

## Jean-Paul Sartre's *Reflexions sur la question juive* (1946) as Blueprint for Grass's Jewish Figures: From *Hundejahre* to *Im Krebsgang*

One of the reasons for this article is my continuing disquiet over the figure of the half-Jewish character Eddi Amsel in *Hundejahre*. What has always disturbed me about the plump freckly boy, who develops into an artiste extraordinaire, is that he not only survives the brutal assault on him by Walter Matern and his associates in the SA, he afterwards pursues a successful career in government-sponsored show-business during the hey-day of the Third Reich. What is more after the war Amsel becomes a spiritus rector of the Economic Miracle, a wealthy industrialist apparently calling all the shots in the new republic who has once and for all turned the tables on his erstwhile treacherous friend, the deadbeat Matern. As media mogul and scarecrow manufacturer intent on holding the mirror up to the recent Nazi past, Amsel even commissions the writing of the novel *Hundejahre*, enlisting Matern to write the third of its three books. [According to the novel's idiosyncratic system of imagery, human beings erect scarecrows as protective mechanisms, either as surrogate selves or as ideological totems. Scarecrows also imitate us by re-presenting our actions as performances for us to watch.] While the novel depicts the mountain of bones at the Stutthof concentration camp just along the coast from Danzig and explains that everyone on the outside of the camp who wanted to see them could do so since they piled up in plain sight, through the presence of the post-war Amsel *Hundejahre* appears at the same time to endorse the view that Jews dominated business and the media even after 1945 after thriving under cover in the Third Reich. It also makes light of the horrific beating up to the extent that all Amsel needs is a new set of gold teeth to be good to go again.<sup>1</sup>

Amsel is named after the poet Paul Celan whom Grass knew in Paris while he was writing *Die Blechtrommel*. Celan's family name was Antschel, which he re-arranged into Celan. The correspondence between Grass and Celan attests to their enduring friendship; Celan possessed all of Grass's books and taught *Die Blechtrommel* at the Ecole Normale Supérieure.<sup>2</sup> Celan, who is also thought to be a model for Sigismund Markus in *Die Blechtrommel*, was not offended by recognising his name in *Hundejahre*.<sup>3</sup> That Grass, in common with other writer colleagues, did not take Claire

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the novel's critics, see Hauke Stroszek, 'Eddi Amsel, Walter Matern und ihrer beider Abkunft. Glossen zum Doppel-Roman *Hundejahre* von Günter Grass', in *Integration und Ausgrenzung. Studien zur deutsche-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*. Festschrift für Hans Otto Horch zum 65. Geburtstag, edited by Mark H. Gelber et al. (Paderborn: Niemeyer, 2009), pp.391-402.

<sup>2</sup> Arno Barnert, 'Eine "herzgraue" Freundschaft. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Paul Celan und Günter Grass', *Textkritische Beiträge* 9 (2004), pp.65-127.

<sup>3</sup> Celan Handbuch. Leben, Werk, Wirkung, edited by Markus May, Peter Goßens and Jürgen Lehmann (Stuttgart, 2008), p.363.

Goll's allegations of plagiarism against him as seriously as Celan believed he should have done caused him distress, but that is another story. Even Marcel Reich-Ranicki, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, with whom Grass was rarely on friendly terms, expressed some admiration for his second novel.<sup>4</sup>

*Hundejahre* cannot be deliberately endorsing anti-Semitic views, if it is even echoing them at all. But given current public confusion over Günter Grass and what Jean-Paul Sartre called 'the Jewish Question', which was generated by the revelation of his SS-secret in 2006 and anti-Israel poem 'Was gesagt werden muss' in 2012, I want to try to get straight what the novel is saying and how and why it says it. I turn to Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* and suggest that in between writing *Die Blechtrommel* in 1959, which depicts a trio of Jewish male characters according to the conventions of social realism, and *Hundejahre* four years later in 1963, Grass became aware of Sartre's characterisation of Jews, Jewishness and anti-Semitism (the German translation of Sartre's essay was re-issued in 1960), and that it helped to shape his representation of Jewish characters and Jewishness in his subsequent fiction.

