

Die Stimmen, die es unternehmen, zu sprechen

Narrative Responsibility and the Free Indirect Mode

in Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.*

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Abstract

*Christa Wolf's work continues to hold a fascination as an exemplar of GDR writing and for its distinctive literary style. Within the existing literature, the narrative structure of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) is often described in terms of an 'intermingling' or 'merging' of narrative voices, but a detailed analysis of the significance of the Free Indirect Mode as a feature of Wolf's style has yet to be undertaken. This paper examines Wolf's experimental literary style through a narrative theory lens and considers how the Free Indirect Mode is used to articulate 'subversive' themes within *Nachdenken*. Through a close analysis of the narrator's imagined conversation with her friend Gertrud, I explore the connections between Wolf's experimental literary style and the process of writing in the GDR.*

Keywords: Christa Wolf; GDR; narrative theory; Free Indirect Discourse; East Germany

Several scholars suggest that the regulations governing literary production in the GDR led authors to embrace ambiguous and non-linear modes of narration. Dieter Sevin states, for example, that East German literature is "durch eine offene Erzählweise gekennzeichnet" (Sevin 12), as a broad response to governmental censorship. Patricia Herminhouse notes that the innovative aesthetic quality of GDR literature may have arisen as a challenge to the party's authority (Herminhouse 363) and Curtis Swope argues that GDR authors developed a greater awareness of the capacity of language "both to constrict subjectivities and to shape new realities" (Swope 162).

Wolf's 'distinctive' literary style is often described in similar terms, particularly in relation to her 1968 novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* Wolf herself has noted: "Bei *Christa T.* habe ich [diese Struktur] zum erstenmal angewendet und gemerkt, daß ich damit eigentlich zu mir selber finde" (Wolf "Schreiben im Zeitbezug: Gespräch mit Aafke Steenhuis" 149). Therese Hörnigk commends the "eigentümliche Erzählmelodie" of *Nachdenken* (Hörnigk "Nachdenken über Christa Wolf" 29), Heinz-Dieter Weber suggests that it is "die Schreibweise selbst, die exemplarisch sein will" (Weber 31) and Werner Krogmann characterizes *Nachdenken* as "ein Buch, das wirklich etwas bewegt hat: beim Leser, in der Gesellschaft, in der ästhetischen Theorie" (Krogmann 31). As Ulrike Wilson writes, though Wolf's work "received praise for [its] exceptional literary quality, West German critics tended to focus primarily on the political

message of works by writers from the other Germany” (Wilson 15). Irmgard Nickel-Bacon, Renate Reschke, Myra Love, and Anna Kuhn all similarly suggest that the spotlight cast on the political themes of Wolf’s work has left aspects of her narrative style relatively under-examined¹.

Taking the suggestion that an ‘ambiguous’ narrative style arose in GDR literature partly in response to governmental regulation (Sevin 12; Herminhouse 363; Swope 162), this paper examines Wolf’s portrayal of the writing process in the GDR in *Nachdenken über Christa T.* The novel is framed as the unnamed narrator’s attempt to weave together the threads of her friend’s life, posthumously. She recounts Christa T.’s childhood during World War II, her time at university, her relationships, her marriage, her experience of motherhood, and, finally, her illness and untimely death. Wolf’s usage of the Free Indirect Mode throughout the novel allows multiple narrative voices to participate in telling Christa T.’s story, while also revealing the narrator’s own internal conflict during her writing process. The narrator is torn between her respect for how Christa T. challenged the existing social system and her own sense of conformity. A close narrative theory reading of her imagined conversation with Gertrud reveals the narrator’s temptation to frame the story in terms that hold Christa T. responsible for her own inability to find a place within society. By focusing on Wolf’s usage of the Free Indirect Mode in this key scene, I suggest that a close narrative theory reading of *Nachdenken* can shed new light on the relationship between Wolf’s prose style and the politically sensitive wording of the novel.

