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THE WRITINGS OF CHRISTA WOLF:  
FROM OBJECTIVE TO SUBJECTIVE AUTHENTICITY

By

Victoria Maddox Kingsbury

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE WRITINGS OF CHRISTA WOLF: FROM OBJECTIVE TO SUBJECTIVE AUTHENTICITY

By

Victoria Maddox Kingsbury

Christa Wolf, a writer in the German Democratic Republic, has been expressing her ideas about literature in essays, reviews, interviews, and forewords to various works since 1952. This dissertation examines the chronological development of the different topics discussed in her theoretical writings. Chapters One through Four deal with the following topics which are found in her theoretical writings: 1) the development of GDR literature, 2) the interaction of author, reader, and society, 3) the relationship between the author and the work, and 4) the literary work itself. In order to discover the extent to which they correlate with the difference in viewpoint between her early and late theoretical writings, her earliest fictional work, Moskauer Novelle (1961), and a recent novel, Kindheitsmuster (1976), are analyzed.

Her early theoretical writings exhibit the belief that literary works should be aimed at promoting the goals of the socialist society. To this end she urges writers to show the interrelatedness of past, present, and future in their works and to depict the problems and conflicts of the emerging socialist society in order to help the reader adjust to his surroundings. Thus, in her early works she believes the author should be motivated by a desire to further the goals of socialism. Moskauer Novelle is shown to be consistent with her early views on literature.



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Her later theoretical writings reflect her growing interest in the author's subjective reasons for wanting to write. This concern with the author's inner experience leads to the development of a theory of prose which centers around the term "subjective authenticity," which describes the author's approach to reality through the act of writing. An analysis of Kindheitsmuster shows that it conforms to the principles of subjective authenticity.

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ALICE VICTORIA MADDOX KINGSBURY  
1981

To my parents,  
whose confidence in me has made all things possible

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the German Democratic Republic's leading writers of fiction and literary theory is Christa Wolf, who was born in 1929 in Landsberg an der Warthe. She attended school there until 1945, when she fled with her family to Mecklenburg.<sup>1</sup> From 1949 to 1953 she studied German literature in Jena and Leipzig. In 1952 her first review was published in Neues Deutschland and since then she has continued to write reviews, as well as editorials, essays on literature, and forewords to various works. She has also expressed her views on literature in interviews with authors and critics. Although presently working primarily as a writer in Kleinmachnow, after moving there in 1962, she has been involved with all aspects of literary life in the GDR. She has worked with the German Author's Union, has served as editor of the journal Neue deutsche Literatur, and has been employed by the publishing houses Neues Leben and Mitteldeutscher Verlag. She has edited various anthologies of GDR literature and given speeches at writers' conferences. Having been influenced by the First Bitterfeld Conference, where writers were urged to experience the working world in order to write about it more effectively, she worked in a railroad car factory. In 1961 her first fictional work, Moskauer Novelle, was published and received the Kunstpreis der Stadt Halle. After that she began to spend increasingly more time writing fiction, although she has continued to publish theoretical works. In 1963, she published her second fictional piece, Der geteilte Himmel, for which she received the Heinrich-Mann Preis

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der Akademie der Künste der DDR. Her later novels are Nachdenken über Christa T. (1968), Kindheitsmuster (1976) and Kein Ort. Nirgends (1980). She has also published several short stories, including "Juninachmittag" (1965), "Unter den Linden" (1969), "Neue Lebensansichten eines Katers" (1970), "Kleiner Ausflug nach H." (1971) and "Selbstversuch" (1972).

A brief sketch of the developments of GDR literature will provide a background to the ideas that Christa Wolf presents in her theoretical writings, since as a literary theorist she has been concerned with the development of literature in GDR society, as well as with the possibilities that her society offers for the production of literature.<sup>2</sup> The origins of GDR literature can be traced back to the foundation of the Association of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers in 1928 and to the formulation of the tenets of Socialist Realism around 1934. Anna Seghers, a GDR writer whose works have been the subject of articles and interviews by Christa Wolf, was one of the members of the Association; she is also included in the group of writers who formed the anti-fascist front around 1945 to 1949. The First Authors' Congress, held in the GDR in 1947, proposed that Soviet literature be an example for GDR literature. In 1948, writers were also urged to propagate the Two-Year Plan and were encouraged to go to factories and villages to gain the material for their works. At the Second Authors' Congress in 1950, the Authors' Union was founded and authors were urged to help the government in the establishment of socialism. Although the Third Authors' Congress in 1952 saw a stronger enforcement of publishing restrictions, after 1953 administrative controls lessened slightly and instead, authors were encouraged to internalize responsibility for what they wrote. At the First Bitterfeld Conference in

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1959, authors were urged to further the goal of a national literature. Anna Seghers' novel Die Entscheidung set a precedent in literature at this time for depicting the individual in the midst of making difficult decisions. Fictional works began to show the difficulties the individual faced in adapting to his new society. Christa Wolfs 1961 work Moskauer Novelle followed this trend. In 1964, at the Second Bitterfeld Conference, the interaction of writers and workers was stressed. Both Brigitte Reimann's novel, Ankunft im Alltag, and Christa Wolfs Der geteilte Himmel included elements of the work world. The idea that literature should present a "Menschenbild," i.e., that it should depict man in his present-day situation seen from a socialist perspective, was also expressed at the Second Bitterfeld Conference. Writers began to be concerned with the depiction of actual societal development, as was the case with Hermann Kant and his novel Die Aula. Following the Fifth Authors' Congress in 1961, more criticism of the political and social system began to be allowed and Erik Neutsch's Spur der Steine raised the question of whether there were certain conflicts inherent in socialism, such as that between the individual and society. This more liberal attitude, where the depiction of conflicts and problems in the society was tolerated, seemed to satisfy both authors and the SED party, but by 1965 the party wanted to stop this trend toward liberalization. It soon became clear, however, that authors were unwilling to give up their new-found freedom. Christa Wolfs comments at the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee in late 1965 on the responsibility of art to raise new questions showed that the party would be unable to stop the emancipation of literature. In 1971 the insistence on preserving the tenets of socialist realism was dropped and the statement



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was made that in a stable socialist society there should be no need for taboos in literature. One trend in literature around this time was the depiction of the interrelationship of past and present. Christa Wolf and other authors began to believe that the past had not been overcome and was thus a potentially valuable theme for literature. Tendencies in GDR literature in the 1970's include the incorporation of the first person narrator with the resultant perspective of inner/subjective authenticity. There is a tendency, especially in Erik Neutsch's Suche nach Gatt and the recent works of Christa Wolf, for this subjective perspective to result in the confrontation of the narrator with himself and not just with the object of his narration.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the incorporation of the first-person narrator, there is a recent trend in GDR literature towards what Steinbach calls "ästhetische Reflexion"---the reflection upon the possibilities and difficulties of the writing process. This trend is reflected in Christa Wolf's novel Kindheitsmuster, where this process of reflection forms one of the levels of narration.

Beginning with her 1952 review published in Neues Deutschland, Christa Wolf has produced numerous reviews, essays, forewords to anthologies, and interviews with other authors. Through the years her ideas on literature have changed, maturing and becoming more personalized as she has developed as a critic and as an author. This work will trace and analyze the development of her theoretical writings by examining the various topics that she discusses in her reviews, essays, and interviews. Critics have been primarily concerned with Christa Wolf's fiction, although some have mentioned her theoretical writings in discussing her works of fiction. They have used her views on literature, primarily

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those found in "Lesen und Schreiben,"<sup>4</sup> to substantiate their statements about her short stories and novels. None of these articles discusses any development of her theoretical writings from the early 1950s to the mid 1970s. There also exist numerous reviews of her collection of essays Lesen und Schreiben, but none of these relate the views expressed in it to her earlier theoretical writings. Only three works discuss the development from her early to her late theoretical writings. One of them is by Alexander Stephan, who devotes thirteen pages to her literary criticisms, work as an editor, and essays.<sup>5</sup> He summarizes the development from her early to her later theoretical writings in one sentence. He states that only after having hidden her own position behind half-scientific, half-literary analyses of works of other authors for ten years does she finally in 1970 begin to express her own ideas on literature. In his 1973 article entitled "Auf dem langen Weg zur Wahrheit," Jäger discusses her theoretical writings, citing only sixteen of her over 60 publications.<sup>6</sup> His goal is to show that her fictional work Nachdenken über Christa T. is consistent with the ideas expressed in her essays and critiques. He discusses her early theoretical writings, and then uses her fictional works to show the progression of ideas towards those expressed in "Lesen und Schreiben." He does not, however, trace the chronological development of any specific themes within her theoretical writings. In his 1975 article, "Die Literaturkritikerin Christa Wolf," he discusses primarily her development from a critic into a writer of fiction.<sup>7</sup> In regard to her earlier theoretical writings, he states that she was primarily concerned in her reviews that works exhibit a cohesiveness of plot. In regard to her later writings, he states only that they are thematically similar to one

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The present work examines in detail the ideas presented in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings, grouping them thematically and examining each theme chronologically in order to discover any changes or developments within each theme. The various topics that Christa Wolf discusses in her theoretical writings are grouped for the purpose of this study into the following categories, which form the first four chapters: 1) the development of GDR literature, 2) the interaction of author, reader, and society, 3) the relationship between the author and the work, and 4) the literary work itself. None of these categories exists in complete isolation from the other categories within her writings because it is the writer, who, interacting with his work and with society, creates a work with which the reader, a member of society, interacts. There may even be further interaction if what the author says causes the reader to act in a certain way within society, and all of these interactions occur within a historical context, i.e., they are a part of the development of literature in the GDR.

The groupings chosen for investigation serve merely as a framework within which to organize the ideas Christa Wolf presents in her theoretical writings. It should be remembered that she rarely discusses any of these topics in isolation; for example, the writer is not viewed as an entity standing by himself. He is seen as a functioning and influential member of his society, who, by creating works of literature, plays an important role in the development of his society. Even when in her later writings Christa Wolf concerns herself with the more subjective and personal reasons for an author wanting to write, the author is never viewed as being alienated from his society. It is her desire that the writer be accepted by society,

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and she perceives that her society's goal is to become more able, willing, and flexible enough to deal with the more subjective aspects of human behavior. The interplay between writer and society (the reader being an important part of society) is a lasting and ever-changing process. As the society develops historically, so too does the writer change in his personal and artistic development. As both society and the writer develop, the interchanges between the writer, the work, the reader and society are carried out at an increasingly mature level. The writer, through his special talent in using the medium of literature, is the catalyst for interchanges between himself, the work, the reader, and society.

Chapter Five examines both her earliest fictional work, Moskau Novelle (1961) and her 1976 novel Kindheitsmuster, to reveal the relationship of those works to the four topics discussed in Chapters One through Four. The extent to which these two fictional pieces correlate with the difference in viewpoint between her early and late theoretical writings will be revealed.

Two appendices have been provided in addition to the usual bibliography. Because the term socialist realism is often encountered in regard to GDR literature, Appendix A provides a brief definition of socialist realism. Because this work discusses the themes found in Christa Wolf's theoretical works with respect to their chronological development, Appendix B provides a timetable containing biographical information on Christa Wolf, the dates when her theoretical writings were written, the publication dates of her fictional works, and dates important to GDR literary development.



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## Notes--Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Much of the biographical information is from Alexander Stephan's timetable. (Alexander Stephan, Christa Wolf (Autorenbücher, No. 4, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Ernst-Peter Wirckenberg) (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1976), pp. 139-40.

<sup>2</sup>a) David Bathrick, "Geschichtsbewußtsein als Selbstbewußtsein. Die Literatur der DDR," in Literatur nach 1945, I. Politische und regionale Aspekte, by Jost Hermand, vol. 21: Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft ed. Klaus von See (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1979);

b) DDR Handbuch, ed. Bundesministerium für Innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975);

c) Dietrich Steinbach, "Die neuere Literatur der DDR: Probleme, Tendenzen, Konstellationen," Deutschunterricht 30 (1978): 100-118;

d) Witold F. Tulasiewicz, "Socialist Realism in the German Democratic Republic," in Oakland Symposium on Socialist Realism in Literature, ed. Renate Gerulaitis (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1975), pp. 20-47.

<sup>3</sup>The term "subjektive Authentizität" is proposed by Christa Wolf in her conversation with Hans Kaufmann. ("Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," Weimarer Beiträge 6 [1974]: 90-112.) This recent development is discussed by Dietrich Steinbach, pp. 114-19.

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, by Christa Wolf, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), pp. 149-180.

<sup>5</sup>Alexander Stephan, Christa Wolf, pp. 117-29.

<sup>6</sup>Manfred Jäger, "Auf dem langen Weg zur Wahrheit. Fragen, Antworten und neue Fragen in den Erzählungen, Aufsätzen und Reden Christa Wolfs," in Sozialliteraten. Funktion und Selbstverständnis der Schriftsteller in der DDR, by Manfred Jäger, vol. 14: Literatur in der Gesellschaft, ed. Klaus Günther, Leo Krutzer and Jochen Vogt (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1973), pp. 11-101.

<sup>7</sup>Manfred Jäger, "Die Literaturkritikerin Christa Wolf," Text und Kritik 46 (1975): 42-49.

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## Chapter One--The Development of GDR Literature

### Introduction

As an essayist and critic, one of the main areas that concerns Christa Wolf is the topic of the development of GDR literature. It is especially important to her because she believes that literature can help form the continually evolving society, and all those concerned with the area of literature have an obligation to their society to help it develop in a way that will improve the life of the people within it. Her theoretical writings frequently mention the role that a certain writer or a certain work plays in the development of her society's literature. Her views on the development of GDR literature fall into several categories. She occasionally discusses the historical origins of GDR literature, but is in general more concerned with the role of contemporary literature in the general literary development. In her earlier essays she is concerned about the influence of the entertainment novel ("Unterhaltungsroman") on the people and calls for the raising of literary standards. She believes that naturalistic details should be avoided in literary works and that there should be greater emphasis on more all-encompassing themes in literature, such as the humanization of man. She also mentions the importance of literary discussions to clarify the goals of literature. Another topic that concerns her is the theme of war, which she feels needs to be dealt with, but not to the point of losing contact with present-day life. It will be seen that in her later discussions of the development of GDR literature there is a movement in her theoretical writings toward a more personal view of literary developments, engendered by her own development into a writer of

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#### A. The Origins of GDR Literature

Christa Wolf discusses the origins of GDR literature in the Forewords to two volumes of collected writings by GDR authors. She expresses the idea that GDR literature can trace its development back to the beginning of the century:

Die Wurzeln unserer neuen Literatur reichen zurück bis an den Beginn unseres Jahrhunderts, als eine junge Generation bürgerlicher Schriftsteller die alten Ideale verwarf und mit ihren besten Vertretern aus der Literaturrevolte zur gesellschaftsumgestaltenden Revolution der Arbeiterklasse vorstieß, um gemeinsam mit Dichtern aus dem Proletariat als Augen- und Ohrenzeuge Stimme eben dieser Revolution zu sein.<sup>1</sup>

She views the GDR literature of that time as being firmly based on the early revolutionary literature. Even if the present literature is primarily concerned with depicting the building of a socialist society, the historical past should not be forgotten. Her views conform to those of other GDR literary critics who accepted the tradition of German literature which was "identified with the cause of the working class and critical of the bourgeoisie."<sup>2</sup> Christa Wolf names several authors who were among the first to attempt to portray the form and spirit of the new society in their literary works, and continues by saying that the number of such young authors had increased since 1955. These new authors brought to literature their own fresh experiences and views:

Eine neue Generation ist in die Literatur eingetreten, mit ihrem spezifischen Grunderlebnis, mit ihrer eigenen Art, das Leben zu sehen, zu fühlen und darauf zu reagieren, mit ihren eigenen Konflikten und ihren speziellen Möglichkeiten, Konflikte zu überwinden.<sup>3</sup>

Other than in these two Forewords, Christa Wolf is primarily concerned, not

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with the origins of GDR literature, but with specific features of literature and the direction that the literary development is taking at any given time.

## B. The Entertainment Novel

In one of her earliest theoretical writings Christa Wolf expresses concern about the role of the entertainment novel ("Unterhaltungsroman") in the development of GDR literature.<sup>4</sup> She feels that entertainment novels should be analyzed and their literary value ascertained. They should not be ignored simply because they are entertaining. She believes that from an artistic viewpoint, such entertaining works should not be considered second-rate, as if it were somehow easier to write in an entertaining, humorous manner than in a serious manner. Since the general reader is more likely to read these works rather than more problematical material, it is important that critics investigate them. Although Christa Wolf feels that the author whose book she is reviewing has not been completely successful in expressing his theoretical knowledge in his work, he is to be commended for trying to reach the people with a book that is not just entertaining but is also relevant to the reader as he attempts to ascertain his position in the new society.

She believes that the entertainment novel could serve as a transitional literature intended to gradually raise the level of the reader's taste:

Seit längerer Zeit versuchen Schriftsteller bei uns, die trübe Flut kitschiger "Unterhaltungsliteratur" durch bessere Bücher einzudämmen; es scheint eine Art von "Zwischensliteratur" zu entstehen, die den Leser vom schlechten Buch weg- und an das Beste heranführen will.<sup>5</sup>

She feels that this transitional literature should be judged by literary standards, and that it is important to discover the reasons for the literary



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shortcomings of many of the books produced in the early 1950's in the GDR. If such a transitional literature is indeed to be the stepping stone to a better literature, gradually raising the level of the reader's taste, then the author of such literature should strive to incorporate the elements of good literature into his works. If no attempt is made to better this entertainment literature it will continue to function as a drug for the masses, helping them only to overcome the meaningless activities of the reader's everyday life. Christa Wolf questions the ability of the existing entertainment novels to perform a valid function in her society:

Auch der gute Unterhaltungsroman muß seine Spannung aus echten Konflikten schöpfen, er soll nicht als Zugeständnis an schlechten Geschmack gelten. Der Schatten eines riesigen Berges schlechter Literatur lastet auf unserem Büchermarkt. Wird er durch diese Art neuer Unterhaltungsliteratur wirklich "besiegt"?<sup>6</sup>

In 1956 she is still concerned about the plenitude of entertainment novels which she describes as "wertlose, oftmals gefährliche, süßlich-kitschige 'Romane'." Authors of this stream of superficial novels, which they still maintained was transitional literature, justified its existence by citing the high number of volumes sold and by claiming that it was at least reaching the masses.<sup>7</sup> Christa Wolf hypothesized that this literature developed in reaction to the schematism which had been a central issue in criticism of the early 1950's. Christa Wolf does not define the term schematism, but Anna Seghers also refers to the problem of schematism and describes it in some detail. Anna Seghers is a GDR writer born in 1900 who, even during her exile in Mexico from 1941-1947, was concerned with the development of literature in what she termed "the other Germany." When she returned to Germany in 1947, she chose to live in what was then the Soviet occupation zone and she has since played a leading role

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in the literary development of the GDR. At the Fourth Writers' Congress, she discusses the fact that in many novels there were no real conflicts, only apparent conflicts, no genuine developments in the characters, only apparent developments, which caused the reader to lose interest in what he was reading. Rather than letting the characters speak for themselves, the authors tended to depict their characters as types: "Man erkennt augenblicklich, wie in den Mysterienspielen des Mittelalters, die Engel an ihren Flügeln und die Teufel an ihren Hörnern. Und die Personen handeln, wie es ihren Insignien entspricht."<sup>8</sup> Anna Seghers believed that this schematism existed whenever the authors viewed the teachings of the party as dogma. Because the reader could so easily guess the plot of the story, he was not likely to reflect upon the story after he had read it. Although Christa Wolf does not deny the importance of the stated goal of transitional literature--to support the power of workers and farmers--she is convinced that the goal does not justify jeopardizing the development of good literature. The transitional literature was really no higher in quality than the earlier literature. In order for literature to develop further, a deepening of the content was necessary. Schematic works lacked depth of character whereas this transitional literature lacked depth of idea. Christa Wolf calls for realistic characterization in works which should also have socially beneficial ideas, i.e., ideas which will help the reader adjust to his new society. She feels that there exists in her society sufficient material for use in literature so that authors should not have to resort to trite themes. In order to best serve the interests of both reader and author, attempts should be made to eliminate the superficial elements in literature: "Die Spitze der Kritik muß sich gegen ein Überhandnehmen von Platitüden,

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The justification for the existence of "trashy" literature will slowly disappear, she believes, when the process of raising the level of the reader's taste ("Niveauehebung") has run its course.<sup>10</sup> It is the responsibility of the critic to stimulate production of good literature and especially to help the reader understand such literature so that he will no longer turn to trashy novels as the drug addict turns to drugs.<sup>11</sup>

#### C. The Presence of Naturalistic Elements in the Novel

Another of Christa Wolf's concerns was the presence of naturalistic elements in the works of the late 1950's and early 1960's. She never states outright what she means by the term naturalistic elements, nor does she discuss exactly why they should be avoided. She is not the only critic to criticize naturalism without discussing what the term actually means, however. Alexander Fadejew makes the following comments about naturalistic elements in his own work:

Die Säuberung eines Werkes von groben Ablagerungen bedeutet nicht eine Entstellung der Epoche, um so mehr als sie den Charakter der Helden nicht ändert, vielleicht gerade im Gegenteil... Ich habe das Recht, das Werk von solchem Naturalismus zu säubern, um die große Epoche nicht herabzuwürdigen. Ich muß zugeben, daß ich persönlich einen Hang zu naturalistischen Einzelheiten habe, längst wurde mir aber bewußt, daß das den Leser verletzt und...in keiner Hinsicht bereichert.<sup>12</sup>

He, too, finds naturalism to be discordant with the aims of a socialist literature, but does not really explain what he means by the term. He goes on to say that the writer should orient himself to the progressive

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reader and not cater to the baser instincts of the reading population, a view with which Christa Wolf concurs.

We can only assume that by naturalism Christa Wolf means attention to the details of life which reveal the less noble side of mankind. For her, the use of naturalistic details does not contribute to what she perceives as the goal of literature in the early 1960's--to aid in the development of the socialist state by helping people find their place in society. Depicting minute, unpleasant details detracts from the attention that should be given to the raising of society's consciousness. The writer should divert people's attention from the sordid details of life, directing it rather toward a belief in, and aspiration toward, a better world. This is consistent with the discussion of naturalism at the 1st Soviet Authors' Congress in 1934, where the terms reality and truth were distinguished from one another. Reality was defined as the details of life as it is, and was equated with naturalism; truth was the view of life as it should be. Writers were urged to depict truth in order to further the goals of socialism. It is questionable, though, whether by avoiding naturalistic details and by concentrating only on an optimistic view of life literature can actually produce the effect Christa Wolf and others desired. If the "masses," who operate on a mundane, day-to-day level of existence, do not find the details of their life in what they read, it does not seem likely that they are going to read the books intended for their cultural enlightenment. There was a great deal of idealism in the early essays written by Christa Wolf and others of that time who were concerned with the development of their socialist society. Idealism was a necessary ingredient for the building of their new society, for without it there would



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have been no aspiration toward their goal, no hope for the future. The idealism needed to be tempered by realism, however. As early as 1957, Christa Wolf was concerned that the idealism expressed in works of literature was too abstract, and that too many works, although validly trying to deal with the problems of man in the developing society, had been guilty of shallow portrayals of those problems: "Mit oberflächlichem Optimismus, mit Scheinkonflikten, mit schematischen Vereinfachungen ist unsere Wirklichkeit, ist das erste Stadium einer sozialistischen Gesellschaft weder darzustellen noch tiefergehend zu beeinflussen."<sup>13</sup>

In discussing Erwin Strittmatter's first novel, Ochsenkutscher, she praises his artistic talent but concedes that his work is not free from naturalistic elements. She indirectly criticizes naturalism when she states that although Strittmatter has overcome the tendency to give characters and actions a symbolic value greater than they merit, other contemporary authors still needed to learn that abstract symbolism was just the reverse side of naturalism.<sup>14</sup> In a different essay, she states her belief that an important goal of literature should be to convey the capability of society to make people more human ("den Menschen menschlicher zu machen"). By concentrating on the portrayal of the greater ideals of society, writers can avoid naturalistic detail even when portraying bourgeois characters.<sup>15</sup> In a later article, Christa Wolf praises Anna Seghers' latest novel, Die Entscheidung, for encompassing the basic goals and ideals of the times, believing that in concentrating on these basic ideas, Seghers' novel is protected from any trace of provincial naturalism.<sup>16</sup>

After 1961 Christa Wolf does not mention naturalism in her essays again. There are two possible reasons for this--1) naturalistic details no

longer appeared in works and thus her concern had become obsolete, or 2) naturalistic details still appeared in works but they were no longer a concern because she and society had developed to the point where the depiction of the less positive aspects of life was no longer seen as a threat to the attainment of society's goals. The second possibility is the most likely, because as GDR literature progressed from the early years of idealistic, dogmatic writing aimed at propagating the beliefs of socialism to the later years of less political and more personal writing, negative aspects of socialist life began to be depicted in the literature. Once the society had gained a firm ground and was surer of itself, it was no longer so necessary to gloss over or ignore the unpleasant features of life in that society. The presence of naturalistic details became less and less a concern as the restrictions on writers lessened, although the situation still does not exist that authors can publish whatever they wish.

#### D. The Humanization of Man

Christa Wolf feels that if authors want to avoid schematism and naturalism in their works, they should strive to depict the goals of the society, one of which is the humanization of man ("Menschenwerdung des Menschen"). She views the humanization of man as an all-encompassing theme: "Jeder der unendlich vielen möglichen Stoffe, welche die Wirklichkeit bereit hält, muß dem echten Schriftsteller unter den Händen zu einer Modifikation dieses Themas werden."<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, there had been a lack of novels in the early 1950's dealing with the humanization of man, and for this reason she is quick to praise Rudolf Fischer for depicting in his novel the various facets of modern life that she believes lead to the

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humanization of man. He presents the conflicts and excitement in the life of modern socialist man. Through the resolution of conflicts man improves himself, his place in society, and ultimately society itself. She further lauds Fischer for placing his characters within a historical context; he shows that their actions and conflicts are a result of their pasts. She sees his depiction of people in a historical context as a genuine accomplishment, especially in view of the many novels of that time whose characters were not placed in a historical context. Characters in other novels of the time were not only devoid of a past but were also manipulated by present, external circumstances. It is important to Christa Wolf that literary characters take an active part in their lives and that their present actions be realistically based on their past experiences--only then can characters serve as suitable role models for the socialist citizen. She criticizes the "occupational novel" ("Betriebsroman") precisely because of its sketchy, unrealistic portrayal of characters as stereotypes rather than as real people. She exempts Fischer's book from the category of occupational novel because, although his novel takes place at a coal mine, he is involved with his characters and depicts them in a life-like manner:

"Glücklicherweise hatte Rudolf Fischer von Anfang an nicht die Konzeption eines sogenannten 'Betriebsroman' gewählt, sondern die Geschichte wirklicher Menschen in den Mittelpunkt seiner Aufmerksamkeit gerückt."<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, not all authors had achieved this solidarity with their work:

"Wie häufig zeigen unsere Bücher sonst ein seelenloses, dürres Verhältnis des Schriftstellers zu seinen Gestalten, die er nur als Illustration für bestimmte Gedanken benutzt!"<sup>19</sup>

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consistent with her views on the role of literature, which is to depict people in a humane manner, as individuals and not as stereotypes. The reader can then identify with them and learn how to fit into his society. In this way the interests of the state are served: the reader identifies with the individuals he reads about and learns from them how to function in the new socialist society. It was important to her that the developing GDR literature realize its obligation to present the theme of the humanization of man.

#### E. The Importance of Literary Discussions for the Development of a National Literature

In an essay written in 1955, Christa Wolf stresses the importance of discussions on literature by literary critics, believing that such discussions will enrich the critic's views by exposing him to other people's viewpoints, and thus creating a climate less colored by subjective inclinations and aversions. For a developing literature in a developing society it is important that the literary theoreticians maintain an open and honest relationship with one another so that the needs of the society can be handled in the best possible manner. The comments that Christa Wolf makes in her early writings are strongly influenced both by the young and developing society and by the literature which reflects that development. Her praise of authors who place their characters in a historical context reflects her concern with literature as part of society's historical development. She stresses this in her discussion of a conference on the development of a socialist national literature which was held in preparation for the Fourth German Authors' Congress. Concern was expressed that the writers of the GDR were repeating the mistakes of earlier times instead of

learning from history. The earlier mistakes had supposedly been discussed and overcome in previous literary discussions, but Christa Wolf feels that more discussion is still needed: "Wie wichtig wäre für uns alle eine Auswertung dieser theoretischen Diskussionen heute noch oder heute wieder!"<sup>20</sup> If writers intend to be part of the cultural development of their society, then they should be aware of their own cultural past and learn from the mistakes and successes of their predecessors.

Christa Wolf considers one of the most important ideas presented at the conference to be the idea that the decisive impulses for literary progress can arise only from material stemming from the present-day society. The concern with a socialist national literature is repeated and further discussed at the Fourth German Authors' Congress, which took place in January 1956. Johannes Becher set forth the idea that GDR literature should develop towards a socialist national literature.<sup>21</sup> It was at this conference that Christa Wolf's concern with a socialist national literature received its legitimization. By 1959 she seems to feel that a national socialist literature is well on its way to reality. In reference to a collection of various authors' works she states that their best works form the basis of a socialist German national literature.<sup>22</sup> She perceives that GDR literature has progressed to the point where there is a body of work which depicts the present-day reality of her society. And yet, in 1962 she asks what the prerequisites of a national literature would be for those authors around 35 years of age ("Was wäre die Voraussetzung für eine nationale Literatur von uns heute Fünfunddreißigjährigen?").<sup>23</sup> The use of the subjunctive indicates that she is not sure what the prerequisites for a national literature would be for those of her generation. She does not



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view a socialist national literature as a fixed, obtainable goal, but rather as an on-going process. Because the society is continually changing, any literature which reflects the society must also be continually changing. If it becomes static it will no longer be an accurate depiction of the society. A work of literature must be judged within the context of the events of the time and cannot be viewed in historical isolation.

#### F. War as a Theme

Consistent with her belief in the role of literature in depicting the emerging socialist society, Christa Wolf expresses concern about the tendency of writers who deal with the theme of World War II to have their books conclude with the end of the war. She does not wish to deny the importance of the war, but sees the time period after the war as being more important and thus warranting more attention:

Die Zeit der großen Wandlungen lag nicht im, sondern nach dem Krieg. Das bringt wahrscheinlich viele Autoren mit ihrer Wahrheitsliebe in Konflikt, wollen sie doch – und müssen sie doch auch – Entwicklungen, Wandlungen schon während der Handlungszeit ihrer Bücher zeigen. So entstehen dann untypische Konstruktionen, unglaubliche Schemafiguren. Aber wieso fesselt die ungeheuer interessante Übergangszeit zwischen Krieg und Frieden, da wirklich auf breiter Front die Ideologien miteinander in Berührung kamen und aufeinanderstießen, warum fesselt diese Zeit unsere Autoren weniger als die des Krieges selbst? Ist die Nachkriegszeit ihnen vielleicht weniger zum Erlebnis geworden?<sup>24</sup>

To her, the time after the war is much more important because it was then that the people began working together towards the creation of a new socialist society. She wants what is written to be placed in its proper historical context, and in order to help the reader find his place in society he needs to be shown the developments which followed the war. This belief stems from the difference she perceives between anti-fascist and

socialist elements in literature; war books that conclude with the end of the war can be anti-fascist, but to be socialist they need to go further. She believes that it is necessary to progress from the anti-fascist standpoint, which was already present in GDR literary works, to a socialist standpoint.<sup>25</sup> Since it is important to her that books be relevant to the times, she calls for a critical examination of existing war books to see whether they are performing any valid function. She is concerned that once an interesting theme, such as the war, has been found, that writers will just keep repeating the same basic information, never striving to discover new insights within that particular theme.