Sartre wrote most of *Réflexions sur la question juive*, which runs to some 90 pages in the autumn of 1944, immediately after the liberation of Paris in August that year but before that of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen in January and April 1945. He mentions the Nazi gas chambers, but only once, and in connection with the Polish city of Lublin, which contained on its outskirts the Majdenak concentration camp, which was liberated by the Red Army in July 1944. *Réflexions sur la question juive* came out in full at the end of 1946 and over the following few decades established itself as a minor landmark in Sartre's prodigious oeuvre, both as an 'existential analysis of the relation between Self and Other' and as an example of the intellectual's self-proclaimed duty to bear witness to his times.<sup>5</sup> A leading historian of anti-Semitism in France recently described it as 'an extraordinarily astute work in psychological as well as historical terms', devoting a third of a survey chapter on anti-Semitism in France to it.<sup>6</sup> Its status and in particular Sartre's terms and points of reference have inevitably also been contested, in particular by the American Jewish critic Susan Suleiman in the mid-1990s, as explained later in this article.

Two English translations followed quickly in 1948, the British version under the more literary title of *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*, which is the focus of the first of Sartre's four subsections. It is a

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<sup>4</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Bilderbogen mit Marionetten und Vogelscheuchen', in *Unser Grass* (DVA: Munich, 2003), pp.45-58.

<sup>5</sup> See Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question. Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (London / Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p.126.

<sup>6</sup> Richard J. Golsan, 'Antisemitism in France: Dreyfus, Vichy and Beyond', in *Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Richard S. Levy and Albert S. Lindemann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), pp.136-49, here p.142.

subject which Sartre himself treated in a literary format in the pre-war novella *L'Enfance d'un chef*, in which the upper-middle class protagonist Lucien Fleurier finds the solution to his confused identity by choosing anti-Semitism as he enters adulthood.<sup>7</sup> This essentially irrational and arbitrarily assembled set of beliefs gives the anti-Semite a ready-made sense of selfhood and superiority through membership of a dominant group. The contemporaneous American translation of *Réflexions sur la question juive* published by Schocken Books gave equal focus to the object of the anti-Semite's antagonism in its title: *Antisemite and Jew*.<sup>8</sup> Both the British and American translators thus both avoid Sartre's preferred term 'Jewish Question'. *Antisemite and Jew* was re-issued in the USA in 1962, 1970, and 1976, making it the dominant version in the English-speaking world. In 1999 the New York based journal *October* devoted an issue to Sartre's essay edited by the distinguished scholar Denis Hollier after a conference held the previous year; this in turn prompted a conference in Paris in 2003 followed by a volume of proceedings.<sup>9</sup> Out of print now?

1948 also saw the first German version of *Réflexions sur la question juive* published by the Zurich-based Europa Verlag under the less racy but more accurate title of *Betrachtungen zur Judenfrage*, though with the added subtitle: *Psychoanalyse des Antisemitismus*. With its echo of Thomas Mann, who had explored his attitudes towards the First World War in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, the German title returns Sartre's work to philosophy while adding the dimension of psychoanalysis, which Sartre himself had not stressed in the text. The Europa Verlag was founded in 1933 as an outlet for émigré writers, such as Ernst Bloch and Heinrich Mann.<sup>10</sup> In 1960 this translation was reprinted in a paperback volume containing two further essays written in 1946.<sup>11</sup> *Réflexions sur la question juive* was then re-translated into German in 1994 for the complete edition of Sartre's works under the simpler and more accurate title *Überlegungen zur Judenfrage*, with related contributions by Sartre on Israel.<sup>12</sup> My edition of this volume was reprinted in 2017. Sartre's essay has thus become a classic in French, English and German. While it took arguably a little longer for this to happen in German, it is today better established in German than in English. Judging by the

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<sup>7</sup> French first publication, Le Mur. 'Die Kindheit eines Chefs' was published by Rowohlt in 1950 with four other short works of fiction. Hans Reisiger and Heinrich Wallfisch are listed as the translators.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Portrait of the Anti-Semite* (London: Secker & Warburg / Lindsay Drummond, 1948), tr. Erik de Mauny; *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), tr. George J. Becker. See *October* 87 (1999), edited by Denis Hollier, pp.177-79 for full bibliographical details of the English-language versions.