The Free Indirect Mode and Wolf’s Experimental Style

Before turning to a close analysis of *Nachdenken*, it is first necessary to clarify the ‘distinctiveness’ of Wolf’s literary style and outline the literary theory that I will bring to bear on the text. Wolf describes her own style as a form of indirect speech or a style that “getragen von einer bestimmten Redeweise [ist], von der Redeweise des Autors, die überhaupt nicht verleugnet wird” (Wolf “Unruhe und Betroffenheit: Gespräch mit Joachim Walther” 768). Wolf further emphasizes the importance of the ‘authorial voice’ in her discussions of subjective authenticity (Wolf “Subjektive Authentizität: Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann” 797). In Wolf’s well-known interview with Hans Kaufmann, in which the idea of writing “aus Erfahrung” is discussed at length, Kaufmann posits that this experimental concept is “dehnbar und verschwommen und deshalb philosophisch nicht viel wert” (Wolf “Subjektive Authentizität: Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann” 781). Wolf counters that her intention was not to develop a consistent philosophical approach to literary style and she has elsewhere preferred to characterize her thoughts on poetics as a “Gewebe”: “Es gibt Einschüsse, die wie Fremdkörper wirken, Wiederholungen, nicht bis zu Ende bearbeitetes Material” (Wolf “Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesung” 12).

Wolf’s ambiguity when discussing her own prose style has led to widely varied interpretations of the concept of ‘authorial voice’ in her work. As Julia Hell notes, critics “do not agree on how to understand authenticity [...] or even voice” in Wolf’s work (Hell 68). Despite this ambiguity, the relationship between authorial and characters’ voices in *Nachdenken* has been identified as a key feature of the text. As Barbara Dröscher states, “der Schlüssel für die literaturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Erzählung liegt in der Konstellation der drei Personen: Autorin, Erzählerin und Christa T.” (Dröscher 78). Heinrich Mohr², Birgitta Schuler³, Hörnigk⁴, Cheryl Dueck⁵, and Ulrike Wilson⁶, among others, all characterize Wolf’s distinctive style with reference to her method of ‘intermingling’ or ‘merging’ of narrative voices.

Narrative theory provides a more specific form of terminology to describe this key feature of Wolf's narrative style. The Free Indirect Mode allows the voice of the story-teller, or the 'narratorial' voice, to merge with characters' voices, or 'figural' voices. Brian McHale defines the technique as a mode of narration that allows for fluidity across the boundary separating narrator from narrated, in which "the voice of the narrator is combined with that of the character [...] or superimposed on it" (McHale 818). Salvato distinguishes between narratorial and figural language to describe the ways in which a narratorial voice can serve to organize and structure the raw, disorganized thoughts of a character:

Es handelt sich um eine harmonische Verbindung der inneren Rede mit der geordneten Wiedergabe des Autors, der in den ungeordneten inneren Fluß des Helden syntaktische Ordnung und stilistische Harmonie bringt (Salvato 151).

Figural language contains a sense of immediacy and a heightened emotional or a psychological intensity, whereas narratorial language provides stylistic coherence by organizing characters' immediate thoughts and feelings into a consistent and logical piece of writing. As Roy Pascal argues in his seminal work on the dual voice technique, however, narratorial and figural voices do not just overlap, but can also merge and fuse together in a 'hybrid' voice (Pascal 32). This distinction between figural and narratorial voices offers a more concrete framework for understanding how Wolf might integrate an authorial voice into her prose writing.

The title of this paper is adapted from a line in *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), which reads "die Stimme, die es unternimmt, [...] zu sprechen" (Wolf *Kindheitsmuster* p. 12). A voice that 'es unternimmt, zu sprechen' controls the content of a story and directs the narrative towards certain themes. Although the inclusion of interweaving narrative voices 'die es unternimmt, zu sprechen' is part of Wolf's broader project to develop a 'new' mode of writing based on the principle of subjective authenticity, a close reading of *Nachdenken* suggests that this feature of her style may have also been used to navigate politically sensitive phrasing.

