. Ich lief bergab.

– *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, [10] 8: 527

Far from the enraged scenario he plays out in his head, the ‘filmed version’ shows Grass passively hoping to see the profile of his former girlfriend before running ‘bergab’, a metaphor Grass uses for the narrator’s disappearance into his projected stories in *Der Butt*. Not only, therefore, does this fantasy sequence provide a model for projection as psychologically motivated ‘fantasy’ but it provides the rhythm of entering and departing from projected sequences that Grass employs in *Der Butt*.

In *Die Box* (2008), a pre-war German box camera – the precise make and model remain uncertain despite considerable speculation – provides Grass with a metaphor for the transformative nature of the creative process. A research assistant, Marie, takes pictures of objects ‘was [Grass] so brauchte für alle Einfälle’ (*Die Box*, ‘Übriggeblieben’, 12). These are objects, however, which are not necessarily there, at least in their original form: ‘Meine Box macht Bilder, die gibts nicht’ (*Die Box*, ‘Übriggeblieben’, 19). The development of the images in the darkroom transforms objects:

Denn was die alte Marie mit ihrer Agfa-Box knipste, kam, kaum hatte sie die Rollfilme in ihrer Dunkelkammer entwickelt, ganz anders als in Wirklichkeit raus.

– *Die Box*, ‘Ohne Blitzlicht’, 34

Indeed, the ‘father’ sees images of Marie taking photos, photos which form the basis of ‘kindliche Wünsche, sich zwanghaft wiederholende Ängste, aber auch Nachträgliches und Vorweggenommenes aus dem Eheleben der Eltern’ (*Die Box*, ‘Übriggeblieben’, 27). The box camera, indeed, is described as a ‘Wunschbox! Zauberbox! Wunderbox!’ (*Die Box*, ‘Wundermäßig’, 64). The potential of the box camera to transform objects into the fulfilment of wishes is constantly emphasised, suggesting that objects from the past do not conform to how the narrator wants them to be. The photos of the “father’s” partners turn out to reflect how he wanted them to be:

Aber als [Marie] dann rauskam aus ihrer Dunkelkammer, hab ich wirklich Augen gemacht. Ein ganzer Packer Abzüge, alle sechsmalneun, und auf allen war zu sehen, was sich Vaters Frauen womöglich gewünscht haben. Wird aber eher so gewesen sein, daß er sich seine Frauen so gewünscht hat, jede anders stark.

– *Die Box*, 'Wunschdirwas', 114

As Nana speculates – or rather, as 'father' imagines Nana speculating – the box camera 'fulfilled wishes' and 'saved the past':

Vielleicht was das Besondere, daß sie nicht nur Wünsche erfüllte, sondern computermäßig alles Vergangene speichern konnte, selbst wenn es damals noch keine Festplatten und Disketten gegeben hat.

– *Die Box*, 'Schnapschüsse', 163

What Grass here equates with the power of the imagination, with creative powers, is strikingly similar to what emerges, particularly in *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*, as projection and the transformative processes of dreamwork. Interestingly, Grass also draws attention to the fact that his female assistant – suggested by his photographer friend, Maria Rama, the book's dedicatee, who took numerous photographs of his artwork and studio – seems to play a mediating role. She comes from Masuria, from the eastern parts of the former 'Reich', like Grass and his mother. Is there a sense that Maria fulfils the function of a mother, providing the secure framework for Grass' stories, a psychoanalytic interpretation Grass plays with both in *Die Box* and *Der Butt*? In the sixth month of *Der Butt*, Ilsebill and Griselde Dubertin (masked versions of Veronika Schröter and Anna Grass) make fun of his dependency on his mother, much to the narrator's consternation. *Die Box*, however, insists:

'An meinem Mutterkomplex verdiene nur ich!'

– *Die Box*, 'Wunschdirwas', 106

Hidden behind the ironies, of course, could be Grass' concession that female mediation - women and sexuality – plays a significant role in his writing.

The other major strain in *Die Box* which is relevant to my argument is the role of the audience.

'Father' invites his children from his four main relationships to contribute to a 'film' he will direct.

*Die Box* is constructed as a chronological narrative but episodically, with each child telling her or his

version of events, although all recognise the role that Marie and her box camera plays. But they themselves question their presence in the narrative. This, however, seems less like a vain search for an author, Pirandello-like, and more like an author searching for a means of allaying his anxieties through 'imagined' dialogue. As Lara 'speculates':

Wer weiß, was wir sonst noch alles nicht wissen...

[...]

...so daß man später, wenn man das las, nie genau wußte, was ist nun wahr davon...