<sup>9</sup> *Sartre et les juifs. Actes du colloque international 2003*, ed. Ingrid Galster (Paris: La Découverte, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Betrachtungen zur Judenfrage. Psychoanalyse des Antisemitismus* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1948), tr. Hedi Wurzian.

<sup>11</sup> *Drei Essays*. Mit einem Nachwort von Walter Schmiele (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1960), rep. 1980 and 1983. The two other essays are *Ist der Existentialismus ein Humanismus? (L'existentialisme est un humanisme)* and *Materialismus und Revolution (Materialisme et Revolution)*. All references are to this edition.

<sup>12</sup> *Überlegungen zur Judenfrage*, in *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1994), tr. Vincent von Wroblewsky.

number of reprints and the critical discussion, interest in the text has been most sustained in America.<sup>13</sup> In the 1990s Sartre's views generated some critical debate in the USA, which was subsequently echoed in France but matched only by uncommented scholarly apparatus in Germany.<sup>14</sup> A recent book ... The Germans, in contrast, have translated, disseminated, and commemorated Sartre's work but refrained from analysing it.

The German publishing history of *Réflexions sur la question juive* can be mapped on to trends in reception of Sartre's thought (for instance, the spike of interest after his death when it was re-issued twice in quick succession) and in the development of public concern about the Nazi past and how it should be remembered. Yet it is surprising that it is not a reference point in the field of Memory Studies or Franco-German cultural relations.<sup>15</sup> It is a book, I shall argue, which has exercised influence in Germany under the radar as a number of its ideas, especially those concerning the construction and constructed-ness of Jewish identity and the bad faith of the anti-Semite became mainstream and thus detached from their source.

Sartre presents anti-Semitism as a universal phenomenon and approaches it from an analytical rather than historical perspective. There is for him certainly nothing distinctly French or German about hostility to Jews and presumed 'Jewish behaviour'. One of his more elaborate historical examples involves nineteenth-century Poland in which he debunks claims made by Polish nationalists that Polish Jews did not back the cause of Poland because they sided with the Russian occupiers (pp.??). Sartre points out that the Russians unleashed the Cossacks on Jews who lived in Russia itself, but practised a policy of divide and rule in Russian Poland, regarding Jews in both countries as impossible to assimilate. There were consequently practical and material reasons for the behaviour of Polish Jews in Russian Poland who certainly had no grounds for supporting the Russians. For the most part Sartre is discussing the case of France as an informed observer, but he had also spent up to a year in Germany shortly after Hitler came to power. He gives an account of a friend who looked completely Jewish to French eyes but passed as a non-Jew in Germany because he was blond with blue eyes. He recalls another who looked Corsican in France but Jewish in Germany (pp.??). 'In truth, every country has its Jews and our image of the Jew is different from that of our neighbours'.

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<sup>13</sup> On this debate, see two contributions to Hollier's special issue of *October*: Sandy Petrey, 'Reflections on the Goyische Question', pp.117-28 and Susan Suleiman, 'Rereading Rereading', pp.129-38.

<sup>14</sup> Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre and Decolonisation* (Chicago, 2018). In BL

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Littler does not cite it, for instance, in *Alfred Andersch (1914-1980) and the Reception of French Thought in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen, 1991).