A Close Narrative Theory Reading of Wolf's *Nachdenken*

By framing *Nachdenken über Christa T.* as the unnamed narrator's biographical project to rediscover Christa T., Wolf thematizes the process of attempting to represent 'voice' in a work of fiction. Writing allows the narrator to feel Christa T.'s presence again – it enables her to hear Christa T. speak, and to retrace her lines of thought. At the same time, the narrator's own voice also participates actively in the story, often emerging to comment on the vagueness of a memory, to explain the source of her information, or to question the authenticity of her representation of Christa T. At one point, she expresses doubt that she will be able to convey the essence of Christa T. properly to her reader: "Denn sie ist schwer zu fangen" (N 138). Part of this difficulty is due to Christa T.'s 'subversiveness', in the sense that she does not fit easily into the molds provided by a socialist society. In a letter to her sister, Christa T. describes her struggle to feel a sense of belonging in the GDR:

Ich taste die Steine ab, keine Lücke. Was soll ich es mir länger verbergen: Keine Lücke für mich. An mir liegt es. Ich bin es, der die notwendige Konsequenz fehlt. [...] Ich weiß nicht, wozu ich da bin (N 86).

To characterize Christa T., the narrator develops an experimental narrative style, which interweaves Christa T.'s own voice into the story by citing her letters, diaries entries, and sections from her thesis. By so doing, she allows Christa T.'s 'own voice' to become involved in the process of narration.

Sylvia Schmitz-Burgard and Evelyn Asher suggest that Christa T. could be a manifestation of a suppressed aspect of the narrator's own self⁷. Though this theory is contentious⁸ it does seem as though the process of narrating Christa T.'s life leads the narrator to confront her own, repressed feelings towards the society in which Christa T. struggled to locate herself. The narrator is conflicted between her own conformism and her sympathy for Christa T.'s 'subversive' viewpoint. This tension, for the most part, plays out on a subconscious level. As Mechthild Quernheim notes, the narrator represses her envy of Christa T.'s autonomy, and "nur indirekt läßt sich dieses Gefühl erschließen" (Quernheim 28). The Free Indirect Mode serves to obliquely communicate these feelings to the reader.

This usage of the Free Indirect Mode can be found in a scene in which the narrator and Christa T. learn of the Hungarian uprising. The narrator recounts that they were listening to reports of the uprising on a Western radio station: "[Wir hörten] kaum unterdrücktes Hohngelächter über das Scheitern dessen, was sie "Utopie" nannten" (N 156). At first, the reader is situated in the 'narrative world' with these characters. "Jetzt denkt die Cousine, sie hat recht behalten, sagte Christa T." (N 156), referring to her husband's cousin who lives in West Germany. In the following passage, however, a narratorial voice becomes discernible:

Wir wußten ja selbst nicht, was das für eine Nacht war, wir haben Jahre gebraucht, es zu wissen. [...] Erst später fragten wir uns: Warum eigentlich nicht? In jener Nacht bei unserem Tee, der kalt wurde, als die vielen hämischen Stimmen sich in unserem Zimmer trafen, merkten wir nur die Verdunkelung der Welt und merkten nicht, daß bloß die Bühnenscheinwerfer gelöscht waren und wir uns daran gewöhnen mußten, in das nüchterne Licht wirklicher Tage und Nächte zu sehen (N 156).

This passage remains connected to the 'present-tense' narrative moment ("das fühlten wir gleich"), in which 'wir' are aware of this "Verdunkelung der Welt" as the tea cools, but at the same time, there are clear signs of narratorial retrospection (such as "wir wußten ja selbst nicht" and "Erst später fragten wir uns"). Figural and narratorial perspectives are also folded into the same narrative moment; the "nur" in the passage "merkten wir nur die Verdunkelung der Welt" is suggestive of the presence of a more knowledgeable voice, who understands the greater historical significance of the uprising. There is an initial sense of confusion upon hearing these "hämischen Stimmen" claim that the uprising throws light on certain aspects of the ideological system (presumably, since this is a Western radio station, the complete failure of the socialist system). Yet these "Bühnenscheinwerfer" are revealed, by the narratorial voice, to be falsely staged, and as the narratorial voice suggests, 'wir', both in the room and in the broader socialist system, must adjust to the harsher impositions of the 'real' darkness and 'real' light. Here, the 'wir' obscures the narrating voice and suggests a collective viewpoint when the politically-sensitive theme of the Hungarian uprising comes into narrative focus.