Womöglich sind auch wir, wie wir hier sitzen und reden, bloß ausgedacht – oder was?

– *Die Box*, 'Wünschdirwas', 118

And Nana underlines that idea, returning to the film metaphor:

'Und dann soll auch noch alles unter Papas Regie laufen. Er denkt sich uns einfach aus!' ruft Nana.

– *Die Box*, 'Krummes Ding', 170

In drawing attention to the indirect use of an audience, Grass seems again to be confirming an approach he had used in his fiction. He points knowingly to the internal nature of his fiction, which represents a signal feature of his autobiographically-informed writing of the 1970s and 80s. The camouflage of an indirect audience is perhaps most overtly employed in *Aus dem Tagebuch* (where the children play that role) and *Der Butt* (where Ilsebill fulfils that function).

The two autobiographies reveal crucial elements which Grass uses in the construction of his autobiographically-informed fictions. *Die Box* in particular points to the internal nature of the fictions and their exploitation of an indirect address. Its central metaphor draws attention to the transformative processes Grass incorporates in his narratives (through condensation, displacement and projection). *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, on the other hand, exposes some of the key incidents at the root of Grass' wartime guilt and shame that form the authorial elements underlying Grass' projections. In my concluding chapter, I aim to consider the overall implications of why Grass incorporates projection in these autobiographically-informed works.

## 7 Conclusion

I have been suggesting that Grass gives voice to a bleak social and political critique as well as his own wartime guilt and shame in his three main autobiographically-informed fictions of the 1970s and 80s, *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, *Der Butt* and *Die Rättin*. In *Aus dem Tagebuch*, for example, doubts about the possibility and nature of social and political change stem from the threat of reactionary interests exploiting the passage of time. Grass' main examples of the political appropriation of the passage of time in this work cover two shockingly oppressive abuses of socialist power, which balance the National Socialist totalitarianism the narrator struggles with. Grass, through his narrator, cites both the Bolshevik suppression of communist-sympathising Kronstadt sailors in 1921 and the Soviet suppression of liberal socialist reform, Dubček's 'Prague Spring', in 1968 Czechoslovakia. In *Der Butt*, a similar scepticism over the possibility of social and political change underlies the narrative. In this work, scepticism takes the form of concerns over whether the subversion of patriarchy will result in the replacement of one form of patriarchy by another, albeit in female guise. *Der Butt* also opens up the question of the limitations of conceptualising change: for Grass' narrator seems trapped in a binary conception of gender difference. Whereas Grass clearly parodies this biological conception, he himself does not appear to be able to offer any alternative, except to decry, via his narrator, the limitations of binary thinking early in month 1.<sup>88</sup> As with the references to dominant economic and political interests in *Aus dem Tagebuch*, two conspicuously symptomatic examples of dominant and manipulative power are recounted in *Der Butt*. The first relates to the patricians' manufactured conflict between Danzig's 14th century beer-workers and coopers (initially depicted in month 2) whilst the second involves the equally stage-

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<sup>88</sup>*Der Butt*, [6] 1: 13: 'Vielleicht haben wir nur vergessen, daß es noch mehr gibt. Was Drittes. Auch sonst, auch politisch, als Möglichkeit.' I do not see this in the concrete political terms John Sandford (1990) proposes. When the narrator tells Ilsebill she has to think of men's desire for alternative possibilities in more dialectical terms (*Der Butt*, [6] 1: 12), it seems as if the 'third way' is being equated with the resolution of a dialectical process. In my view, any 'synthesis' of a contradictory relationship is provisional, part of an ever-developing process. A 'third way' does therefore represent 'possibility' but a possibility which can never be fully realised.



managed shipyard workers' strike in 1970 Gdańsk (depicted in month 9). With *Die Rättin*, the emphasis is placed on ideological dissimulation – on the way politicians and capitalists directly and indirectly manage society's perceptions of the nuclear and environmental threats (of the present) and National Socialist atrocities (of the past). In both cases, ideologies of re-apportioned blame and responsibility (contemporary 1980s society) and of consumerism (postwar society) deflect societies from recognising the actual conditions that shape them.

A sense of Grass' own wartime guilt and shame over complicity with National Socialism as well as a failure to question it in any form accompanies this social and political critique. In *Aus dem Tagebuch*, guilt and shame compels the narrator, and through him, Grass, to commit himself to challenging 'die verstreichende Zeit' in his fiction. In *Der Butt*, references to wartime guilt and shame are more elliptical but nevertheless perceptible. The narrator's letter to Grass' former Gymnasium teacher, Dr Stachnik (month 2), represents the most obvious case – a case also underlined by *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, as noted in chapter four. In *Die Rättin*, on the other hand, wartime guilt and shame again assume a more prominent form, being embedded in Oskar's attempts to create a film scenario – itself a constantly self-atrophying projection.