The essay has three sub-sections followed by a conclusion: the first is on the character of the anti-Semite; the second on his ostensible adversary the democrat who wants Jews to stop being Jewish so that they can assimilate fully into the French Republic; and the third on notions of the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic Jew'. For an understanding of Grass's Jewish characters after *Die Blechtrommel*, it is the first and third sub-sections on the anti-Semite and notions of authentic and inauthentic Jewishness which are of interest. Sartre's core thesis is that anti-Semites define what Jewishness is and who counts as a Jew and that consequently both the concept and the type can vary greatly across time and cultures. Anti-Semitism is irrational and none of its tenets bear serious scrutiny. The anti-Semite can vary his arguments to suit the facts because his arguments are not evidence based. Jews in turn are aware that the anti-Semite's gaze rests upon them and behave in ways which are supposed to be Jewish or they define themselves in opposition to such stereotypes (what Sartre calls the 'inauthentic Jew'). 'inauthentic Jews are people who are taken to be Jews by others and who have chosen to flee from this situation' (p.?) The 'inauthentic Jew' denies his character by attempting not to conform to the anti-Semite's stereotypes --- and it is the male sex which Sartre looks at, by the way: he only mentions Jewish women in the context of sex. There are many links between definitions of Jewishness and femininity, however. Sartre was working on *Réflexions sur la question juive* at the same time as his collaborator Simone de Beauvoir was researching *Le seconde sexe*, first published in 1949, the most famous line of which runs: 'You are not born woman, you become one'. It is no coincidence that Grass bases one of his biggest novels (*Der Butt*) on the male-female binary and that he has come into criticism from feminists for his understanding of femininity and female roles and characteristics. Some key quotations give the gist of *Réflexions sur la question juive*: 'existierte der Jude nicht, der Antisemit würde ihn erfinden' (p.12); 'The Jew is a person who other people consider to be a Jew' (p.44); 'The Jew, because he knows he is under observation, takes the initiative and attempts to look at himself through the eyes of others' (p.60); 'It is thus the *idea* that we make for ourselves of what is Jewish which seems to determine history rather than "historical facts" which bring forth the idea' (p.14); 'The anti-Semite has chosen hatred because hatred is a belief; first of all he chose to devalue words and reasoned arguments' (p.16); '[the anti-Semite] is someone who is afraid. Not of Jews, obviously, but of himself, of his consciousness, his freedom, his impulses, his responsibility, loneliness, change, society and the world; he is afraid of everything except of the Jews' (p.35). We can apply all these concepts and propositions to Grass's Jewish figures and their persecutors in Grass's fiction after *Die Blechtrommel*, from *Hundejahre* through to *Im Krebsgang*.

The best literary illustration of Sartre's thesis is possibly not by Günter Grass at all but contained in a neo-Brechtian parable play by the Swiss-German dramatist, Max Frisch. Entitled

*Andorra*, it was premiered in 1961, thus in between the re-issue of *Betrachtungen zur Judenfrage* and the publication of *Hundejahre*, and elaborated from a sketch published in Frisch's diary entitled 'Der andorranische Jude' and dated 1946.<sup>16</sup> Like Sartre, Frisch is not historically specific. The lead character Andri is wrongly held to be Jewish, like Hermann Ott in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* and Wolfgang Stremplin in *Im Krebsgang*. Whether Frisch was directly influenced by Sartre is not mentioned in the scholarship as far as I have been able to ascertain.<sup>17</sup> Books and pamphlets by Sartre got noticed, however. Frisch read French and lived in Zurich where the first German translation of Sartre's essay was published.

Grass met Frisch for the first time in 1955. There was regular contact in the mid-1970s when Frisch moved to West-Berlin to be near Grass and his circle in Friedenau.<sup>18</sup> But Grass and Sartre? As with Frisch and Sartre, there is little to go on. As a young man Grass was a keen reader of French Existentialism, so he tells us in *Kopfgeburt* in a passage beginning 'Ich war auf Du und Du mit dem Existentialismus' which has often been quoted. In *Schreiben nach Auschwitz* ...

Have we paid less attention to Sartre on account of his own favouring of Camus in their famous dispute which erupted in 1952? For Grass, Sartre, some twenty-two years his senior, was a force to be reacted against; he rejected Sartre's idea of committed literature and fashioned his own concept of the writer as citizen in opposition to it. Yet while Camus died just as Grass was becoming famous, Grass and Sartre overlapped for two decades as the leading public intellectuals in their respective countries. Both also visited Israel for the first time in March 1967 and were for most of their lives staunch defenders of the Israeli state.