The narrator implies that Christa T. had some sense of foreknowledge of these 'truths' that are revealed in the aftermath of the Hungarian uprising. "Christa T. verstand, daß sie, daß wir

alle unseren Anteil an unseren Irrtümern annehmen mußten, weil wir sonst auch an unseren Wahrheiten keinen Anteil hätten" (N 157-8). Christa T. is positioned alongside, but distinct from, this collective 'wir'. She had always been able to see the world in this way: "Übrigens hatte sie nie aufgehört, den Leuten in die Gesichter und in die Augen zu sehen, so wurde sie jetzt nicht von manchen Blicken überrumpelt" (N 158). It is implied that Christa T.'s inability to find her own place in a socialist society enables her to view the GDR with greater recognition of these realities, which only come to light for the narrator in the wake of the Hungarian uprising.

While this retelling of the Hungarian uprising allows Christa T.'s own voice to be heard distinctly from that of a collective 'wir'-narrator, the narrator often becomes concerned that she may be misrepresenting her protagonist. She questions the accuracy of her characterization of Christa T., reflecting: "Vielleicht sollte ich, wie die Dinge liegen, die Verantwortung nicht allein übernehmen" (N 56). She is aware of her role as 'eine Stimme, die es unternimmt, zu sprechen', and the responsibility she carries as a 'narratorial voice'. In the context of the GDR, this responsibility is twofold; a narrating voice is held accountable not only to the narrative itself, but also the ways certain themes may be subject to censorship in the context of the GDR. As Simone Barck notes, many different bodies and actors were involved in censorship in the 1960s: "Das Zensursystem der DDR war ein kompliziertes Geflecht voneinander abgeschotteter und durch verschlungene Pfade verbundener bürokratischer Subsysteme, das auch den Kundigsten immer wieder Rätsel aufgab" (Barck, Langermann and Lokatis 432). As Manfred Jäger argues, self-censorship often played an important role during the process of negotiation with a publisher, or even with the awareness that the text will be subject to this process: "Die Veränderungen im Text wurden den Autoren zwar abgerungen, aber sie waren doch ihrer Zustimmung bedürftig" (Jäger 37). Although Wolf's fictitious narrator claims to be concerned with the accuracy of her representation of Christa T., her hesitation could also arise from concerns that her characterization of such a 'subversive' figure may not be considered permissible for publication. This reflection on narrative responsibility implies that the narrator may be confronting the problem of her own capacity to 'self-censor'.

The narrator decides to verify her memory of Christa T. with a mutual friend. She thinks of Gertrud Born, now Dr Dölling, and imagines going to the city where they studied together, walking across the university square to Dr Dölling's office and asking her to recount her own memory of Christa T. She becomes drawn into the thought experiment by imagining arriving at Gertrud's office and noticing that she has attempted to reinvent herself since their time together at university, symbolized by an altered surname and new title. The narrator observes that Dr Dölling – "eine gut angezogene, gepflegte Frau" (N 58) – has worked hard to create a new persona to rid herself of "die blasse, unscheinbare Gertrud Born" (N 58). The narrator notes that she ought to respect Gertrud's new persona and name: "Das würde ich [...] zu respektieren haben" (N 58). In contrast to Christa T., who struggles to find her 'place' within society, Gertrud is comfortably situated in a good position with a nice office. In seeking validation for her characterization of Christa T., the narrator thinks to consult someone who has found their place in society and may represent a conforming voice. Yet although the conversation unfolds in vivid and realistic detail, we remain within the narrator's own mind; she is evoking a fictitious voice to assist in the process of narration and the reader's attention is frequently re-directed to the fact that this conversation is an experiment in incorporating multiple narrative voices into the narrator's story-telling.

The narrator utilizes the Free Indirect Mode by weaving together Gertrud's viewpoint with her own narratorial voice. This effect is best observed in longer passages, since it is often the surrounding context of certain phrases that leads one to question whether it is Gertrud or the narrator who 'speaks':

Sie war merkwürdig, würde Gertrud Dölling sagen. Und ich müsste sie lange auffordernd ansehen, bis sie das Wort herausrückte: Ich möchte sagen, sie war – gefährdet.