As I have argued, neither critique nor 'confession' is directly expressed. Grass' pessimistic social and political arguments do not, therefore, unequivocally equate to a searing critique of the way dominant economic and political interests militate against social and political change, condemning societies to a cyclical repetition of history. Similarly, the wartime guilt and shame which emerge in each work do not simply represent a personal confession. I have been claiming that the indirect expression of the two sets of issues arises from the narration of each work. First of all, Grass creates a highly ambiguous first-person narrator, where the degree to which it can be identified with Grass himself is never resolved. In addition, Grass projects a range of narrator figures and stories which depend on psychological transformations and consequently conceal their causes. These

projections are integrated within narratives which reconstruct the unconscious as conceived by Freud and thus exploit the condensations and displacements which Freud claimed characterised it. I discussed these issues in terms of a dual projection giving rise to a social and political critique emanating from the constructed narrator and an embedded wartime guilt and shame associated with the author, Grass himself. The key question remains: why does Grass use projection and its Freudian rationale to create such highly indirect, ambiguous narratives?

I conclude that Grass uses projection and Freud's theory of the unconscious on which it relies to raise questions and render uncertain what the projections reveal. Grass adheres to his original artistic 'manifesto' set out in 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner' as I have indicated throughout. What he presents not only registers uncertainty and ambiguity, it leaves open the possibility of multiple interpretation, of pluralistic possibility. For 'meaning' is dynamic: whatever is claimed is always open to further interpretation and change. That is what *Der Butt's* narrator implies with his assertions that punctuate the novel and which is stated once again at its conclusion: 'Das ist die Wahrheit, jedesmal anders erzählt' (*Der Butt*, [6] 9: 693). As Grass declared in 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner', his 'preferences' are to straddle the boundary between internal and external:

Oft bei Ostwind,  
wenn die Zwischenwände umblättern,  
ein neues Kapitel sich auftut,  
lehne ich glücklich am Zaun,  
ohne die Hühner zählen zu müssen –  
weil sie zahllos sind und sich ständig vermehren.

– 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner', [1]: 9

He recognises that his ideas are constantly being generated and form part of a dynamic process, giving rise to provisional meanings.

Grass consequently combines his social and political critique with doubts about its tenability.

Indeed, the possibility of hope for some kind of social and political change depends on how far his claims can be challenged. At some stage, the cycle *may* be broken. Attempts to institute social and

political change *may* succeed in preventing appropriation and marginalisation by dominant economic and political interests, even if that possibility may only represent ‘ein schöner Traum’ (in the finely ambiguous words of the female rat at the end of *Die Rättin*, [7] 12: 633). The Sisyphean cast to Grass’ writing – his compulsion to create and challenge juxtaposed with the recognition of the potential futility of doing so – leaves open the possibility for some kind of tenuous hope. Most obviously, the ambiguous and unresolved narrative conclusions of his fictions could be interpreted as suggesting hope. *Aus dem Tagebuch* not only concludes with its ambiguous narrative resolution (the double ending) but with the just-perceptible expression of hope registered in the Dürer quincentenary lecture, reproduced as section 30 of the work. The title ‘Vom Stillstand im Fortschritt’ plays with uncertainty: stasis may only be apparent and form part of a gradual, almost imperceptible social and political progress or it may be real and permanent reflecting an illusory, because cyclical, social and political progress. *Der Butt* ends with the image of women striding into a future which cannot be certainly predicted, even though it is a future where men are marginalised. And *Die Rättin* concludes, as I have already noted, with a hope for a regenerated future which the female rat nevertheless dampens with her ironic judgment. Indeed, that image (‘ein schöner Traum’) captures Ernst Bloch’s conception of political change as hope, a blend of Marx with Freud – a ‘daydream’.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, Grass’ references to his own wartime guilt and shame raise questions about his relationship to his past and the significance of that guilt and shame. *As Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* emphasises, Grass cannot recognise himself as a ‘young Nazi’.<sup>90</sup> This raises questions about how far the ‘self’ can be considered as anything but a social construct rather than a determining, coherent ‘essence’. As the controlling metaphor of the autobiography suggests – which, as discussed in

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<sup>89</sup> See *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*: Part II (‘Das antizipierende Bewusstsein’), sections 9–14. Grass of course makes intertextual reference to Bloch in the final section of *Die Rättin* as well as in *Der Butt*, where the narrator observes an older man reading Bloch in India (month 3).