Sartre's most famous visit to Germany in this period was that he paid to the imprisoned Andreas Baader in 1974. There perhaps lies one of the reasons for his and Grass's lack of interest in one another. As a French writer or intellectual, either you showed solidarity the leader of the Red Army Faction or you entered into a discussion with the champion of reformist social democracy. Grass claimed Camus as his own and saw Sartre as his antithesis. In an interview in 1986 ... Grass had little time for either the *nouveau roman* and its practitioners or the Parisian revolutionaries in May 1968. His interlocutors in France were the writer Nicole Casanova (b.1934), who published a book-length interview with Grass in 1979, Françoise Giroud (1916-2003), a writer and feminist but also government minister in Giscard's right-of-centre administration in the mid-1970s, and latterly the

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<sup>16</sup> Max Frisch, *Die Tagebücher. 1946-1949/1966-1971* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp.32-34.

<sup>17</sup> For example, *Frischs Andorra*, edited by Walter Schmitz and Ernst Wendt. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Materialien (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Frisch, *Die Tagebücher*, pp.715-16. And *Aus dem Berliner Journal*, ed. Thomas Strässle with Margit Unser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2014), pp.158-60

theorist and anti-capitalist thinker Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002).<sup>19</sup> It is thus rather odd that there are convergences with Sartre when it comes to their understanding and characterisation of both Jewishness and the character of the anti-Semite.

In many respects Eddi Amsel's protector turned persecutor the unpredictable Walter Matern in *Hundejahre* is a classic Sartrean anti-Semite, an unstable personality and would-be actor who tries on roles to see if they fit. A one-time communist, athlete, would-be Don Juan, fantasist, and alcoholic, Matern's progress through his twenties recalls in some respects Sartre's Lucien Fleurier in *L'Enfance d'un chef*. Resentment of his sensitive, artistically inclined friend Amsel temporarily fills a gap in his identity which results in his participation in the beating up of Amsel, but Matern discards this identity shortly after adopting it. Any quotations? From the beating up sequence?

But he ends the war a certified anti-Fascist after getting sent to a penal battalion for making subversive comments as an instructor at anti-aircraft battery near Danzig. Matern is an idealist or ideologue who needs to believe in something, but it does not really matter to him what that something is. In the post-war sequence Matern seeks out former comrades in order to seduce their partners to infect them with venereal disease, or at least this is what he claims: he also says that he has had sex with the Virgin Mary, Queen Luise of Prussia, and Eva Braun.

Two of Grass's acknowledged sources for Jewish-Aryan binary are nineteenth-century classics of German realism: Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) and Wilhelm Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor* (1864), both of which he found in his mother's bookcase and read as a child.<sup>20</sup> Both novels contrast an upright, clean-living gentile bourgeois (Hans Unwirsch and Anton Wolfarth respectively) with an untrustworthy, money-motivated, and unhygienic Jew (Moses Freudenstein and Veitel Itzig). Amsel is called 'Itzich' at more than one point in *Hundejahre* to underline the connection, though this had become a derogatory synonym for Jews more generally. Neither Freytag nor Raabe is said to have been anti-Semitic (indeed Freytag was a classic liberal who demonstrably opposed anti-Semites), but each novelist exploited grotesque Jewish stereotypes for narrative effect, which delighted actual anti-Semites who celebrated their novels.<sup>21</sup> Graham Greene did the same in his pre-war fiction; Harry Lime, one of his greatest villains, is a composite of anti-Semitic clichés (money-driven, preferring the darkness of doorways and underground sewers to daylight, disloyal, morally bankrupt with a scheme which infects innocent children with fatal adulterated medicine),

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<sup>19</sup> References.

<sup>20</sup> As recounted in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*.

<sup>21</sup> See Benedict Schofield, 'Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*: Politics, Aesthetics, and the Bestseller', in *The German Bestseller in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Charlotte Woodford and Benedict Schofield (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2012), pp.21-38.

but there is no suggestion that Lime is Jewish. Greene recognised that after 1945 he could no longer be anti-Semitic about Jews any more.<sup>22</sup> Is something similar going on with respect to Grass's portrayal of Amsel in the post-war sequence with the difference being that pre-war his father's Jewishness was very much integral to the story?