Das Wort lasse ich sich zerstreuen, es gehört nicht in diesen Raum und vergeht schnell.

Ich möchte sagen – das hast du schon immer gesagt, erinnere ich Gertrud Dölling. Sie lacht und legt die Fingerspitzen aneinander, das tat schon Gertrud Born, wenn sie verlegen war. Wodurch gefährdet?

Doktor Dölling ist gewöhnt, schnell und genau nachzudenken und das Ergebnis ihres Denkens zu formulieren.

Jetzt mag sie zögern.

Durch ihre Vorstellungskraft. [...] Sie war – ausschweifend. Sie hat es nicht fertiggebracht, die Grenzen anzuerkennen, die jedem nun einmal gesetzt sind. Sie verlor sich in jede Sache, du konntest drauf warten. Manchmal konnte man denken, das ganze Studium, der ganze Bücherkram gingen sie eigentlich nichts an, sie war auf was anders aus. Und das, weißt du, war fast – verletzend (N 59).

Gertrud's description of Christa T. implicitly refers to her 'subversiveness' and the terms Gertrud deploys – "merkwürdig", "gefährdet", and "ausschweifend" – are accusatory and critical, implying that Christa T. is responsible for her own failure to find her 'place' in society. Gertrud hesitates (uncharacteristically) and pauses before deploying each accusatory adjective: "sie war – gefährdet", "Sie war – ausschweifend" and "das, weißt du, war fast – verletzend" (N 59). The narrator's description of Gertrud's body language and her emphatic pauses implies that the topic under discussion is 'sensitive'. The narrator distances herself from this language, but throughout the passage, she avoids using punctuation that would clearly distinguish her own reflections from those of Gertrud's, and the scene is characterized by her usage of the Free Indirect Mode.

At Gertrud's suggestion that Christa T. is "gefährdet", for example, the narrator shifts the focus of the (imagined) conversation: "Das Wort lasse ich sich zerstreuen, es gehört nicht in diesen Raum und vergeht schnell" (N 59). With this sentence, we lose track of our place in the narrative. Are we in Gertrud's office, where a silence falls, and the narrator allows the word – spoken by Gertrud – to dissipate? Or have we returned to the narrator's writing table, where she has penned a term that she immediately regrets? This duality accords with McHale and Salvato's definitions of the Free Indirect Mode as an effect that sustains an ambiguity between narrated and narrative time (i.e. our position within Gertrud's office and the narrator's study).

The words that follow also carry a certain ambiguity: "Ich möchte sagen – das hast du schon immer gesagt, erinnere ich Gertrud Dölling" (N 59). The reader might think, at first, that the narrator attempts to interject, or change the topic of conversation ("Ich möchte sagen –"), but after this dash, our attention is re-directed to the term "gefährdet" ("das hast du schon immer gesagt"), and the narrator goes on to press Gertrud for her precise meaning: "Wodurch gefährdet?" It is almost as though the narrator attempts to avoid the topic but is inadvertently compelled to press Gertrud further. Though Gertrud proceeds to describe Christa T. in her own words, the narrator establishes that this response is reluctantly given ("Jetzt mag sie zögern"). In

this sense, the narrative shifts between their voices and the responsibility for the narrative is shared.

This mode of narration can also be used to describe the involvement of an additional, overarching narrative voice at work in this scene: that of the ‘authorial narrator’. Despite her emphasis on the concept in her theoretical writings, the existing literature often does not clearly outline how an ‘authorial voice’ can be identified in Wolf’s work. Antje Diesing notes that an authorial voice “immer wieder sichtbar wird” (Diesing 51) and Klaus Sauer emphasizes that Wolf “sich nicht zurückziehen hinter die Scheinobjektivität einer Erzählfigur [will]” (Sauer 96). Heinz-Dieter Weber suggests that the “Subjekt des Schreibens” is “von der Person der Autorin nur undeutlich unterscheidbar” (Weber 30). Yet precisely how this ‘authorial’ voice can maintain a distinct presence, while also merging with other narrative voices in the text remains unclear. Within the literature on the Free Indirect Mode, the concept of the ‘authorial narrator’ has been deployed to describe the author as an overarching ‘narratorial voice’ that guides the content of the narrative. Suzanne Ferguson writes that the use of the Free Indirect Mode “in conjunction with the guarded, ambiguous intrusions of the authorial narrator consistently functions to create [a] kind of multiple perspective” (Ferguson 242). Laurel Brinton argues that the Free Indirect Mode allows for the presence of an authorial voice in the text and can be used to “reflect either an author’s sympathetic identification with the characters in the text or his ironic distancing from them” (Brinton 368). This ‘authorial’ presence is also referred to as an ‘implied’ authorial voice, following Wayne Booth’s well-known conception of the ‘implied’ author (Booth).

