

Paley, Grace (1922-) Encyclopedia Article

Paley, Grace (1922-)

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With the publication in 1959 of the first of three short story collections, *The Little Disturbances of Man: Stories of Women and Men at Love*, Grace Paley, at the age of 37, made an immediate impact on the literary scene. In these stories and the work that followed, readers have been charmed by a voice that is startlingly original yet as familiar as an overheard conversation on a city bus. Paley's work clearly reflects her own experience as a child of the Jewish Bronx, a young wife and mother staked out with the kids in Greenwich Village's Washington Square Park, and an activist involved in many of the important political movements of her time, most notably feminism and various antiwar efforts. Paley's literary output has been relatively small, due in part to time-out for motherhood, but it has been enthusiastically received by a wide audience. A photograph of Paley that accompanies several of her books shows the author bundled up in parka and wool hat, wearing her commentary for the day's political action sandwich-board style over her coat. It reads, from top to bottom: "Money/Arms/War/Profit," and a few other words or phrases that don't fit into the camera's frame. With her characteristic elfin grin, Paley appears to be ready for any weather. The photograph has a caption from the late Donald Barthelme, Paley's fellow fiction writer, neighbor, and friend: "Grace Paley is a wonderful writer and troublemaker. We are fortunate to have her in our country."

Further Reading:

Arcana, Judith. *Grace Paley's Life Stories: A Literary Biography*. Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois, 1993.

Paley, Grace. *The Collected Stories*. New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994.

———. *Just As I Thought*. New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998.

———. *New and Collected Poems*. Gardiner, Maine, Tilbury House, 1992.