By 1958 she has become impatient with those authors who keep turning to the past for their themes. After having read yet another war novel, she questions going backwards and covering ground that she feels has already been sufficiently examined in literature.<sup>26</sup> She feels that the war novel has reached its limits and can no longer present anything meaningful to the reader. Just four years later, however, she welcomes the appearance of Max Walter Schulz's war novel, Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, and seems to feel that the "new" war novel can, by virtue of the fact that more time has elapsed since the war, provide insights into the historical development of the country as well as help those who are still personally troubled by the war. And in 1962, instead of worrying that old material is simply being reworked as she did in 1958, she states that the recent past is an especially important theme for Germans: "Gerade wir Deutschen haben keinen Grund, die jüngste Vergangenheit als erledigt anzusehen." Still advocating a relevance to the present, she clarifies the preceding statement by saying that anyone who keeps their eyes open can

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see the varied ways in which the past, which has been politically overcome, plays a role in the lives of the people. In order to overcome the past at all levels of consciousness and to free oneself from the past, one needs time, patience, persistence, knowledge, and an active relationship to the present.<sup>27</sup>

This seems to be a fairly short period of time for such a complete change in her view of war novels, but this change could have been influenced by the First Bitterfeld Conference, held in 1959. There was some discussion at the conference about the necessity of depicting the war so that the events of the past would not be forgotten. Her acceptance of the new war novels also occurs simultaneously with the development of an "Entwicklungsroman," which was characterized by an examination of the past. Her belief that these new novels served a valid function in the society is in accord with the views of one critic writing about that time period:

Diese verschiedenen Formen [Ankunftsliteratur, Entwicklungsroman, Lyrik] der literarischen Rückbesinnung trugen dazu bei, das historische Verständnis vieler Bürger der DDR zu fördern, ihr sozialistisches Staatsbewußtsein zu fördern, ihr sozialistisches Staatsbewußtsein weiter auszubilden.<sup>28</sup>

#### G. A Shift in her Viewpoint on the Development of GDR Literature

Beginning in the middle 1960's, Christa Wolf's view of the development of GDR literature shifts. It is not surprising that when she herself begins to write fiction her position in respect to literature would change. It seems obvious that her view both of the author's role in society and his relationship to his work would change, but an alteration appears even in her discussions about the history of GDR literature. In a 1965 article she

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briefly mentions the improvement in the books of those writers who are around 30-35 years old, including herself in that group. Her view of the development of literature in the DDR has become more personal, tempered by her own experiences as a developing writer:

Seit wir gelernt haben, uns frei und sicher in dieser Gesellschaft zu bewegen, völlig eins mit ihr und zugleich kritisch, wie man sich nur der eigenen Arbeit gegenüber verhalten kann – seitdem sind die Bücher der heute Dreißig-, Fünfunddreißigjährigen lebendiger, wahrhafter, wirklichkeitsvoller geworden.<sup>29</sup>

In her speech at the Seventh Authors' Congress, where she discusses the relationship of the writer to his work, she includes herself in the generation of writers who, having been teenagers at the end of the war, find a present need to come to grips with their experience, because they were too young to do so at that time. The history of the development of GDR literature is no longer for her an abstract theme which can be dealt with without personal intervention, but rather one in which she has become deeply involved. Now that she has become a writer of fiction, her earlier idealistic views are tempered with a realism born of experience. In reviewing the recent history of GDR literature, she states that there was an initial phase of thoughtful working through of the influences of the fascist time, a process which caused people to reflect upon their past but one which did not really deal with the subject of the war thoroughly enough for the reader and the writer to overcome their feelings about their war experiences. She believes, however, that this was a necessary first step towards working through the events of the past. She admits there was a tendency in the 1950's to place the blame for fascism on others. But she believes that that time has past: "Diese Zeit scheint mir vorbei. Wir machen das nicht mehr. Aber es war kein Zufall, daß wir es gemacht

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haben..." She sees the necessity of dealing with the past in a new, realistic manner as an aspect of literature which cannot be eliminated: "...man kann eine Kindheit, die man nicht nur als Objekt, also passiv, erlebt hat und die einen geformt hat, nicht wie niemals gewesen von sich abtun."<sup>30</sup>

In a 1973 interview with Konstantin Simonow (a Soviet writer best known for his war novels), she states that she hopes to discover in the course of their conversation how their respective nationalities and ages have affected their writing. She is concerned about the relationship between Soviet and GDR literature in terms of their development, and now that she herself is a writer, she can lend her discussion a personal tone, comparing her ideas as a writer with those of her Soviet dialogue partner. She and Simonow discuss the effect that belonging to a certain generation has on a writer's work and agree that a writer's early experiences, especially remembrances of the war years, have a great effect on him, both personally and artistically. Later in the conversation, Christa Wolf discusses the development of literature in her country, still seeking to reveal the differences and similarities between the literature of the USSR and the GDR:

Was die Literatur meines Landes und meiner Generation betrifft: Ich habe oft das Gefühl, daß die wichtigsten Erlebnisse – innere und äußere –, die wichtigsten Entscheidungen und Konflikte, die unsere Entwicklung bestimmt haben und uns seit bald drei Jahrzehnten bewegen, nur schwach oder gar nicht in unserer Literatur sichtbar werden. Ich möchte gerne wissen, ob Sie ein solches Gefühl auch kennen.<sup>31</sup>

Simonow agrees that in his country's literature, too, much has been left undiscussed. Christa Wolf's concern with the development of literature in her country is evident in the quotation above. For her it is very important

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that literature deal with the crucial issues of the times and that authors do not neglect their responsibility of portraying the conflicts experienced by the people and the society in the course of their evolution. Here, as well as throughout her conversation, she interjects her own experiences as a writer. No longer, as in her earlier essays, does she view her country's literature from a distant vantage point as critic; now she is personally involved in that literature by being not just a critic, but also a writer.

In a 1974 discussion with Hans Kaufmann, she makes the statement that several authors of that time question in their works the ethics of their profession. She lists the names Günter de Bruyn, Jurek Becker, Erwin Strittmatter, and Anna Seghers as being examples of such authors.<sup>32</sup> Although she does not mention her own name in this list, her novel Kindheitsmuster, by virtue of the recurring discussions in the work of the function and validity of the author in modern society, justifies inclusion of her name in this list.

## Conclusion

Although Christa Wolf's concern with the origins of GDR literature is not found throughout her writings, occurring only in two Forewords, there are certain topics concerning the development of GDR literature which are of constant interest to her from her early theoretical writings through her later writings. One facet of the development of GDR literature that remains constant throughout her writings is her belief in the necessity of literature to express profound ideas, i.e., literature should have an overall goal, not be just a shallow portrayal of everyday life. This particular concern changes form according to the particular stage of literary

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development in her society: at one time, naturalistic elements are a concern, at another time the entertainment novel is a problem. Throughout her writings she remains concerned that literature both deal with the humanization of man as a theme and also aid in the humanization of man by helping the reader realize his potential in society. Throughout her writings, she makes occasional reference to the importance of literary discussions as an aid in the exchange of ideas about the goals of literature. Literature should play an integral role in the development of the society and should strive to be a socialist national literature, reflecting the aspirations of society. Her concern with a socialist national literature culminates in her realization that such a literature is not an absolute, but is a goal toward which authors must aspire.

An examination of the overall change in the tone of her discussions on the development of GDR literature reveals that, coinciding with her own development as a writer, she gains a more personal viewpoint towards its development, and includes herself as a member of the literary establishment. It is not just her experience as a writer that causes this change in tone, it is also the fact that she matures as a critic. Her first essay, a review, was written when she was still a university student. Later, after experience as an editor and increased involvement in literary spheres, she gains the confidence to express her own views. These natural developmental changes, combined with her own experience as a writer, contribute to the alteration in the tone of her theoretical writings from impersonal and idealistic to personal and realistic.

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Notes--Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Prosa aus zehn Jahren, ed. Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1959), pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup>Witold F. Tulasiewicz, "Socialist Realism in the German Democratic Republic," In Oakland Symposium on Socialist Realism in Literature, ed. Renate Gerulaitis (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1975), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, ed. Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1959), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf, "Um den neuen Unterhaltungsroman," Neues Deutschland (20 July 1962): p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Christa Wolf, "Besiegte Schatten?" Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955): 137, 138.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>7</sup>Christa Wolf, "Achtung, Rauschgifthandel," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (February 1955): 139, 141.

<sup>8</sup>Anna Seghers' comments at the Fourth German Authors' Congress, quoted by Hans-Dietrich Sander, Geschichte der Schönen Literatur in der DDR. Ein Grundriß, 1st ed. (Freiburg: Rombach, 1972), p. 153.

<sup>9</sup>Christa Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit," Neue deutsche Literatur 4 (January 1956): 115, 119, 124.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 120. She credits Mao Tse-Tung with the term "Niveauehebung."

<sup>11</sup>The analogy between reading trashy novels and drug addiction is made in her article "Achtung, Rauschgifthandel."

<sup>12</sup>Eduard Claudius, Ruhelose Jahre - Erinnerungen (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1968), p. 328.

<sup>13</sup>Christa Wolf, "Warum singt der Vogel nicht?" Neues Deutschland No. 270 (14 November 1957).

<sup>14</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (July 1955): 140.

<sup>15</sup>Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit?" pp. 121-22.

<sup>16</sup>Christa Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben. Die deutsche Frage in dem

Roman 'Die Entscheidung' von Anna Seghers." Neue deutsche Literatur 8 (May 1961): 50.

<sup>17</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955): 144, 145, 146, 148.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>20</sup>Christa Wolf, "Die Literaturtheorie findet zur literarischen Praxis," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (November 1955): 159.

<sup>21</sup>Geschichte der Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Von einem Autorenkollektiv unter Leitung von Horst Haase und Hans Jürgen Geerds, Erich Kühne, Walter Pallus), vol. 11: Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, ed. Hans-Günther Thalheim et al. (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1977): 222. It was at the Fourth German Authors' Congress that other topics that concerned CW were mentioned, such as the fact that portrayals of the workplace were simply not adequate. Stefan Heym also criticized schematism for the same reason that CW had--because of the unrealistic portrayal of the characters' motivations.

<sup>22</sup>Wolf and Wolf, Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup>Christa Wolf, Discussion at the "Konferenz junger Schriftsteller in Halle," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (August 1962): 133.

<sup>24</sup>Christa Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst," Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (December 1957): 121.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>26</sup>Christa Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (June 1958): 4.

<sup>27</sup>Christa Wolf, "Schicksal einer deutschen Kriegsgeneration," Sonntag 50 (1962).

<sup>28</sup>Geschichte der Literatur der deutschen demokratischen Republik, p. 242.

<sup>29</sup>Christa Wolf, "Einiges über meine Arbeit als Schriftsteller," In Junge Schriftsteller der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Selbstdarstellungen, ed. by Wolfgang Paulik (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1965), p. 13.

<sup>30</sup>VII. Schriftstellerkongreß der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Protokoll, ed. Schriftstellerverband der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1973), pp. 149 and 150.

<sup>31</sup>Christa Wolf, "Fragen an Konstantin Simonow," Neue deutsche



Literatur 20 (December 1973): 13.

<sup>32</sup>Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf." Weimarer Beiträge 6 (1974): 90.

## Chapter Two--The Interaction of Author, Reader, and Society

### Introduction

From her earliest essays to her latest, Christa Wolf is concerned with the responsibility of the author towards his socialist society and the possibilities that the socialist society presents for the expression of ideas in literature. In her earliest essays she feels that the author's responsibility towards his society is best expressed through a presentation of reality, not as a static reality, but as the reality engendered by the developing socialist society. By dealing with reality and depicting the changes that are occurring, the reader can be helped to adjust to his new environment. She believes that a socialist society provides an opportunity for the humanization of literature, and that literature, by concentrating on people and their reactions to their environment, can enrich the life of the reader and inspire him to achieve his greatest potential.<sup>1</sup> The author must have a clear understanding of his society, its history, and its goals in order to create works of literature which can effectively portray reality and help the reader to understand his society.

Christa Wolf views the emerging socialist society idealistically. In that she believes that the society can and will improve itself, but she is realistic in seeing that there are problems which need to be overcome. For that reason she believes that the author should portray society not just as it is, but also as it could be in the future. By presenting problems to the reader and showing characters who effectively deal with them, the author further aids the transition to a socialist society. The relationship between the author and the society is seen as being a reciprocal one--

the author furthers the transition to a new society while, at the same time, the emerging socialist society enables the author to create a humanistic, realistic work of literature. The role of the author is not seen as an easy one; it is, rather, a difficult task to help mold the developing society while at the same time forming a new, socialist literature. It is a task requiring a careful balance between responsibility and risk-taking.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with Christa Wolf's views on the author's responsibilities towards both his society and himself and on the possibilities that the socialist society presents for literature. This first section contains the following topics: a) literature as a representation of reality; b) the difficulty of the author's task in presenting a relevant representation of reality; c) the idea of historical correctness ("historische Wahrhaftigkeit"); d) the depiction of problems and conflicts; e) the concept of newness; and f) the humanization of man ("Menschenwerdung des Menschen"). The second section of the chapter deals with Christa Wolf's views on the reader's relationship to the author, the work and society. It will be seen that although her views on the relationship between the reader and the author change from her early to her later works, the importance of the reader does not diminish. Since it is the author's responsibility to help the reader understand his society better, the two sections, one on the responsibility of the writer and the other on the interaction of the reader with the work, are integrally related.

## A. Responsibility of the Author and the Possibilities for Literature in the GDR

### 1. Representation of Reality

According to Christa Wolf, the basic responsibility of the author is the presentation of reality for the purpose of helping the reader understand his role in the new society: "Mit Hilfe des Schriftstellers, der seine Macht richtig gebraucht....können sie weiter für den Sozialismus arbeiten,

Sozialisten erziehen. Und was sonst wäre die Aufgabe einer sozialistischen Gegenwartsliteratur?"<sup>2</sup> The concept of responsibility to the society is

integral to socialism. As discussed by von Salisch, a consciousness of duty and responsibility to the society is one of the main characteristics of the well-rounded personality in the GDR.<sup>3</sup> The author, as a member of the society, has an obligation to further the goals of socialism. Just as the worker on the assembly line should consider his work as essential to the developing society, so too should the author do his part by portraying the society in a way consistent with the goals of socialism.

In one of her earliest essays, Christa Wolf criticizes a certain author's work for a plot which lacked an inner necessity, which she believes arises only out of a pure, elevated reflection of reality's developmental rules.<sup>4</sup> This concept of the reflection of developmental laws of reality is ever-present in her early essays. She is convinced that the society is progressing towards a socialist society according to certain laws of development: "Die Entwicklung zum Sozialismus vollzieht sich gesetzmäßig und unaufhaltsam."<sup>5</sup>

It is the obligation of the author to assist the progression towards a socialist society by presenting the reality of the developing society in his works.

Although she believes that the author must promote progress towards the socialist state, she criticizes the younger authors of that time who view literature as the mere depiction of an ideology.<sup>6</sup> The author's obligation extends beyond the mere presentation of an ideology; he needs to depict people and their reactions to actual life situations in order to be of assistance to the reader and thus to society. The presentation of reality and its laws of development, although abstract concepts, must be given life by the author, who, through his ability to fashion characters and plots, can create a realistic presentation of the present with which the reader can identify.<sup>7</sup>

In order to serve the interests of socialism the work must maintain the reader's interest by keeping in step with reality and presenting material relevant to the reader: "Nur über die angemessene, das heißt auf der Höhe der Zeit stehende literarische Gestaltung der Veränderungen unserer Wirklichkeit [führt] der Weg unserer sozialistischen Literatur, wie schwierig es auch sei, mit der Wirklichkeit Schritt zu halten."<sup>8</sup>

In her Foreword to a collection of works by GDR writers she reiterates the idea of the author's responsibility to expose facets of reality in order to intensify the reader's experience:

Gemeinsam ist ihnen [den Autoren] der Ernst ihrer Bemühungen und das Verantwortungsbewußtsein gegenüber ihrem Talent; gemeinsam ist ihnen der leidenschaftliche Wille, ein Stück Wirklichkeit, das Gegenstand ihrer Erzählungen und Romane ist, ganz zu durchdringen, seinen immanenten Sinn bloßzulegen und auf diese Weise das Erlebnis des Lesers zu intensivieren.<sup>9</sup>

Although Christa Wolf usually makes her statements about the responsibility of the author without specific reference to the party, she occasionally mentions that it is the party. In addition to organized groups

of writers, that sets the goals of literature and assigns tasks to the author. In discussing the development of literature in the GDR, she mentions in 1957 that the party repeatedly demands that authors present reality truthfully.<sup>10</sup> In a later article which discusses a meeting of the German Authors' Union in 1958, she states that the present demand is that authors understand the organic connection between literature and societal life.<sup>11</sup> She agrees with these goals for authors and believes that all writers of that time were aware of their responsibility towards reality. Because the goal of presenting reality in an optimistic, socialistic manner had not yet been met, she continually urges writers to aim for this goal. She feels that authors should choose their material in such a way that they can depict the trends of societal development.

Her discussion of a short story by Egon Günther, with respect to the question of whether a writer in the GDR can write everything that he wants to, reveals further her position on the responsibilities of the author. She praises the author for at least having picked a subject from the present to write about, but goes on to criticize him for having presented a character whose demise by external circumstances would cause the reader only to sympathize with the character and not relate the story to his own life. She feels that the author, who chose to present the story of an engineer out of work ("ein extremer Ausnahmefall bei uns"<sup>12</sup>) should have portrayed him as being in control of his life, rather than being determined exclusively by external events. If the engineer had been mistreated, his anger should have caused him to act, not to give up in resignation. The author should present a character from whom the reader can learn that he, too, is in control of his destiny. The work as a whole should lead

the reader to feel that he is an essential element within the developing socialist society, not just someone buffeted by fate. It is the author's responsibility to create a work which inspires the reader to attain his potential as a human being.

One of the reasons that Christa Wolf considers Anna Seghers' novel Die Entscheidung to be one of the great novels of world literature is because it depicts socialist reality so well. She believes that in Seghers' book socialism is not just recognized, but is a reality, a reality which creates new realities. She feels that Seghers succeeds in presenting the inner logic of societal truth. It is this inner connection with reality that places this work among the great novels of world literature.<sup>13</sup> The idea that one reality can create other realities is understandable in the light of Christa Wolf's belief that the reality to be presented and developed in a work of literature should not be an exact representation of life, but rather a representation of life which takes into account past events and possible future events. It is consistent with her idea that reality should be presented in a way that inspires the reader; it is a carefully chosen section of reality, a reality viewed in a certain context, that the author should present.

Beginning with her speech at the second Bitterfeld Conference in 1964, Christa Wolf discusses not just the responsibility of the author towards the socialist society but also the possibilities that the society presents for literature. She poses a question concerning what possibilities the GDR society offers art. She answers by saying that the advantage of the GDR society is that its goals are consistent with those of literature:

Für die Kunst bestehen die Vorzüge unserer Gesellschaft darin, daß ihr Wesen mit den objektiven Gesetzen der Entwicklung.

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mit den objektiven Interessen des Menschen übereinstimmt,  
daß sie also nicht den Ehrgeiz hat, als mystisches,  
undurchschaubares Etwas vor den Leuten zu erscheinen...<sup>14</sup>

She is not saying anything different here than in her earlier statements on the relationship of art and society, but is only discussing the relationship from the opposite perspective. In her earlier essays, literature is supposed to represent life, by which she means socialist society. The society is seen as being in concord with the "humanistic essence of art." The difference in her perception of the issue can be attributed to the fact that in her earlier writings, during the early developmental stages of the society, literature aimed to present a view of life incorporating its future potential. Now that she feels that the potential is considerably closer to being realized, the society is more capable of providing the appropriate support of humanistic literature. She repeats this idea in a different article:

Zum erstenmal treibt die Wirklichkeit uns Lebensstoff zu, der uns nicht zwingt, unsere Figuren physisch oder moralisch zugrunde gehen zu lassen. Die Konflikte werden dabei nicht schwächer, sondern eher schärfer, moralischer, das heißt: menschlicher.<sup>15</sup>

In another article she repeats this idea, stating that the socialist society is not just interested in its own progress, but is the only society which allows a truly free development of literature and art.<sup>16</sup>

This viewpoint of society as capable of supporting a humanistic literature does not mean that she is no longer concerned with the responsibility of the author. In the summary of an essay on her own work as a writer, she again mentions the responsibility of the socialist author to develop his themes fully, to comprehend life as correctly as possible, and to continue to try to work with the events of life in order to understand

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them. The interplay between the two elements, writer and society, is emphasized in her statement that, because socialism has become a reality in her society, the writer is increasingly free to develop ideas which will in turn help the society.

Diese Tatsache [die Realität des Sozialismus] gibt uns die Sicherheit, uns frei in unserem Stoff zu bewegen, die Vorteile immer besser zu nutzen, die unsere Gesellschaft dem Schriftsteller bietet: Daß er in die Lage versetzt wird, sich das Wissen und die Erlebnisse zu verschaffen, die nötig sind, um ein Gesamtbild der modernen, komplizierten Industriegesellschaft zu bekommen; daß er sich nicht, wie ein großer Teil der bürgerlichen Literature heute, mit Randerscheinungen zufrieden geben muß, sondern zum Wesentlichen gedrängt wird.<sup>17</sup>

In her 1968 article on Anna Seghers' novel Glauben an Irdisches, Christa Wolf begins to develop more strongly the idea that the author must do more than passively reflect reality. She never advocated that the writer simply mirror reality; he was always supposed to view reality from a certain perspective. Even when she mentioned the idea of the reflection of reality's developmental laws ("Widerspiegelung der Entwicklungsgesetze in der Wirklichkeit"), she modified the word reflection with the adjectives pure and elevated ("gereinigt" and "gehoben"). From this article on, though, she begins to deal increasingly more with the author's subjectivity. Her discussions about the author's responsibility begin to emphasize the responsibility of the author to his artistic talent and his own experience, not just his responsibility to society. Krogmann mentions this development in his article on Christa Wolf: "Das ist deutlich: an die Stelle des Zentralbegriffs des Sozialistischen Realismus 'Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit' tritt hier 'Widerspiegelung der Erfahrung der Wirklichkeit'."<sup>18</sup> The idea of responsibility towards society never disappears from her writings, but when the author is advised to heed his inner voice, he stands a greater chance

of conflicting with established literary dogma. Her new emphasis on the author's subjectivity is expressed here when she concurs with Anna Seghers' emphasis on the author's responsibility to actively participate in the creative process:

Gegenüber einer Theorie, die den Schriftsteller in die Rolle eines passiven Spiegels der objektiven Realität zu drängen suchte, hebt Anna Seghers die aktive Arbeit des Autors hervor, der ein Produkt seiner Zeit, aber auch ein schöpferisches Subjekt ist, das den Mut und die Verantwortung finden muß, rücksichtslos "auf die Realität loszusteuern", keine "Furcht vor Abweichung" vom unmittelbaren Erlebnis zu haben, da diese Furcht "entrealisierend" wirkt, aber auch nicht auszuruhen auf dem "Vollbesitz der Methode". ... Die Unmöglichkeit für den Künstler, sich dieser Aufgabe zu entziehen, wenn sie ihm bewußt geworden ist. Das Risiko des Mißlingens, das zunimmt, je kompromißloser man vorgeht, je höher man zielt.<sup>19</sup>

In her best-known essay, "Lesen und Schreiben," Christa Wolf maintains that the author must go beyond the realm of information dispersal, because that role is adequately covered by media such as television and newspaper. Because people can turn to documents such as memoirs, diaries, and sociological investigations for information on life around them, the modern writer must be willing to present more than the realm of what is and has been if he wants to convey something to the reader that other media cannot: "Der Kuchen 'Wirklichkeit' von dem der Prosaschreiber sich früher in aller Seelenruhe Stück für Stück abschnitt, ist aufgeteilt."<sup>20</sup> Christa Wolf's solution is a type of literature she calls epic prose ("epische Prosa"), referring to Brecht's term "episches Theater." She defines epic prose as a type of literature which has the courage to understand itself, not as an end in itself, but as an instrument for bringing the future into the present. (L&S/207) This epic prose, she believes, can only be realized in a new society, i.e., her socialist society.

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which is free of the restraints of the past and does not fear experimentation:

...die Prosa kann sich nur mit gedanklichen Strömungen und gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen verbinden, die der Menschheit eine Zukunft geben, die frei sind von den jahrhundertealten und den brandneuen Zauberformeln der Manipulierung und selbst das Experiment nicht scheuen. Das heißt, ich sehe eine tiefe Übereinstimmung zwischen dieser Art zu schreiben mit der sozialistischen Gesellschaft. (L&S/207)

Literature should not tell the reader that a certain idea or belief is right or wrong. It should let him discover and think for himself:

Ob nicht Aussagen, bei deren Wiederholung nichts anderes im Bewußtsein des Lesers aufleuchtet als ein Lämpchen mit der Beschriftung "falsch" oder "richtig" – ob nicht solche Aussagen in andere Bereiche gehören und die Literatur, die Prosa, von der hier die Rede ist, den Mut haben muß, auf Erkundung zu gehen. (L&S/208)

She concludes one section of "Lesen und Schreiben" with the idea that we should let mirrors perform the function of mirroring reality, whereas literature does not stand opposite to reality, merely re-presenting it; rather literature and reality are merged together in the author's consciousness:

Lassen wir Spiegel das Ihre tun: Spiegeln. Sie können nicht anderes. Literatur und Wirklichkeit stehen sich nicht gegenüber wie Spiegel und das, was gespiegelt wird. Sie sind ineinander verschmolzen im Bewußtsein des Autors. Der Autor nämlich ist ein wichtiger Mensch. (L&S/213)

From her early to her later essays there are several shifts in her view of the interrelationship between the author, the work, reality, and society. In her earliest essays, she states that it is the author's responsibility to present reality, viewed from a socialist perspective, in his literature for the purpose of aiding the developing socialist society. A second stage begins when she believes that society has reached the point where it can have positive input into the author-literature-reality configuration. No longer is the relationship between literature and society

one-sided, with literature serving society's goals; it becomes a symbiotic relationship, with society helping literature fulfill its purpose. The third stage in her views on the author's responsibility is represented by her statements in "Lesen und Schreiben," where she stresses the idea that literature and reality are not in opposition to one another, but are fused together in the consciousness of the author. The idea expressed in her early essays that the development of the society is more important than the development of literature is counterbalanced by her statements in "Lesen und Schreiben," which almost ignore the role of society and instead emphasize the role of the author, "ein wichtiger Mensch." From this point on, her discussions of the responsibility of the author center primarily on ~~the~~ relationship between the author and the work, the subject of Chapter *Three*.

## *2.* The Difficulty of the Author's Task

In her discussion of the responsibility of the author, Christa Wolf *makes* it clear that the presentation of socialist reality is not an easy task. *In her* earliest theoretical works she maintains that the author must have a *particular* perspective of reality, a perspective that will allow him to depict *society* in such a way that his work aids the developing society. In one *of her* earliest theoretical writings, a review of a novel by Ehm Welk, she *states* that the author expresses the correct theoretical insights through *various* characters. This clearly shows, she continues, that this author is *well-aware* of the responsibility of the author.<sup>21</sup> Thus the portrayal of "Correct" insights is one of the responsibilities of the socialist author. In *this* particular article she does not clarify what "correct" insights are, but

in later articles it becomes clear that socialist insights are the only correct ones.

Christa Wolf believes that another of the author's difficult tasks is the presentation of the conflicts of life, rather than just a naive, simplistic view of life. Presenting such conflicts requires of the author ability, courage, and a realistic view of life, not a superficially optimistic mood.<sup>22</sup> The author must have more than just an understanding of the socialist goals in order to fulfill his task; he must believe whole-heartedly in the goals of socialism.<sup>23</sup> She thinks that for many beginning writers the task of conveying reality may be more difficult than they had expected: "Es mag für denjenigen, der anfängt zu schreiben, eine Überraschung sein, daß das **Leben** sich nicht einfach aus der Wirklichkeit in das Buch übertragen **läßt**."<sup>24</sup> This relates directly to her idea that the author should present **reality**, but reality seen from a particular perspective. Because of the **complex** societal developments, it is a difficult task to realistically depict **the** present time in a literary work. She criticizes Egon Günther, as well **as** other authors, for their laxness in judging their literary characters **according** to social criteria. She urges authors not to be ashamed of **having** a particular "Weltanschauung," i.e. a socialist world-view, and warns **that the** opposite of one world-view is always another world-view, the false **one in** such cases. By having the proper understanding of the fight for **socialism**, authors can avoid the mistake that Christa Wolf perceives a **certain** author (who remains unnamed) has made in portraying the extreme **difficulty** of the conflicts that a socialist must struggle with. As Christa **Wolf** sees it, that particular author has not understood that exactly the **opposite** is true; the fight for socialism already offers the chance to



explore the possibilities of acting and thinking in a more humane manner. The better the author understands the basic tendency of societal development, the better he is capable of portraying the humanistic features of the socialist society. Even with the proper understanding of societal development, the author must not think that his task will be easy. He must always ask himself the question--"Can one write that?" Christa Wolf explains that what she means here is not whether the author will have the opportunity to publish what he has written, but whether the author's feeling of responsibility to the society will assure him that what he has written is appropriate for his society. In addition to portraying the rules of societal development, the author needs both the ability to depict the occurrences of *life* and an interest in the essential nature of life. In order to depict life properly, a socialist perspective is necessary:

Voraussetzung hierfür ist ein festes (nicht statisches), richtiges (das heißt in unserer Zeit sozialistisches) Weltbild, welches die Rolle des ordnenden und wertenden Prinzips übernehmen muß: ein Weltbild, das aus Wissen und Erfahrung, aus Theorie und Praxis gewachsen ist.<sup>25</sup>

*She* perceives that a common element in the problems of the literature of *that* time is that some authors do not completely understand the dialectic of *their* society's development and thus are unable to depict life in the proper socialist manner.

She explains why so many of the early literary discussions centered on ideological questions by stating that before one can depict life correctly, one must view it correctly.<sup>26</sup> Because works of literature in the socialist society are intended to reach a larger audience than those in a non-socialist society, the author must concern himself with the truth content ("Wahrheitsgehalt") of his books. Christa Wolf is pleased with the

appearance of Anna Seghers' novel Die Entscheidung because it sets a new standard of quality for GDR literature. One of the reasons that she feels that Seghers' novel is so successful is that it manages to do justice to contemporary life even though modern life is difficult to understand.<sup>27</sup>

In a discussion at a conference of young authors in Halle, she states that the first prerequisite of a national literature is a secure relationship between the author and the nation. She believes that unless authors have a genuine, undisturbed relationship with the nation, no great national literature can develop.<sup>28</sup>

In her speech at the Second Bitterfeld Conference, she adds a new element to her discussions of the difficulty of the author's task. She develops the idea that if literature is to have anything new to say to the people, writers must be willing to take some risks when they write:

Ich bin der Meinung, daß man zum Beispiel als Trapezkünstler unbedingt mit Seil, Schutzgürtel und Netz arbeiten muß. Aber wenn man schreibt – auf welchem Gebiet auch immer –, kann man nicht mit Netz arbeiten; da muß man schon ein kleines Risiko eingehen, das aber mit Verantwortung verbunden sein soll.<sup>29</sup>

Writers must be willing to present the problems in their society.

**They** should not just ignore the imperfect aspects of socialism. Just **because** they present problems does not mean they are against socialism. **In** reference to her meeting with a youth club in Frankfurt in 1964, Christa **Wolf** reports that when she read a chapter from her latest work, Nachdenken über Christa T., the audience thought she must be an **opponent** of socialism because she criticized certain aspects of it. She **tried** to explain that just because she depicted problems in the system did **not** mean that she was opposed to the basic beliefs of the system.<sup>30</sup>

The difficulty of the author's task is mentioned by Max Walter Schulz

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in his talk at the Sixth German Writers' Congress. His view agrees with that of Christa Wolf. In response to Becher's statement at the Fourth Congress that what is needed by the author is "Sicht und Übersicht, Durchsicht, Einsicht, Aussicht," Schulz states that it is indeed true that life is becoming more complicated and that authors must be careful to view life from the proper perspective:

Es ist wahr, wenn wir sagen, die Dinge sind komplizierter geworden und werden immer komplizierter. Entsprechend muß sich aber auch der Mensch, der die Dinge für sich nutzen will, mit höherem Wissen ausstatten. Es kann sich der Schriftsteller heute nicht mehr allein auf seine Lebenserfahrungen, seine spezifische und allgemeine Bildung, auf sein Talent und seine Sinnesorgane verlassen. Die Durchsicht bezieht sich auf Erkenntnis großer Zusammenhänge in großen geschichtlichen Dimensionen. Von der Aussicht verlangen unsere Leser heute die gleiche Genauigkeit wie von der gegenständlichen Beschreibung. An irgendwelcher Ungenauigkeit von Aussicht können sich unsere Leser nur langweilen.<sup>31</sup>

*He*, like Christa Wolf, believes that authors must have a complete enough *understanding* of societal processes to be willing and able to give some *idea* of what the future might be like.

The difficulty of the author's task increases when, as Christa Wolf *states* in "Lesen und Schreiben," the author can no longer be content with *showing* external reality, but must delve deeply into his own mind to find a *theme* for his work. There must be an "inner authenticity" to what he *says*. Krogmann discusses Christa Wolf's concept of inner authenticity:

Für Christa Wolf ist "innere Authentizität" aber die (innere) Aufrichtigkeit des Autors, der sich mit seinem gewählten Bild selber darbietet, seine Unmittelbarkeit, faßbar eher im Begriffsfeld "Spontaneität". Natürlich handelt es sich um Subjektivität, die hier zum Ausdruck kommt, aber nicht als Willkür einer Individualität, sondern eher in der Form moralischer Integrität, in der der Autor sich findet, durch die er vor sich bestehen kann.<sup>32</sup>

The author's difficulty now lies in the problem of finding this well-spring

within himself, out of which his writing should come:

Ein Irrtum ist es, sich etwas wie Stoffbänke vorzustellen...auf denen die Stoffe bereitlägen, um sich von jedem beliebigen Autor nach Hause tragen zu lassen. Für einen bestimmten Autor gibt es in einem bestimmten Augenblick nur einen einzigen Stoff. Ist der Autor fleißig und kenntnisreich, wird er das Material finden, das nötig ist, ihn zu realisieren....  
(L&S/213)

Because of the shift from an emphasis on the responsibility of the author to society to the responsibility of an author to his own inner moral obligations, there is a shift in the reason for the difficulty of the author's task. In her earlier theoretical writings, Christa Wolf maintained that the difficulty for the author lay in the necessity of understanding socialist processes. Now, in her later works she sees the difficulty as lying in the necessity of the author understanding his own internal processes and his own relationship to what he writes.