<sup>90</sup> He suggests in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* that he cannot avoid reaching the conclusion that ‘[Er] war ja als Hitlerjunge ein Jungnazi’ ([10] ‘Was sich verkapselt hat’, 242).

chapter three, has a long heritage in Grass' formulations – the self is an illusory concept with no central, constitutive core. Nevertheless, Grass' writing indicates how far shame over his past failings, in particular his failure never to have conceived of challenging National Socialism, has determined his subsequent commitment to challenge through his writing. In writing against 'die verstreichende Zeit', he attempts to challenge how the passing of time can be appropriated and marginalised by dominant powers to their advantage. And despite his sublimating shame in all his writing, including most conspicuously in his autobiographically-informed writing, Grass recognises that shame can never be dissipated, that there can be no complete catharsis.<sup>91</sup>

These two sets of claims – almost suspended in their narratives from definitive formulation, like the 'Windei' in 'Die Vorzüge der Windhühner' – raise further questions about the psychological processes which give rise to them. The irresolution of Grass' projected narratives, constructed in terms of internal conflict and debate, also suggest that the 'epistemological' processes they entail represent claims which cannot be validated. Grass' narratives are not only unresolved, therefore, they are necessarily indeterminate.

This is the epistemological argument I referred to in my opening two chapters and which Grass broaches without fully embarking upon. The uncertainties of what his projected narratives reveal raise epistemological questions about how far we can know anything with certainty, how far we can validate the claims we make. The claims, therefore, that social and political change will always remain impossible can never be fully validated. Similarly, the limitations of rationality and irrationality, voiced in *Die Rättin* and underlying *Der Butt* in the form of the limitations of gender and its social construction, constrain the resolution of any claims to definitive 'knowledge'.

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<sup>91</sup> Michael Minden (2008), Stuart Taberner (2008 and 2009) and Rebecca Braun (2008b) all provide readings that see shame, albeit with slightly different emphases, as the predominant motivation for Grass' writing and the form that writing takes.

Despite only broaching these questions, they are integral in my view to the form Grass' narratives take. In the same way that the internal nature of the narratives is masked by indirect audience address, the highly vocal conflict between the narrators and their various interlocutors masks the dialectical construction of Grass' fictions. In *Aus dem Tagebuch*, the narrator and Zweifel's circumspect hope for gradual change are dialectically juxtaposed; *Der Butt* features the narrator and his stories which debate dialectically what is expressed as Ilsebill's demand for revolutionary change and the subversion of patriarchy; and *Die Rättin* pitches the claims that potential nuclear and environmental devastation are being covered up against the failure to find the means to challenge them. In addition, *örtlich betäubt*, an important precursor of the autobiographically-informed fictions I am dealing with, provides a compact example of dialectic, played out by Starusch and his projection of the dentist. The dialectical structure Grass employs in each of these works refrains from any definitive resolution and consequently embodies a dynamic, constantly formative and ever-provisional process towards merely provisional 'meaning'.

Surprisingly, given Grass' vociferous parody of Hegel in his works, Grass seems to be drawing on the internal dialectic of Hegel's *Die Phänomenologie* (1807), which indirectly informs Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944) and *Negative Dialektik* (1966). Grass follows the dialectic Hegel sets out in *Die Phänomenologie* – effectively an epistemology – which emphasises the formative and provisional nature of any resolutions and therefore sharply differs from the deterministic (and right-wing) Hegel, whom Grass mercilessly parodies, notably in *Aus dem Tagebuch*.<sup>92</sup> Although I have been unable to focus on this aspect of Grass' fiction in this dissertation, I consider it an important issue for future Grass research.

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<sup>92</sup> Terry Pinkard (1994) and Frederic Jameson (2010) both argue for the more 'formative' reading of Hegel's *Die Phänomenologie* which is reflected in Grass' works of the 1970s and 80s.

My argument stresses, therefore, that Grass *exploits* projection and its Freudian rationale to raise questions. These range from doubts about the possibility of lasting social and political change, questions about the psychological significance of his wartime past and the concept of the self to epistemological issues arguing for the indeterminacy of all attempts to establish definitive 'meaning'. Despite the irresolution of these claims, Grass remains committed to continuing with his questioning. As he put it in 'Schreiben nach Auschwitz' (1990): '[...] doch dem Schreiben nach Auschwitz kann kein Ende versprochen werden, es sei denn, das Menschengeschlecht gäbe sich auf' (*Essays und Reden 1980–2007*, [12]: 261). Paradoxically, the very indeterminacy he identifies may provide the sole conditions for any form of hope: indeterminacy entails provisionality and thus the recognition that there will always be other stories to tell, other interpretations of social and political structures to develop.

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