In *Hundejahre* Grass adapts Raabe and Freytag's binary contrast by making the opposites first into friends, then antagonists. Otto Weininger's treatise *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which contains a chapter on Jewishness, is a named source insofar as Amsel's father Albrecht Amsel modelled his behaviour as a Jew trying not to be Jewish on what Weininger identified as non-Jewish habits and characteristics. Amsel tells us that in the first decade of the twentieth century this book sold so well that it could be found in households which read no other books apart from the Bible.<sup>23</sup> According to Weininger, Jews have no souls, they cannot sing or do sport but they have the opportunity to overcome the Jewishness within themselves. As a result Albrecht Amsel joins the church choir, founds a gymnastics association, runs relays and establishes the game of *schlagball* in the region. Sartre would have been struck by Weininger's argument that both gender and Jewish identities are entirely constructed. For Weininger, the Jew is to the non-Jew what the female is to the male --- passive rather than active, imitative rather than creative, material rather than spiritual, emotional rather than rational, mentally unpredictable rather than physically robust and steadfast. The good news is that through hard work and application we can all overcome our female or Jewish tendencies. This can also happen in the other direction. Albrecht Amsel's annotated copy of Weininger's book lies on his son's desk as he is writing the first part of *Hundejahre*. In Sartre's terms, Amsel senior is an 'inauthentic Jew' as he tries to contradict others' prejudiced conceptions of what a Jew should be like. His son is also an accomplished singer, but he is imitative in his art and ironic about everything.

Dismantling the Jew / Gentile binary in German fiction did not stop with Grass. Edgar Hilsenrath varies the pairing of Amsel and Matern in Max Schulz and Itzig Finkelstein in *Der Nazi und der Friseur*, but he reverses the physical stereotypes, making the Aryan Schulz, who makes a career in the SS, dark-haired and hook-nosed with bad teeth and thick lips, while the Jewish Finkelstein has blond hair and blue eyes. In 1945 the war criminal Schulz steals the deceased Finkelstein's identity and makes a new existence for himself as a Jewish barber in Tel Aviv. It is the Nazi posing as a Jew, however, who survives, in contrast to *Hundejahre*, in which the half-Jewish son of the inauthentic

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<sup>22</sup> See Lisa Silverman, 'Absent Jews and Invisible Antisemitism in Postwar Vienna: *Der Prozeß* (1948) and *The Third Man* (1949)', *Journal of Contemporary History* 52:2 (2017), pp.211-28.

<sup>23</sup> *Hundejahre* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1997), vol. 5, *Werkausgabe* edited by Volker Neuhaus and Daniela Hermes, p.40.



Jew triumphs after 1945 while his treacherous friend turned persecutor is obliged to work for him. Hilsenrath probably did not have to read Sartre to come up with the idea of a Jew looking like an Aryan and vice versa, but Sartre expresses it explicitly, as I have shown. It took Hilsenrath a decade to find a publisher in Germany for a novel which treated the Holocaust with such unashamed and apparently disrespectful irony.<sup>24</sup>