### 3. Historical Truthfulness

One of the difficulties that besets the author is the task of understanding the historical, developmental processes of his socialist society. In discussing the author's responsibility Christa Wolf repeatedly mentions the importance of depicting reality in the context of its development.<sup>33</sup> The author should portray the contemporary society, but always as it appears within the context of its historical development. Christa Wolf's continual concern with the historical relevance relates both to political and literary development in the society. The developing socialist society sought to justify its existence by stressing its historical roots in the proletarian struggles of earlier times; likewise, the evolving GDR socialist literature claimed that its roots were in the proletarian writers who wrote

even before the establishment of the GDR. As Tulasiewicz points out in his article on Socialist Realism in the GDR:

The new economic basis of the German Democratic Republic demands a new literature. Using the concept of a Marxist perspective, however, it is possible to find antecedents for this literature in the earlier proletarian-revolutionary and anti-fascist literatures in pre-1919 Germany.<sup>34</sup>

Christa Wolf believes that the author has a responsibility towards the continuation of the traditions of socialist literature.<sup>35</sup>

Through the author's portrayal of the historical development of the society, the reader is led to see that as a member of the developing society he should take an increasingly more important role in this development. The author should help the reader gain an understanding of the important historical processes that he can be a part of:

Außer dem Leben selbst kann in ähnlicher Vielseitigkeit, Eindringlichkeit und Konzentration nur die Kunst ein umfassendes neues Lebensgefühl und Lebensbewußtsein im Menschen wachrufen und festigen. Dahin geht auch der Appell des 25. Plenums des Zentralkomitees der SED an den fortgeschrittenen Teil unserer Künstler, der Partei zu helfen, "das Klassenbewußtsein der Arbeiterklasse auf die Höhe ihrer geschichtlichen Aufgabe zu heben". Das ist ein hohes Ziel, und ich kritisiere nicht, daß nicht jeder Schriftsteller es erreicht; ich kritisiere, daß manche es aufgegeben haben, danach zu streben.<sup>36</sup>

By showing the reader that he can take an active role in his society, the author will help the reader avoid the trap of determinism, which is the belief that a person's actions are determined primarily by external circumstances. If the reader succumbs to the idea of determinism, thus believing that he has no control over his own life, he will no longer have the will to help his developing society. Christa Wolf believes that to ensure the continuation of the novel-writing tradition, it is necessary to show that people can take an active role in their own lives:

Wenn man nun aber annimmt, daß der Mensch in dieser Welt nichts tun kann? Daß alle Bewegung von außen kommt und der Mensch nur in den Fängen eines unentrinnbaren Geschicks sich abmüht wie eine Fliege im Spinnennetz? Wie soll dann eine Romankonzeption entstehen?<sup>37</sup>

This idea of historical truthfulness is found repeatedly in her theoretical works, in various contexts. In discussing the criteria upon which a critic judges a literary work, she states that the first question the critic asks is whether what is stated in the book is true. She then qualifies the question with the statement that she does not want to simplify the parallels between truth and literature, but that nonetheless artistic truth should correspond to historical truth.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, although she is not advocating an absolute reflection of reality in a literary work, she does believe that there must be a correspondence between the work and historical truth. Nieraad describes Christa Wolfs emphasis on historical relationships:

Christa Wolf selbst hat in diesem Sinne ihre Kritik an der konventionell sozialistisch-realistischen Schreibweise deutlich genug formuliert: diese manifestiere sich vor dem Hintergrund eines mechanischen Weltbildes in der bloßen Abschilderung eines vergegenständlichten, d.h. enthistorisierten gesellschaftlichen Beziehungsgerüsts, eines "hierarchisch geordneten gesellschaftlichen Kosmos, in dem Menschenpartikel auf soziologisch oder ideologisch vorgegebenen Bahnen sich bewegen oder von dieser erwarteten Bewegung abweichen."<sup>39</sup>

The author has an obligation not just to understand the historical truth himself, but to present characters who understand the historical background of their society. On these grounds she criticizes an author who allows his character to exist in a perpetual misinterpretation of the historical situation.<sup>40</sup>

The presentation of reality in the light of historical processes is consistent with the responsibility of the author to help the people in a

developing socialist society realize their potential. Literature should portray a segment of mankind's path to self-realization in a historically accurate manner.<sup>41</sup> The fate of the people should be shown in the unerring light of the great historic struggles of the century.<sup>42</sup> By showing the inter-relationship of past, present, and future as part of a natural historical development, the writer can "give the people a future."<sup>43</sup> Christa Wolf believes that because past, present, and future are integrally related, the reader must be given an idea of his position with regard to the development of the society. In order for him to understand the time in which he lives he must understand its past. This idea corresponds to the views expressed by several literary critics. Mohr believes that one of the tasks of GDR literature is the working through of the past, especially the period of the construction of a socialist society in the GDR.<sup>44</sup> Max Walter Schulz, in discussing the responsibility of the author, also mentions the idea of historical perspective: "Die Durchsicht bezieht sich auf Erkenntnis großer Zusammenhänge in großen Dimensionen."<sup>45</sup> Steinbach sees Christa Wolf's belief in the relationship between past and future and the historization of the present as part of an overall tendency in recent GDR literature.<sup>46</sup> If indeed this is only a recent tendency in GDR literature, as he says, then Christa Wolf was certainly ahead of her time by proposing the idea of historical relevance as early as 1955.

The idea that the author should have an understanding of historical development is present from Christa Wolf's early to her late theoretical writings. There is, however, a shift from generalizations about historical perspective in her early writings to mention of specific past events in her later writings. Beginning with her discussions of her 1976 novel



Kindheitsmuster, in which her goal was to work through her own experiences during the war with the hope that others might benefit from what she learns about confronting the past, she deals with the concept of historicity in a more personal, specific way. Her theoretical writing reflects her preoccupation with investigating her own past in a work of fiction. Another reason that she deals with historical relevance on a more direct level in her later theoretical writings is that the society is no longer in its developmental stages. It is more settled, and the people are no longer in need of being helped through the transition to a socialist society. The relative stability of the society allows the author to turn from a preoccupation with the present society to an examination of the immediate past, not so much to justify the present societal developments, but to gain an awareness of how he as a person has evolved from his own personal past. For Christa Wolf, the Second World War is an important experience that needs to be examined, and it becomes the subject of her novel Kindheitsmuster as well as the topic of many of her later theoretical writings. This personal view of the past contrasts with her earlier writings in which she stated the idea of historical truthfulness in general terms. Again, as with the other themes investigated, there is a shift in emphasis from her early to her later works, a shift based on the development of the society around her and her own development as a writer.

#### 4. The Depiction of Problems and Conflicts

In his task of depicting reality, the author should, according to Christa Wolf, present a view of life that shows the possibilities for improvement of the society. She is optimistic that the society will better

itself and feels that it is the author's task to depict the problems of the present so that they can be overcome. It is through the confrontation of problems and the solution of them that society can be improved. In discussing the tasks of the GDR writer, Mohr also views the presentation of problems in the society as one of the responsibilities of the author:

"Das Vorstellen von Problemen und Konflikten einer erweiterten Gegenwart ist eine zweite Aufgabe, an der Literatur sich produktiv zu erweisen hat."<sup>47</sup> Even in her earliest writings, Christa Wolf is concerned that the author not present an unrealistic view of society; she knows that the society is only in the early developmental stages and urges the writer to present it as such:

Wohl soll man zeigen, daß gute, starke Keime überall hervorbereiten; aber aus ihnen fertige Bäume zu zaubern, heißt die Methode des sozialistischen Realismus mißverstehen und den Menschen einen schlechten Dienst erweisen, die im täglichen Kampf diese Keime pflegen und schützen müssen.<sup>48</sup>

**Authors** should not be ashamed to recognize the imperfection of the **society**.<sup>49</sup> Christa Wolf argues against the presentation of only those **aspects** of present-day life which are generally called positive:

Jeder Mensch weiß, daß in der Wirklichkeit sehr viel "passiert". Unter anderem passieren auch menschliche Tragödien; unsere Literatur ignoriert sie, weil sie "nicht typisch" seien; denn typisch sei nur das Positive! Auf diese Weise lassen unsere Schriftsteller, gerade unsere jüngeren Schriftsteller, die in unserem neuen Leben ihre Stoffe finden, um einer falsch verstandenen Definition willen und aus Angst vor genauso falsch orientierten Verlagslektoren, ihre Leser allein, die ja von ihnen auch wissen wollen, wieso denn heute noch Menschen durch eigene oder fremde Schuld zugrunde gehen oder schwere Fehler einzelner Funktionäre großen Schaden anrichten können.<sup>50</sup>

Christa Wolf believes that conflicts and problems are necessary for the development of the society; without them the society would be static and there would be no impetus for change. Not only can society benefit

if literature presents conflicts and problems, but the socialist society makes the task of writing more challenging for the author precisely because it offers productive conflicts:

Die Fruchtbarkeit unserer Gesellschaft für die Literatur scheint mir nicht darin zu bestehen, daß es ihr leichter macht; nicht darin, daß sie ihr abgeschliffenere oder kleinere Konflikte anbietet; sondern darin, daß sie neuartige Konflikte produziert, produktive Konflikte.<sup>51</sup>

It would be a disservice to the reader were the author to ignore these problems, for it is by depicting problems and possible solutions that the author can help the reader find answers to his own problems and those of the society. The depiction of reality should not just include those elements that she labels "kleinbürgerlich":

Aber wahrheitsgetreu ist nicht kleinbürgerlich; wahrheitsgetreu ist nicht: unsere Zeit aus der Froschperspektive sehen und sie säuberlich in kleine Happen zerteilen, die ein Spießer ohne Beschwerden verdauen kann, alte Konflikte verkleistern und auf das Happy-End zusteuern um jeden Preis.<sup>52</sup>

She urges the author to comprehend the more profound problematic of the time ("die tiefere Problematik unserer Zeit"). Later in the same article she clarifies what she means by the more profound problematic of the time when she urges the writer to delve into the problems of his time with the necessary thoughtful profundity, in order to comprehend them in terms of the time in which they have arisen.<sup>53</sup> The conflicts of the time are those encountered by the people and the society in their transition from a capitalist to a socialist society. In 1965, a critic is able to state that the GDR author has reached the point where he can be honest in his relation with himself and the reader. "Nowhere is the fact ignored that present-day life has tragic moments, too, and that what has been attained up until now still does not give occasion for self-complacency."<sup>54</sup>

Even after the society has settled somewhat after its original transition, Christa Wolf sees that there are still problems and conflicts that need to be perceived by the author and presented in his works. She feels that, as Anna Seghers depicts in her novel Die Entscheidung, the separation of Germany caused a wound which must never heal: "Die Grenze schneidet tief ins Fleisch des Volkes. ... Diese Wunde darf nie vernarben."<sup>55</sup> She views the problems engendered by the separation as part of the "Weltproblematik," by which she means the conflict between capitalism and socialism. Because of this perpetual conflict there will always be issues which need to be resolved, and literature can help by depicting the problems and either offering solutions or offering the hope that solutions will be found.

She praises the author Werner Heiduczek for his ability to depict the meaning of present-day life in his play, and comments about his depiction of conflicts:

Charakteristisch für die Erzählung...ist die zupackende Art, in der hier Konflikte vom heutigen Standpunkt aus behandelt werden. Das gibt diesem Stoff Frische, sogar Aktualität, und doch auch historische Perspektive: Die Schwierigkeiten, die man überwand, machen Mut, mit den andersgearteten Schwierigkeiten von heute fertig zu werden.<sup>56</sup>

She praises his ability to see beyond the events of the time and comprehend the meaning of present-day life. The link that she sees between the ability to solve past problems and the courage to resolve present ones makes it all the more important that the author not forget historical developments when presenting present-day situations.

In 1963, she praises Karl-Heinz Jacobs for portraying in his novel Beschreibung eines Sommers the conflicts that can arise between the new society and its people. She is not oblivious to the fact that in a time of

such quick societal change there might be people who cannot immediately adapt to their new surroundings. She feels that the author has a responsibility to depict the possible conflicts and offer the hero, as well as the reader, possible solutions:

Hier stößt also das Leben, eine große Leidenschaft, mit Normen der Gesellschaft zusammen – ein Hauptthema der Literatur vergangener Jahrhunderte, auch heute in seiner Zeitgemäßen Abwandlung noch nicht gegenstandslos.<sup>57</sup>

Because the novel presents life realistically, it functions to help the developing society gain self-awareness.<sup>58</sup> She repeats this idea almost verbatim in a later article: "Die Literatur einer neuen Gesellschaft hat schon immer versucht, eben dieser ihrer Gesellschaft zum Bewußtsein ihrer selbst zu verhelfen."<sup>59</sup>

In her speech at the Eighth Authors' Congress, she presents the idea *that* the depiction of conflicts which she has advocated since her earliest *writings* must now include specifically the most recent German past, the *time* of fascism.<sup>60</sup> A serious depiction of the time of fascism is only *possible* if the author simultaneously depicts a confrontation with the *present*. She stresses the necessity of relating the present and the past so *that* the mistakes of the past not be made in the future. She believes an *important* theme for future discussions would be the unsolved problems of *the* past.<sup>61</sup> If such problems could be brought into the open and *worked* through, she believes that there would be less chance of the past *repeating* itself. This requires the ability of the author to confront his own *present* and past life and appropriately convey his findings through his *literature*. She says that as an author, she has had to come to terms with *the* conflicts that she encountered within herself.<sup>62</sup>

As with the theme of the author's difficulty in portraying reality, the

insistence on depicting problems has been a constant element in her theoretical writings. The types of problems that she feels must be shown have changed from her early to her later writings, just as the society has changed. In her early theoretical writings she is concerned with the depiction of the problems engendered by the transition to a socialist society. Once the society has become more stable, problems of the past can be dealt with. The past history of the society and the people in it are integrally connected, and she advocates the author's investigation of his own past. In her later writings, having become an author herself, she can relate to the problems that other authors need to confront within themselves.

##### 5. The Concept of Newness

A recurrent theme in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings, which often appears in conjunction with the themes previously mentioned, is the idea of "newness." She uses the word "new" as an adjective in such terms as "the new person," "the new society," and "a new feeling towards life" ("Lebensgefühl"), and as a noun by itself ("das Neue"). This section examines her discussions of the concept newness in an attempt to discover whether there is any change in her viewpoint from her early to her late writings.

She discusses the concept of newness ("das Neue") from her earliest writings through to her 1959 Foreword to a collection of writings by GDR writers. Her earliest reference to the idea appears in a review of Erwin Strittmatter's novel Tinko, in which she states that Strittmatter is concerned with depicting the essence of this newness in his work: "Erwin Strittmatter

wollte nicht nur die äußere Erscheinungsform des Neuen auf unseren Dörfern aufzeichnen, er wollte zugleich und vor allem das Wesen dieses Neuen deutlich machen."<sup>63</sup> He discloses the essence of newness by placing the present situation in its historical perspective. He uses a child as his personification of newness, showing the child drawn to that which is new, whereas that which is old is seen as being unnatural. Christa Wolf praises Strittmater for symbolizing the contrast between the old and the new way of life in his society, and for showing the naturalness of the new way of life. The fact that an entire meeting of the German Writers' Union in 1957 had as its theme the reflection of newness in the country emphasizes the importance of this concept in literary discussions of that time.<sup>64</sup>

In discussing the background of the writers whose work appears in *the* volume Proben junger Erzähler, she points out that for many of them *it was* a difficult but essential process to stop discussing the unpleasant *past* (the wartime) and to recognize where newness was developing and *what* form this newness was taking.<sup>65</sup> In the Foreword to a different collection of writings she states that the new literature has given the *people* a new answer in their search for meaning in their lives: "sie entdeckte ihnen das Neue, das Einmalige unserer Zeit, das Geheimnis der Epoche."<sup>66</sup>

Much more frequent than the use of the term newness alone is her *use of* the word new in conjunction with a noun. She discusses the new *society* in light of the author's responsibility to present in his works the *conflict* between old habits and the new societal circumstances.<sup>67</sup> She *also* points out the relationship between the new society and literature:

"Prüfstein für die Literatur...wird immer mehr die neue Gesellschaft selbst, die sich bei ihrer kulturellen Revolution der sozialistischen Literatur bedient."<sup>68</sup> She commends authors who attempt to portray the essence of their society in their literary works.<sup>69</sup>

In her early articles, Christa Wolf believes that literature should be concerned not just with the new society, but with the new people within it whom literature was to help achieve a new feeling for life. Literature should try to define what the new people in GDR society will be like: "Wer sind sie denn, die 'neuen Menschen' dieser Periode, wie sehen sie aus, welche Konflikte sind für sie typisch?"<sup>70</sup> Literature should help define the new person's personality development, as well as help him fit into the new society:

Es geht den Autoren nicht um Dinge, sondern um Menschen, die in unserer Zeit leben, die mit Schwierigkeiten zu kämpfen haben und zusehen müssen, wie sie ihr Denken und Handeln mit den Forderungen unserer Gegenwart in Übereinstimmung bringen.<sup>71</sup>

She criticizes those authors who do not have a clear conception of this function of literature:

Manche literarische Arbeit der letzten Jahre kränkte doch ganz offensichtlich daran, daß ihr Autor von dem so eminent wichtigen Vorgang in unserer Wirklichkeit – der Herausbildung neuer Menschen – nur sehr allgemeine, verschwommene Vorstellungen hatte, obwohl gerade dies der Gegenstand seiner Darstellung war.<sup>72</sup>

She feels that Ruth Werner has achieved the goal of presenting the new person in her book Ein ungewöhnliches Leben, unlike those authors who do not understand the importance of depicting the new person in their works: "Suchen wir Züge des neuen, sozialistisch denkenden, fühlenden und handelnden Menschen in unserer Literatur – hier werden wir sie finden."<sup>73</sup> Not only the present-day person should concern the author, but since the



past, present, and future are so integrally connected, the author should also ask himself what the person of the future will be like.<sup>74</sup> If the person of the future can be imagined, writers can better communicate through their works the goals toward which the present-day person should strive.

This new person should attain a new feeling for life if he is to function in the new society. Christa Wolf believes that one of the tasks of literature is to develop in the reader this new feeling for life, by waking up the reader's senses. Literature should enrich the reader, making him more aware and more feeling: "[die Literatur] soll ein Gefühl für die Tiefe und den Sinn des Lebens in ihm wecken, soll ihn erschüttern und voranreißen, auf die Höhe seiner Zeit heben."<sup>75</sup> The author should inspire the reader in such a way that he looks with anticipation to the future and works actively toward it. Much later, in a letter to a novice writer who has written for advice, she again states the idea that literature can wake up the forces within a person:

Außer einer schnell fortschreitenden echten Demokratisierung des öffentlichen Lebens kann auch die Literatur eine Menge dazu tun – nicht, indem sie, wie etwa die Klassik, Ideale schafft, die nicht im öffentlichen Leben, sondern nur im Geiste zu realisieren sind, sondern, indem sie Kräfte weckt, die unbewußt vorhanden sind und Bestätigung, Ermutigung, Anstoß brauchen.<sup>76</sup>

Her views on the ability of literature to portray newness in order to help the reader relate to society have changed little from her early to her late writings.

## 6. The Humanization of Man

Related to her discussions of the new man is the idea that socialist society and socialist literature share the goal of the humanization of man. It is a reciprocal arrangement: the socialist society aids the humanization of man, and literature is obligated to help this humanization by portraying life as it is, as well as the future towards which people should strive. She strongly believes that a socialist society is best able to provide the environment in which people can fulfill themselves. She believes that the socialist novel will prove that only in a socialist society can literature become a science of people ("Wissenschaft vom Menschen") in the full sense of the word.<sup>77</sup> In a later article she repeats the idea that literature is directly connected to the socialist society: "Literatur ist von ihrem Wesen her direkt an die sozialistische Gesellschaft gebunden. Insoweit und insofern sich diese Gesellschaft einer größeren Vervollkommnung des Menschlichen, der Möglichkeiten des Menschen nähert."<sup>78</sup> Nawlewska summarizes her belief about the relationship between humanism and the socialist society:

So wird der Humanismus begriffen nicht als der "Natur der Dinge" oder der "Natur des Menschen" immanent oder angeboren oder gar als anachronistisch, sondern als etwas, das immer wieder vom Individuum neu erlernt werden muß, unter den schwierigsten Verhältnissen in der spätbürgerlichen Welt, unter günstigen Bedingungen in der sozialistischen.<sup>79</sup>

Her belief that the author should depict the humanization of man occurs throughout her theoretical writings. She first mentions the idea when she states that the present time provides the theme of the humanization of man:

Unsere Zeit gibt den Romanschriftstellern ein gewaltiges Thema auf: zu schreiben über die Menschwerdung des Menschen. Jeder der unendlich vielen möglichen Stoffe, welche die

Wirklichkeit bereit hält, muß dem echten Schriftsteller unter den Händen zu einer Modifikation dieses Themas werden.<sup>80</sup>

She further develops the idea in a later article in which she explains that the function of GDR literature is to clarify the correspondence between a socialist society and the desires of humanity:

Sie müßte klarmachen, wie bei uns endlich das gesellschaftlich Notwendige sich in Übereinstimmung befindet mit der tiefen Sehnsucht der Menschen nach Vervollkommenung, nach allseitiger Ausbildung ihrer Persönlichkeit; welch ein starker, unerschöpflicher Kraftstrom der sozialistischen Welt durch die Möglichkeit zufließt, diese tiefe Sehnsucht der Menschen zu befriedigen. Hier, in dem Bewußtsein von der historischen Notwendigkeit, von der echten Menschlichkeit unseres Kampfes liegen die Quellen unserer Siegeszuversicht, nicht aber in winzigen, manchmal sogar zufälligen Tellerfolgen, wie manche Bücher uns glauben machen möchten. Unsere Gesellschaft ist nicht nur imstande, nein, es liegt in ihrem Wesen, den Menschen menschlicher zu machen.<sup>81</sup>

This quotation also shows the interrelation of the concepts of humanization, historicity, and the new person. Her emphasis on the humanization of man relates to her belief that literature is capable of evoking responses in people that might otherwise be ignored in their struggle for economic and political progress: "Denn es kann passieren, daß über den Mitteln – Politik, Ökonomie – das Ziel vergessen wird: der Mensch. Hier, glaube ich, ist der Punkt, an dem die Literatur aufpassen und ihren Platz verteidigen muß."<sup>82</sup>

Her belief in this responsibility of literature correlates with the central topic of the Fifth German Authors' Congress which was "the socialist concept of people in our literature" and which included discussion of the topic of the growth and development of new human relationships.<sup>83</sup> The humanization of man was part of the plan for the society of the GDR:

Dieser an sich idealistische, aufklärerisch-utopische Gedanke, daß die Literatur dazu prädestiniert sei, die Vervollkommenung des Gattungswesens Mensch (hier: in der sozialistischen Ge-

sellschaft) herbeiführen zu helfen, wird nun in der DDR in umfassender Weise zu verwirklichen versucht: als Planziel der "gebildeten Nation", als Modell Literaturgesellschaft.<sup>84</sup>

The concern with the development of the people was also expressed by Otto Gotsche in his reply to a Soviet literary journal which asked about the possibilities for literature offered by the GDR:

Den höchsten Beitrag für die Entwicklung der sozialistischen Menschengemeinschaft und unserer Arbeiter- und-Bauern-Macht geben die literarischen Beiträge, die sich mit dem Schaffen und der Entwicklung der Menschen in unserer Gegenwart beschäftigen.<sup>85</sup>

For Christa Wolf, believing in the humanization of man means believing that man has the potential to fulfill himself, and that the future will offer increased opportunities for him to develop to his fullest potential. For this reason she considers that if an author expresses a pessimistic perspective of the future, he contradicts reality; she consequently considers his position to be anti-humane.<sup>86</sup> Von Salisch discusses Christa Wolf's belief that the socialist society is in a position to give the people a future:

Christa Wolf möchte mit ihrer Prosa das "Subjektwerden des Menschen" unterstützen, und sie sieht die bestmöglichen Voraussetzungen für ein Gelingen dieses 'Projekts' in den gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen, die der "Menschheit die Zukunft geben", d.h. sie sieht "eine tiefe Übereinstimmung" zwischen der dialektischen Schreibweise und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft.<sup>87</sup>

The dehumanization of man is a topic which relates to Christa Wolf's idea that one goal of literature is to convince the people that they have the power within them to forge their own destiny. Not only do people have responsibility for their present and future, but also for their past. In referring to the war years, she states that people were at that time, and continue to be, subjects of history, not objects.<sup>88</sup> In her discussion with Hans Kaufmann she states that anything that prevents the masses from



being subjects of history is immoral.<sup>89</sup>

In her later works, her discussions of humanization begin to take on a slightly different tone. Rather than being so concerned with the humanization of man with respect to his society, she emphasizes the possibility of man coming to terms with his inner self. Man is not seen as separate from society, but her concern becomes centered on man's relationship to himself, his relationship to society being only of secondary interest. She feels that society is supportive of this goal, and that one of the advantages of her society is that it views literature as an instrument for the gaining of awareness ("Instrument der Bewußtwerdung").<sup>90</sup> She sees both socialist society and its literature as having the goal of helping people attain self-realization: "Die tiefe Wurzel der Übereinstimmung zwischen echter Literatur und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft sehe ich eben darin: Beide haben das Ziel, dem Menschen zu seiner Selbstverwirklichung zu verhelfen."<sup>91</sup> She asks the question that she feels literature should help the reader to answer for himself: What is this process of coming to terms with oneself? ("Was ist das: dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?").<sup>92</sup> She becomes increasingly concerned with the development of the inner man and his attempt to discover more about himself. She believes that literature can serve an invaluable function by presenting material in such a way that the reader must confront his own feelings and examine his own development. She feels that literature should not give pat answers to problems that confront the characters, but should depict their struggle to come to terms with their own feelings, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Literature should push people to discover increasingly more about

themselves: "...ich habe herausgefunden, daß man um jeden Preis versuchen muß, den Kreis dessen, was wir über uns selbst wissen oder zu wissen glauben, zu durchbrechen und zu überschreiten."<sup>93</sup> Sallisch lists self-actualization ("Selbstverwirklichung") as one of the characteristics of the official personality picture ("Persönlichkeitsbildes") in the GDR; the official view is that such self-realization comes about through the process of working for the society.<sup>94</sup> Christa Wolf does not disagree with the idea that work can be fulfilling, but feels that people need more than one impetus to prompt them to delve into their own feelings and deal with the remembrances of the past that are buried deep within them. She feels that literature is well-suited to this purpose: "Meine Meinung ist, ...daß Literatur versuchen sollte, diese Schichten zu zeigen, die in uns liegen - nicht so säuberlich, nicht katalogisiert und schön 'bewältigt', wie wir es gern möchten."<sup>95</sup>

From her early to her later theoretical writings there has been a progression from an outward, societally-oriented view of the humanization of man, to an inward, personally-oriented perception of humanization. Part of this shift in viewpoint can be ascribed to her own development as a writer of fiction, in which she progresses from works which depict man in his relationship to society to works which are more concerned with the inner realm of experience. The shift in viewpoint can also be attributed to the changes occurring in her society. The early developing socialist society needed works of literature which supported its beliefs and aims, whereas later on, once the society had stabilized, attention could be turned towards the inner man.

## B. The Reader

Whether affecting the reader in some way is the primary goal of the author, as Christa Wolf maintains in her earlier writings, or whether the author's primary obligation is to himself and his material, as she postulates in her later writings, the topic of the reader is ever-present in her theoretical writings. Without the reader, literature could have no effect on society, and Christa Wolf believes that the reader is especially important in her socialist society because the reader takes the writers and literature so seriously.<sup>96</sup> She agrees with Anna Seghers that there can be no purely artistic questions in a time and society in which the written word has such a direct impact on the people.<sup>97</sup> She also agrees with Anna Seghers that the effect of art on the people can be greater than that of reality.<sup>98</sup> The effect of literature on the society, and hence on the reader, must be taken into consideration in the creation of literature. With the exception of some of her recent articles, Christa Wolf's discussions of the role that the reader plays in the author-literature-society configuration can be divided into two main areas. One of the areas answers the question "What characteristics of literature will most likely hold the reader's interest?" The other area answers the question "What should the reader learn or experience from reading literature?" After discussing these two areas, the direct relationship between author and reader expressed in some of her more recent articles will be examined.

In an early article, Christa Wolf states that one of the questions that authors ask themselves is how they can reach the masses with their work.<sup>99</sup> It is a difficult question, she says, because the society contains people of such varied interests and levels: "Unsere Bücher müssen für



den künftigen Weltraumfahrer interessant, aber auch für den ehemaligen Tagelöhner verständlich sein."<sup>100</sup> Basically, a work should depict aspects of life with which the reader is able to identify. She states in an early essay that up to that time, most works had unfortunately failed to satisfy this criterion: "[unsere Landbevölkerung] sucht doch...fast vergeblich nach einer Begegnung mit ihrem eigenen Leben in einem neuen Buch."<sup>101</sup> Later she praises a novel by Rudolf Fischer for presenting elements of life with which even the less-educated reader is able to identify: "Deutlich spricht aus seinem Buch die innige Anteilnahme am Leben der einfachen Menschen; es ist zu erwarten, daß viele einfache Leser es mit derselben Anteilnahme lesen werden."<sup>102</sup> She also praises Ruth Werner for depicting in her book every-day reality with its inherent conflicts: "Der Leser weiß: Dies ist nicht Spekulation; so stellte und stellt das Leben Konflikte vor Kommunisten, und so lassen sie sich austragen."<sup>103</sup> If a reader can associate his own experiences with those in a book, he is more likely to keep reading it and learn something from it. In discussing reactions to her own work Nachdenken über Christa T., she states the following: "Reaktionen bei Lesungen zeigen mir, in welchem Maße Leser bereit sind, ein literarisches Vorhaben, das ihrer eignen Erfahrungswelt entstammt, durch Assoziationen anzureichern."<sup>104</sup> Although in both this statement about her own work and the earlier statements about Fischer's and Werner's works, Christa Wolf is concerned with the reader being able to identify with the material he reads, there is a difference in both the audience the authors are writing for and the purpose of the works. The earlier works were written to reach all levels of society; as she says, even the "simple people" should be able to understand the ideas presented.

The purpose of these earlier novels was to help the reader adjust to his society, with the goal of becoming a better socialist citizen. Later in her own work, Nachdenken über Christa T., there is no pretense of trying to reach even the simplest reader. Her work has a complex structure and would probably not be understood by uneducated readers. Her aim is to investigate the inner workings of the mind, especially the process of remembering and reflecting upon the past, and is not intended to show the every-day man how to function as a proper socialist. Therefore, although both the early works of other writers and her own later work were intended to be understood by the reader, the type of reader for whom the works are written has changed, as has the purpose of the work.