In the Gertrud scene, an ‘authorial voice’ can be identified in specific passages that reveal the narrator’s own, suppressed feelings with regard to Christa T. In the same way that the narrator filters Gertrud’s wording through her own viewpoint, the ‘implied’ authorial voice positions the reader to understand the narrator’s internal conflict. It might be inferred that the narrator is divided between her sense of respect for Christa T. and her own, deep-seated conformism. Thus the example of the Hungarian uprising casts Christa T. in a position of authority and foreknowledge, the narrator is not always able to reconcile herself with this representation. She does not fully accept Gertrud’s harsh description of Christa T., but at the same time, she struggles against the temptation to view her protagonist through the same lens. Upon hearing Christa T. described as “gefährdet”, the narrator averts her gaze from Gertrud’s attention, “denn daß ich mein eigenes Empfinden ruhig von ihr ausgedrückt hören kann, ist nicht denkbar” (N 59). This is her most direct admission that Gertrud embodies her own ‘internal voice’, and she quickly becomes defensive, noting that Gertrud’s understanding of Christa T. is unfairly biased, because of the challenge Christa T. posed to her ‘way of life’: “Ich aber begreife endlich die Rolle, die Christa T. in ihrem Leben gespielt hat: Sie hat es in Frage gestellt. Und die blasse, schüchterne Gertrud Born hat das drei Jahre lang ausgehalten” (N 59). Here, the brief admission that Gertrud voices the narrator’s own suppressed viewpoint is being quickly and deliberately forgotten as the narrator attempts to distance herself from Gertrud’s perspective. In a rather transparent attempt to delegitimize Gertrud’s viewpoint, she begins to refer to her by her old name. This name is re-situated to evoke a past, where characters were placed alongside each other, or perhaps where the narrator felt superior to the “blasse, schüchterne Gertrud Born” (N 59). The old name also removes the sense of legitimacy carried by ‘Dr Dölling’ by erasing the marker of her professional success.

Despite the narrator’s attempts to deny an alignment of her viewpoint with Gertrud’s, the

fact that the conversation takes place entirely in the narrator's mind strengthens the impression that Gertrud speaks with the narrator's own 'inner' voice. Yet these feelings are largely repressed; the narrator does not intend to direct the reader's attention to her own deep-seated inability to accept Christa T.'s subversiveness. Therefore, we can infer that it is the higher narratorial voice of the 'implied' author that reveals these repressed feelings. This voice is not explicit or independent in the text; it remains *behind* or *within* the narrator's own thoughts and expressions. Thus, the voice of the 'implied' author is manifested through the dual voice technique. It is contained, for instance, in the defensive tone in which "Gertrud Born" (N 63) is spoken, in the discussion of "die Rolle, die Christa T. in ihrem Leben gespielt hat" (N 63), and in the narrator's repeated attempts to leave the conversation – "Warum sollte ich ihr weiter zuhören?" (N 60) and "Was bleibt mir übrig, als aufzustehen und mich still davonzumachen?" (N 63). In addition to the voices of Gertrud and the narrator, the 'implied' authorial voice plays an active role in the scene as 'eine Stimme, die es unternimmt, zu sprechen', or as a voice that carries responsibility for the narrative.

