



# **Günter Grass and His Critics: From The Tin Drum to Crabwalk (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)**

*Siegfried Mews*

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When the Swedish Academy announced that Günter Grass had been awarded the 1999 Nobel Prize for Literature, it singled out his first novel 'The Tin Drum' (1959, English translation 1963) as a seminal work that had signaled the postwar rebirth of German letters, auguring 'new beginning after decades of linguistic and moral destruction.' Nearly fifty years after its publication, the novel's significance has been generally acknowledged: it is the uncontested favorite among Grass's works of fiction on the part of reading public and critics alike, yet its canonical status tends to obscure the decidedly mixed and even hostile reactions it initially elicited. Along with 'The Tin Drum' Grass's impressive body of literary work since the 1950s has spawned a cottage industry of Grass criticism, making a reliable guide through the thicket of sometimes contradictory readings a definite desideratum. Siegfried Mews fills this lacuna in Grass scholarship by way of a detailed but succinct, descriptive as well as analytical and evaluative overview of the scholarship from 1959 to 2005. Grass's politically motivated interventions in public discourse have kept him highly visible, blurring the boundaries between politics and aesthetics. Mews therefore examines not only academic criticism but also the daily and weekly press (and other news media), providing additional insight into the reception of Grass's works.

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