The interplay between the reader and what he reads can be so strong that the reader can almost take over the role of writer:

"Wahrscheinlich werden sich viele Leser die eigenen Erinnerungen zwischen die Seiten schieben. Auch wenn die Handlung abbricht, weiß man, wie es weitergehen wird: Man schreibt unbewußt, aus eigenen Erfahrungen schöpfend, mit."<sup>105</sup> The author should not forget the tastes of the reader when deciding what type of material to present. A certain environment may prove stimulating, or the relevance of the plot to his own life may keep the reader's interest. In any case, the author must be concerned with preventing his work from being unattainable: "Indem er seine Kunst unerreichbar macht, rettet der Künstler keineswegs das Menschliche in sich."<sup>106</sup>

The second question that concerns Christa Wolf is "What should the reader learn or experience from the work?" One of her hopes centers around the reader's ability to understand. The work should encourage the

reader to use his own mind: "aber kann ein Buch klug sein, das den Leser verstimmt, weil es ihm nicht die Fähigkeit zum eigenen Denken und Urteilen zutraut?"<sup>107</sup> In her Foreword to one anthology of works, she claims that the works contained in it help to clarify for the reader the most recent history of the GDR.<sup>108</sup> Literature can aid the reader's understanding of recent history as well as his understanding of the meaning of life: "Die Menschen – eine ganze Generation – fragten nach dem Sinn ihres Lebens, und die neue Literatur gab ihnen eine neue Antwort: sie entdeckte ihnen das Neue, das Einmalige unserer Zeit, das Geheimnis der Epoche."<sup>109</sup> Christa Wolf emphasizes this pedagogic aspect of literature when she states that "die Belehrung, die auch eine Absicht des Schriftstellers ist, so aufgenommen wird, als gebe sie das Leben selbst: durch Anteilnahme, Sympathie, Liebe, Haß und Abscheu lernt der Leser mit Herz, Sinnen und Verstand begreifen."<sup>110</sup>

The author can help the reader adjust to everyday life by depicting characters and situations from which he can learn to conduct his own life. Christa Wolf praises Otto Gotsche for depicting understandable characters who can function as genuine role models.<sup>111</sup> She lauds those authors who present new heroes and themes in their works and who portray the recent past in such a way that the reader gains an understanding of his life and its historical context.<sup>112</sup> She praises Anna Seghers' novel Die Entscheidung for this reason: "Dieses Buch will uns leben helfen, heute und hier."<sup>113</sup> In a different review of the same novel she makes a similar remark: "Ihr Buch gibt seinen Lesern – Leser verschiedener Generationen, verschiedener Gesellschaftsschichten, verschiedener Nationalität und Bewußtseinstufe – Beistand in alltäglichen Fragen und

Nöten.<sup>114</sup>

Christa Wolf postulates an "epic prose" which, by avoiding a cathartic effect such as that of Aristotelian drama, can awaken the feelings inside a person and cause him to react to what he has read. Literature should not leave the reader with a satisfied sigh and a feeling that now everything is in order. "Ein solches Gefühl tötet wie ein chemisches Gift das Leben der Menschen in einem Buch, es sterilisiert alle Kelme, die fruchtbar im Leser weiterwachsen könnten."<sup>115</sup> Instead, if the reader is to be inspired to take what he has learned and apply it to his own life, then he must be agitated by what he reads, not satisfied. In order to have this effect, literature must probe deeply into a person's thoughts and feelings: "Und haben Bücher nicht tief in die Menschen einzugreifen?"<sup>116</sup> She believes that an epic prose can serve this function:

Die epische Prosa sollte eine Gattung sein, die es unternimmt, auf noch ungebahnten Wegen in das Innere dieses Menschen da, des Prosaesers, einzudringen. In das Innerste Innere, dorthin, wo der Kern der Persönlichkeit sich bildet und festigt. ... Diese Region kann die Stimme eines anderen Menschen, kann Prosa erreichen, kann durch die Sprache berührt und aufgeschlossen werden – nicht, um sich ihrer zu bemächtigen, sondern um seelische Kräfte freizusetzen, die an Gewalt mit den im Atom gebundenen Energien zu vergleichen sind. (L&S/207)

Christa Wolf praises Anna Segher's novel Die Entscheidung for fulfilling the function of epic prose:

Dieses Buch erklärt nicht nur, es belehrt nicht nur. Es weckt Wünsche und Sehnsüchte, Hoffnungen und Träume, die vielleicht weiterglimmen werden, wenn man schon vergessen hat, woran sie sich zuerst entzündeten. Es könnte manchem der Anstoß sein zu seinem "ersten Schritt."<sup>117</sup>

This "first step" can be interpreted to mean the first step towards taking an active role in socialist life. Later, in an essay on her own work as a writer, she expresses the wish that literature have the capability of

awakening the desires of all people: "ich wünsche mir oft, die Literatur wäre etwas wie ein Zauberstab, ihn, sie alle zu erlösen: Die toten Seelen zum Leben zu erwecken, ihnen Mut zu sich selbst zu machen, zu ihren oft unbewußten Träumen, Sehnsüchten und Fähigkeiten."<sup>118</sup> Not only should literature awaken the forces lying dormant within the reader, but it should intensify the experiences that he has already had. By depicting reality and attempting to penetrate its meaning, the author, through his work, is in a position to intensify the experience of the reader. In depicting past situations, specifically the war, it is not sufficient that the author invoke the response from the reader "Ja, so ist es gewesen."<sup>119</sup> He must induce the reader to repeat his own experience.

Aber diese Wiederholung darf kein Abklatsch des einstigen Erlebens sein, sondern sie muß zu seiner Bewertung führen. Unsere Bücher müssen die Leser zwingen, ehrlich gegen sich zu sein, mit sich ins Gericht zu gehen und die eigene, die unheilvolle Rolle unseres Volkes im letzten Krieg zu begreifen und zuzugeben. Unsere Bücher dürfen kein Schlupfloch für den bequemen Zeitgenossen lassen: Sie müssen ihn wirklich betreffen.<sup>120</sup>

Here, in discussing the war, she again mentions that one of the reasons that literature is so important is that it causes the reader to remember and work through past events:

Wie oft, wenn Menschen aus ihrem Leben erzählen, wenn sie von ihrer inneren Wirrnis nach dem Zusammenbruch des Hitlerregimes sprechen, wie oft nennen sie dann den Titel eines Buches, das ihnen Anstoß gab, nachzudenken, richtig zu fragen, sich über mühsam verarbeitete Antworten zur tiefgreifenden Entscheidung vorzutasten.<sup>121</sup>

Beyond providing answers to the questions of what will interest the reader and what the reader should learn or experience from literature, Christa Wolf mentions several times in her more recent writings the direct relationship between reader and writer. As a writer herself, she feels that

in recent years talks with readers have helped her more than talks with official literary critics.<sup>122</sup> In the GDR there is a direct relationship between the author and his audience. Writers often meet with the public, to discuss literature in general or to give readings from their work; in this way there is a flow of information from the author to the reader and back again. By meeting with readers, the author can gain a better understanding of the needs of the public, and the public in turn comes to know the writer as a person, not just as a picture on the cover of a book. Christa Wolf believes that there is an increasing willingness for the author and the public to work together to help deal with the problems they both face: "Besonders in der Jugend besteht ein wachsendes Bedürfnis, mit Schriftstellern und anderen, die sich darum kümmern wollen, gemeinsam über den Sinn der Anstrengungen und Kämpfe nachzudenken, denen sie sich tagtäglich aussetzen."<sup>123</sup>

In a discussion about her novel Kindheitsmuster, she makes several statements that show that her feelings towards the author-reader relationship have changed from her previous statements:

Das ist sowieso eine falsche Vorstellung, daß man schreibt in Hinblick auf den Leser. Ich gehöre allerdings nicht zu denen, die behaupten können – und ich glaube es auch anderen nicht, die es behaupten –: Ich denke überhaupt nicht daran, daß das mal veröffentlicht wird. Das stimmt nicht. Man denkt nicht dran, aber man weiß es; es ist da: Man möchte es veröffentlichen, man schreibt es zur Veröffentlichung. Insofern schreibt man anders, als wenn man sich in seinem Tagebuch Notizen machen würde über die Kindheit oder über irgend etwas. ... Die Versuche [diese Geschichte zu erzählen] sind nicht gemacht worden im Hinblick darauf, wer es lesen soll, sondern im Hinblick auf den Stoff, auf das Material. Eine Art Selbstversuch; nämlich man muß sich zu dem Material in eine Beziehung bringen, und darum ging es.<sup>124</sup>

Although she says that she is no longer writing primarily with the reader in

mind, she does hope that what she has to say might be relevant to the young reader, who, although he has not experienced the same events that she has, might find something in what she has said that he can apply to his own life: "Es gibt aber Erfahrungsmuster, die für Jugenden allgemein gelten oder in einem bestimmten Jahrhundert gelten, in einer bestimmten Nation oder in einer bestimmten Gesellschaft. In diesem Sinne hoffe ich schon, daß man etwas Verallgemeinertes findet."<sup>125</sup>

The author must have the courage to write what he feels he must, regardless of what politicians, newspapers, or even readers might think about what he says.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, in this article she is not totally abandoning her belief in the possibilities of the author-reader relationship that she expressed in her earlier essays, but rather she is now much more concerned with the relationship of the author and the work. The change in her ideas about the reader follow the same change as her ideas on the topics discussed earlier. This change involves a progression from a concern primarily for the society to a concern for the relationship of the author with his own work.

## Conclusion

Because of Christa Wolf's ideas on the interrelationship between the author, his work, the society, and the reader within that society, it would be logical to expect that any progression of her ideas over the period between her early and her late theoretical writings would be reflected in each of the topics that she discusses in respect to that relationship. It has been seen that this is indeed the case. Within the general topic of the responsibility of the author and the possibilities for literature in a

socialist society, each of the areas that she discusses--the representation of reality, the difficulty of the author's task, historical truthfulness, the depiction of problems, the concept of newness, and the humanization of man--reflects a change of perspective from her early to her late writings. In her early works she is more concerned with the impact of literature on society and how it can help the society develop towards its goal of socialism. Her later works exhibit the belief that the author's primary goal is inwardly oriented: he is to examine his own mind and find within it the material for his work.

The topic of the reader includes her concern for what aspects of literature maintain the reader's interest, and her concern for what the reader should learn or experience from literature, as well as a description of the direct author-reader relationship. Here, too, her ideas show a progression. In her early writings about the reader, she believes that he must be helped to fit into his developing society, but later she becomes more concerned with the enrichment of the inner man. In one of her most recent articles, she emphasizes the writer's responsibility to himself, which must at times mean that he cannot be concerned with what the reader thinks. The progression of ideas from her early to her late works is caused by two factors: 1) her own development as a writer which leads to a more personal view of the responsibilities of writing, and 2) the development of the society, which, now having become somewhat stable, can allow literature to be preoccupied with the inner world of the people living within it.



## Notes--Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Christa Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe. Gedanken zum III. Sowjetischen Schriftstellerkongreß," Neues Deutschland No. 167 (20 June 1959).

<sup>2</sup>Christa Wolf, "Sozialistische Literatur der Gegenwart," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 (May 1959): 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>Marion von Salisch, Zwischen Selbstaufgabe und Selbstverwirklichung: Zum Problem der Persönlichkeitsstruktur im Werk Christa Wolfs, vol. 12: Literaturwissenschaft-Gesellschaftswissenschaft: Materialien und Untersuchungen zur Literatursoziologie, ed. Theo Buck and Dietrich Steinbach (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1975), pp. 69-70.

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans. Bemerkungen zu dem Roman 'Im Morgennebel' von Ehm Welk," Neue deutsche Literatur 2 (January 1954): 148.

<sup>5</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (July 1955): 141.

<sup>6</sup>Christa Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," Neue deutsche Literatur 2 (June 1954): 143.

<sup>7</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," 141.

<sup>8</sup>Christa Wolf, "Die Literaturtheorie findet zur literarischen Praxis," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (November 1955): 159.

<sup>9</sup>Christa Wolf, Foreword to In diesen Jahren: deutsche Erzähler der Gegenwart, ed. Christa Wolf (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam jun., 1956), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Christa Wolf, "Warum singt der Vogel nicht? Fortsetzung einer öffentlichen Diskussion in der 'Schwarzen Pumpe' über Gegenwartsliteratur," Neues Deutschland 12 (November 1957).

<sup>11</sup>Christa Wolf, "Unsere Meinung," Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (January 1958): 3.

<sup>12</sup>Christa Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (June 1958): 7.

<sup>13</sup>Christa Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben. Die deutsche Frage in dem Roman 'Die Entscheidung' von Anna Seghers," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (May 1961): 63.

<sup>14</sup>Christa Wolf, Speech at the Second Bitterfeld Conference. Protokoll der von der Ideologischen Kommission beim Politbüro des ZK der SED und

dem Ministerium für Kultur am 24. und 25. April im Kulturpalast des Elektrochemischen Kombinats Bitterfeld abgehaltenen Konferenz (Berlin: Dietz, 1964), pp. 224, 229.

<sup>15</sup>Christa Wolf, "Eine Rede," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1972), p. 121.

<sup>16</sup>Christa Wolf, "Gute Bücher - und was weiter?," Neues Deutschland (19 December 1965).

<sup>17</sup>Christa Wolf, "Einiges über meine Arbeit als Schriftsteller," Junge Schriftsteller der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Selbstdarstellungen, ed. Wolfgang Paulick (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1965), pp. 16.

<sup>18</sup>Werner Krogmann, "Moralischer Realismus - Ein Versuch über Christa Wolf," Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik 7 (1978): 252.

<sup>19</sup>Christa Wolf, "Glauben an Irdisches," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1978), pp. 92-94.

<sup>20</sup>Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), pp. 189. Further citations from this article will be indicated directly in the text by using the abbreviation L&S followed by the page number.

<sup>21</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsroman," 150.

<sup>22</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 142.

<sup>23</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsroman," 145.

<sup>24</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 143.

<sup>25</sup>Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" 11.

<sup>26</sup>Christa Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, ed. Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1959), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>Christa Wolf, "Deutschland unserer Tage," Neues Deutschland No. 77 (18 March 1961).

<sup>28</sup>Christa Wolf, Discussion at the "Konferenz junger Schriftsteller in Halle," Neue deutsche Literatur 10 (August 1962): 133.

<sup>29</sup>Wolf, Speech at the Second Bitterfeld Conference, p. 233.

<sup>30</sup>Christa Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch: Bemerkungen zu einem internationalen Kolloquium," Neue deutsche Literatur 13 (March 1965): 98.

<sup>31</sup>Max Walter Schulz, "Das Neue und das Bleibende in unserer

Literatur." In VI. Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß. Protokoll (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1969), p. 34.

<sup>32</sup>Krogmann, p. 250.

<sup>33</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," 142.

<sup>34</sup>Witold F. Tulasiewicz, "Socialist Realism In the German Democratic Republic," in Oakland Symposium on Socialist Realism in Literature, ed. Renate Gerulaitis (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1975), pp. 22-23.

<sup>35</sup>Christa Wolf, Foreword to Proben junger Erzähler, ed. Christa Wolf (Leipzig: Reclam, 1959): p. 4

<sup>36</sup>Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit?" 123.

<sup>37</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955), 144.

<sup>38</sup>Christa Wolf, "Eine Lektion über Wahrheit und Objektivität," Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (July 1958), 121.

<sup>39</sup>Jürgen Nieraad, "Subjektivität als Thema und Methode realistischer Schreibweise. Zur gegenwärtigen DDR-Literaturdiskussion am Beispiel Christa Wolf," vol. 19: Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch im Auftrage der Görres-Gesellschaft, ed. Hermann Kunisch 19 (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1978), 315. He is quoting from Christa Wolf, "Subjektive Authentizität und gesellschaftliche Wahrheit," Auskünfte (Berlin, 1974), p. 492.

<sup>40</sup>Christa Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (November 1958): 130.

<sup>41</sup>Wolf, "Land in dem wir leben," 50.

<sup>42</sup>Christa Wolf, "Ein Erzähler gehört dazu," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (October 1961):51.

<sup>43</sup>Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben," 208.

<sup>44</sup>Heinrich Mohr, "Produktive Sehnsucht. Struktur, Thematik und politische Relevanz von Christa Wolfs 'Nachdenken über Christa T.'," Basis 2 (1971): 225.

<sup>45</sup>Schulz, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup>Dietrich Steinbach, "Die neuere Literatur der DDR: Probleme, Tendenzen, Konstellationen," Deutschunterricht 30 (April 1978): 110.

<sup>47</sup>Mohr, 225.

<sup>48</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 142.

<sup>49</sup>Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" 12.

<sup>50</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 142.

<sup>51</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 101.

<sup>52</sup>Wolf, "Warum singt der Vogel nicht?".

<sup>53</sup>Christa Wolf, "Besiegte Schatten?" Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955): 138.

<sup>54</sup>Alfred Klein, "Potrebnoť b šťastie," Voprosy literatury 9 (December 1965), p. 33. Translation mine; the original Russian (in transliteration) reads: "Nigde ne zamalčivaetsja, čto nynesnaja žizn' imeet i tragičeskie momenty i čto dostignutoe do six por ešče ne daet povoda dija samouspokoenija."

<sup>55</sup>Wolf, "Deutschland unserer Tage."

<sup>56</sup>Christa Wolf, "...wenn man sie durch Arbeit mehrt," Berliner Zeitung, No. 95 (1961).

<sup>57</sup>Wolf, "Ein Erzähler gehört dazu," 131.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>59</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 101.

<sup>60</sup>Christa Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 101.

<sup>61</sup>Christa Wolf, Speech at the Seventh Authors' Congress, VII. Schriftstellerkongress der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Protokoll (Arbeitsgruppen), ed. Schriftstellerverband der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1973), pp. 148, 151.

<sup>62</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 99.

<sup>63</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," 141.

<sup>64</sup>Wolf, "Unsere Meinung," 3.

<sup>65</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Proben junger Erzähler, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup>Christa Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, pp. 9-10.

<sup>67</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 144.

<sup>68</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Proben junger Erzähler, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, p.

10.

<sup>70</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 147.

<sup>71</sup>Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit?" 121.

<sup>72</sup>Christa Wolf, "Literatur und Zeitgenossenschaft," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 (March 1959): 9.

<sup>73</sup>Christa Wolf, "Vom erfüllten Leben," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 (February 1959): 140.

<sup>74</sup>Wolf, "Literatur und Zeitgenossenschaft," 11.

<sup>75</sup>Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe."

<sup>76</sup>Wolf, Christa, "Briefwechsel Gerti Tetzner – Christa Wolf," in "Was zählt, ist die Wahrheit. Briefe von Schriftstellern der DDR," Neue deutsche Literatur 23 (August 1975): 123.

<sup>77</sup>Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe."

<sup>78</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 101–2.

<sup>79</sup>Horst Nawlewski, "Christa Wolf," Deutsch als Fremdsprache 10 (Literarisch-landeskundliches Sonderheft 1973): 90.

<sup>80</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 144.

<sup>81</sup>Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit?" 121–22.

<sup>82</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 103.

<sup>83</sup>Alexander Abusch, Literatur im Zeitalter des Sozialismus. Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte 1921 bis 1966, vol. 2: Schriften (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1967), p. 679.

<sup>84</sup>Wolfgang Beutin et al., ed., Deutsche Literatur Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1979), p. 346.

<sup>85</sup>Otto Gotsche, "Unsere historische Pflicht," in Neuere DDR-Literatur. Texte und Materialien für den Deutschunterricht, 2nd ed. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1975), p. 49.

<sup>86</sup>Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" 13.

<sup>87</sup>von Salisch, p. 76. He quotes from Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben," p. 208.

<sup>88</sup>Wolf, Christa, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen. Eduard Zak sprach mit Christa Wolf," Sonntag No. 7 (1968): p. 7.

<sup>89</sup>Christa Wolf, "Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," Weimarer Beiträge 20 (June 1974): 112.

<sup>90</sup>Wolf, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen," 6

<sup>91</sup>Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), pp. 77-78.

<sup>92</sup>Christa Wolf, "Tagebuch," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 66. This quotation, originally made by J.R. Becher, stands as the motto of her story Nachdenken über Christa T..

<sup>93</sup>Wolf, "Selbstinterview," p. 80.

<sup>94</sup>von Sallisch, p. 70.

<sup>95</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," Sinn und Form 28 (July/August 1976): 864.

<sup>96</sup>Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe."

<sup>97</sup>Wolf, "Glauben an Irdisches," p. 90.

<sup>98</sup>Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben," 49.

<sup>99</sup>Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit," 115.

<sup>100</sup>Wolf, "Literatur und Zeitgenossenschaft," 11.

<sup>101</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 140.

<sup>102</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 149.

<sup>103</sup>Wolf, "Vom erfüllten Leben," 142.

<sup>104</sup>Wolf, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen," p. 7.

<sup>105</sup>Wolf, Christa, "Anna Seghers über ihre eigene Schaffensmethode. Ein Gespräch." In Anna Seghers, Über Kunstwerk und Wirklichkeit. Vol. II Erlebnis und Gestaltung, ed. Sigrid Bock (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), p. 49.

<sup>106</sup>Christa Wolf, "Freiheit oder Auflösung der Persönlichkeit?" Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (April 1957): 142.

<sup>107</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 143.

<sup>108</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Proben junger Erzähler, p. 4.

- <sup>109</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit, p. 9.
- <sup>110</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," 142.
- <sup>111</sup>Wolf, "Sozialistische Literatur der Gegenwart," 6.
- <sup>112</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, p. 9.
- <sup>113</sup>Wolf, "Deutschland unserer Tage."
- <sup>114</sup>Wolf, "Land in dem wir leben," 52.
- <sup>115</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," 142.
- <sup>116</sup>Wolf, "Besiegte Schatten?" 141.
- <sup>117</sup>Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben," 61-62.
- <sup>118</sup>Wolf, "Einiges über meine Arbeit," p. 16.
- <sup>119</sup>Wolf, Foreword to In diesen Jahren, p. 4.
- <sup>120</sup>Christa Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst," Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (December 1957): 120.
- <sup>121</sup>Wolf, Foreword to Wir, unsere Zeit. Gedichte aus zehn Jahren, p. 9.
- <sup>122</sup>Christa Wolf, "Literaturkritik ohne Netz," Neues Deutschland (4 April 1974).
- <sup>123</sup>Wolf, "Notwendiges Streitgespräch," 102.
- <sup>124</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," 868-69.
- <sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*, 872.
- <sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 886.

## Chapter Three--The Relationship between the Author and the Work

### Introduction

This chapter examines Christa Wolf's views on the relationship between the author and his work. Throughout her theoretical writings, she is concerned with the dynamics of the interaction between the author and what he is writing. In her earlier writings, her comments focus on the works of others, her views of their writing, and the relationship she perceives to exist between these authors and their work. In her later theoretical writings, her own experiences as a writer of fiction shape her views of the author-work relationship. Her earlier comments reflect her belief that the author has a great responsibility to the society, and her reviews of authors' works usually judge them according to how well the author has understood his task and to what degree he has presented a view of society which will further the goals of socialism. Concurrent with her own development as a writer of fiction, her statements on the author-work relationship begin to reflect a deepening awareness of the interaction between the author and his work, as well as of the confrontation of the author with his own past and present. In her later works she develops her ideas of the author-work relationship into a theory she calls subjective authenticity ("subjektive Authentizität"), in which the process of writing is no longer a reflection of reality, but rather a reflection of self. Through writing, the author confronts his own inner world, rather than the outer world of societal reality. The author searches for an understanding of himself and is no longer content just to try to make sense of what he sees happening outside himself. Thus Christa Wolf moves away from the



view that the author's primary responsibility is to the society and toward the view that the author is primarily responsible to his own inner development.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first three sections deal with topics that concern Christa Wolf from her early theoretical writings through her later writings: 1) general comments about the author-work relationship; 2) the role of experience; and 3) the author's lifestyle. The second group of sections examines three topics that she discusses only in her later writings: 4) the author's personal motivation for writing; 5) the process of remembering; and 6) her theory of subjective authenticity.

#### A. General Comments on the Author-Work Relationship

Christa Wolf's earliest comments about the author-work relationship occur within the context of the author's responsibility to depict society in such a way that the reader is helped to understand his place in society. To this end the author should show that he has a proper understanding of the society, and he should depict characters and situations in a realistic way so that the reader can learn from what he reads. She criticizes the authors of the 1950's who did not have a clear perception of how to create non-stereotypical characters. There is a discrepancy between her desire for authors to keep in mind that literature should serve the goals of society and her desire that they should not create characters who serve only to espouse certain ideas. Through vital, realistic characters, the author is supposed to convey certain ideas to the reader, but he must do so subtly and without appearing dogmatic. This contradiction occurs because of Christa Wolf's desire that literature promote the goals of

socialism, but she was unwilling even in her early writings to accept a literary work just because it was ideologically correct. It was important to her that a work not only arise from the author's genuine belief in the goals of socialism, but that it should also have inherent literary merit. Therefore the presence of any given character or situation in a work should be justifiable according to literary standards and not be included only to represent certain ideological viewpoints.

She hopes that the author will develop in such a way that he gains the ability to do justice to the material that society presents for his use: "Wir dürfen hoffen, daß diese Wirklichkeit ihm neue, noch größere Stoffe aufdrängen wird und daß er im Prozess seiner eigenen künstlerischen Reife die Fähigkeiten ausbilden wird, sie zu bewältigen."<sup>1</sup> The author should have not only the technical competence to depict reality in a socially acceptable manner, but must really believe in the goals of his society: "Es handelt sich dabei...in erster Linie weder um Fragen des Talents noch der technischen Fertigkeiten dieser Schriftsteller; es ist die Frage nach ihrer Einstellung zum Leben, nach der Tiefe und Wahrhaftigkeit ihres Weltbildes."<sup>2</sup> She believes that no one can force the writer to depict ideas that he has not resolved. It must be understood by both authors and critics that no one, not even an authors' union, can force a writer to depict ideas in his work that he does not really agree with.<sup>3</sup> She repeats this idea in a different article and further states that this relationship between the author's world-view and his choice of material for his work is one that needs to be discussed further in literary circles.<sup>4</sup> She further believes that the author must ask himself what it is that he wants to achieve with his work. In addition, he must have sufficiently high

aspirations for himself. She criticizes a certain author for having been satisfied with too little in his work:

Er hatte gar nicht die Absicht gehabt, die revolutionären Traditionen der Mansfeld-Arbeiter zu Worte kommen zu lassen; es hatte ihm genügt, möglichst anschauliche Elendsschilderungen zu bekommen; er glaubte, mit ihnen am besten die Legende von der "guten alten Zeit" zerstören zu können. Er hätte mehr wollen müssen, er hätte sich vor allem vornehmen sollen, mit seinen Berichten über die Vergangenheit in den gegenwärtigen Kampf einzugreifen.<sup>5</sup>

It is not sufficient that an author set challenging goals for himself, he must realize them. She criticizes another author for this discrepancy between his goal and its realization: "In den bisher vorliegenden Besprechungen wird allgemein die gute und nützliche Absicht des Autors anerkannt; über den Grad der Verwirklichung dieser Absicht gehen die Ansichten der Rezensenten auseinander."<sup>6</sup>

It is in a 1957 article that she mentions the creative process, but she only advocates the investigation of its peculiarities and difficulties: "...[es] wäre wohl nützlich gewesen, den Besonderheiten und Schwierigkeiten im Schaffensprozeß der Schriftsteller nachzugehen."<sup>7</sup> The fact that she does not state any of her own ideas concerning the dynamics of this creative process is certainly understandable in light of the fact that she is still at an early stage in her theoretical writings and has not yet begun to write her own fiction. Beginning with an article on Anna Seghers' novel Die Entscheidung, she develops her ideas of what this creative process involves. The importance of writing to the author and the interrelationship between what he experiences and what he writes gradually becomes clear to her as she progresses in her own development as a writer. The following statement about a character in Seghers' novel reveals her increasing awareness of the relationship of the author to his work and the

significance that writing has for his entire life: "Dann packt es ihn, dann ist plötzlich keine Kluft mehr zwischen gelebtem und geschriebenem Leben, dann hat sein Beruf, das Schreiben, das zugleich seine wichtigste und ernsteste Lebensäußerung ist, auch die anderen Lebensäußerungen nachgezogen."<sup>8</sup>

In a later article, entitled "Tagebuch," she discusses the relationship of the author to the diary. She believes that the reading of diaries, as well as other "factual" accounts of life such as memoirs and biographies, is caused by readers' general distrust of fictional accounts of the lives of others.<sup>9</sup> But she believes that it is only literature, which she contrasts with factual accounts of life, which can create a synthesis of contemporary human relationships, which are often hard to explain. She feels that diaries, although not genuine literature, can serve a useful function for the author in the creation of his own literary works. Since diaries are not usually written for publication, the ideas presented in them tend to be close to actual occurrences in life, and an author can use them as a source for his characters and situations. A diary can provide ideas for a literary work, but more is required of a work than the mere presentation of occurrences. The writer must interact with the material and create a new reality, the reality of the book: "Erst aus dieser Verquickung [von "Stoff" und "Autor"] geht ein Drittes hervor, die neue Realität des Buches." (L&S/212) This new reality, the work, is the result of the creative process, which is the merging of the author and his material.

Her later writings also reveal her idea on the effect which writing has on the author. She describes the act of writing as enabling the author to merge with the present:

Für den [Autor ist] Schreiben das Mittel..., sich mit der Zeit zu verschmelzen in dem Augenblick, da beide ihre dichteste, konfliktreichste und schmerzhafteste Annäherung erfahren. Die Energiemenge, die aufgebracht werden muß, um den Schmelzpunkt zu erreichen, ist beträchtlich. Nicht weniger als der volle Einsatz der eigenen moralischen Existenz ist gefordert, jedesmal neu. Das ist der Ernst hinter dem Spiel der Kunst.<sup>10</sup>

No longer does she view writing in an abstract manner, as an activity that authors perform for the good of their society. It has become to her an activity that is integrally connected to the very being of the author, who must give up something of himself in order to create a work of literature.

#### B. The Role of Experience

One of the aspects of the relationship between the author and the work that interests Christa Wolf is the role that the author's experiences play in the development of the literary work. Throughout her theoretical writings, she is concerned about the degree to which experiences shape the author's perception of the world, and ultimately his writing. Her earliest essays express her belief that the author should not attempt to write about events that he has not personally experienced, whereas in her later works she is more concerned with how the author interacts with his experiences through the act of writing. This change in her ideas is in congruence with the change in her view of the goal of writing from her early belief that writing should serve the socialist society to her later emphasis on writing as a personally fulfilling process for the author.

Her concern that the author depict the laws of societal development is expressed in an early essay, where she states that the author must have experienced these laws and have thought about the people within the society, before he can produce a literary work that will serve the goals of

the socialist society: "Bevor ein Schriftsteller eine solche Geschichte... erfinden, solche Gestalten und Konflikte schaffen kann, muß er viel über die Menschen seiner Umgebung nachgedacht und über die Gesetze erfahren haben, nach denen sie sich bewegen."<sup>11</sup> Because the author should depict experiences and events that he personally has experienced, she finds the autobiographical style typical of young writers of the time to be appropriate to their goals: "Diese weitgehend autobiographischen Darstellungen sind für junge Schriftsteller eine naheliegende und natürliche Form der Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Vergangenheit."<sup>12</sup> The author need not have personally experienced each detail of his story, but he should deal with material that is within his general realm of experience, i.e., events that could logically happen within his society, or characters that are actually present in the society. Because she perceives the events of the time to be important to the development of the society, she feels that authors should portray actual heroes of the society.<sup>13</sup> Although she wishes that all authors had the correct view of the society and wants them to express that viewpoint in their works, she does not think they should simply echo the ideas that they hear around them. They should strive to widen their realm of experience and depict in their literary work beliefs that they actually hold, not just reflect ideas that they think they should: "Ein Autor kann sich einen progressiveren als seinen gegenwärtigen Standpunkt wohl wünschen, aber nicht einfach aussuchen, er muß ihn erarbeiten, erfahren, erleben."<sup>14</sup> This places a double burden on the writer, who must not only process and reflect his own experience, but also deal with the external forces that say he should depict reality in an ideologically correct way. Since both the integrity of the author and the

idea that the author should try to help the developing society are important to Christa Wolf, the only way she can resolve the conflict that arises if the author's experiences do not coincide with the correct ideological viewpoint is to urge all writers to somehow incorporate the correct viewpoint into their belief system. She praises an author who understands his role in society and successfully depicts it in his work: "Walter Kaufmann hat es....erfahren, wohin er gehört. Und er überträgt diese Grunderfahrung auf den jungen Helden seines Buches."<sup>15</sup> She further praises other writers for an authenticity in their works which stems from writing about their own experiences.

Er brauchte keine Milieustudien. Er hatte unter den Bergarbeitern gelebt, ihre Sprache gesprochen, ihren Kampf mitgekämpft....<sup>16</sup>

In dem Erzählungskranz, den er plant, werden sich Erfahrungen aus dieser Zeit direkt literarisch niederschlagen. ...Was er in dieser Erzählung gestaltet und in dem Stück auf die Bühne stellt, die wirre, harte Zeit nach dem letzten Krieg, hat Heiduczek als Achtzehn-, Neunzehnjähriger erlebt....<sup>17</sup>

This concern with the role of experience in an author's work continues throughout her writings, but it begins to take on a different tone as her theoretical writing progresses from early to late. In an interview with Anna Seghers, Christa Wolf asks her about the role that biographical elements play in her work.

Spielt das Biographische in Ihrem Werk sonst keine Rolle oder nur eine indirekte Rolle? ... Mich interessiert das Biographische. Aber nicht für sich allein, sondern insofern es umgesetzt wird in der künstlerischen Arbeit; dieser sehr verwickelte Prozeß, wie sich biographisches eigenes Erlebnis niederschlägt in Büchern, zum Beispiel in Ihren Büchern.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning with this 1965 interview, Christa Wolf's interest turns from the importance of actual experiences to the authenticity of a work to a concern about the effect that the process of writing has on the writer's

perception of his experiences. The interaction of the writer with his experiences becomes more important than the use of his experiences to depict a correct ideological standpoint. No longer does she believe that the author should simply write about his experiences; rather, he should write about his interactions with his world. It is this desire to come to terms with his world, and thus with himself, that motivates the author to write: "Das ist es, was ihn zum Schreiben drängt, mehr als die unscheinbaren, fast zufälligen Erlebnisse, die ihm auf seiner Wanderschaft zuteil werden."<sup>19</sup> The author should still work from his own experiences, but she no longer feels that his experiences can be placed directly on the paper; some change necessarily occurs in the process of writing about experiences.

