



Anniversaries: From the Life of Gesine Cresspahl

Uwe Johnson, Leila Vennewitz (Translation)

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A translation of the first two volumes of Uwe Johnson's *Jahrestage*.

Anniversaries: From the Life of Gesine Cresspahl Details

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Karen says

[https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/bo...](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/books/review/anniversaries-from-the-life-of-gesine-cresspahl.html)

Barbara says

January 5, 2019 I'm just beginning Anniversaries, so I can't really comment, other than to say it is an EPIC novel. It has 1668 pages! Will check back in along the way.

January 29, 2019: I just finished Part 1: Aug. 1967-Dec. 1967, which would have been Book 1 when originally published. Gesine Cresspahl and her daughter, Marie, are introduced in this first book. Both were born in East Germany, Gesine just before WWII and Marie during the Communist occupation of East Germany. It took a little while to get used to the book's format. The entire book is written as Gesine's diary entries between August 1967 and 1968. Gesine's entries are written in a sort of stream of conscious flow. They are easy to read, but it's not always clear that Gesine is writing. Her voice changes from first person to third person, sometimes even writing as her daughter Marie. Once I understood this, the book was much easier to understand. Gesine also flashes from the present in New York City 1967 to her distant past. In the first book, the flashback setting is East Germany before World War II from 1932 to 1935. I'm thoroughly engrossed in the book. Part 1 ended on page 417. I'm on to Part 2.

Grace Walters says

I have the privilege of living in the building Uwe Johnson describes living in in NYC in 1967. It's where he, in fact, lived during the period described in this semi-autobiographical book. Recommended as a good example of post-war German writer.

James says

This is a book about the city as seen by a poet but it is much more as it demonstrates the mind of an admirably uncompromising and impressively earnest writer with a wayward eye and prose to match. Johnson's prose defies translation: that he survives at all is a minor miracle but reading Uwe Johnson in English is better than not reading him at all, because even in this less than perfect version he comes across as an uncommonly original and provocative voice. The book can seem an inchoate jumble at times, but as with all great novels it is worth persevering to enjoy the richness of the story. The book inhabits a world all its own as demonstrated by the vitality, design, versatility and inventiveness that abound throughout. An exhilarating read whose allusiveness may deter those who do not relish such journeys.
