

Writing the Child

Fictions of Memory in
German Postwar Literature

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The child is never just a child. While the image, voice and gaze of the victimized child is a universal symbol of a failing world, it can be an equally potent aesthetic screen for historical obfuscation. Analysing selected works by Dieter Forte, Günter Grass, Gisela Elsner, Hans-Ulrich Treichel and Rachel Seiffert, *Writing the Child* considers the evolution of German cultural memory concerning wartime trauma and victimhood. In these works, the aesthetically conceived child comes into view as a memory icon, animated as much by collective fantasies as shaped by specific historical moments. Whose suffering has gained importance after the end of World War II? Who claims innocence or responsibility at the time and over time as the Nazi legacy reverberates into the future? Who remains implicated in the legacy of perpetration? In dialogue with the voices of German war children, the *Kriegskinder*, the texts echo but

also contest exculpatory victimologies that have shaped German memory frameworks from the 1940s up to the post-1989 present.

SUSANNE BAACKMANN is Associate Professor of German at the University of New Mexico. Informed by having lived and worked in two cultures and languages, her research is focused on issues of gender, memory and trauma in the context of German-speaking cultures. Previous book publications explore how contemporary women authors have rewritten narratives of love and desire and how gender inflects narratives about violence and war. She has published widely on memory and postmemory in recent literature, films, photography and art. In her teaching she focuses on contemporary German culture, as well as fairy tales, notions of Heimat and memory studies.



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