The passage of time between an experience and the act of writing about it also causes subtle changes in the author's perception of his experiences. The author finds that he cannot simply record his experiences, even if he wants to depict them exactly as they occurred, but rather discovers that time has transformed them:

[Der Autor] versucht, schreibend, getreu zu sein, und findet: Die fünfundzwanzig Jahre haben nicht nur an ihm, sie haben auch an jener frühen Szene gearbeitet. Muß zugeben: Er hat sie nicht "objektiv" erzählt – das ist nicht möglich. Es entmutigt ihn nicht. Er entschließt sich, zu erzählen, das heißt: wahrheitsgetreu zu erfinden auf Grund eigener Erfahrung. (L&S/198-99)

This inherent difficulty for the author in relating his experiences is one concern of Christa Wolfs. The author wants to understand his own experiences and come to grips with them through his writing, but the very act of writing about them destroys his direct connection with them:

Denn es ist schwierig, unverwandt und unbedingt wahrhaftig von den eigenen Erfahrungen auszugehen. Dies, manchmal als



Gewissensprüfung für den Autor hingestellt. Ist in Wirklichkeit blanker Eigennutz: Jede Manipulation mit den eigenen Erfahrungen zerstörte unverzüglich den Kontakt zu den lebendigen Quellen der Inspiration und würde den Autor zwingen, Gespenster auszustoßen, Mißgeburten, die mit verdrehten Augen und falschen Zungen reden.... (L&S/216)

The author must observe life in order to write about it, but if he observes life with the intent of writing about it, his direct relationship with it is lost. In answer to the question of whether she herself has a literary relationship with the present, or whether there are within her various persons who react in different ways to the present, she states that she tries to react to life without the intention of writing about everything that she sees:

diejenigen Ereignisse und Vorgänge oder Handlungen, in die ich hineingezogen werde, die mich besonders stark berühren, [werden von mir] absolut "unliterarisch" erlebt. Das heißt, ohne diese Beobachterposition, ohne dieses Gefühl: Ah, schreibst vielleicht mal drüber; oder: Das wäre mal eine Figur! Das ist absolut weg. Was man "berechnend" erlebt – mit dem Blick auf literarische Verwertbarkeit –, ist nach meiner Erfahrung verdorben, unbrauchbares "Material".<sup>21</sup>

The task of the author to present his own experiences, which she now believes that he cannot do in a direct manner, is further complicated by the fact that in trying to present his experiences, he must maintain a certain distance from his experiences in order to be able to write about them. He cannot simply transfer his experiences directly onto paper, because the person that he presently is must necessarily enter into the writing process. The idea that the author must maintain some distance from his own experiences and also from his writing is expressed from her earliest writings onward. In her early writings, though, the writer is supposed to distance himself from his own personal development in order to better present topics that will help the society. He is supposed to depict experiences that he understands, while at the same time paying

attention to the overall goal of his writing. He must avoid the danger of becoming too involved with his own personal development:

[Die Gefahr besteht], daß der Autor mitten im Prozeß der eigenen Entwicklung die Maßstäbe für die Wichtigkeit seiner ganz persönlichen Problematik verliert und sie auf ungeeignete Gebiete überträgt.<sup>22</sup>

The author may want to depict a character who is having difficulty adapting to his society, but he should not allow himself to be drawn into the confusion of the character he has created.<sup>23</sup>

In her later articles she is concerned with the necessity of distance from certain past experiences. Now that she herself is a writer of fiction, she personally understands that a certain distance is necessary in order to deal with events or feelings that were painful or not understood at the time they were experienced: "Der Autor ... braucht ja eine gewisse innere Freiheit einem sehr schwierigen Stoff gegenüber."<sup>24</sup> In discussing the creation of her own novel Kindheitsmuster, she states that she needed the distance that thirty years provided in order to be able to deal with the events in her past.

Ich habe hier die Distanz von fast dreißig Jahren gebraucht....Die Größe, die Länge der Distanz hängt ab von der Schwere der Betroffenheit in diesem Fall, die Schwere der Verletztheit, der Verwundung, die man ausdrücken muß, erlaubte es – wieder in diesem Fall – nicht, früher daran zu rühren. Daraus erklärt sich die Zeitspanne, die ich gebraucht habe, bis ich damit anfang.<sup>25</sup>

This distance is necessary in order to put past experiences into their proper perspective, but it means that the earlier events will not be remembered exactly as they were. The person presently remembering them and writing about them is obviously a different person from that person who originally experienced the events. The intervening years have changed his perspective, and his depiction of earlier events will be

tempered by his change in viewpoint.

Christa Wolf's view of the role of experience, and the necessity of distance from certain experiences, changes from her early to her later works. In her early works, she maintains that the author should attempt to portray his experiences directly in his work for the purpose of helping the developing society. Later, after she herself has become an author, she understands the more complicated effects that writings has on the presentation of actual experiences. She learns that experiences cannot be placed directly on paper, because the act of writing about them changes the author's perspective toward them and time affects the author's remembrances of past experiences. She asserts throughout her writings that the author must maintain a certain distance from his experiences, but the reason for maintaining this distance changes during the course of her writings. Her early belief is that the author cannot depict characters and situations objectively if he becomes too involved in his material, while her later belief is that distance is a necessary prerequisite to understanding certain events of the past.

#### C. The Lifestyle of the Author

Discussion of the author's lifestyle ("Lebensweise des Schriftstellers") appears in an essay written in 1959, before Christa Wolf herself had become an author. In this essay she discusses the problem of the author, who, because of his chosen profession, needs to understand the events around him in order to adequately portray them in his literary works. She discusses the contradiction that confronts the author, the contradiction between the emphasis the society places on collective work

and the individual nature of the act of writing:

Während die Vorbilder für Ihre literarischen Figuren im Leben in dem Maß typische Helden unserer Zeit werden, in dem sie sich von Individualisten zu bewußten Mitgliedern eines Kollektivs entwickeln, zwingt die Hauptarbeit des Schriftstellers, das Schreiben, ihn weiterhin zum vereinzeln, zum individuellen Schaffen. Die Frage ist, an welchen Punkten des Schaffenprozesses kann und muß der sozialistische Schriftsteller seine Vereinzelung durchbrechen...und die Hilfe des Kollektivs in Anspruch nehmen?<sup>26</sup>

At this stage in her theoretical writing, she expects the author to make every effort to discover how he can reconcile his profession with the socialist way of life. She feels that the author must search for ways to change his life to fit the ideals of the society; for example, rather than working completely on his own, he could join an authors' group where new ideas are discussed and works critiqued.

In articles written after she had published several works of fiction, she continues to be concerned with the lifestyle of the author, but in a more personal way. For example, in a 1965 interview with Anna Seghers, she asks about the conditions under which Seghers likes to write, where and when she writes, and whether she works on a regular basis according to a specific timetable.<sup>27</sup> She is concerned with discovering the specifics of another author's writing habits, perhaps to compare them with her own. In a later article she discusses her own habit of writing down the minutiae of life around her so that she can use them later in her works: "Natur, Landschaftserlebnisse verschwimmen allzu leicht zu Stimmungen und sind dann nie wieder reproduzierbar. Ich brauche eine Stütze, knappe, anspruchslose Notizen."<sup>28</sup>

The author's relationship to his own era is emphasized in her statement that the present time continually demands that the author re-

evaluate his profession.<sup>29</sup> The author must constantly examine his role in society, his lifestyle, and objectives in order to remain relevant to the times in which he is writing. In discussing her own story, Nachdenken über Christa T., she states that one of her reasons for writing it was to discover what prevented Christa T. from becoming a writer. She examines Christa T.'s life in an attempt to discover the internal and external causes for her failure to become a writer. The question is never really answered whether it is Christa T.'s own personal inadequacies or the limitations of her society which prevent her from realizing her goal.

Speaking from her own experience, Christa Wolf discusses the profession of the author as one which changes the author's relationship to reality and to himself:

Es ist eine gesteigerte Aufmerksamkeit, ein andauernder Verantwortungsdruck, ein Dauerengagement, das unheimlich stark ist und darauf hingeht, daß man, ob man will oder nicht, dazu da ist, zu beschreiben, was man erfährt....Einfach, daß man weiß, man ist dazu da, es zu beschreiben, verändert vieles.<sup>30</sup>

Having become an author, she now feels confident to discuss the effects that the author's profession has on his life and his perception of reality. She has become aware of the influence that writing has on one's life. The author cannot be content only to watch what others do, he must take an active part in life, experiencing it to the fullest. Although she views the author's profession as offering a private challenge to the individual, she feels that one of the advantages of her society is that it is both supportive of and interested in the life of the author, thus preventing him from becoming isolated from his society. In this respect, her views of the lifestyle of the author have changed little from her early statement about the necessity of the author finding his place in society by interacting and

exchanging ideas with other people. Her views on the author's lifestyle have become more personal because of her own experience as a writer, but they have not changed in content.

#### D. The Author's Personal Motivation for Writing

One of the topics that Christa Wolf discusses only in her later theoretical writings is the author's personal motivation for writing. It has been seen that in her early writings, the author's motivation for writing is expressed in terms of his obligation to society. Representative of her ideas at this stage of her writings is the following comment about the motivation of the author:

Wir müssen erreichen, daß möglichst viele Schriftsteller gar nicht anders können, als unsere Gegenwart in irgendeiner Form künstlerisch zu gestalten, weil kein anderer Stoff sie derart begeistert, derart packt und brennend interessiert, weil sie nichts anderes innerlich so bedrängt.<sup>31</sup>

This quotation reveals her belief at that time that the author's desire to express himself could be molded by the society, and that his primary obligation should be to present contemporary material that could best aid the attainment of society's goals. In her later writings, however, she develops the idea that the author writes to overcome certain problems he perceives in himself. By overcoming these problems the writer achieves a better understanding of himself, which in turn leads to an ability to participate more intensively in life.

The idea of writing in order to overcome problems is developed from a statement by Anna Seghers: what has become able to be told, has been overcome ("Was erzählbar geworden ist, ist überwunden").<sup>32</sup> Christa Wolf believes that the corollary is also true, that what must be overcome

should be told ("Was überwunden werden muß, soll erzählt werden").<sup>33</sup>

This forms the basis of many of her statements about the author's motivation for writing. She believes that one can only begin to write when one no longer finds reality understandable: "Zu schreiben kann erst beginnen, wem die Realität nicht mehr selbstverständlich ist." (L&S/209) Only those aspects of life which disturb her are worthy of being written about: "Ich kann nur über etwas schreiben, was mich beunruhigt."<sup>34</sup> She discusses her own realization of this aspect of writing in the following statement:

Ich hatte nämlich erfahren – Ich kann wohl sagen: überraschend, und gegen meinen eigenen beträchtlichen Widerstand –, was es bedeutet, erzählen zu müssen, um zu überwinden; hatte erlebt, daß der Erzähler...gezwungen sein kann, das strenge Nacheinander von Leben, "Überwinden" und Schreiben aufzugeben und um der Inneren Authentizität willen, die er anstrebt, den Denk- und Lebensprozeß, in dem er steht, fast ungemildert...im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache zu bringen.<sup>35</sup>

The author writes in order to overcome certain experiences that have previously remained unresolved for him. In referring to her motivation for writing Kindheitsmuster, she refers to this as her reason for writing: "Mein Zugang zur Literatur, der Zwang zum Schreiben, ergibt sich daraus, daß ich sehr stark, sehr persönlich betroffen war und bin von der Geschichte, von der Geschichte unseres Volkes, unseres Staates und von allen Ereignissen, die ich seit meiner Kindheit bewußt erlebt habe."<sup>36</sup> Through the act of writing, the author confronts himself and attains a measure of self-realization. In trying to understand the death of a friend, which was her motivation for writing Nachdenken über Christa T., Christa Wolf found that something unexpected happened in the process of writing about her friend. Rather than the simple confrontation between author and the

character that is being created, she found that she was suddenly confronting herself in her interaction with the literary character who was evolving:

Da stehe ich auf einmal mir selbst gegenüber, das hatte ich nicht vorhergesehen. Nicht sie und nicht ich sind Gegenstand der Geschichte, sondern unsere Beziehungen zueinander, die Verschiedenheit der Charaktere und ihre Berührungspunkte, die Spannungen zwischen uns und ihre Auflösung, oder das Ausbleiben der Auflösung. Nichts Gegenständliches, wenn Sie so wollen, nichts Fotografierbares. Aber etwas ungemein Wirksames.<sup>37</sup>

This confrontation with self, and the interaction between the author and his material, form an important part of her literary theory. She feels that this desire to understand oneself better is one of the primary impulses for writing:

Allerdings ist der Wunsch, uns besser kennenzulernen, ein starker Antrieb zum Schreiben. Wer sich nicht kennt, kann auf die Dauer nicht handeln. Faszinierend aber ist die innere Spannung von Menschen, die, handelnd, sich selbst freundlicher und die Welt, in der wir leben, wohnlicher machen.<sup>38</sup>

The author writes in order not to miss the opportunity of understanding himself better: "Eine der wichtigsten Voraussetzungen für das Entstehen von Literatur ist aber Sehnsucht nach Selbstverwirklichung: daher der Zwang des Aufschreibens, als vielleicht einzige Möglichkeit des Autors, sich nicht zu verfehlen." (L&S/215) Writing is a process of self-actualization, in which the author, through confronting problems, is brought face to face with himself, his life, and desires. "Anscheinend erwartet der Schreibende, daß seiner Hand, schreibend, eine Kurve gelingt, die intensiver, leuchtender, dem wahren, wirklichen Leben näher ist als die mancherlei Abweichungen ausgesetzte Lebenskurve." (L&S/185) The process of writing intensifies the author's relationship with himself and the world.



Nützlicher scheint es mir, das Schreiben nicht von seinen Endprodukten her zu sehen, sondern als einen Vorgang, der das Leben unaufhörlich begleitet, es mit bestimmt, zu deuten sucht; als Möglichkeit, intensiver in der Welt zu sein, als Steigerung und Konzentration von Denken, Sprechen, Handeln.<sup>39</sup>

She feels that the act of writing also enables the writer to step out of the bounds of his own being and experience the world through the eyes of his literary characters:

Diese Sehnsucht, sich zu verdoppeln, sich ausgedrückt zu sehen, mehrere Leben in dieses eine schachteln, auf mehreren Plätzen der Welt gleichzeitig sein zu können – das ist, glaube ich einer der mächtigsten und am wenigsten beachtetsten Antriebe zum Schreiben...<sup>40</sup>

She states that early in her writing career she realized that writing also alleviates the pain engendered by the realization that experiences of life cannot be repeated: "Der Schmerz über die Einmaligkeit und Unwiederholbarkeit des Lebens ließ sich mildern."<sup>41</sup> This belief that writing leads to self-actualization and can offer the author subjective experiences that he might otherwise never be exposed to, differs from her earlier belief that the motivation for writing is to help the society.

#### E. The Process of Remembering

The belief that one of the reasons for writing is to explore the process of remembering is found in many of Christa Wolf's later writings. She feels that writing can be a catalyst to remembering the past and that the author can examine through writing experiences and feelings that he had earlier in his life and perhaps did not then understand. Remembering the past, like writing, enables the author to fight against the process of forgetting: "Sich-Erinnern ist gegen den Strom schwimmen, wie schreiben –

gegen den scheinbar natürlichen Strom des Vergessens, anstrengende Bewegung." (L&S/197-98) By viewing his experiences from his present position the author may be able to discover connections between events and feelings that were simply too close to him in the past to allow him to interpret what was happening:

Ein neues Bedürfnis läßt sich nicht abweisen: sich früherer Erfahrungen zu versichern. Damit verquickt der Wunsch, Vergangenes möge nicht vergangen, nicht tot sein, es möge sich nicht ein für allemal verfestigen. Das Mittel dagegen ist die Neuerschaffung der Vergangenheit, die allerdings auch nicht zu jedem beliebigen Zeitpunkt möglich ist, sondern nur genau in jenem vergänglichen Moment, da die undurchsichtige Gegenwart so weit zurückgetreten ist, um durchsichtig, dem Erzähler verfügbar zu sein; aber noch nah genug, daß man nicht damit "fertig" ist.<sup>42</sup>

The interconnectedness of past, present, and future that she expressed in her earlier works in terms of historical societal development now fascinates her as one of the results of the process of writing. In discussing her act of writing a particular article, she describes this interaction of past, present, and future:

Dies schreibe ich am staubigen Schreibtisch des Hotels "Rossija": Im Bewußtsein der Gegenwart – beispielsweise dieses Flusses da unten und aller wirklichen und erträumten Erlebnisse, die sich mir mit ihm verbinden – schreibe ich über einen früheren Vorgang, während dessen Ablauf ich mich – eine Kette von Assoziationen entlangtastend – nicht nur an noch frühere Ereignisse, sondern auch an vergangene Gedanken und Erinnerungen erinnerte und mir zu allem übrigen noch die Möglichkeit aufstieg, das alles könnte später einmal, in der Zukunft (die in diesem Moment Gegenwart ist), auf irgendeine Weise bedeutsam werden. Zum Beispiel, indem ich es beschreibe. (L&S/184)

She views the process of remembering which occurs while writing as being as important a part of a literary work as the actual topic. This stream of remembering ("Strom der Erinnerung") is as much a reality to her as the actual events and characters depicted. She believes that this process of

remembering can be an integral part of a work, as in her novel Kindheitsmuster. In order to depict both the events of an earlier time and her process of dealing with the events as a writer, her novel had to consist of many layers of narration:

Ich schreibe ein Buch über eine solche Kindheit in dieser Zeit. Natürlich habe ich da keinerlei Tagebuchmaterial. Ich versuche authentisch zu sein dadurch, daß ich mich auf meine Erinnerung stütze und dann diese Erinnerung an Dokumenten überprüfe, die mir zugänglich sind. Da mache ich manchmal überraschende Entdeckungen, die auch ein Beitrag zur Psychologie des Gedächtnisses sein mögen – so daß das Buch, um "realistisch" zu sein, mehrere Ebenen bekommen muß.<sup>43</sup>

The process of remembering fascinates her because she realizes that although scientists may know a lot about the chemical processes of the brain, they have yet to discover how or why a particular individual remembers or forgets certain events. She wonders why certain events remain in a person's memory while other seemingly more significant experiences are no longer remembered. In writing Kindheitsmuster she realized that she would have to include not just the events that she wanted to remember and understand, but also the process of her involvement with the material:

...erst nach und nach...habe ich herausgefunden, daß ich zum Beispiel mit hineinnehmen mußte, wie das Manuskript entstand, was ich ungern getan habe. Oder Überlegungen über das Gedächtnis: Wie erinnert man sich eigentlich, woran erinnert man sich, warum an manches ja, an manches nicht. Es wurde dann eine der Aufgaben, die ich mir stellte, das Erinnern mitzudiskutieren. Und so kam es nach und nach – drei, vier solcher "Ebenen".<sup>44</sup>

She views the combined act of remembering and writing down past events as a way of combatting the disturbing process of forgetting: "Immer wieder bestürzt es mich, wie schnell und wie vieles man vergißt, wenn man nicht alles aufschreibt. Andererseits: Alles festzuhalten wäre nicht zu

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Her discussions about the act of remembering as an integral part of the writing process all stem from her own experiences with writing. She has become personally involved in the processes of writing and no longer views it as an activity that can be determined by external society; rather it must emanate from the author's subjective involvement with his experiences and his attempt to understand the process of remembering.

#### F. Subjective Authenticity

The involvement of the author with the process of writing and the possibility for the depiction of this involvement in the work itself is an idea that Christa Wolf develops in an interview with Hans Kaufmann. It is here that she first uses the term subjective authenticity ("subjektive Authentizität") to describe the author's approach to reality in his work.

Die Suche nach einer Methode, dieser Realität schreibend gerecht zu werden, möchte ich vorläufig "subjektive Authentizität" nennen – und ich kann nur hoffen, deutlich gemacht zu haben, daß sie die Existenz der objektiven Realität nicht nur nicht bestreitet, sondern gerade eine Bemühung darstellt, sich mit ihr produktiv auseinanderzusetzen.<sup>46</sup>

The author cannot simply stand apart from his work and objectively depict events in his writing, he must become involved with his material and actually be a part of the work. The process of writing causes the author to see a different reality than before:

Man sieht eine andere Realität als zuvor. Plötzlich hängt alles mit allem zusammen und ist in Bewegung; für "gegeben" angenommene Objekte werden auflösbar und offenbaren die in ihnen vergegenständlichen gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen (nicht mehr jenen hierarchisch geordneten gesellschaftlichen Kosmos, in dem Menschenpartikel auf soziologisch oder ideologisch vorgegebenen Bahnen sich bewegen oder von dieser erwarteten Bewegung abweichen); es wird viel schwerer "Ich" zu sagen, und doch zugleich oft unerläßlich.<sup>47</sup>

Krogmann discusses Christa Wolfs concept of inner authenticity and sees it as a moral category, not a literary or formal category. This view agrees with Christa Wolfs own statement that inner authenticity is not a literary category under which one can subsume such specific aspects of a literary works as "the positive hero," or "conflict," or "the comic element."<sup>48</sup>

Krogmann states that for Christa Wolf, inner authenticity is the inner sincerity of the author:

Für Christa Wolf ist "Innere Authentizität" aber die (innere) Aufrichtigkeit des Autors, der sich mit seinem gewählten Bild selber darbietet, seine Unmittelbarkeit, faßbar eher im Begriffsfeld "Spontaneität". Natürlich handelt es sich um Subjektivität, die hier zum Ausdruck kommt, aber nicht als Willkür einer Individualität, sondern eher in der Form moralischer Integrität, in der der Autor sich findet, durch die er vor sich bestehen kann.<sup>49</sup>

Another critic views Christa Wolfs concept of subjective authenticity as part of a trend in recent GDR literature away from the previously imposed strictures of socialist realism and toward a spontaneity which was thought to have been lost:

Die Entwicklung des Erzählers und die Perspektive der subjektiven Authentizität haben dann vor allem auch die Aufgabe, die positivistische Trennung von Autor und Stoff, von Bewußtsein und Wirklichkeit, von Schreiben und Leben aufzuheben und den Denk- und Lebensprozeß im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache zu bringen.<sup>50</sup>

The idea of subjective authenticity, with its emphasis on the interrelationship of the author with his work, shows just how far Christa Wolfs ideas on the author and writing have progressed from her earlier writings, in which the primary goal of the author was to depict society in a way that helped further socialist goals. The author's primary commitment is now to himself and his material, even to the extent that his interaction with the work is a theme in the work itself.

## Conclusion

Christa Wolf's ideas on the relationship between the author and the work change considerably from her early to her later writings. Before she herself began to write fiction, she viewed the relationship from a distance and was concerned with the idea that the author should be primarily motivated by a desire to further the goals of socialism. The work was seen as a tool to be manipulated by the author for a specific purpose. In her later writings she develops the ideas that the author has an obligation to himself in writing and that the interaction between the author and the work is integral to the creative process. Rather than being just a passive tool for the attainment of society's goal, the work becomes an equal partner in the author-work relationship, providing the author with a means for self-understanding. Each of the categories she discusses in the general topic of the author-work relationship show some change from her early to her later writings. Her general comments on the relationship between the author and the work progress from abstract observations about the works of others to personal statements regarding the dynamics that she has discovered to exist in the author-work relationship. Her early discussions of the function of an author's experiences in the creation of literature emphasized the direct depiction of experiences as they occurred in actual life. Later, she realizes the effect that writing has on the perception of events. Her interest in the author's lifestyle is a constant throughout her writing, changing only in the degree to which she expresses personal interest in the act of writing. The author's motivation for writing is seen in her early writings only in terms of his obligation to

society, whereas in her later theoretical writings she discusses the author's personal motivation, which is to work toward self-fulfillment through writing. In her later works she deals with the act of remembering, including the ways in which remembrances of the past are altered both by the act of writing and by the passage of time. Her discussions of the author-work relationship culminate in her theory of subjective authenticity, which explains the integration of the author into the work itself.



<sup>1</sup>Christ  
(September 1957).

<sup>2</sup>Christ  
Literatur 4 (Juli 1957).

<sup>3</sup>Christ  
(1957).

<sup>4</sup>Christ  
der Kunst." N 1957.

<sup>5</sup>Christ  
deutsche Literatur 1957.

<sup>6</sup>Christ  
(November 1957).

<sup>7</sup>Wolf.

<sup>8</sup>Christ  
(May 1961): 62.

<sup>9</sup>Christ  
Prosastücke. 3  
62.

<sup>10</sup>ibid..

<sup>11</sup>Christ  
Literatur 3 (Juli 1957).

<sup>12</sup>ibid..

<sup>14</sup>Wolf.  
Kunst." 122.

<sup>15</sup>Christ  
(October 1957).

<sup>16</sup>Christ  
Literatur 7 (März 1958).

<sup>17</sup>Christ  
95 (1961).

<sup>18</sup>Christ  
deutsche Literatur 1961.

### Notes---Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955): 146.

<sup>2</sup>Christa Wolf, "Popularität oder Volkstümlichkeit?" Neue deutsche Literatur 4 (January 1956): 122.

<sup>3</sup>Christa Wolf, "Warum singt der Vogel nicht?" Neues Deutschland 270 (1957).

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst," Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (December 1957): 121.

<sup>5</sup>Christa Wolf, "Eine Lektion über Wahrheit und Objektivität," Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (July 1958): 122.

<sup>6</sup>Christa Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (November 1958): 134.

<sup>7</sup>Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers....," 122.

<sup>8</sup>Christa Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben.," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (May 1961): 64.

<sup>9</sup>Christa Wolf, "Tagebuch," in Leben und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>11</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (July 1955): 141.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>14</sup>Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst," 122.

<sup>15</sup>Christa Wolf, "Autobiographie und Roman," Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (October 1957): 142.

<sup>16</sup>Christa Wolf, "Sozialistische Literatur der Gegenwart," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 (May 1959): 4.

<sup>17</sup>Christa Wolf, "Wenn man sie durch Arbeit mehrt," Berliner Zeitung 95 (1961).

<sup>18</sup>Christa Wolf, "Christa Wolf spricht mit Anna Seghers," Neue deutsche Literatur 13 (June 1965): 7-8.

<sup>19</sup>Christa Wolf, Foreword to Juri Kasakow's Larifar! und andere Erzählungen (Berlin: Kultur und Fortschritt, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>21</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," Sinn und Form 28 (July/August 1976): 882.

<sup>22</sup>Christa Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," Neue deutsche Literatur 2 (January 1954): 145.

<sup>23</sup>Christa Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (November 1958): 132.

<sup>24</sup>Christa Wolf, "Fragen an Konstantin Simonow," Neue deutsche Literatur 21 (December 1973): 11.

<sup>25</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf": 877.

<sup>26</sup>Christa Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe," Neues Deutschland No. 167 (20 June 1959).

<sup>27</sup>"Christa Wolf spricht mit Anna Seghers": 17.

<sup>28</sup>Wolf, "Tagebuch," p. 71.

<sup>29</sup>Wolf, "Glauben an Irdisches," In Lesen und Schreiben, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 90.

<sup>30</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf": 863.

<sup>31</sup>Wolf, "Warum singt der Vogel nicht?".

<sup>32</sup>"Christa Wolf spricht mit Anna Seghers": 18.

<sup>33</sup>Wolf, "Glauben an Irdisches," p. 97.

<sup>34</sup>Hans Kaufmann, Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," Weimarer Beiträge 6 (1974): 90.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>36</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf": 864.

<sup>37</sup>Christa Wolf, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen," Sonntag No. 7 (1968): 6

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>Hans Kaufmann, Gespräch mit Christa Wolf": 95.

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<sup>40</sup>Christa Wolf, "Einiges über meine Arbeit als Schriftsteller." In Junge Schriftsteller der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Selbstdarstellungen, ed. by Wolfgang Paulick (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1965), p. 12.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Christa Wolf, "Der Sinn einer neuen Sache." In Lesen und Schreiben, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 57.

<sup>43</sup>Wolf, "Fragen an Konstantin Simonow": 10.

<sup>44</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf": 864.

<sup>45</sup>Christa Wolf, "Dienstag, der 27. September 1960," Neue deutsche Literatur 22 (July 1974): 12.

<sup>46</sup>Hans Kaufmann, Gespräch mit Christa Wolf": 95.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>49</sup>Werner Krogmann, "Moralischer Realismus – Ein Versuch über Christa Wolf," Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik 7 (1978): 250.

<sup>50</sup>Dietrich Steinbach, "Die neuere Literatur der DDR: Probleme, Tendenzen, Konstellationen," Deutschunterricht 30 (1978): 114.

Introduction

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## Chapter Four--The Literary Work Itself

### Introduction

In her theoretical writings, Christa Wolf discusses certain specific attributes of literary works, such as characterization and plot, in terms of how successful a certain author has been in presenting his ideas in his work. Her comments on the specific features of a literary work are usually made in connection with the ideas discussed in the previous chapters, such as the relationship of the author to the work or the responsibility of the author towards his society. The emphasis in this chapter, however, is on just these specific features, viewing them as much as possible in isolation from the role of the author and the function of the work in society. Her comments on specific aspects of literary works are divided into the following groupings: 1) characterization, plot, and structure, 2) personal elements, and 3) the narrative perspective. Because a large number of early theoretical writings are reviews of the works of others, it is natural that she would be concerned with specific elements of their work such as characterization and plot. Later, as she begins to write more essays and eventually to write her own fiction, her discussions of specific elements found in literary work diminish and she becomes more concerned with the interaction of the author with the work. She no longer views a successful literary work as merely being a combination of well-depicted characters, a well-motivated plot, and an appropriate structure and narrator, all fused together by an author who is motivated by a desire to help the socialist society. She discusses the creation of prose as a process which involves the integrity of the author, who, through writing,

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#### A. Characterization, Plot, and Structure

One of Christa Wolf's concerns with regard to characterization is the importance of presenting characters not just as types, but also as individuals. She believes that it is necessary to depict certain general stereotypes in order for the reader to be able to identify with them and learn from them, but these characters should also be depicted as individuals. In her earliest essay she criticizes a certain work for presenting characters who are only stereotypes and who do not exhibit a strong individuality.<sup>1</sup> She also criticizes in works of the 1950's the almost constant appearance of certain stock figures such as "the party secretary," "the mayor," or "the leader of the farmers' collective," because they lack any individuality.<sup>2</sup> In a different article, she praises an author for perceiving and depicting a new type of party functionary, who is shown as a real human being with specific attributes such as intelligence, patience, and a self-sacrificing attitude.<sup>3</sup> In another article she states that the presentation of typical literary figures, who nevertheless appear as concrete figures, requires great skill on the part of the author:

Typische literarische Gestalten zu schaffen, setzt eine hohe Stufe der künstlerischen Verallgemeinerungsfähigkeit voraus, der Fähigkeit nämlich, ganz konkrete Individuen zu formen und sie doch gleichzeitig deutlich als Exponenten ihrer Gesellschaftsschicht, ihrer Klasse oder eines bestimmten Teils dieser Klasse zu kennzeichnen.<sup>4</sup>

She criticizes a certain author for presenting only the negative aspects of the workers' life, believing that such a presentation of workers is inaccurate because the characters are not shown exhibiting the characteristic features of their class.<sup>5</sup> In an article on the Third Soviet Authors' Congress, she

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criticizes the belief that the only way to activate the reader is to present characters as types:

Niemand hält es für richtig, an Stelle von lebendigen menschlichen Charakteren unnahbare Standbilder aufzurichten. Aber mit allem Ernst wurde gesagt, daß die sozialistische Literatur ihre große Aufgabe, die Menschen zu aktivieren, nur erreichen wird, wenn sie große Vorbilder schafft, Gestalten, die den Leser mit voranreißen.<sup>6</sup>

Thus for her it is not sufficient that a work depict characters just as types; they must also be given individual attributes.

She believes that in order for characterization to be effective, the reader must be presented with a fully-developed character who does not stand in isolation from his past. The reader must be able to understand the character's present position with respect to his past activities. She praises Rudolf Fischer for his successful presentation of his characters within a historical context:

Sehr geschickt führt Rudolf Fischer im ersten Drittel des Buches, das in aller Ausführlichkeit und atemberaubenden Genauigkeit den Verlauf des Unglücks schildert, zwanglos alle Hauptpersonen in einer gut verzahnten Handlung zusammen. ... Er geht den Veränderungen nach, welche ihre Lebenslinie durch dieses Unglück erfuhr, und versucht, die Erfahrung weiterzugeben, daß ein solch schwerer Schlag, den Feinde der Arbeiterklasse zufügen, zwar großen Schaden anrichten.<sup>7</sup>

The author should present each character fully. The reader should not be left to wonder about important facets of the character's personality. If, for example, a character is shown being angry about something, the complete details of his anger should be revealed. The reader should be able to discover whom or what he is angry at.<sup>8</sup> Christa Wolf believes that one of the secrets of good characterization is that the character's personality should be revealed through his actions, rather than just being described by the author.<sup>9</sup> She praises Anna Seghers for her ability to depict characters

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through their actions and for presenting characters who are not just good or bad, but who are realistically complicated:

Keinen degradiert sie zur Randfigur. Jeder wird, tritt er auch selten auf, als ganzer Mensch geachtet.... Ein Netz von Beziehungen wird um sie geknüpft, aus dem sich allmählich ein Mensch herausschält – oder viele Menschen –, meist nicht nur gut oder böse, sondern widerspruchsvoll, kompliziert, an soziale Bedingungen gebunden, doch für den Leser anziehend oder abstoßend nach ihrem Verhalten in den wichtigsten Proben der Zeit.<sup>10</sup>

Although the character should be revealed more through his actions than through his speech, accurately depicting dialogue is one of the most important means of characterization. She criticizes a certain author for not having used language successfully: "Die Sprache seiner Gestalten ist für den Autor noch nicht zu einem der wichtigsten Charakterisierungsmittel geworden. Er läßt die Menschen flache Dialoge führen...."<sup>11</sup>

Characters should be depicted as experiencing genuine conflicts. The character develops through such conflicts and by reading about such characters the reader can be helped to understand his own life and the conflicts he faces. Those conflicts which threaten the very being of the character are especially important because they reveal the most about the character.