While the narrator claims to be attempting to better understand Christa T., her dialogue with Gertrud represents a broader, internal conflict with the complex and ambiguous censorship systems within the GDR and, more specifically, the self-censorship that led authors to avoid topics and wording that might lead to publication delays (Jäger 37). As the co-narrated conversation continues, the narrator becomes increasingly uncomfortable with the Gertrud's wording. It is implied that the conversation begins to push the narrator's boundaries, both in the sense that the narrator's inner, suppressed thoughts are being drawn into the light of the narrative, and that the discussion of Christa T.'s subversiveness is becoming increasingly direct. Gertrud begins to imply that Christa T.'s death was self-intentional, though up until this point the reader has understood her to have died of leukemia. To imply that Christa T. committed suicide is the ultimate accusation that she, herself, was responsible for the failings in her life. The narrator asks "oder denkst du, daß sie an dieser Krankheit gestorben ist?" (N 62). The response is blunt: "Nein". This 'nein' is a key example of Wolf's usage of the dual voice technique. Given the context of the preceding statement, we can attribute this 'nein' to Gertrud – i.e. no, Christa T.'s death *was* self-intended. This 'nein' is the final reinforcement of Gertrud's view of Christa T. as 'gefährdet' and, ultimately, *responsible* for her own death.

In the proceeding statement, however, the narrator resolves not to visit Gertrud after all: "Ich werde nicht zu ihr gehen" (N 63). The 'nein' could be attributed to the narrator as she re-establishes her control over the narrative and speaks over Gertrud, not wanting to hear her response. Her justification – "Warum soll ich Gertrud Dölling traurig machen?" (N 62) – sounds like the emotional displacement of an insincere excuse. She asserts that as to the question of Christa T.'s death, she will ask herself in her own time, "ohne in Zweifel zu ziehen, daß es die Krankheit war, Leukämie, mit der sie nicht fertig werden konnte" (N 62). Again, the narrator's explanations ring false. Before concentrating on a different topic, the narrator even notes that "gewisse Fragen, die ich [Gertrud] stellen wollte, kann ich ebensogut – oder besser – mir selbst stellen" (N 62). The narrator's intention is to excuse herself from making the trip (in any real sense), but the effect is ironic – an admittance of the correspondence between their perspectives. Indeed, later in the novel, the narrator echoes Gertrud's assessment of Christa T.'s death: "Meine Abwehr ist nicht verschwunden, aber beiseite gerückt. [...] Von Krankheit kann man immer sprechen. Todeswunsch als Krankheit" (N 88). Here, the accusatory wording previously attributed to the imagined Gertrud begins to emerge in the narrator's own phrasing.

In his study of multi-vocality in Wolf's major works, Bernhard Greiner suggests that the narrator of *Nachdenken* confronts a suppressed part of her own self by narrating from Christa T.'s perspective: "Ziel des Durcharbeitens ist, unterdrückte Ich-Anteile, für die Christa T. steht, wiederzugewinnen und mit diesen auch die Fähigkeiten zu fühlen, zu erkennen und zu handeln [...]" (Greiner 133). From this study of the narrator's conversation with Gertrud, however, we can see that Gertrud's voice is also used to articulate the narrator's own suppressed, conflicted feelings towards Christa T. While the scene shifts between Gertrud and the narrator's perspectives, the narrative also operates on a higher, authorial level, which directs the reader's attention towards the narrator's internal struggle to narrate Christa T.'s life. Gertrud, the unnamed narrator, and an authorial voice are all involved in the process of narration. All three are 'Stimmen, die es unternehmen, zu sprechen' through the usage of the Free Indirect Mode.

Viewed in relation to the idea of narrative responsibility, the scene can also be read as an implied portrayal of the process of writing in the GDR. The narrator's struggle to represent Christa T. 'authentically' is in tension with her own internal voice that would, like Gertrud, simply label Christa T. as 'gefährdet'. In her conversation with Gertrud, the narrator confronts her own role in 'self-censoring'. Although she attempts to distance herself from Gertrud's wording, later in the novel she begins to suggest that Christa T.'s death may, in fact, have been self-intended. Wolf's usage of the Free Indirect Mode allows the narrative to shift between these internal viewpoints, laying bear the complicated, contradictory process of representing a 'subversive' persona in a work of GDR fiction.