To situate the depiction of Amsel, I will review the Jewish characters in Grass's other fiction, both prior to *Hundejahre*, in other words *Die Blechtrommel*, and after it, which means considering *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972), *Die Rättin* (1986), *Ein weites Feld* (1995) and *Im Krebsgang* (2002). My thesis is that between *Die Blechtrommel* and *Hundejahre*, Grass started paying closer attention to ideas which Sartre articulated and that his approach became increasingly abstract or allegorical as a result. *Die Blechtrommel* contains three more or less realistically portrayed middle-aged Jewish males, whose Jewish identity is marked by their speech, dress, appearance, and mannerisms. Sigismund Markus' suicide on Kristallnacht denies his tormentors the opportunity to humiliate him and provides the novel with a powerful crescendo at the end of Book One. Towards the end of Book Two Mariusz Fajngold appears in Danzig, a survivor of Treblinka where the rest of his numerous family perished. If Grass captured the authentic timbres of Jewish-Danzig German with Markus, as critics who should know claimed that he did, with Fajngold's back story as a participant in the Treblinka revolt, he shows himself at the forefront of Holocaust history. Some of the novel's most powerful prose is devoted to Fajngold's waking vision of his dead family. Fajngold's proposal to Oskar's stepmother and first love Maria and suggestion that he takes over the Matzerath family shop mirrors Markus's love for Oskar's mother Agnes and is to be understood as allegory rather than realism. Both German-Cassubian Catholic women turn down their Jewish suitors. The German-Jewish symbiosis has failed in these two cases as it has in the wider case of German-Jewish relations. The third Jewish character is Ferdinand Schmuhs, proprietor of the Onion Cellar, in which his emotionally repressed patrons cry false tears induced by onions rather than discuss their deeds and experiences in the Third Reich. Schmuhs's hobby is shooting sparrows. He crashes his car on the day he loses control and shoots thirteen rather than his self-imposed limit of twelve. Schmuhs is a prototype for Amsel to the extent that he attempts to orchestrate post-war emotional responses. Amsel's scarecrows are designed to frighten off the sparrows.

In contrast, in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* the 'good German' Hermann Ott is taken to be possibly Jewish by his protector Anton Stomma on the grounds that he showed solidarity with

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<sup>24</sup> See Bernhard F. Malkmus, *The German Picaro and Modernity. Between Underdog and Shape-Shifter* (London/New York: Continuum, 2011), pp.131-52 ('The Shape-Shifter as Underdog: Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi und der Friseur*).

Danzig's Jews and then goes on the run when the Germans invade. Grass deploys a documentary approach in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* to the extent that he follows the fortunes of Danzig's Jewish population as they were depicted in a contemporary history by Erwin Lichtenstein, a Jewish Danziger whom Grass met on his 1967 visit to Israel. Grass has been criticised for not knowing this history first-hand and for dwelling on the orthodox Jewish community at the expense of the assimilated. The bigger problem is the incorporation, indeed appropriation of Marcel Reich-Ranicki's account of survival, which Grass attaches to the non-Jewish German Hermann Ott. Basing a fictional account of the survival of a non-Jewish character on a significant episode from a Jewish Holocaust biography shows little respect for what one could call embodied history. The Cassubian Anton Stomma, who is considering an application to become an ethnic German (Volksdeutscher), takes Ott to be Jewish because he is on the run from the Nazis, is looking for a place to shelter, and he introduces himself with his nickname 'Zweifel', which sounds Jewish to him because he once knew a Jewish business man called Gläubig. (p.250) But the only reason he takes Zweifel for clever is because he believes that Jews are clever. 'All origins are arbitrary', we read in *Hundejahre*.

*Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* provides a coda to the Danzig fiction. *Die Rätin* picks up an idea first expressed in a poem published in 1960, 'Racine läßt sein Wappen ändern'. Binary thinkers or Manicheans, as Sartre calls anti-Semites, can only admit one principle or a single truth at a time. The French classical playwright cast out the rat from his coat of arms, granting the swan his exclusive favour, which was to the detriment of his art. Henceforth he wrote in a strictly classical, tightly controlled style using a narrow range of vocabulary and a single register. In Grass's apocalyptic novel the rats are the unwanted other which is repressed, denied or exterminated. It is now the rats rather than the Jews which, adapting the anti-Semites' slogan quoted in *Die Blechtrommel*?? *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, are 'unser Unglück'. Sartre begins his essay with a comment on this slogan. *Die Rätin* posits a binary between humanity and rats which leads the world to catastrophe because humanity denies the rat-like (or Jewish) elements in its own make-up.