Ein schwerer persönlicher Konflikt bringt seine inneren Widersprüche zum Ausbruch, stellt alles in Frage, was er gesichert glaubte: Sein gutes Ansehen als Ingenieur, sein Verhältnis zu den Mitarbeitern führt ihn bis an den Rand des Zusammenbruchs und schließlich, da er auf tragfähigem Boden steht, an den Beginn der Genesung. Es geht also nicht um Kleinigkeiten, sondern um einen Menschen, um Sein oder Nichtsein.<sup>12</sup>

Secondary characters should have a genuine function in the work, not just occur randomly throughout it. She criticizes those works which present secondary characters whose relationship to the main figure is

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unjustified.<sup>13</sup> She perceives one author as being capable enough of presenting interesting characters, but as being too undisciplined to control their position in the story. She states that the characters come and go as often as the scenes change.<sup>14</sup>

Another of her concerns about characterization is that characters be psychologically plausible. She criticizes Strittmatter's presentation of his main character because he has sacrificed psychological believability in order to gain objectivity. Because he chose to present the child's actions in an objective manner, he often attributes to the child certain observations and thoughts which overstep the bounds of what a child would actually experience.<sup>15</sup> She perceives another author as having lost believability by depicting a character twice experiencing a similar decision-making process. Not only does this character lose plausibility, but all of the characters in the second part of the book often appear exaggerated and their actions seem artificially motivated.<sup>16</sup> Christa Wolf perceives another author to have improved his characterization from the first part of the work to the second. In the first part of his work, the characters' relationships to one another are forced and stilted, but in the second part, the characters' actions are shown as being realistically motivated by their beliefs and feeling.<sup>17</sup> If characters are presented in a psychologically believable manner, the reader can identify with them and understand their motivations. Enabling the reader to look into the characters' minds is important to Christa Wolf:

Wie wichtig, in diese Menschen...hineinschauen zu dürfen: Zu erfahren, was sie antrieb, woher sie ihre Kraft nahmen, aber auch, was schwer und traurig für sie war. Wie nahe kommen uns dadurch die Gestalten dieses Buches, dem man nur viele aufmerksame und aufnahmebereite Leser wünschen kann.<sup>18</sup>

In referring to the shortcomings of many war books and the contrasting

success of Dieter Noll's war novel. Christa Wolf further emphasizes the importance of presenting characters whose personalities are justifiable:

Manche unserer Kriegsbücher verleihen ihren Helden auf Kosten der künstlerischen Glaubwürdigkeit vorzeitig Einsichten, die sich der großen Masse der Jungen erst sehr allmählich nach dem Krieg auftaten. Diese Autoren sahen sonst keine Möglichkeit, die Perspektive ihrer Figuren anzudeuten. Anders Noll, der tausend Seiten vor sich hat, genügend Raum für die allmähliche Entwicklung einer literarischen Gestalt. Seine Konzeption ist bedeutsam, weil sie berücksichtigt, wie wenig man heute über einen Menschen weiß, wenn man seine Vergangenheit nicht kennt, wie unbefriedigend, für unsere Absichten oft unergiebig Bücher bleiben müssen, die mit dem Kriegsende abbrechen. Dieter Noll ist einer der ersten, der versucht, das literarische Vakuum zwischen Zusammenbruch und neuem Anfang auszufüllen.<sup>19</sup>

Unless an author can justify a character's personality through reference to the character's background experiences, he will be unsuccessful in creating a believable character. Such is the problem she perceives in Rudolf Bartsch's novel:

Rudolf Bartschs Roman versucht viele Erklärungen für die Vorgänge in der Psyche seiner Helden. Stimmungen, Gedanken, Gefühle werden über zahlreiche Seiten beschrieben. Und trotzdem wollen sich aus den einzelnen Teilen keine echten Figuren zusammenfügen. Trotzdem will es einem schwerfallen, die immer wieder beteuerte Liebe Irenes zu Artur zu verstehen und zu glauben.<sup>20</sup>

The connection between characterization and plot is obvious, since it is the actions of the characters which form the plot. In criticizing the plot of certain works, Christa Wolf mentions in her early writings the absence of any genuine conflict. She feels that genuine conflicts should be depicted, not just a series of minor skirmishes and arguments. This relates to the belief expressed in her early writings that the conflicts which arise in society should be depicted in literature so that the reader can be helped to resolve his problems and so that literature can fulfill its goal of helping the society develop. The author should concentrate on major



issues and conflicts and not be content to depict insignificant matters. She criticizes a certain work for presenting minor complications and thus steering the reader's interest away from important issues of the day and toward what she calls "the private sphere."<sup>21</sup> She feels that, unfortunately, even though an author may pick a topic that has the potential of involving conflict, thus leading to an interesting and relevant plot, he may become side-tracked in his goal and fill his book with too many unimportant asides:

Der Kern des Romans "Wem die Steine Antwort geben" ist eine tragfähige Geschichte, die genügend Konfliktstoff liefert, um menschliche Charaktere zu entwickeln, und die Raum gibt, diese Konflikte auszutragen. Freilich sind die Menschen nicht recht überzeugend geraten, freilich sind manche Konflikte und Komplikationen etwas krampfhaft zusammengesucht, aber überall, in der Anlage der Gestalten und der Handlung, gibt es Ansätze, aus denen sich echte Menschen, eine echte Fabel wohl hätten entwickeln können. Allzu viel Nebensächliches füllt noch dieses Buch.<sup>22</sup>

She praises a different author for a plot which is successful because it stems from basic human wishes and desires.<sup>23</sup> She feels that, unfortunately, the presentation of a plot which is successfully integrated with other elements of the work is all too uncommon in literary works of the early 1960's. She would like to see more works with scenes which are "symbolkräftig, prall an Details und völlig verschmolzen mit ihrer geistigen Substanz, wie man sie sonst in unserer jüngeren Literatur lange suchen kann."<sup>24</sup>

One of her complaints in regard to the plots of early works is that they often contain extraneous elements that do not contribute to the development of the plot. In addition to other criticisms of a certain work, she makes the following comment about the presence of unrelated elements in the work: "Daneben gibt es die Beschreibung vieler Ereignisse, die nicht direkt zur fortlaufenden Handlung gehören. Sie sollen

verschiedene Probleme illustrieren...Nur sind diese Probleme nicht immer organisch mit der Handlung verbunden."<sup>25</sup> She criticizes another work for containing unrelated elements and connects the author's failure to present a cohesive plot with his failure to understand the developmental laws of the society:

Die echte Handlung wird ersetzt durch eine Kette nacheinander ablaufender Ereignisse; die echte Spannung, die aus der allseitigen Entfaltung der Charaktere in der Handlung entspringt, muß fehlen. ... Es fehlt ihm die innere Notwendigkeit des Handlungsablaufs, die sich nur aus der "gereinigten", gehobenen Widerspiegelung der Entwicklungsgesetze in der Wirklichkeit selbst ergeben kann.<sup>26</sup>

She feels that this author gradually loses complete control of his plot, allowing unessential elements to obscure his intentions.

Christa Wolfs comments on the structure of specific works she reviews can be divided into negative and positive comments. She either views the structure of a given work as being cohesive and therefore praiseworthy, or being non-cohesive and thus worthy only of criticism. In an early review, she criticizes a certain work for lacking a clear, dramatic composition: "Eine klare, dramatische Komposition mit auf die Spitze getriebenen Widersprüchen ist schlechterdings nicht möglich, weil Ehm Welk sich nicht entschließen konnte, die Hauptaktions- und Reaktionskräfte dieser Revolution als Zentralgestalten in den Mittelpunkt des Romans zu stellen."<sup>27</sup> She questions calling the work of another author a novel because of the presence of so many disparate elements: "Weder gibt es...einen zentralen Helden noch gibt es eine durchgehende Fabel, eine "Geschichte", als Kern des Ganzen; man kann auch nicht ohne weiteres die fünf einzelnen Prosastücke als Fragmente einer größeren Einheit ansehen, wie Nossack sie offenbar aufgefaßt wissen will."<sup>28</sup> The presence of unbelievable and

unjustifiable elements in a work causes it to have an incohesive structure, something which she feels detracts from the overall effectiveness of the work. The connection between events in the work should also be justifiable and not just be artificially established.<sup>29</sup>

If, however, a work has an overall theme which logically connects the events within the work, then the structure can be cohesive. She praises Erwin Strittmatter for his work, which contains an overall idea--the emergence of socialism--which unites all the elements of his novel into a unified whole:

Sie treibt die Handlung voran, zeigt die Entwicklung der Charaktere und trägt gleichzeitig den ideellen Gehalt. Die tiefe gedankliche Durchdringung des Stoffes schließt naturalistische Oberflächlichkeit aus und ermöglicht eine dichte Komposition, die in ihrer streng auf ein Ziel gerichteten Auswahl die Illusion, echtes, wirkliches Leben vor sich zu haben, im Leser wach hält.<sup>30</sup>

His work is unified by the central theme of the development of socialism, whereas a work by Anna Seghers is made cohesive by the central theme of "newness":

Das Buch zieht seine Wahrheitstreue und Überzeugungskraft eigentlich aus der künstlerischen Beweisführung, daß etwas Neues begonnen hat....So hängen alle Gestalten des Buches von diesem zentralen Maßstab ab. Dieser Grundgedanke hält die verschiedenen Handlungen, die sich manchmal nur lose und auf nicht leicht überschaubare Weise berühren, im Innersten zusammen.<sup>31</sup>

She is quick to praise this work for its cohesive structure because so many of the works of the 1950's were lacking in this regard.

In her early writings, Christa Wolf stresses that good characterization is essential for a successful literary work, and she discusses specific aspects of characterization. Although the depiction of character types facilitates the reader's identification with them, characters should be shown

as having individual attributes. Characters should be presented clearly and should be well-developed, and secondary characters should be shown in their relationship to the main characters. In order for the characters to be believable, their thoughts and actions must be psychologically sound and based on their past experiences. Her later theoretical writings discuss characterization in terms of the author's interaction with the literary characters he has created. In discussing one of her own works, Nachdenken über Christa T., she mentions what happened as she attempted to create the character of Christa T. from her own remembrances and from the factual records left behind when Christa T. died.<sup>32</sup> She reports that while interacting with the character she was creating, she suddenly realized that she was confronting herself, not just the character of Christa T. Thus she is no longer discussing characterization as a specific element of a literary work that can be analyzed by a critic; she is concerned with characterization as part of the process of writing which involves the author in the work. The importance of a cohesive plot, which includes characters whose actions are well-motivated and justifiable, is a consistent element in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings up until 1962, at which time her concern gradually moves away from reviews of specific works and towards the development of the theory of prose that she presents in "Lesen und Schreiben." She does not discuss plot as an element of literary works after this point, except in an indirect comment about the Soviet writer Vera Inber. In referring to one of Inber's works, she makes the following comment: "Ich liebe Bücher, deren Inhalt man nicht erzählen kann, die sich nicht auf die simple Mitteilung von Vorgängen und Ereignissen reduzieren lassen, die

sich überhaupt auf nichts reduzieren lassen als auf sich selbst."<sup>33</sup> Plot is no longer her concern in the way that it was in her earlier writings, that is, as a specific element of a work which can be analyzed for its effectiveness. She prefers those works whose plots cannot be retold in any manner other than in the way that the author has chosen to depict them. The plot of a work is no longer something which she views as being separable from the work as a whole. The reader, as well as the author, interacts with the entire work and is brought into confrontation with himself through this interaction. It is this confrontation which concerns Christa Wolf in her later theoretical writings, not the analysis of individual aspects of a work. As with her discussions of plot, Christa Wolf's comments on the structure of works diminish as she becomes less and less involved with reviews of the works of others and begins to write her own fiction and devote more of her theoretical writings to explaining her own interaction with writing. In commenting on her own work, "Nachdenken über Christa T.," she states that the structure of the work is determined by the fact that the work results from her remembrances of the past: "In dem Strom meiner Gedanken schwimmen wie Inselchen die konkreten Episoden – das ist die Struktur der Erzählung."<sup>34</sup> She views this work as being united by the overall theme of the act of remembering. She also discusses the structure of her novel Kindheitsmuster as being determined by the process of remembering and by her interaction with the act of writing.<sup>35</sup> The idea that works are unified by the subjective interaction of the author with the work differs radically from her earlier statements about the works of others, which she praised when they were unified by themes which served the development of the socialist society.

Now it is the author's own interaction with his ideas and thought processes which concerns her more than the responsibility of the work to further the goals of society.

#### B. The Presence of Personal Elements in the Work

Christa Wolf's comments on the presence in a literary work of elements relating to the inner person progress from the belief in her early theoretical writings that such personal elements should be kept to a minimum to the idea in her later works that the depiction of characters' psychological make-up should be the concern of literature. In an early article she criticizes an author for depicting a character who attempts to draw other characters into his own melancholy and who does nothing to extricate himself from his depressed situation. She feels that this author should have emphasized the possibilities for recuperation from depression and not have placed so much emphasis on the character's emotional state.<sup>36</sup> Another author is criticized for spending too much time on the depiction of the emotions of an egotistical character who is distanced from the rest of society.<sup>37</sup> In a 1959 article she praises a work which reveals the intensity of sparingly shown feelings.<sup>38</sup> She does not condemn outright the presentation of feelings, but believes that they must be kept under careful control. In these early writings, she believes that the author should keep in mind that the purpose of his writing is to present material which will aid the developing society. She feels that too much emphasis on emotion and the workings of the mind might detract from the overall goal of literature. In the same year that she advocates the careful presentation of feelings in literature, she mentions that at the Third Soviet

Writer's Congress there was discussion of writers incorporating elements relating to the inner realm of experience into their works.<sup>39</sup> From this point on she begins to accept the increasingly common presence of emotion in literary works, as evidenced by her praise of a work which contains several scenes of great emotional intensity.<sup>40</sup> She begins to realize that the depiction of inner thoughts and feelings need not detract from a literary work. This realization occurs simultaneously with her movement away from the belief that literature must be primarily aimed at promoting the development of socialist society and toward the view that literature has the goal of depicting the inner man. By 1962, she praises an author for belonging to those authors for whom the inner world of their heroes is more important than the mere depiction of events in the characters' lives:

die...wissen, daß die Literatur gerade die unsichtbaren Quellen menschlicher Handlungen aufzudecken hat....In der Handlungszelt des Buches sind die großen Konflikte in den Helden gelegt, denn äußerlich geht es ihm, gemessen an den Schicksalen anderer, recht gut. Es "passiert" ihm nichts, wenn man vom Schluß, dem Unfall, absieht. Das hat etwas Wohltuendes, verglichen mit jener Art von "Handlungsliteratur", die ein Feuerwerk von Ereignissen für nichts und wieder nichts abbrennt. Hier dagegen entzündet sich selbst an scheinbar geringen Vorfällen ein Feuerwerk von Gedanken.<sup>41</sup>

This concern with the inner realm of the personality is continued in an interview about her work, Nachdenken über Christa T. Eduard Zak asks whether she feels that the society has reached the stage where it has become important for literature to discover more about the inner person. She replies that that is definitely true and that she herself has become intensely interested in the inner workings of the mind.<sup>42</sup> It is no longer necessary for a work to be externally dramatic. Rather an author can concentrate on the inner drama of a character's personal development.

### C. The Narrative Perspective

One of the aspects of the literary work itself that concerns Christa Wolf is the relationship of the narrator to the work. In discussing whether the work is told in the first or the third person, she mentions the effect that this choice has on the work. In a work by Erwin Strittmatter, she views the use of the first person narrator as being successful because it offers the writer the opportunity to present his information from the viewpoint of the child who is the main character. In this way the author offers the reader the chance to view the events in the work from the "fresh" perspective of the child. Although this author has chosen the first person for his narration, he is not content to limit his perspective to that of the child, and allows his own perspective to show through:

Durch dieses Medium sieht der Leser frischer, gleichsam zum ersten Mal, trotzdem aber gleichzeitig bewußter. Trotz dieser gewollten Beschränkung auf den geistigen Horizont des Jungen will aber Strittmatter auf eine objektive, vom Autor gewertete Darstellung der Ereignisse und ihrer Ursachen nicht verzichten; nach seiner Grundkonzeption kann er das auch nicht. Er behilft sich damit – und dieser "Behelf" ist mit großem Können gemeistert –, daß er durch die scheinbar naive Erzählung des Jungen immer die objektiv richtige Einschätzung der Vorgänge und Handlungen hindurchschimmern läßt.<sup>43</sup>

In discussing a different work, she feels that this particular author should have allowed his viewpoint to enter into the work in order to present his story more objectively. She feels that the author has allowed the story to concentrate too much on the personal views of the main character who is narrating the story in the first person. The author has abdicated his responsibility to investigate the facts behind the character's present position.<sup>44</sup> In these two early theoretical writings, she is concerned that there be a certain amount of objectivity in the depiction of



the characters and events, and since the use of the first person tends to make the work more subjective, this objectivity should be provided by the intrusion of the author's views into the work. By the time she refers to the use of the first person narrative in a later review, she is no longer concerned about this objectivity and perceives the possibility that the use of first person has for revealing the character's inner feelings:

Mir scheint, die Wahl des Erzählers ist kein Zufall, Tom als Ich-Figur gab dem Autor die Möglichkeit, Schattierungen zu erreichen, die eine objektive Erzählweise ihm verschlossen hätte. Vor allem lag ihm daran, einen solchen Menschen wie Tom von innen her, mit seinen eigenen Augen zu sehen und zu entschlüsseln.<sup>45</sup>

In her early writings the use of the third person is viewed in terms of its allowing the author to regulate the amount of objectivity in the work. In discussing a specific work, she comments on the possibility for objectification that the use of the third person offers the author: "Zwar erzählt er in Abhängigkeit von der Hauptfigur, aber doch distanziert, nicht in der Ich-Form. Es ist denkbar und bewiesen, daß diese Methode Möglichkeiten läßt, zu objektivieren, soweit es dem Autor notwendig oder wünschenswert erscheint."<sup>46</sup> She has no clear preference for either the first or third person, since although the third person automatically provides objectivity, the author can interject his own objectivity into the work through authorial intrusion, even when using the first person.

In a 1970 work which discusses the work of Anna Seghers, Christa Wolf's discussion of the narrator focuses on the subjectivity that is inherent in Seghers' work. She comments that the relationships between the inner life of the characters and the external circumstances make the work of the narrator difficult and yet alluring. The presence of the narrator in the work is revealed through the basic viewpoint shown, as well as the tone of

the work. The non-fictional narrator, the author, is an element of the work, and as such determines the choice of the material, making the author's creation a unique expression of himself:

Der Eindruck, hier werde in filmischem Stil erzählt, täuscht, so stark auch die optische Phantasie des Lesers angeregt wird. Die Prosa der Anna Seghers läßt sich schwer verfilmen. Noch in der scheinbar objektivsten Beschreibung ist der Erzähler anwesend, verrät er sich durch die Grundhaltung, den Ton und durch einzelne plötzlich aufleuchtende Sätze. Eigentlich durch jeden Satz, in dem das Bewußtsein des Autors und sein Stoff zu einer neuen Realität verschmelzen, der Realität der Literatur.

So entsteht neben den drei fiktiven Koordinaten der erfundenen Figuren die vierte, unfiktive, des "wirklichen" Erzählers. Es ist die Koordinate der Tiefe, der Zeitgenossenschaft, des unvermeidlichen Engagements, die nicht nur die Wahl des Stoffes, sondern auch seine Färbung bestimmt. Die Vision, von der ein Autor lebt, verwandelt das Material, das ja nicht nur ihm bekannt und zugänglich ist, in Dichtung, die nur er machen konnte. Ein sehr merkwürdiger, nicht genug bestaunter Vorgang.<sup>47</sup>

In her 1974 discussion with Hans Kaufmann, Christa Wolf again discusses her view of both the author's position in the literary work and of the process of writing as a merging of the author with his material.<sup>48</sup> Now being concerned with the author's interaction with his material, she states that the term narrator is no longer applicable because the work is actually the reflection of the author's interaction with the creative process. Unlike her earlier writings, in which she discusses the author as one who has the option of interjecting his own views into a work for the purpose of objectifying it, her later view is that the author's interaction with the work is now an integral part of the work itself.

## Conclusion

Christa Wolf's views on specific elements of a literary work encompass three basic categories: characterization, plot, and structure; the presence of

personal elements in the work; and the narrative perspective. In her early discussions of characterization she believes that characters, even when presented as stereotypes, should be given individual attributes. Characters should be revealed through actions which are justifiable on the basis of the characters' past experiences. In addition, characters' personalities should be psychologically plausible. In her later writings, characterization is of interest to her in terms of the author's interaction with the characters he creates, an interaction which leads to a confrontation of the author with himself. Her early views on plot reveal her belief that a plot should be realistic in presenting conflicts and that actions should be well-motivated. Elements extraneous to the plot should be eliminated from a work. Her early ideas on the success of a given plot are not found in her later works, giving way instead to a discussion of the work as a whole, which is related to her preference for works which are not simply a sum of easily divisible elements. In her early writings, she is primarily concerned with whether a given work exhibits a cohesive structure which stems from the presence of a tenable theme relating to the development of socialism. In her later writings, she discusses the structure of her own works, which are unified by the theme of remembering as well as by her interaction with the work. Her views on the presence of personal elements in a work change from her early works, where she stresses the sublimation of the character's inner life to the responsibility of the work to help society attain its goals, to her later works, where she praises works whose main emphasis is on the inner realm of man. When discussing the perspective of the narrator in her early works, she is mainly concerned with the use of the first or third person narrator and the concomitant possibilities of

objectification by the author. She is later concerned with the direct presence of the narrator/author in the work and with the overall effect of the interaction between the author and the work, a process which leads to the author's increased self-awareness.

Notes--Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Christa Wolf, "Um den neuen Unterhaltungsroman," Neues Deutschland No. 169 (20 July 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Christa Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," Neue deutsche Literatur 2 (February 1954): 142.

<sup>3</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (July 1955): 143.

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," Neue deutsche Literatur 3 (September 1955): 147.

<sup>5</sup>Christa Wolf, "Eine Lektion über Wahrheit und Objektivität," Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (July 1958): 122.

<sup>6</sup>Christa Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe. Gedanken zum III. Sowjetischen Schriftstellerkongreß," Neues Deutschland No. 167 (20 June 1959).

<sup>7</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 145.

<sup>8</sup>Christa Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (June 1958): 8.

<sup>9</sup>Christa Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans. Bemerkungen zu dem Roman 'Im Morgennebel' von Ehm Welk," Neue deutsche Literatur 2 (January 1954): 147.

<sup>10</sup>Christa Wolf, "Land, in dem wir leben. Die deutsche Frage in dem Roman 'Die Entscheidung' von Anna Seghers," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (May 1961): 58.

<sup>11</sup>Wolf, "Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte," 144.

<sup>12</sup>Christa Wolf, "Ein Erzähler gehört dazu," Neue deutsche Literatur 9 (October 1961): 130.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 132; Christa Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" Neue deutsche Literatur 6 (November 1958): 130.

<sup>14</sup>Christa Wolf, Review of Dieter Noll's "Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt," Sonntag No. 46 (1960).

<sup>15</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte," 144.

<sup>16</sup>Wolf, "Menschen und Werk," 146-7.

<sup>17</sup>Christa Wolf, "Vom erfüllten Leben," Neue deutsche Literatur 7

(February 1959): 141.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>19</sup>Wolf, Review of Dieter Noll's "Die Abenteuer...."

<sup>20</sup>Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" 132.

<sup>21</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," 141.

<sup>22</sup>Wolf, "Besiegte Schatten?" 138.

<sup>23</sup>Christa Wolf, "Schicksal einer deutschen Kriegsgeneration," Sonntag No. 50 (1962).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Wolf, "Um den neuen Unterhaltungsroman."

<sup>26</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," 148.

<sup>27</sup>Wolf, "Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans," 147.

<sup>28</sup>Christa Wolf, "Freiheit oder Auflösung der Persönlichkeit?" Neue deutsche Literatur 5 (April 1957): 137.

<sup>29</sup>Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" 130.

<sup>30</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," 141-42.

<sup>31</sup>Wolf, "Deutschland unserer Tage," Neues Deutschland No. 77 (18 March 1961).

<sup>32</sup>Christa Wolf, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen. Eduard Zak sprach mit Christa Wolf," Sonntag 7 (1968): 6.

<sup>33</sup>Christa Wolf, "Der Sinn einer neuen Sache," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>34</sup>Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 76.

<sup>35</sup>Christa Wolf, "Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," Sinn und Form 28 (1976): 863-64.

<sup>36</sup>Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" 10.

<sup>37</sup>Wolf, "Erziehung der Gefühle?" 130.

<sup>38</sup>Christa Wolf, "Sozialistische Literatur der Gegenwart," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 (May 1959): 6.

<sup>39</sup>Wolf, "Die Literatur der neuen Etappe."

<sup>40</sup>Wolf, "Vom erfüllten Leben," 141.

<sup>41</sup>Wolf, "Schicksal einer deutschen Kriegsgeneration."

<sup>42</sup>Christa Wolf, "Auf den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen. Eduard Zak sprach mit Christa Wolf," Sonntag 7 (1968): 6.

<sup>43</sup>Wolf, "Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit," 143.

<sup>44</sup>Wolf, "Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?" 9.

<sup>45</sup>Wolf, "Ein Erzähler gehört dazu," 129.

<sup>46</sup>Wolf, Review of Dieter Noll's "Die Abenteuer...."

<sup>47</sup>Christa Wolf, "Anmerkungen zu Geschichten," in Anna Seghers Aufstellen eines Maschinengewehrs im Wohnzimmer der Frau Kamptschik (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), pp. 161-62.

<sup>48</sup>Hans Kaufmann, Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," Weimarer Beiträge 6 (1974): 95.

## Chapter Five--The Relationship of Moskauer Novelle and Kindheitsmuster to the Theoretical Writings of Christa Wolf

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the extent to which the ideas developed by Christa Wolf in her theoretical writings are present in her own fiction. She states in an interview with Hans Kaufmann that the ideas she expresses in her prose and essays are not basically different and that their common root is experience with life.

Insofern unterscheiden sich bei mir die einander ablösenden (oder einander durchdringenden) prosaistischen und essayistischen Äußerungen nicht grundsätzlich voneinander. Ihre gemeinsame Wurzel ist Erfahrung, die zu bewältigen ist: Erfahrung mit dem 'Leben' – also der unvermittelten Realität einer bestimmten Zeit und einer bestimmten Gesellschaft –, mit mir selbst, mit dem Schreiben – das ein wichtiger Teil meines Lebens ist –, mit anderer Literatur und Kunst.<sup>1</sup>

Several critics concur with her statement that her theoretical and fictional writings express similar ideas.<sup>2</sup> In order to discover whether these statements are justified, her earliest piece of fiction, Moskauer Novelle (1961), and a recent novel, Kindheitsmuster (1976), will be analyzed in terms of the concepts she discusses in her theoretical writings. If it is true that the ideas she expresses in her theoretical writings are basically no different than those that she expresses in her fiction, it should be found that Moskauer Novelle contains the elements that she found important in her early theoretical writings, and Kindheitsmuster should reflect the ideas that she develops in her later theoretical writings. It will be seen that for the most part, the concepts expressed in her theoretical writings are indeed present in the two fictional works examined.



A. The Relationship of Moskauer Novelle to the Ideas Expressed in her Early Theoretical Writings

1. The Interaction of Author, Reader, and Society

In her early writings, Christa Wolf is concerned with the responsibility of the author to society. The author should depict reality in such a way that the reader can gain an understanding of his role in the developing society. A contemporary subject should be chosen in order to best aid the reader in identifying with the material. The author should not be ashamed of the fact that he is presenting reality seen from his particular, socialist perspective. Moskauer Novelle fulfills these prerequisites and is thus a worthwhile work of literature that can serve the function of aiding the developing socialist society. It is the story of a doctor, Vera Brauer, who travels with a delegation to Moscow in 1959 and discovers that Pawel Koschkin, the Soviet translator for the group, is the same man with whom she had fallen in love in 1945. At that time he was a Lieutenant in the Red Army, and she discovers during the course of her stay in Moscow that through her own actions in 1945 he suffered an injury which prevented him from fulfilling his desire to become a surgeon. Christa Wolf has chosen a subject from the present time and depicts the main character's experiences in such a way that her belief in the potential of her socialist society is revealed. By presenting the story of a GDR citizen who travels to Moscow and interacts with Soviet citizens, she has chosen a theme relevant to the time in which she was writing, the interrelationship between the GDR and Soviet peoples. Kähler states that in depicting this relationship, Christa Wolf has chosen an important theme relevant to the times: "In der 'Moskauer Novelle' schreibt Christa Wolf bereits über eines der größten zeitgeschichtlichen Themen: das Verhältnis zwischen deutschen

und sowjetischen Menschen."<sup>3</sup> By choosing a theme with which the reader could identify, and by showing the main character interacting constructively with the Soviets, Christa Wolf demonstrates her belief that the author has a responsibility to the society and the reader.

Within the realm of presenting historical truthfulness and depicting the development of the society, she expresses the idea that the reader should be led to see that he can take an active part in the development of society. In Moskauer Novelle, Vera and Pawel are contrasted in terms of their ability to take control of their lives. Vera is depicted as constantly striving to understand her own life, and in her job as a doctor she actively partakes in life, helping society by being involved in her work. Pawel, on the other hand, is resigned to his job as a translator and fears any change:

Er hat Angst. Er fürchtet das, was da unverhofft in sein Leben tritt. Er hatte sich doch schon abgefunden, ersatzweise zu leben, hatte sich eingerichtet, hatte seine Ansprüche an sich nach und nach gesenkt. Hatte den Schmerz überwunden, daß er nicht Arzt werden konnte, die Verzweiflung in Resignation verwandelt, das Leben am Rande der Medizin gelebt, nicht mehr gehofft, ein höheres Ziel zu verwirklichen. Staub auf sich fallen lassen, Jahr zu Jahr.<sup>4</sup>

Although he is indeed physically unable to be a surgeon, he is unwilling even to discuss moving to a new city with his wife where he could get a more challenging job, one which offers him the possibility of self-development. His passivity contrasts with one of the desires expressed by Walter, an old friend of Vera's who is also a member of the delegation from the GDR. "Lange und sinnvoll leben", sagte Walter. "Das ist der Grund für alles, was wir tun." Another member of the group says that unfortunately one often forgets that life should be lived to its fullest, and that there are all too many who live life on the outskirts: "Der gäbe sich

selbst auf, springe ab, suche sich ein Plätzchen am Rande oder auf der anderen Seite. Wie viele solcher Menschenhüllen treffe man noch auf Schritt und Tritt!" (MN/181) Although Pawel is not mentioned as being among those who do not partake in life to the fullest, he is depicted as such. He is not the only character described as not taking control of his life, however. One of the secondary characters complains about his present job as an editor, not understanding that he could take control of his own life and change his profession if he wanted to:

Tagsüber...hockte er...In einem winzigen Zimmer hinter seinem Schreibtisch, trank nachtschwarzen Kaffee, zündete eine Zigarette an der anderen an und wütete verbissen in Manuskripten, wobei er Verwünschungen ausstieß und versicherte, ein Redakteur sei das geplagteste Wesen unter der Sonne. Fragte ihn aber jemand, ob er ihm eine andere Beschäftigung verschaffen solle, blickte Heinz ihn nur verständnislos an. (MN/155)

Such characters represent the antithesis of the ideal socialist citizen. Vera, who exhibits a curiosity for life and a desire to take an active part in life, represents the type of person from whom the reader should learn. She is shown as actively participating in life: "Sie lief und schaute und lernte und redete und lachte und bewegte sich und drehte an einem sirrenden Rad, das nicht stillstehen sollte." (MN/159)

Not only is Vera an active participant in her own life, she is also interested in helping Pawel to take control of his life. Despite the fact that by encouraging him to take a position in a distant city she virtually insures that she will never see him again, she urges him to go. By overcoming her own possessive feelings of love for him she is able to encourage him to take action toward bettering his life. Her desire to help him realize his potential correlates with the belief expressed by Christa Wolf in her theoretical writings that literature should help people realize

their potential.