Wolf's utilization of the Free Indirect Mode also creates an ambiguity surrounding precisely where the allegiances of the 'authorial voice' lie on the topic of Christa T.'s subversiveness. Gertrud is critical of Christa T.'s sensitivity, the narrator's viewpoint is contradictory and changeable, and the 'implied' author's perspective is difficult to ascertain. Narrative responsibility is shared between these narrating voices and, hence, obscured. In addition, the Free Indirect Mode serves as a challenge to the very notion of a 'singular' viewpoint. By allowing *multiple* voices to speak, and to share the responsibility for the narrative, the structure of Wolf's novel presents a challenge to the kind of structure that would only allow one voice to narrate. These perspectives may contradict each other, but Wolf's novel allows this space for complexity and ambiguity, rather than attempting to reconcile her characters' various narratives into one, unified story.

Conclusion

Sevin, Herminghouse, and Swope suggest that a stylistic ambiguity emerged in GDR literature partly in response to governmental censorship (Sevin 12; Herminghouse 363; Swope 162). Wolf's usage of the Free Indirect Mode is a key feature of her distinctive literary style, allowing her to sustain a deliberate ambiguity between the novel's multiple, overlapping narrative voices. Wolf places special emphasis on the concept of the authorial presence in her theoretical work, and I have argued that this presence is best conceptualized as an 'authorial narrator', who controls the directions of the narrative behind the voice of the narrator. In the imagined conversation with Gertrud, for example, this authorial narrator frames the narrator's wording in ways that reveal her moments of self-censorship.

A narrative theory reading of *Nachdenken* also helps to clarify how voices ‘intermingle’ and ‘merge’ in Wolf’s writing. Although this analysis has focused on *Nachdenken*, due to the close connection between this text and Wolf’s broader ‘aesthetic project’ articulated in her theoretical writing, it would be interesting to consider the ways in which her style has evolved over time and to apply these concepts to Wolf’s other texts. *Kindheitsmuster* (1976) and *Kein Ort. Nirgends.* (1979) come to mind as narratives in which the Free Indirect Mode features prominently. Broader still, a comprehensive exploration of the use of the Free Indirect Mode in the literature produced under the regulation of the GDR could provide detailed insights into the ways in which more ‘controversial’ themes are perhaps narrated with heightened stylistic ambiguity.

¹ See (Nickel-Bacon 12-13), (Reschke 169), (Love 32), and (Kuhn 52).

² Mohr writes: “Die Struktur ist nicht monologisch, sondern dialogisch” (Mohr “Produktive Sehnsucht. Struktur, Thematik und politische Relevanz von Christa Wolfs *Nachdenken* über Christa T.” 103-07). Mohr also lists the text’s modern stylistic features: “Die Erzählweise ist modern: zwei Zeitebenen, Rückblenden, inneren Monolog, erlebte Rede, Perspektivenwechsel und andere Erzählmittel werden selbstsicher” (Mohr “Die zeitgemäße Autorin – Christa Wolf in der DDR” 26).

³ Schuler notes both the narrator and Christa T. “sind sowohl Subjekt als auch Objekt des Schreibens”, since Christa T.’s voice is often evoked to assist in telling the story and the narrator is also a character in the novel (Schuler 118).

⁴ Hörnigk discusses the “Doppelexistenz” of the narrator as subject and object of narration (Hörnigk *Christa Wolf* 109).

⁵ Dueck notes that Wolf “blurs the boundaries between author, narrator [and] protagonist” (Dueck 62).

⁶ Wilson writes of an “intermingling” of the narrator’s and Christa T.’s voices (Wilson 49).

⁷ Schmitz-Burgard notes that “Christa T. ein Mythos, ein Name für die Vergangenheit der Erzählerin, sein könnte” (Schmitz-Burgard 466). Asher also suggests that there are “clues that perhaps there is no character Christa T. separate from the narrator, but that both represent dual aspects of one personality” (Asher 220).

⁸ Annette Firsching argues that although they are closely associated, the author, narrator and protagonist are clearly distinct personalities (Firsching p. 65). Ackrill notes that “die Annäherung zwischen Figur und Erzählerin im Text zwar thematisiert [wird], bleibt aber ein unerreichbares Ideal” (Ackrill p. 25).

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