*Im Krebsgang* (2002) picks up inherently Sartrean ideas in the twin figures of Konrad Pokriefke and Wolfgang Stremplin. They are depicted as internet friends who love to hate each other and who bond over their shared interest in Second-World War history. The action works as an abstract idea but is not based on a real event; it is history as thought rather than lived experience. The seventeen-year old Neo-Nazi Konrad in the end murders his contemporary Wolfgang who goes by the name of David in honour of David Frankfurter, the assassin of the Nazi functionary Wilhelm Gustloff. Konrad with some assistance from his grandmother Tulla, a leading character in *Hundejahre* who as a child encouraged her dog to attack Amsel, once again manufactures the Jew's identity. The difference this time is that Konrad does this with Wolfgang's active connivance and that Wolfgang

himself has adopted Jewishness as an assumed identity. This does not stop his grandmother from denouncing his behaviour when she finds out about it. At Konrad's trial for Wolfgang's murder, Tulla takes to the witness stand: 'Na son Schwindel! Das hat mein Konradchen nich wissen jekonnt, daß dieser David ain falscher Jud is. Ainer, der sich ond andere was vorjemacht hat, wanner sich bai jede Jelegenheit wien ächter Jud aufjefiehrt ond immer nur von onsre Schande jered hat ...' (p.182) Unlike Tulla, who as a young girl once encouraged her dog to attack Amsel, Konrad has never encountered anyone Jewish, but it does not matter to him that Wolfgang / David was not 'really' Jewish because he shot him on a matter of principle: 'Allein ich mußte entscheiden, ob die mir als David bekannte Person als Jude sprach und handelte' (p.182). The 'ewige Jude' (p.189) spoke through Wolfgang / David, glorying in the Nazis' defeat and the shame which their deeds brought to Germany. Konrad's ineffectual father who narrates the novella at first believes David to be fictional because he is evidently playing a role. (p.89, p.118) As friend-enemies Konrad and Wolfgang they are a re-run of Matern and Amsel, bonding this time over their shared interest in the history of the *Gustloff* and the man after whom the ship was named (pp.48-49). On the other hand, they have differing opinions on contemporary Israel, with Konny praising the Israelis' military bravery in a hostile environment and Wolfgang / David critical of their treatment of the Palestinians. Does this new binary collapse into one because the one's philo-Semitism is the flipside of the anti-Semitism of the other? Their backgrounds are remarkably similar, with distant but liberal parents. They both fit Sartre's definition of the anti-Semite in search of a personality.

As he was growing up in Danzig's Langfuhr district and going to school in the centre of the historic city, Grass appears not to have encountered his Jewish fellow citizens. He remembers the Langfuhr synagogue burning on Kristallnacht, which is a memory which fed into the 'Glaube Liebe Hoffnung' chapter of *Die Blechtrommel*. In *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* he insists too that he remembers how his mother continued after that date to buy from shops owned by Jews, but as W.G. Sebald pointed out in a typically caustic article, when Grass wanted to write about the fate of the Danzig Jewish community in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* he was obliged to consult documentary sources. For *Die Blechtrommel* and *Hundejahre* he cites his Paul Celan as his key inspiration and source; for *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* he consults the academic histories written by fellow Danzigers, Erwin Lichtenstein and Samuel Echt, and draws on Marcel Reich-Ranicki's experiences relayed to him at a meeting of the Gruppe 47. He had by this time formed friendships with a number of other Jewish writers and intellectuals, Eva Figes in London, Helen Wolff in New York, and Wolfgang Hildesheimer in Germany, all with their recollections of exile and persecution.

In a writing career spanning more than half a century, Grass returned repeatedly to what Sartre still called the 'Jewish Question'. He trod on toes, broke taboos or what would become taboos, and approached the subject from the outside, treating it at least after *Die Blechtrommel* in the abstract and the categories Jew and non-Jew, Semite and anti-Semite, as potentialities which are essentially within all of us. This is the idea which lies behind the depiction of Amsel and Matern during the war and post-war years. The fault and the guilt lie with Matern, while Amsel appears to be still a prisoner of his inauthentic pre-war character. Did Grass read Sartre? Was he emboldened by an intellectual authority from the other side of the Rhine? The circumstantial evidence is strong.