The idea that past and present are integrally related is another aspect of historical truthfulness that concerns Christa Wolf in her early theoretical writings. The connection between Vera's past and her present experiences is a constant theme in Moskauer Novelle. Vera must come to terms with the fact that it was a past action of hers that led to the injury which prevented Pawel from becoming a surgeon. There are repeated flashbacks to her first meeting with him in 1945, and the relationship that developed between them influences the way in which they interact in the present. Until Vera finds the courage to discuss with Pawel her guilt about what happened when they first knew each other, she is unable to openly discuss their present relationship. Until she resolves her feelings about her earlier experiences, she cannot adequately deal with her present situation. In his article on Christa Wolf, Gugisch discusses the necessity of Vera resolving her feelings about her earlier experiences before she can cope with the present:

Die Novelle...geht von einer Situation aus, in der gegenwärtigen Entscheidung und kritische Selbstverständigung über die Vergangenheit einander bedingen. Erst als Vera den Mut findet, mit Pawel über ihre Schuld zu reden (von der er übrigens längst weiß), gewinnt sie die innere Freiheit, mit ihm ohne Vorbehalt über ihr gegenwärtiges Verhältnis zu sprechen. ... Vera muß mit ihrem früheren Erleben fertig werden, wenn sie der gegenwärtigen Situation genügen will.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between past and present is expressed not only in Vera's relationship with Pawel but also in the context of the war. During a tour of the city, Vera catches sight of her friend Walter and views his present appearance in terms of what she knows about his past:

Walter Kernten war eines der ersten Mitglieder des Spartakusbundes; in den zwanziger Jahren trug er die graue Uniform des Roten Frontkämpfers; die Faschisten jagten ihn

und fingen ihn ein. Hochverrat. Sieben Jahre Zuchthaus. KZ. In den letzten Kriegsjahren Zwangsarbeit in der Rüstung. Illegale Arbeit unter den Augen der Gestapo. In Demonstrationen, Aufständen, Verhören und Zuchthausjahren war ihm das unbewegliche Gesicht gewachsen, das er heute noch trug. (MN/158)

Later, when she and the other members of the delegation visit a rural hospital, they are given a tour of the modern building and told by the director that the German troops had come there during the war: "Das Haus hatten sie besetzt und zerstörten es zuletzt. Tausend Meter weiter lag unser Schützengraben." (MN/160) Greif believes that in Moskauer Novelle Christa Wolf is generally unsuccessful in her attempt to overcome the recent past because of her constant attempt to depict a rosy future for her society, and that it is not until Kindheitsmuster that she is successful in depicting a thorough confrontation with the past.

Zwischen Vera und Pawel, russische Freunde oder auch Zufallsbekanntschaften auf einem Kolchos, schiebt sich die jüngste Vergangenheit Deutschlands, die zwar betrauert, aber letzten Endes verdrängt wird um des Traumes willen: Die Gelegenheit für eine tiefgehende Auseinandersetzung mit der faschistischen Jugendzeit wird für Christa Wolf erst sechzehn Jahre nach ihrer ersten Veröffentlichung kommen – Kindheitsmuster aber wird frei sein von naivem Zukunftsglauben und sich mit dem auseinandersetzen, was die Basis für eine nicht näher beschriebene Zukunft ist: Vergangenes und Gegenwärtiges.<sup>6</sup>

Even if Christa Wolf's presentation of an attempt to overcome the past is not as well developed in Moskauer Novelle as in Kindheitsmuster, the work does serve to show the relationship of the past with the present and thus corresponds to the desire expressed in her early theoretical writings that literature should present the interrelationship of past and present.

Another idea expressed in her theoretical writings is that the author has an obligation to depict the problems and conflicts of life in order to help the reader adjust to his society and come to some understanding of

how he might handle his own problems. Both Vera and Pawel face a conflict between their love for one another and the relationships that they have already established with their spouses. Pawel becomes increasingly uncomfortable in Vera's presence and seems incapable of handling his feelings for her. Vera tries to keep her emotions under control and spends the evenings writing long letters to her husband at home, but one evening, after a phone call from Pawel, her feelings overcome her and she tears up the letter she had been writing to her husband and realizes that her feelings for Pawel are stronger than she had thought:

Vera wußte, wie er sich jetzt über das Gesicht strich und mit unsicheren Bewegungen eine Zigarette anzündete. Sie zerriß den Brief an ihren Mann. Er wollte mich nicht anrufen und mußte es doch tun. Ich will nicht an ihn denken und muß und muß. Es ist stärker. Was soll ich machen? (MN/175)

She decides that if she cannot control her emotions, she will have to learn to hide them. Her conflict between her feelings for Pawel and her life at home is resolved only when she discusses with Pawel the guilt she feels for what happened in 1945 and when she decides to help Pawel take control of his life. The thought processes which occur in this decision are not clearly depicted in the work, and the ending is too simplistic and idealistic to be completely effective. The end of the work shows Pawel and his wife taking Vera to the airport, where Vera discusses openly with Pawel's wife, Sina, the path that her relationship with Pawel has travelled since they first met in 1945. She tells Sina that she is glad of finally having had the chance to catch up on all the news since she and Pawel had last seen each other. The women hug each other, Pawel squeezes Vera's hands, and she kisses him on the forehead before walking out to her plane. After the emotional turbulence that they had suffered in each

other's presence, the placid friendship they exhibit at the end of the work is rather difficult to believe. The change in their relationship, if it could be believed, would show the reader that the conflicts of life can be resolved for the betterment of all involved, but when their relationship is resolved in such a simplistic manner it is doubtful whether the reader could accept the message being presented.

The idea that literature should depict the newness of life and evoke in the reader a feeling for the depth and meaning of life is another concern of Christa Wolf in her early theoretical writings. Greif believes that she shows the importance of newness in Moskauer Novelle when she shows several of the characters discussing the future of the socialist state: "Neues soll da geschaffen werden nach der Hitlerära, Platz für neue Ideen ist ja nach der totalen Desillusion genügend da."<sup>7</sup> Vera's interest in the city and the people around her also substantiate Christa Wolf's desire to have literature promote an interest in the new way of life. One night when wandering around Moscow, Vera's curiosity and interest in the newness of life around her, represented by the novelty of Moscow, become apparent to her:

Plötzlich wuchs das Gefühl in ihr, auf das sie den ganzen Tag gewartet hatte: Lebenslust, Neugier und eine starke Freude. ...

Wo jeder Stein, jeder Mensch, ja die Luft und selbst der Himmel einem neu sind, scheint es leicht, das ganze Leben neu zu machen. Vera sehnte sich auf einmal danach, und es kam ihr unaufschlebbbar vor. (MN/152)

Related to the concept of newness is the depiction in literature of the humanization of man. One of the responsibilities of literature according to Christa Wolf is to depict the growth and development of new human relationships in the society. In Moskauer Novelle these new human

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relationships are shown through the development of Pawel and Vera's relationship from an amorous love relationship into a platonic and caring relationship that is supportive of their respective marriages, and thus in keeping with society's morals. Had Vera decided to pursue her love relationship with Pawel, she would have had to abdicate her responsibilities both at home and at work. Instead, the friendship that she evinces for Pawel is consistent with the idea that those in a socialist society should help each other make the most of their lives.

The possibility for new human relationships, especially for the development of German/Soviet relations, is also represented by the encounters between the GDR delegation and different groups of Soviets. When Vera and her group visit a rural Soviet hospital they are heartily greeted, shown around, and then treated to a meal and drinks. At the other end of the table from Vera, the people begin singing in Russian and German. They all drink to friendship, to the guests, and to the hosts: "Alle tranken: auf ihre Freundschaft, auf Moskau, auf Berlin, auf Sibirien, auf die Gäste, auf die Gastgeber..." (MN/162) On another occasion, an old friend of Pawel's invites the entire group to a celebration at his collective farm. Greif views this particular interaction between Germans and Russians as being "kitschy" and rather hard to believe:

Besucht sie [Vera] einen Kolchos, wird sie in Operettenmanier gleich von einem bärenstarken bärtigen Russen in Empfang genommen, der sie prompt zu einem Fest einlädt, wie es kaum kitschiger in einem Propagandafilm über Glück und Frieden und gemütliches Beisammensein und kaum 'zufälliger' inszeniert sein könnte. Vera wird als Schwester im Sozialismus gefeiert, eine Melkerinnenbrigade nimmt sie in die Mitte, die Mädchen stellen "Ihr in mühsamen Deutschen Fragen über Fragen", bis sie "eine von ihnen" ist.<sup>8</sup>

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Weißbeschürzte Frauen schleppten Kessel mit dampfender, würzig duftender Suppe herbei und stellten Schalen mit eisgekühlter saurer Sahne auf die Tische. Später reichte man fetttriefende Fleischstücke herum und aß Brot und Lauch dazu.

Dann spielte die Kapelle zum Tanz. Die Schatten der Bäume wurden länger, aber die Hitze hielt an. Die Männer zogen ihre Jacken aus und legten sie hinter sich ins Gras, die Frauen wedelten sich mit buntbestickten Taschentüchern Kühlung zu. Kinder quirlten überall zwischen den Tischen umher. Nicht das winzigste Wölkchen zeigte sich am Himmel, und die Blätter der Bäume blieben unbewegt. (MN/191)

The optimistic perspective on the possibilities for new human relationships that is presented in Moskauer Novelle is not inconsistent with the views Christa Wolf expresses in her early theoretical writings. In them, she states her belief that a pessimistic perspective of life contradicts reality because her developing socialist society offers a future in which man will be able to fulfill himself. In Moskauer Novelle, a train ride provides the setting for a discussion about what each of the people in the compartment imagines he will be like in the future, as well as what people in general will be like in the future. This emphasizes Christa Wolf's belief that the "historical" future is contained within each person. Pawel gives the most detailed view of his conception of future man, listing all the concrete accomplishments he will be capable of, concluding his description with the idea that the person of the future will not be a perfect robot, but rather, finally, a person in his own right:

Bei alledem aber wird er – und das wird seine größte Leistung sein – kein Roboter werden, kein perfektioniertes Ungetüm, sondern endlich: Mensch. Er wird aufrecht über die Erde gehen, lange und intensiv leben, glücklich sein und wird wissen, daß dies seine Bestimmung ist. (MN/182-83)

They all agree that the person of the future will be ever-questioning, ever-searching for more knowledge of the people and the world around him.

Vera herself already displays this attribute, which Pawel tells her is her most appealing trait: "Weißt du, was mir an dir so gefällt? Daß du nie fertig wirst. Daß du nie auf alle Fragen eine Antwort weißt. Daß du nie aufhörst zu wachsen." (MN/200)

The ideas that Christa Wolf presents in her early theoretical writings concerning the relationship between author, society, and reader are found in her earliest fictional work, Moskauer Novelle. She has presented a story which clearly has the goal of helping the reader understand the present society, including its conflicts and problems. Through Vera, the reader is shown that, in order to aid the developing society, his own emotions may have to demure to society's goals. The relationship of past and present are presented through Vera's interaction with her own past and there is an attempt to come to terms with the war. The new life that Moscow represents for Vera represents the new life that is offered to the GDR citizen with its possibilities for self-fulfillment as well as for new human relationships. Although Christa Wolf's attempts to present her views on Soviet/German relations may seem overly-idealistic to the present-day reader, they are consistent with the belief in the optimistic view of human relationships stated in her early theoretical writings.

## 2. The Relationship between the Author and the Work

The ideas that Christa Wolf expresses in her early theoretical writings about the relationship between the author and the work primarily center around the author's responsibility to society, and she views the work primarily as a tool for furthering the development of society. She does, however, also discuss the role of experience in the author's relationship

with the work. She states in her early writings that the author should depict situations that he has experienced, or that are at least within his possible realm of experience. The work should be concerned with the presentation of these experiences, which contrasts with the view expressed in her later writings that the act of writing enables the author to confront his perception of his experiences. Greif discusses the extent to which Moskauer Novelle presents experiences and interests that correlate with Christa Wolfs own experiences and interests. He points out that both Vera and Christa Wolf were born in 1929, and that Christa Wolf, like Vera, is interested in medicine, psychology, and genetics. He cites her article "Ein Besuch" in Lesen und Schreiben, in which she discusses a visit with a geneticist, as substantiation of her interest in genetics. He states that Christa Wolf, like Vera, regrets having burned her diary. A more general correlation between Vera and Christa Wolfs own realm of experience is their shared interest in understanding the people around them: "Immer wieder werden Beweise für das Interesse Veras an den Menschen geliefert. Sie versucht, dem Einzelnen auf den Grund zu kommen und seinen Wünschen und Träumen nachzugehen."<sup>9</sup>

At one point in Moskauer Novelle Vera comments to Pawel that she finds it curious how much one forgets in life and how difficult it is to remember certain past events and feelings:

Merkwürdig sei es doch, sagte sie einmal zu Pawel, wie vieles man im Leben vergesse, mit Absicht vergesse, wenn man so sagen dürfe. Und wie anstrengend es sei, fügte sie mit mühsamen Lächeln hinzu, sich zu erinnern. (MN/165)

Vera is described as being unused to thinking about her own past:

Selten nur dachte sie über sich nach. Sie ging ganz in ihrem Leben auf. Versunken und vergessen war das sechzehnjährige Mädchen, das, verstört, in Fanatismus verrannt, als Flüchtling

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Later, in a conversation with Pawel, she mentions that the songs she learned during the war are the hardest thing to forget. She remembers that although she had written them all down so that she would not forget them, now, after having burned her diary, she finds that she cannot forget them even though she wants to. These various instances in Moskauer Novelle where the process of remembering and forgetting is mentioned are a foreshadowing of the concern that Christa Wolf expresses in her later theoretical writings about the process of remembering. She does not discuss this idea in her theoretical writings until after writing Moskauer Novelle. The presence of the concept of remembering in Moskauer Novelle serves both to define the main character's conflict and to connect the past and the present, unlike Kindheitsmuster where the author's process of remembering becomes thematic.

The ideas that Christa Wolf discusses in her early theoretical writings with regard to the relationship of the author to the work are present in Moskauer Novelle. She is primarily motivated by a desire to help society through presenting a work which helps the reader understand his place in society. The work contains autobiographical elements and thus corresponds in this regard to her belief that a work should relate experiences that stem from the author's own sphere of experience. Mention of remembering and forgetting occur in the work and these processes are a foreshadowing of the detailed discussions of the process which appear in her later

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### 3. The Work Itself

#### a. Characterization, Plot, and Structure

In discussing desirable characteristics of the actual work in her theoretical writings, Christa Wolf states that the personalities of the characters in the work should be revealed through their actions, and not be just described by the author. Although the characters in Moskauer Novelle are to some extent developed through their actions, there exists a great deal of description of them. The reader is often simply told how they act, rather than being shown. For example, after a meeting between Pawel and Vera we are told that from this point, on he acts differently around her and that she has to watch her actions carefully when she is with him:

Seit der Rast im Birkenwäldchen sah Pawel Vera anders an, sprach anders mit ihr als vorher und wurde unruhig in ihrer Nähe. Sie panzerte sich mit Nichtsehen, Nicht hören und Nichtdarandenken. Sie bewachte sich scharf, wenn sie mit ihm zusammen war. (MN/166)

Had Christa Wolf followed her own advice about depicting characters through their actions, rather than just telling about them, these two characters would have been clearly shown acting differently with one another, rather than just being described as doing so.

In her early theoretical writings she also states that characters should not be just types, but should have fully-developed, individual characters. Greif states that the characters in Moskauer Novelle are not fully-developed human beings, but are primarily types who espouse certain viewpoints: "Der Leser hat eine merkwürdig schemenhafte Vorstellung von Akteuren, die sich

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allgemein kaum als 'Menschen' vorstellen, vielmehr Ideenträger mit Scheuklappen sind."<sup>10</sup> Especially because Vera's change of heart with regard to Pawel seems psychologically unjustifiable, she seems to appear in the work only to present the reader with a certain view of life. Pawel's personality also remains somewhat unclear, and he serves to represent the passive person in society who will not take control of his own life. He is depicted only in terms of his reactions to Vera, and at the end of the work it is unclear whether he has actually changed because of his interactions with Vera. We do not know whether he will go with his wife to a new job or whether he will remain where he is. The secondary characters also remain undeveloped. Walter appears only at times during the work when Vera is experiencing mental conflict over her relationship with Pawel. Walter is presented as an older, experienced person who tries to help Vera by pointing out her obligation to Pawel:

Walter [ist] ein alter kampfgeprobter Genosse, ein erfahrener reifer Mensch, dem Vera vertraut, der die Maßstäbe ihres Handelns und Denkens bestimmt. ... Walter weist Vera den Weg, den sie in ihrer Unsicherheit annimmt: Pawel müsse zu einem neuen Selbstvertrauen, zu einer neuen Aufgabe geholfen werden; er brauche Veras Beistand in einem tieferen Sinne: das Wagnis des Lebens, die große Aufgabe, die Umwandlung noch einmal zu beginnen.<sup>11</sup>

Although the secondary characters are not fully-developed human beings, their presence in the work is justifiable in terms of their relationship to the main character Vera. Their influence on Vera is clear, and she is seen interacting with them. In this respect the depiction of the secondary characters follows the advice that Christa Wolf sets forth in her theoretical writings. There are no extraneous characters who simply appear randomly throughout the work, something which she cautions against in her theoretical writings.

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In her early theoretical writings, Christa Wolf states that works should have cohesive plots. There should be no loose ends which remain unresolved in the story. The plot of Moskauer Novelle is cohesive in its presentation of Vera's conflict, which she resolves by the end of the work; in contrast, Pawel's conflict between his feelings for Vera and his marriage to Sina is not clearly resolved, and it remains uncertain whether he will follow Vera's advice to move away and get a better job.

Gugisch describes the over-all structure of the work as being linear and uncomplicated when compared to the structure of her later works:

Die Beziehung zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, das poetische Verbundsystem zwischen der realen und der reflektierten Geschichte ist in der Moskauer Novelle – gemessen an den späteren Werken – noch vergleichsweise linear und unkompliziert.<sup>12</sup>

Kähler also views her use of past and present time as being in its formative stages in Moskauer Novelle: "Das Motiv, aus einem allzu geradlinig vorgezeichneten Lebensweg auszubrechen, um das Gefühl der eigenen Mitformung des Lebens zu gewinnen, klingt erst an."<sup>13</sup> The structure of the work is determined by the use of flashbacks which serve to show the relationship between the Vera's past and the present, but the structure remains simple because the transitions between present and past are always very obvious and there is no doubt in any given episode as to which time is being described. One example of the very apparent transition from present to past is typical of the use of the flashback technique:

Sie ging langsam und sah sich jeden Menschen genau an, der ihr entgegenkam. Wenn er mich jetzt fragen würde, dachte sie nach einer Weile, wie Moskau riecht – er brächte es fertig, das zu fragen –, dann würde ich ihm antworten: Nach Puder riecht es und nach Feuchtigkeit.

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Not only is the transition to the past apparent from the use of the word "damals," and the use of double-spacing between the two paragraphs, but there is also a switch from the use of the third person when describing present events to the first person when describing past events. The transition to the present is indicated by a new paragraph and a return to the third person. Although the transition from one time to the other is always apparent, it is not always accompanied by a switch in narrative person. An example of this is found in the following excerpt:

Sie schloß die Augen und sah vor sich, was sie noch niemand erzählt hatte, Walter nicht und nicht ihrem Mann, und worüber sie auch mit Pawel nicht sprach.

Juli 1945. Das sowjetische Magazin vor dem Dorf Fanselow brennt lichterloh wie eine Fackel vor dem abendlich schwarzen Wald. Vera stößt durch die Menge der Neugierigen und der löschenden und absperrenden sowjetischen Soldaten vor bis zum Scheunentor – das Magazin war eine ehemalige Scheune – und ruft mit schriller Stimme den Name ihres Bruders. ... (MN/177)

The criteria for good plot, structure, and characterization which Christa Wolf advocates in her theoretical writings are not consistently found in Moskauer Novelle. Her characters' personalities are often described, rather than being revealed through their actions, but she is successful in justifying the presence of characters through their relevance to the plot. Her plot is generally cohesive, with a few exceptions. The overall structure of the work is uncomplicated and the use of the flashback technique is not problematical.

## b. The Presence of Personal Elements

In her early theoretical writings, Christa Wolf asserts that authors should control the presence of personal elements in their work so that its overall goal is not overwhelmed by the subjective introspection of its characters. The balance between personal feelings and a responsibility to the goals of society occurs on two levels in Moskauer Novelle. It is the main conflict for Vera, and the author struggles to maintain a balance between the depiction of Vera's personal feelings and other, more objective elements, such as the description of Vera's surroundings in Moscow.

Vera's conflict is between the personal feelings she has for Pawel and the responsibility she feels for her society, represented by her work and her stable home life. Throughout the story she struggles to overcome her feelings for Pawel. To this end she spends many evenings writing letters to her husband at home. The more she realizes that her love for Pawel is overwhelming her, the more she tries to cover up her feelings and act naturally with the people in her group. Eventually, after she confronts her guilt about her past, she convinces herself that she must change her feelings of love for Pawel into a comradely friendship. Upon realizing that her obligation is to her job and her family at home, she changes from being inwardly oriented and becomes concerned with how the others in her group view her:

Ihr Blick war schon zu lange nach innen gerichtet gewesen. Nun nahm sie plötzlich ihre Umwelt neu wahr, in kräftigen, prallen Farben. ... Zum ersten Mal versuchte sie sich und Pawel mit den Augen der anderen zu sehen, und es war ihr nicht mehr gleichgültig, was man über sie dachte.  
(MN/208)

The message for the reader is obvious: subjugating one's personal feelings is sometimes necessary for the good of the developing society. Only when



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one turns one's glance from inner concerns to external concerns can the goals of society be realized.

The contrast between Vera's inner realm of feelings and her new-found perspective on the external world is mirrored in the work itself, which manages to balance the description of Vera's feelings with descriptions of her surroundings. The interspersing of descriptions of Moscow serves to de-emphasize Vera's feelings, but the descriptions are too obviously inserted into the text and tend to be what Kähler calls "reportagehafte Beschreibungen." As an example of the descriptions of Moscow found in Moskauer Novelle, he cites the following:

Moskau ist eine auf sieben Hügel gebaute, weitläufige Stadt, die sich übergangslos aus dem unendlich hingebreiteten Land erhebt. Von der neuen Universität aus hat man sie zu Füßen liegen, summend vor Lebensfreude und Schaffensdrang, von spitztürmigen Kirchen, Zwiebelkuppeln, bunten Klöstern und den mächtigen weißen Hochhäusern überragt. Vera bekam nicht genug von dieser Stadt. Sie lief durch die Straßen, setzte sich in den Parks auf Bänke, fuhr unter und über der Erde kreuz und quer bis in die entlegensten Stadtteile.<sup>14</sup>

The first part of this description sounds like it was taken from a guide book of Moscow.<sup>15</sup> The second part at least mentions Vera, but only in cursory fashion, as a picture of her dashing madly about in the city is presented.

Personal elements in the work are balanced with objective descriptions, although the objective descriptions are not handled in a very successful manner. The main character changes from being concerned with her own inward feelings to a concern for her external world. This work conforms to Christa Wolf's early theoretical views that works should balance the presence of personal elements with a concern that the work function to help the society.

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c. The Narrative Perspective

When in her early theoretical writings Christa Wolf discusses the use of first-person narrative versus third-person narrative, she describes the third-person narrative as lending works a certain objectivity. Moskauer Novelle is written mostly in the third person, with some use of first-person narrative. Kähler claims that this work differs from her later works because the presence of the author is not felt:

Die Erzählweise dieser Novelle unterscheidet sich wesentlich von der später von Christa Wolf verwendeten. Das dichterische Ich tritt völlig zurück. Die Erzählung scheint sich ganz durch die handelnden Personen realisieren zu wollen, ohne die "Einmischung" einer erzählenden Subjektivität.<sup>16</sup>

It is true that the presence of the author is not often felt in this work, in contrast to later works such as Kindheitsmuster where the interaction of the author with the work is an integral part of the structure. The author does appear at times to know more about Vera than she herself does, however. For example, after Vera tells Pawel that whenever she thinks of Russia in the future she will think of the birch grove where they rested one afternoon, the following statement is made:

Und dich werde ich sehen, wenn ich an Rußland denke, hätte sie zu Pawel sagen können, und es wäre die Wahrheit gewesen. Aber sie wußte es ja noch nicht. (MN/164)

This statement could only be made by a narrator who knows more about Vera than she herself knows. The following paragraph is an example of a general comment interjected by the author:

Jeder weiß, daß man in den Sekunden, die man braucht, um aufzustehen, jemandem die Hände zu reichen und sie fest zu drücken – daß man in diesen vielleicht fünf Sekunden außerdem rot und blaß werden, Tränen in die Augen bekommen und unglaublich viele Bilder vor dem inneren Blick vorbeijagen sehen kann. So ist der Mensch eingerichtet, und

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mit der Fähigkeit, sein Leben ineinanderzuschachteln, hilft er sich über die Kürze dieses Lebens hinweg. (MN/147)

Interjections by the author are interspersed throughout the work and serve to express a view beyond that of the characters themselves, thus lending a certain objectivity to the work.

Although the work is for the most part told in the third person, there is some use of the first person, most notably in flashbacks to Vera's earlier life. The use of the first person at such times serves not only to delineate the flashback, but also to emphasize the personal effect that remembrances of the past have on Vera. The use of the first person is not restricted to flashbacks, however; it also occurs in the present time when Vera is experiencing emotional turmoil. For example, in the following quotation there is an abrupt transition from third person to first person:

Sie zerriß den Brief an ihren Mann. Er wollte mich nicht anrufen und mußte es doch tun. Ich will nicht an ihn denken und muß und muß. Es ist stärker. Was soll ich machen? (MN/175)

The following example shows the use of the first person as an interjection within passages of third person narration:

Der Asphalt glänzte feucht im Lichtkreis der Lampen. Feiner Regen sprühte ihr ins Gesicht. Sie stellte den Mantelkragen hoch, vergrub die Hände in den Taschen und schob sich langsam auf der immer noch belebten Straße vorwärts. Menschen mit vollen Einkaufsnetzen kamen ihr entgegen, um Mitternacht.

Daß ich nicht mehr an ihn gedacht habe!

Plötzlich wuchs das Gefühl in ihr, auf das sie den ganzen Tag gewartet hatte: Lebenslust, Neugier und eine starke Freude. Hast recht, Pawel, ich freu mich doch noch! (MN/152)

The use of the first person in times of emotional stress serves to emphasize the personal aspect of her feelings. Significantly, once she has made the decision to turn from her inwardly-directed thoughts to a

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concern for her environment, there are no more instances in which the first person is used.

The use of the first and third-person narrative in Moskauer Novelle is consistent with the views expressed by Christa Wolf in her early theoretical writings. The third person lends an air of objectivity to the work, whereas the use of the first person emphasizes the personal aspects of the work. In addition, the author's interjections augment the information available from the characters themselves.

#### B. The Relationship of Kindheitsmuster to the Ideas Expressed in her Later Theoretical Writings

For the purpose of comparison, this section of the chapter will present a brief exposition of Kindheitsmuster in terms of the separate elements discussed in the previous section. Since what were previously separate notions on specific aspects of literature coalesce in her later theoretical writings into a unified theory of prose, an additional section will discuss the interrelationship of the separate elements as they appear in Kindheitsmuster.

##### 1. The Interaction of Author, Reader, and Society

Within the category of the interaction of author, reader, and society in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings, there is a general development from the idea that the author's primary responsibility is to society to the idea that the author's primary responsibility is to himself. She becomes increasingly concerned with the subjectivity of the author and how his interaction with the work helps him confront himself and gain a greater understanding of the workings of his mind. The theme of Kindheitsmuster



is the exploration of the author's process of coming to terms with both her childhood self as well and the adult person that she has become. This exploration is done through the act of writing, and the author's thoughts as she is writing the novel are also contained within the work. This involvement of the author with her past and present person, and with the act of writing itself, is consistent with the ideas expressed in her later theoretical writings. Although the basic theme of the work reflects Christa Wolf's increasing concern with the subjective aspects of writing, especially the possibilities that writing offers the author for confronting his past experiences and feelings, there are elements of Kindheitsmuster which correspond to some of the specific topics in her earlier theoretical writings within the general category of the relationship of the author, the reader, and society.

Choosing a subject from the present time is one of the elements of a successful work mentioned in Christa Wolf's early theoretical writings. Although the main theme of Kindheitsmuster is the confrontation of the narrator with her past, her daughter Lenka represents the younger generation in the GDR. According to Hille in her review of Kindheitsmuster, Lenka's view of present-day life reflects the concerns and opinions of the generation which has grown up in the socialist society:

Mit der Figur der Lenka – Tochter der Erzählerin – gelingt der Autorin am überzeugendsten die Gestaltung gegenwärtig realer Wirklichkeit. Im Denken und Fühlen, im Sagen und Verschweigen der Lenka ist DDR-Wirklichkeit präsent. ... Worüber Lenka sich freut oder ärgert, worüber sie nachdenkt und philosophiert sind Anmeldungen der heute jungen Generation, sind Ansprüche derer, die unter den Bedingungen der sozialistischen Entwicklung geboren und aufgewachsen sind.<sup>17</sup>

Lenka's reaction to the war and her inability to understand how the people

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of that time, her mother's generation, could have let such events occur is viewed as being typical of the post-war generation. In trying to make her daughter understand that period, the narrator is forced to confront her past and her daughter's questioning; her daughter's reaction to information about the war prevents the narrator from too easily coming to terms with the events of that time. When Lenka finds the biology book that her mother used in school, her reaction shows that she will not easily accept explanations about the past:

Erinnerst du dich, was Lenka sagte, nachdem sie die Seiten im Biologiebuch der zehnten Klasse betrachtet hatte, auf denen Vertreter niederer Rassen – semitischer, ostlicher – abgebildet sind? Sie sagte nichts. Sie gab dir wortlos das Buch zurück, das sie heimlich genommen hatte, und äußerte kein Verlangen, es noch einmal zu haben. Dir kam es vor, als betrachte sie dich an diesem Tag anders als sonst.<sup>18</sup>

Lenka's questioning of how people could have allowed the events of the war to transpire prompts the narrator to delve into her past in order to find out when she first began to lose her own feeling of responsibility. In response to her mother's telling her that her own father wondered what the war had done to them, Lenka wonders how people could have divorced themselves from any feeling of responsibility:

Lenka sagt: Das versteht sie nicht, solche Sätze. Von Leuten, die die ganze Zeit dabeigewesen sind. Sie will nicht – noch nicht – erklärt haben, wie man zugleich anwesend und nicht dabeigewesen sein kann, das schauerliche Geheimnis der Menschen dieses Jahrhunderts. Sie setzt Erklärung noch mit Entschuldigung gleich und lehnt sie ab. Sie sagt, man müsse konsequent sein, und meint: rigoros. Du, sehr bekannt mit diesem Verlangen, fragst dich, wann der Schwund der unbedingten Strenge bei dir begonnen hat. (KM/42)

Another concern in Christa Wolf's early theoretical writings was the responsibility of the author to depict people and situations in such a way that the reader could identify with the characters and discover from them

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various ways of conducting his own life. In her early writings, the reason for this concern was that the society was in a state of transition, and literature had the goal of helping people adapt to the new society. By the time Kindheitsmuster was written, the society had developed to the point where Christa Wolf could be concerned with more subjective reasons for writing. The reader, however, is not forgotten, and although it is no longer necessary to help him adjust to his fluctuating society, the presentation of problems of the present-day GDR society in the work can help motivate the reader to take an active part in his society. Hille believes that presenting contemporary problems in Kindheitsmuster is not idle criticism, but is an attempt to motivate the reader:

[Die Autorin] überzeugt...immer wieder mit genau beobachteten und kritisches Denken herausfordernden Details aus unserer Wirklichkeit. Dabei ist nicht – so meine ich – kontemplative Krittellei die Zielrichtung, sondern das Betroffenmachen des Lesers, um ihn zu mobilisieren für eine verantwortliche Teilnahme am gesellschaftlichen Prozeß.<sup>19</sup>

The most blatant criticism of present-day GDR society occurs when Lenka discusses her job working on an assembly line, finding it difficult to believe that anyone should have to work at a job from which they derive no pleasure. (KM/252–53) There is also implied criticism of the society when the modern generation is depicted, through Lenka, as being unable to believe that it would allow the past to repeat itself. In reference to past events, Lenka says:

Daß wir das alles verstehen sollen. Ich jedenfalls, sagte Lenka, ich versteh es nicht.  
Und bei euch, ich meine, in deiner Generation, könnte nichts Ähnliches . . .  
Bei uns? Das? (KM/169)

The narrator is painfully aware that as a child she was ignorant of many war-time events:

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Auf Seite 107 in Lenkas Schulbuch im Format 14 x 9 eine "Karte der faschistischen Konzentrationslager in Europa während des zweiten Weltkrieges"....Du spürtest körperlich, wie Lenka zum erstenmal begreift, in welcher Landschaft ihre Mutter ihre Kindheit verbracht hat. Die geographische Lage der Vernichtungslager Chelmno, Treblinka, vielleicht auch Majdanek, macht die Annahme wahrscheinlich, daß Transporte mit Menschen, die für diese Lager bestimmt waren, auch über L. geleitet wurden, das ja an der Ostbahnstrecke lag....Niemand hat Nelly von einem ihrer Landsleute hierüber ein Wort gehört, während des Kriegs nicht und auch nicht danach. (KM/219)

The narrator wants to make sure that the present generation is aware of world events and does not simply repose in ignorance. To this end she makes repeated reference to the uprisings in Chile and to America's role in the Vietnam War.

Because the narrator discusses her own confrontation with the past, the reader is helped to confront his own past. In addition, the process of remembering is an integral feature of the work and is explicitly discussed. An example of this is when the narrator asks: "Warum vergißt dieses Kind seine frühesten Jahre, um eine einzige Szene zu behalten, die ihm niemand je glauben wird." (KM/37) The reader is given the opportunity to confront his own process of remembering and perhaps also try to overcome certain events of his past. Bock relates this aspect of Kindheitsmuster to the idea Christa Wolf expresses in "Lesen und Schreiben" that prose should not attempt to define the experiences of the reader, but should give him the courage to confront his own experiences. Through this process the reader is helped to interact with the work, and the barriers between the producer of a work and its "consumers" are demolished.<sup>20</sup> It is interesting that both Bock and Hille mention the effect that Kindheitsmuster has on the reader, and that Bock relates the effect of Kindheitsmuster to Christa Wolf's ideas in "Lesen und Schreiben." When

Christa Wolf herself discusses the creation of Kindheitsmuster, she maintains that, although she wrote it differently than had she been writing in her diary, she created the work with the material in mind, rather than the reader. Her concern was her own confrontation with the work, not the effect on the reader, although she does state that, once the work was finished, she hoped that some of what she said might be relevant to the reader.<sup>21</sup>

The idea expressed in her theoretical writings that a work should depict the interrelationship of past and present is represented in Kindheitsmuster by the narrator's attempt to come to terms with her past. In traveling to her birthplace, once in Germany but now a part of Poland, memories of her past are triggered by the places that she sees. From an adult standpoint, and using the information that she has learned through the years about the war, she tries to make sense of the experiences she had as a child. There is a continual shifting back and forth between the present and the past. For example, she recalls a meeting that Nelly (the child) attended, and in the middle of the description she interjects a comment that Lenka makes during their trip. (KM/179-80). The relationship between the child that she was and the adult that she is now is bi-directional: because of her childhood experiences she has developed into the person that she is today, and the present-day person that she is influences the memories of her past and structures them according to her present understanding of past events. Bock points out that the impossibility of separating past from present has already been mentioned by Christa Wolf in her 1974 interview with Hans Kaufmann:

Schon 1974 hatte Christa Wolf im Interview mit Hans Kaufmann auf die Unmöglichkeit einer sauberen Trennung von



Vergangenheit und Gegenwart hingewiesen und damit die persönlichen Bedingungen ihres Schreibens so genau gekennzeichnet, daß es kein Zufall ist, gerade diese Gedanken des Interviews auf dem Klappentext des Romans wiederzufinden: "Aber kein Mensch kann den Wirkungen entgehen oder sich von den Einflüssen trennen, die von seiner Kindheit und Jugend her in sein späteres Leben dringen – auch und gerade, wenn diese Kindheit unter Einflüssen stand und Verhaltensweisen in ihm erzeugt hat, die er am liebsten vergessen und leugnen möchte, zuerst vor sich selbst."<sup>22</sup>

Bock further points out that present desire to overcome the past

("Bewältigung der Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart"<sup>23</sup>) is the force behind Christa Wolfs desire to write.

## 2. The Relationship between the Author and the Work

The idea expressed in "Lesen und Schreiben" that the creative process consists of the author interacting with his material to create a third reality--the reality of the work itself--forms one of the narrative levels of Kindheitsmuster. The problems encountered by the author during the act of writing are presented in the work and form an integral part of the structure. Near the very end of the work she questions whether she has succeeded in coming to terms with the child that she once was:

Je näher uns jemand steht, um so schwieriger scheint es zu sein, Abschließendes über ihn zu sagen, das ist bekannt. Das Kind, das in mir verkrochen war – Ist es hervorgekommen? Oder hat es sich, aufgescheucht, ein tieferes, unzugänglicheres Versteck gesucht? Hat das Gedächtnis seine Schuldigkeit getan? Oder hat es sich dazu hergegeben, durch Irreführung zu beweisen, daß es unmöglich ist, der Todsünde dieser Zeit zu entgehen, die da heißt: sich nicht kennenzulernen zu wollen? Und die Vergangenheit... – Ist ihre Vormacht gebrochen? Werden die Stimmungen sich beruhigen? (KM/377)

Although the work contains autobiographical elements, it is the author's perception of actual experiences that is thematic, rather than the experiences themselves. This correlates with the change in Christa Wolfs



view of the role of experiences from her early to her later theoretical writings. In Kindheitsmuster the narrator tries to understand the essence of her earlier experiences but realizes that she cannot relive her experiences, nor even present them exactly as they happened: her perception of them is affected both by the time that has elapsed since their occurrence and by the person that she has become:

Die Beschreibung der Vergangenheit – was immer das sein mag, dieser noch anwachsende Haufen von Erinnerungen – in objektivem Stil wird nicht gelingen. Der Doppelsinn des Wortes "vermitteln". Schreibend zwischen der Gegenwart und der Vergangenheit vermitteln, sich ins Mittel legen....Der heutigen Person die Begegnung mit jener vergangenen möglich machen, vermittels geschriebener Zeilen? (KM/153–54)

Ester comments on the effect of present consciousness on the narrator's memories:

Das Bewußtsein wirft seinen Schatten auf die Landschaft der Erinnerung. Die Erzählerin kann den Schatten zwar nicht verschwinden lassen, wohl aber bewußt machen.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of remembering fascinates the narrator, as shown by her detailed description of Salvador Dalí's painting "The Persistence of Memory", only part of which is cited here:

Es zeigt, was man nicht für möglich halten würde: Die Landschaft der Erinnerung. Die klare, doch unwirklichen Farben. Die Inseln, die sich aus dem Meer erheben. Das direkte, helle, doch unheimliche Licht, dessen Quelle nicht preisgegeben wird. Die anhaltende Bedrohung durch das Dunkel. Zwischen beidem die unscharfe Grenze. Totale Stille und Bewegungslosigkeit. (KM/239)

The mention of islands which rise out of the sea is reminiscent of her description of the structure of Nachdenken über Christa T. The narrator's fascination with remembering is consistent with Christa Wolf's later theoretical writings, in which she states that one of her impulses for writing is to investigate the process of remembering.

### 3. The Work Itself

#### a. Characterization and Plot

Since the narrator is attempting to gain an understanding of the child that she once was, the depiction of her childhood constitutes a large part of the novel. Nelly Jordan, the child, born in 1929, is shown growing up in a middle-class family. Her development is traced through various experiences, and she is shown absorbing the views of her family and learning not to question things that were happening in the society around her. As Kane points out, the narrator's relentless probing into her own childhood reveals the unpleasant attributes that she acquired from her family and society, attributes such as bigotry and the belief that ignorance is better than knowing the unpleasant truth: "Was ich nicht weiß, macht mich nicht heiß." (KM/141) As a child, she considers herself and her family lucky because they are free of any suspect elements and they are good at ignoring or forgetting anything unpleasant:

Übrigens hatten sie Glück. Keine jüdische oder kommunistische Verwandt- und Freundschaft, keine Erb- und Geisteskranken in der Familie..., keine Auslandsbeziehungen, keine nennenswerten Kenntnisse in irgendeiner Fremdsprache, überhaupt keinen Hang zu zersetzenden Gedanken oder gar zu entarteter und anderer Kunst. Festgelegt durch das, was sie nicht waren, wurde ihnen nur abverlangt, nichts zu bleiben. Und das scheint uns leichtzufallen. Überhören, übersehen, vernachlässigen, verleugnen, verlernen, verschwitzen, vergessen. (KM/141)

Kane refers to a particular scene from the narrator's childhood which he describes as being "a gaunt and hideous memory not because she had not dared to offer these wretched women some of her own food, but because the Nazi designation of them as Untermenschen had become such a part of her own thinking that it never even remotely occurred to her to

do so<sup>25</sup>:

Im Herbst 1943 hockte Nelly in einer Reihe mit Ukrainerinnen beim Kartoffellesen auf den Feldern der Domäne....Hat sie sich Gedanken gemacht über die Suppe, die aus einem besonderen Kübel für die ukrainischen Mädchen geschöpft wurde? Wäre ihr die Idee gekommen, aufzustehen, über den Abgrund von dreißig Schritten zu den Ostarbeiterinnen zu gehen, die am gleichen Feldrand saßen, und einer von ihnen den eigenen Essennapf zu geben, in dem Fleisch schwamm? Das schauerliche Geheimnis: Nicht, daß es nicht gewagt, sondern daß es gar nicht gedacht wurde. (KM/232)

The characterization of Nelly, if taken out of the context of the work, could be described as being complete--the reader is given a clear picture of the child and its development within the society at that time:

Von dem Kinde Nelly wird in plastischen Farben erzählt; ein Mädchen in der Fülle des Daseins entsteht vor den Augen des Lesers; er erfährt von Kinderspielen und Schwierigkeiten mit dem jüngeren Bruder, von Märchen, Schulerlebnissen, Ängsten und Freuden; vom Mitmachen in der faschistischen Jugendorganisation, den Tätigkeiten während des Krieges, dem Verlassen der Heimat und dem Leben in einem kleinen mecklenburgischen Dorf.<sup>26</sup>

However, within the context of the entire novel, her characterization is problematical because the narrator continually points out that she cannot be sure that she is depicting her earlier experiences accurately because they are being viewed from her present standpoint:

[Das Kind] bewegt sich, geht, liegt, sitzt, ißt, schläft, trinkt. Es kann lachen und weinen, Sandkuten bauen, Märchen anhören, mit Puppen spielen, sich fürchten, glücklich sein, Mama und Papa sagen, lieben und hassen und zum lieben Gott beten. Und das alles täuschend echt. Bis ihm ein falscher Zungenschlag unterliefe, eine altkluge Bemerkung, weniger noch: ein Gedanke, eine Geste, und die Nachahmung entlarvt wäre, auf die du dich beinahe eingelassen hättest. Weil es schwerfällt zuzugeben, das jenes Kind da...dir unerreichbar ist. Nicht nur trennen dich von ihm die vierzig Jahre; nicht nur verhindert dich die Unzuverlässigkeit deines Gedächtnisses, das nach dem Inselprinzip arbeitet und dessen Auftrag lautet: Vergessen! Verfälschen! Das Kind ist ja auch von dir verlassen worden. (KM/12)

At the end of the work she wonders if she has succeeded in approaching

an understanding of the child that she once was. So, although Nelly may appear to be depicted accurately, appearing as a fully-developed character, the reader cannot be confident of his perception of her, since he is constantly warned by the narrator that the portrayal of Nelly may be inaccurate.

The plot of Kindheitsmuster reminds one of Christa Wolf's statement about the work of the Soviet writer Vera Inber: "Ich liebe Bücher, deren Inhalt man nicht erzählen kann, die sich nicht auf die simple Mitteilung von Vorgängen und Ereignissen reduzieren lassen, die sich überhaupt auf nichts reduzieren lassen als auf sich selbst."<sup>27</sup> Although one could retell Nelly's story by describing her experiences as revealed in the novel, it is difficult to reduce the essence of the work to a simple retelling of events because the interaction of the narrator with her memories and with the act of writing about them form an integral part of the work.

#### b. Structure and Narrative Perspective

The overall structure of Kindheitsmuster is integrally related to the various levels of narration in the work. Bock devotes most of her article on Kindheitsmuster to a discussion of the three narrative levels in the work. She points out that although Christa Wolf's earlier works of fiction employ the flashback technique to connect past and present time, the structure of Kindheitsmuster is more complicated than any of her earlier works. Bock relates the various structural/time levels in the work to different types of narration.<sup>28</sup> The first level of narration, the description of the child Nelly, is carried out in the third person. The use of the third person to describe the child is necessary because the narrator is

confronting the child that she used to be; she is no longer the same person as that child:

Allmählich, über Monate hin, stellte sich das Dilemma heraus: sprachlos bleiben oder in der dritten Person leben, das scheint zur Wahl zu stehen. (KM/9)

She wants to understand the child but realizes that she can approach the past only from her present perspective and thus employs the third person to gain the necessary distance from her subject.<sup>29</sup> Bock describes the second level of narration, the trip that the narrator, her husband, and her teenage daughter take to her birthplace, as functioning to contrast and compare societal problems of the past and the present. The third level of narration, in which the narrator addresses herself as "du," is the level of self-reflection by the narrator:

Die dritte Textebene wird von der Selbstreflexion, dem Monolog der Erzählerfigur beherrscht. Alles Vorgeführte und Besprochene, die Ereignisse der Kindheitsgeschichte, die Vorfälle der Reise und die Meinungen der Reisepartner, werden noch einmal der gedanklichen Überprüfung ausgesetzt, kommentiert, ergänzt und kritisiert, vor allem aber befragt nach den Möglichkeiten einer Umwandlung des Erlebnismaterials in Gestaltungsmaterials.<sup>30</sup>

The self-reflection of the narrator relates to Christa Wolfs idea of subjective authenticity, in which the author has the opportunity to be a part of the work he creates. Moreover, the inclusion of the author in the work can actually be thematic. In her conversation with Hans Kaufmann, Christa Wolf defines subjective authenticity as the author's search for a method of approaching reality in a literary work. She further states that subjective authenticity not only argues against the existence of an objective reality in literature, but offers a way for the author to productively confront reality.<sup>31</sup> This definition is directly applicable to Kindheitsmuster, where the narrator disputes the possibility of objectively presenting a picture of her childhood,

but writes about her past in order to confront it. From this confrontation, which forms the basis of the creative process, stems the third reality Christa Wolf speaks about, the reality of the work itself.

There is a fourth level of narration not mentioned by Bock, the use of "ich" which is found at the end of the work. The possibility that the first person might be formed through a synthesis of the second and third person is mentioned earlier in the work: "Schließlich kann man ein Spiel mit sich um sich beginnen. Ein Spiel in und mit der zweiten und dritten Person, zum Zwecke ihrer Vereinigung." (KM/149) Bilke discusses this fourth level of narration as a reflection of the narrator's belief that present-day events have the possibility of being as devastating as those of the past:

Für die aktuelle Situation am wichtigsten...ist das 17. Kapitel, als "Ein Kapitel Angst" überschrieben, weil hier die vierte, bisher ausgesparte Erzählebene, die der nächtlichen Angstträume und unbewältigten Erlebnisse, dem Leser am eindringlichsten nahegebracht wird. Dieses Ängste sind noch immer gegenwärtig, weil die Vorfälle, auf die sie bezogen sind, bis heute nicht ausdiskutiert sind.<sup>32</sup>

#### c. The Interrelatedness of Features In Kindheitsmuster

In the same way that the separate features of literary works as discussed in Christa Wolf's early theoretical writings merge in her later theoretical writings into a cohesive theory of literature which she calls subjective authenticity, Kindheitsmuster exhibits an interconnectedness of various features. The description of past and present time, the structure, the narrative levels, the confrontation of the narrator with the material, and the process of remembering are all integrally connected. The description of several different time levels influences the structure of the work and is



thematic: "Die verschiedene Zeitebenen, im 'Kindheitsmuster'...zur literarischen Struktur verdichtet, sind immer gegenwärtig."<sup>33</sup> The various time levels correspond to the narrative levels, which in turn represent various modes of the narrator's interaction with her material. In the first level of narration labelled by Bock, the narrator describes her childhood in a seemingly objective manner. The second level of narration, the trip to her birthplace, provides a means of relating problems of the past and the present, thereby showing that although society may think that it has overcome the past, the process of dealing with the past will never end. The third level of narration, in which the narrator reflects upon the first two levels, offers her the opportunity to discuss the problems and possibilities of transforming experiences into a literary work, as well as to investigate the process of remembering. The depiction of the process of remembering relates in turn to the presentation of various time levels and the desire of the narrator to confront her past. The interrelationship of all of these aspects of the work represent in fictional form the theory of subjective authenticity which Christa Wolf proposes:

Die Entwicklung des Erzählers und die Perspektive der subjektiven Authentizität haben dann vor allem die Aufgabe, die positivistische Trennung von Autor und Stoff, von Bewußtsein und Wirklichkeit, von Schreiben und Leben aufzuheben und den Denk- und Lebensprozeß im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache zu bringen.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Within the category of the author, the reader, and society, both Moskauer Novelle and Kindheitsmuster correspond to the ideas presented in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings. Her early writings advocate the representation of reality for the purpose of helping the reader adjust to his



developing socialist society, and in Moskauer Novelle she has presented her topic in such a way that the reader can identify with the material and learn from it how to adapt to his society. A specific view of reality, an optimistic perspective toward the future of the GDR society, is presented in the work, which corresponds to what she advocates in her early theoretical writings. Both works, Kindheitsmuster and Moskauer Novelle, present the topic of present-day society, and the reader can apply what he learns from the work to his own life. The difference between both her early and later theoretical writings and her early and late pieces of fiction lies in the orientation of the author's responsibility--in her early works, the author is admonished to be oriented primarily toward helping the society by helping the reader adapt to society. In her later works, however, she is concerned with the author's responsibility to his material and to himself, and with the use of the act of writing to gain an understanding of his own feelings and thoughts.

Both works present a view of the interrelationship of past and present, with Moskauer Novelle depicting an optimistic view of the future. Appropriate to the time in which it was written, it encouraged people to look to the future of their society and encourage them to work towards that future. In Moskauer Novelle the depiction of past and present is fairly simplistic, with the changes between times very obvious, whereas in Kindheitsmuster the interconnection of past and present is more complex.

Within the realm of the author and the work, both fictional pieces reflect the author's concern with the topic of experience, Moskauer Novelle reflecting her belief that a work could depict experiences, and Kindheitsmuster thematizing the author's perception of experiences. Again,

in this area, there is a change from an orientation towards society in the earlier work to a concern in the later work with the author's confrontation with herself and the material. The interrelationship of author and work culminates in the development of her theory of subjective authenticity, which can be applied to Kindheitsmuster.

Specific attributes of the work itself, including plot, structure, characterization, and narrative perspective, develop from the relatively simplistic plot and structure and non-fully developed characters of Moskauer Novelle to the fully-developed characterization and complex interaction of plot, structure and narrative levels in Kindheitsmuster.

The basic transition in her theoretical writings from the early view that the author presents a societally-oriented work to the later concern with the author's interrelationship with the work for his personal development and growth is thus reflected in the two fictional works examined.

## Notes--Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf." Weimarer Beiträge 6 (1974): 91.

<sup>2</sup>Heinrich Mohr. "Produktive Sehnsucht: Struktur, Thematik und politische Relevanz von Christa Wolfs Nachdenken über Christa T.," Basis 2 (1971): 230; Jürgen Nieraad. "Subjektivität als Thema und Methode realistischer Schreibweise," Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch 19 (1978): 292.

<sup>3</sup>Hermann Kähler. "Christa Wolf erzählt," in Weggenossen. Fünfzehn Erzähler der DDR, ed. Institut für Gesellschaftsroman beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam, 1975), p. 218.

<sup>4</sup>Christa Wolf. "Moskauer Novelle," in An den Tag gebracht: Prosa junger Menschen (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1961), p. 207. Further citations from this work will be indicated directly in the text using the abbreviation MN followed by the page number.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Guglsch. "Christa Wolf," in Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen, ed. Hans Jürgen Geerdts (Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 1972), p. 401.

<sup>6</sup>Hans-Jürgen Greif. Christa Wolf: "Wie sind wir so geworden wie wir heute sind?" (No. 1: Europäische Hochschulschriften), vol 237: Deutsche Literatur und Germanistik (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), p. 36.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 33. His statements in regard to the similarities between Vera and Christa Wolf are on pp. 32-33.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 37. He is quoting from p. 98 of Christa Wolfs conversation with Hans Kaufmann.

<sup>11</sup>Kähler, p. 220.

<sup>12</sup>Guglsch, p. 401.

<sup>13</sup>Kähler, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup>Kähler, p. 219. The excerpt he quotes is found on p. 159 of the 1961 edition referenced above.

<sup>15</sup>Christa Wolf admits that she did not know much about Moscow at the time that she wrote Moskauer Novelle. Christa Wolf, "Über Sinn und Unsinn von Naivität," in Eröffnungen. Schriftsteller über ihr Erstlingswerk, ed.

Gerhard Schneider (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1974): 167.

<sup>16</sup>Kähler, p. 219.

<sup>17</sup>Ursula Hille, Review of Kindheitsmuster, Arbeiten zur deutschen Philologie 12 (1978): 147.

<sup>18</sup>Christa Wolf, Kindheitsmuster (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1979), p. 13. Further citations from this work will be indicated directly in the text using the abbreviation KM followed by the page number.

<sup>19</sup>Hille, 147.

<sup>20</sup>Sigrid Bock, "Christa Wolf: Kindheitsmuster," Weimarer Beiträge 23 (1977): 128.

<sup>21</sup>"Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," Sinn und Form 28 (July/August 1976): 868:69.

<sup>22</sup>Bock, 108. She is quoting from Christa Wolf's conversation with Hans Kaufmann, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup>Bock, 108. She is again quoting from Christa Wolf's conversation with Hans Kaufmann, p. 103.

<sup>24</sup>Hans Ester, Review of Kindheitsmuster, Deutsche Bücher 7 (1977): 201.

<sup>25</sup>B.M. Kane, "In Search of the Past: Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster," Modern Languages 59 (March 1978): 21-22.

<sup>26</sup>Bock, 104.

<sup>27</sup>Christa Wolf, "Der Sinn einer neuen Sache," in Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Prosastücke, 3rd. ed. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>28</sup>Bock, 104-105.

<sup>29</sup>Jörg Bernhard Bilke, Review of Kindheitsmuster, Neue deutsche Hefte 24 (1977): 375.

<sup>30</sup>Bock, 105.

<sup>31</sup>"Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," 95.

<sup>32</sup>Bilke, Review of Kindheitsmuster, 376.

<sup>33</sup>Werner Krogmann, "Moralischer Realismus – Ein Versuch über Christa Wolf," Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik 7 (1978): 244.

## Conclusion

The examination of Christa Wolf's theoretical writings has revealed that in each of the four main topics discussed there is a change in her views of literature from her early to her late writings. In Chapter One it was revealed that her views on the development of GDR literature change in tone, becoming more personal, as Christa Wolf progressed from a young literary critic to a more mature critic as well as a writer of fiction. The various topics pertaining to the development of GDR literature, such as a concern with naturalism, also change through time because her society, and its literature, change, the society becoming more stable and thus more capable of accepting criticism.

Her views on the interaction of author, reader, and society, the topic of Chapter Two, were also shown to exhibit a change in orientation. Her view shifts from her early belief that the author's primary responsibility is to the society to a later belief that the author is responsible to his inner self, from which he should draw the material for his writing. This shift is evinced in the sub-topics within the general category of the author's responsibility, such as the representation of reality, the difficulty of the author's task, and the humanization of man. Her views on the reader change from her early idea that literature should help the reader adapt to his society to her later idea that the writer need not write with the reader in mind, but rather concentrate on his own self-development. If the reader happens to benefit from the work he will not necessarily learn how to adjust to the society, but he might learn how to come to terms with his own past.

Chapter Three revealed her views on the relationship between the author and the work. The topics which appear in both her early and late writings exhibit a change in viewpoint. For example, she believes in her early writings that the author can directly reflect his own realm of experience in his work, whereas in her later writings she discusses the effect that both a lapse of time and the act of writing have on the perception and depiction of experiences. There are three topics within her discussion of the author-work relationship which appear only in her later theoretical writings: the author's personal motivation for writing, the process of remembering, and subjective authenticity. They reflect her increasing concern with the author's subjective involvement with the act of writing.

Chapter Four discussed the comments that Christa Wolf makes about the literary work itself. Plot, structure, and characterization are viewed as specific elements of works in her early writings and are judged by their effectiveness in promoting the goals of socialism. In her later works she views these three elements in terms of the author's interaction with the work as a whole. Her view on the inclusion of personal elements in a literary work changes from the early belief that such elements should be kept to a minimum so as not to detract from the overall goal of the work to the belief that the examination of the inner workings of the mind is one of the most important themes of literature. In early writings she is concerned with narrative perspective only in terms of the amount of objectivity allowed by the use of first or third person narration. In later writings the author's direct interaction with the work, and the depiction of that interaction thematically, is of primary concern.

Chapter Five examined her earliest fictional work, Moskauer Novelle.



and a recent novel, Kindheitsmuster, in light of the topics discussed in Chapters One through Four. It was discovered that Moskauer Novelle correlates with the views expressed in her early theoretical writings, i.e., that literature should represent reality in such a way that the reader can learn from the work how to adapt to his socialist society. The interrelationship of past and present were depicted within the simple structure of the work. Kindheitsmuster was shown to correspond to the theory of prose expressed in her later theoretical writings. The complex structure of the work, incorporating four levels of narration, indicates that the work was not aimed at the general reader and Christa Wolf admits that she wrote mainly with her own interaction with the material in mind. Both the narrator's attempt to come to terms with her past and the interaction of the author with the act of writing are thematic in the work.

Thus, the overall progression from Christa Wolf's early to later writings is from a view of literature which emphasizes the objective responsibility of the author to promote society's goals to a view of literature as reflecting the author's subjective interaction with the act of writing. This interaction, which can be thematic in the literary works, leads to the author's increased self-awareness.

This examination of the chronological development of the ideas in Christa Wolf's theoretical writings provides the foundation for further work on Christa Wolf's writing, as well as on GDR literature in general. For example, the extent to which the works of other GDR authors reflect Christa Wolf's idea of subjective authenticity could be examined. An investigation could be made into the official response to Christa Wolf's

interest in the subjective aspects of writing. Her 1980 novel, Kein Ort. Nirgends. could be examined in an attempt to discover whether it corresponds to the idea of epic prose that Christa Wolf proposes in "Lesen und Schreiben." Studies of her most recent theoretical writings could be made in order to discover whether they augment her ideas on the subjectivity of the creative process.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A--Socialist Realism

At the Second Party Congress in 1952, socialist realism was introduced as the favored literary theory in the GDR. The congress established as the basic responsibility of literature the presentation of reality in such a way that it would reflect the development of a socialist consciousness. Depending on the source consulted, the specific elements of socialist realism vary. The following is a compilation of the different aspects of socialist realism listed in several sources.<sup>1</sup>

Socialist realism should depict present-day reality, but a reality viewed from a socialist perspective rather than an objective perspective. This implies the presentation of the social class struggle in its historical perspective. The work world, not the private sphere, should be its concern; this prevents the inclusion of psychological and erotic elements which might detract from the desired view of reality.<sup>2</sup> A positive hero should be presented not as an actual, every-day person, but as a representative of the ideal socialist. The author, through this hero, should take an obvious stand on the desirability of socialism. The basic view of life presented should be optimistic and future-oriented. The author should not present his material in such a way that he alone can understand it; rather the work should be understandable by the every-day reader. In order to reach the greatest number of readers and to enable these readers to emotionally identify with the material presented, a socialist realist work should employ clear and simple language, and the form should also be simple and non-experimental. Socialist realism should separate socialist literature from bourgeois-decadent literature. Only those works

considered progressive by the party are allowed to be included as part of the literary heritage of socialist realism. A socialist realist work should agree with the principles of the party ideology, and the author should accept the party's role in establishing acceptable literary practice.

Notes--Appendix A

- <sup>1</sup>a) Bathrick, "Geschichtsbewußtsein als Selbstbewußtsein. Die Literatur der DDR," In Literatur nach 1945. I. Politische und regionale Aspekte, by Jost Hermand, Vol. 21 of Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft, ed. Klaus von See (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1979), p. 274;
- b) Christine Cosentino, "Eine Untersuchung des sozialistischen Realismus im Werke Christa Wolfs," German Quarterly 2 (1974): 246-247. Cosentino discusses the relationship of socialist realism to Christa Wolfs Der geteilte Himmel and Nachdenken über Christa T.
- c) DDR Handbuch, ed. Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975), p. 526;
- d) Witold F. Tulasiewicz, "Socialist Realism in the German Democratic Republic," In Oakland Symposium on Socialist Realism in Literature, ed. Renate Gerulaitis (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1975), pp. 30-31. Tulasiewicz discusses the implications of socialist realism for GDR literature in general.
- e) Gero von Wilpert, Sachwörterbuch der Literatur, 4th. ed. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1964), pp. 657-58.

<sup>2</sup>This contrasts with the perception of socialist realism expressed at the Second Bitterfeld Conference where it was stated that literature should also recognize "die Entwicklung der Vielfalt des ganzen Schaffens, Denkens und Fühlens der Menschen." (Protokoll der von der Ideologischen Kommission beim Politbüro des ZK der SED und dem Ministerium für Kultur am 24. und 25. April im Kulturpalast des Elektrochemischen Kombinats Bitterfeld abgehaltenen Konferenz (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1964), p. 125.

# APPENDIX B--Timetable

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1929			C.W. born in Landsberg an der Warthe
1947			1st Authors' Congress
1949			Moves to Mecklenburg
1949-53			Studies German Literature in Leipzig and Jena
1950			2nd Authors' Congress
1952	Um den neuen Unterhaltungsroman		3rd Authors' Congress
1953-59			Works with German Authors' Union
1954	Komplikationen, aber keine Konflikte Probleme des zeitgenössischen Gesellschaftsromans		
1954-59			Works for <u>Neue Deutsche Literatur</u>
1955	Achtung, Rauschgifthandel Besiegte Schatten Die Literaturtheorie findet zur literarischen Praxis		

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1955 (cont.)	Menschen und Werk		
	Menschliche Konflikte in unserer Zeit		
	Die schwarzweissrote Flagge		
1956	Forward to <u>In diesen Jahren</u>		4th Authors' Congress
	Popularität oder Vollständigkeit		
1957	Autobiographie and Roman		
	'Freiheit' oder Auflösung der Persönlichkeit		
	Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers...		
	Warum singt der Vogel nicht?		
1958	Botschaft wider die Passivität		
	Erziehung der Gefühle?		
	Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?		
	Eine Lektion über Wahrheit und Objektivität		
	Unsere Meinung		



Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1958-59			Editor of <u>Neue Deutsche Literatur</u>
1959	Anna Seghers über ihre Schaffensmethode		1st Bitterfeld Conference
	Foreword to <u>Proben junger Erzähler</u>		
	Foreword to <u>Wir, Unsere zeit</u>		
	Die Literatur der neuen etappe		
	Literatur and Zeitgenossenschaft		
	Sozialistische Literatur der Gegenwart		
1959-62			Moves to Halle; works in a railroad car factory; works for Mitteldeutscher Verlag
1960	Auf den Spuren der Zeit		
	Review of Dieter Noll's "Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt"		
1961	Deutschland unserer Tage	<u>Moskauer Novelle</u>	August 13th: Berlin Wall
	Ein Erzähler gehört dazu		5th Authors' Congress
	Land, in dem wir leben		
	...wenn man sie durch Arbeit mehrt		

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1962	Discussion at the "Konferenz junger Schriftsteller in Halle"		Moves to Kleinmachnow; since then, self-employed author
	Schicksal einer deutschen Kriegsgeneration		
1963		<u>Geteilte Himmel</u>	
1964	Krista Wolf beseduet so studentami  Literaturkritik ohne Netz  Pocemu ja pisu  Der Realitäten Kraft zerbricht die Klischees  Eine Rede  Speech at the 2nd Bitterfeld Conference		2nd Bitterfeld Conference
1965	Christa Wolf spricht mit Anna Seghers  Gute Bücher – und was weiter?  Einiges über meine Arbeit als Schriftsteller  Notwendiges Streitgespräch	"Juninachmittag"	

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1966	Abgebrochene Romane  Brecht und andere  Deutsch sprechen  Fünfundzwanzig Jahre  Tagebuch - Arbeitsmittel und Gedächtnis  Die zumutbare Wahrheit		
1967	Foreword to Larifari ...  Probe Vietnam  Der Sinn einer neuen Sache - Vera Inber		
1968	Aug den Grund der Erfahrungen kommen  Glauben an Irdisches  Nur die Lösung: Sozialismus  Selbstinterview	<u>Nachdenken über</u> <u>Christa T.</u>	
1969	Ein Besuch	"Unter den Linden"	6th Authors' Congress

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1970	Afterword to <u>Erzählungen</u>	"Blickwechsel"	
	Anmerkungen zu Geschichten	"Neue Lebesansichten eines Katers"	
	Bei Anna Seghers		
	Gegenwart und Zukunft		
1971	Afterword to <u>Das Siebte Kreuz</u>	"Kleiner Ausflug nach H."	
	Zu einem Datum		
1972	Gedächtnis und Gedanken - Fred Wander	"Selbstversuch"	
1973	Autoren - Werkstatt		7th Authors' Congress
	Fragen an Konstantin Simonow		
	Speech at the 7th Authors' Congress		
1974	Das wird man bei uns anders verstehen		
	Fortgesetzter Versuch		
	Hans Kaufmann. Gespräch mit Christa Wolf		
	Über Sinn und Unsinn von Naivität		

Year	Title of Theoretical work	Novels, short stories	Biographical Information and Literary events
1975	Briefwechsel ...  Contribution to "Thomas Mann - Wirkung and Gegenwart"  Diese Lektion wollen wir gründlich lernen  Diskussion mit Christa Wolf  Max Frisch beim Wiederlesen ...  Suche nach dem menschen		
1976		<u>Kindheitsmuster</u>	8th Authors' Congress
1978	Beispiele ohne Nutzenanwendung  Bibliotheca Universalis  Dankrede...  <u>Foreword to Guten Morgen, du Schöne</u>		
1980	Nun ja!...	<u>Kein Ort. Nirgends</u>	

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