Das fiktionale. So ist auch die Frage nach der Schuld am Tod der im Text "gestorbenen" Figuren zu verstehen — sie "leben" oder "sterben" allein durch die Macht des Erzählers.

Die Häutungen der Zwiebeln führen, wie die Häutungen des Textes, zu unkontrollierten und heftigen Reaktionen. Die Anarchie der mit diesem Geruch verbundenen Reaktionen wird zur professionellen Macht ausübung des hierzu berufenen Oskars, der nur weint, das heißt unwillkürlich und machtlos ist; wenn er es will, der er mit seiner Trommel nicht nur sich selbst Traenen entlocken kann, sondern die Zuhörer dahin trommeln kann, wo er sie haben möchte, sogar in deren Kindheit. Die potentielle Machtlosigkeit wird zur potenti ten Macht, der Erzähler/Trommler herrscht uneingeschränkt.

Die Fiktionalität der solchermaßen etablierten Macht wird aber zum absoluten Machthorst, da weder die Gerüche noch das Erzählen letztendlich kontrolliert werden können. Trotz der Versuche, sie mehrmals festzulegen, gleiten sie endgültig ab: der Erzähler als allmächtige Figur wird heraußgeschworen, die Geschichte Oskars in der Form des Vaterunser's zusammengefaßt (490).

Trotz der sich auflösenden Kontrolle/Macht dient nochmals ein Geruch zur Zuschreibung. Der Gepäckträger kann nicht die schwarz Köchin sein, da sein Geruch nicht stimmt (486). Ex negativo wird so definiert, was sich nicht definieren läßt, ein Symbol, das (Oskar) nicht riechen kann. Auch das Wiedererinnern der Gerüche endet nur noch in einem Aufschrei (488). Der Erzähler als Gottfigur, der abweicht nicht den Boden/Grund des Realismus verlassen kann, ein v-erwachsener buckliger Realismus, kann seine Macht nicht aufrecht erhalten und schreit nach kontrollierbaren Gerüchen. Der "göttliche" Erzähler, Oskar, der dem Jesuskind seine Trommel geliehen hatte, dieser Oskar ist als Erzähler am Ende, er "hat keine Worte mehr" (491).


Literatur:

Christa Wolf's Büchner Prize Acceptance Speech: An Exercise in Sprach- and Kulturkritik

CAROL ANNE COSTABILE

With Büchner's example before me, I am disturbed more than ever by the deep complexity of writing and living, of responsibility and guilt, which molds and likewise threatens to destroy anyone who writes by living and lives by writing.

So begins Christa Wolf's Büchner Prize Acceptance Speech. In this very short address, Wolf introduces a variety of thoughts. First and foremost this speech serves as an expression of gratitude for
the honor bestowed on her by the German Academy for Language and Literature. Coupled with this expression of appreciation is praise for Georg Büchner and his works. These two functions, however, are obvious and represent only a superficial interpretation of Wolf's discourse. Delving deeper into this lecture, one identifies a criticism of the limitations imposed on language by society. This paper wishes to provide a forum for a discussion of Wolf's criticism by examining two possibilities: Wolf's speech is both an exercise in Sprachkritik, a criticism of the deficiencies in language and a direct criticism of society, a Kulturkritik.

Of the many recurring themes in Wolf's works, none is more enigmatic than her concern with the limitations of expression ["Grenzen des Sagbaren"]; which become evident as she attempts to combine her literary production with daily life. Despite her awareness of the limitations of language, Wolf strives to express experiences which lie outside of these boundaries. Her skepticism of language stems from her experiences as a writer in search of an appropriate means of expression.

Wolf, who, in various works such as Nachdenken über Christa T. (1968) and Kindheitsmuster (1976), has discussed the inadequacies of language, manages, in her Büchner Prize Acceptance Speech, to unmask many of these failings. For this process of revealing Wolf performs two tasks: on the one hand she is a writer; on the other she acts as a cultural critic. By questioning the ability of language to adequately reflect life in a highly technological age, she also criticizes the society in which she lives and writes. She remarks: "Shackled by a generally misconstrued past, confined to a present almost without alternatives, full of evil foreboding — how are we to speak?" (BP, 4).

The role of the writer in society is one of the focal points of Wolf's speech. Her evaluation of Büchner provides a medium for self-examination: "To read Büchner again means seeing one's own situation more sharply" (BP, 3). She places her own situation into the larger, global situation. Wolf emphasizes that writers, faced with a world consumed with the progress of technology, must overcome many difficulties today in their quest for an appropriate means of expression. Questioning what role, if any, literature can play in this technological world she remarks: "Shall the language of literature therefore fail us?" (BP, 4). Without the literature, Wolf believes there will exist only silence. This silence could be characterized by the description of one of Büchner's own characters, Lenz. His Lenz novella concludes with the sentence: "So lebe er hin." Wolf interprets this sentence as a metaphor for silence, for literature that has not been written, whatever the reason. Büchner's death signified his silence. Christa Wolf, however, does not fall silent. This speech serves as evidence of her refusal to be hushed. For Wolf language has become perverse ["verkehrten"] The only possible means for self-expression available to writers, language, no longer permits them to communicate "in hope," but only "in crisis" (BP, 9).

Despite perversion, however, the language of literature still manages to "come [close] to human reality" (BP, 10). Wolf portrays the languages of politics and science as devoid of human emotion. She contrasts the words of literature which have an "aura" (BP, 10) with scientific and political terminology. The words "peace," "moon," "town," "meadow," "life," and "death" are juxtaposed with their scientific-political counterparts: "nuclear stalemate," "earth satellite," "settlement area," "grazing land," "material forms of motion," and "termination" (BP, 10). It is at this point of her speech that Wolf's criticism is the strongest. Science and politics have usurped literature's role in the defining of language, and language no longer expresses emotion. Wolf is in actuality criticizing the society which permitted the hegemony of scientific language to occur.

On the one hand, Wolf calls for authors not to lose their language, since it is through self-expression that they must realize themselves, and this realization could lead to education. But on the other hand, scientists also need language to develop new idioms to describe their technology, a technology which may cause the destruction of humankind. Wolf comments:

With the help of specialized language, scientists have shielded their discoveries from their own feelings; pseudological linguistic constructions support the politicians' obsession that the salvation of humanity lies in the possibility of exterminating it several times over. (BP, 10)
The preoccupation of science with technology has created a new function for literature. Wolf interprets: "Today, literature must be peace research" (BP, 10). As long as writers can retain their ability to express themselves, their literature may possibly serve as a means to monitor technological advancement. A properly crafted literature will express a criticism of its society. This may cause the readers to ponder the society in which they live, and possibly band together to prevent what Wolf sees as imminent destruction.

Wolf's concern with technological advancement is not unlike that expressed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their critique of the Culture Industry. The Frankfurt School, established in 1924 as the Institute for Social Research, was concerned from its inception with the development and preservation of "culture." In their treatise "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Horkheimer and Adorno exercised a criticism against technology for its role in the creation of the Culture Industry which exists in bourgeois capitalist society. They compared the mass production of culture with mass production in industry, delegating to culture the same exchange function as commodities held in capitalist society. Culture becomes completely controlled by industry and technology. Not only does this Culture Industry lead to the demise of idealist aesthetics and the expression of individuality within culture, but the technology which is consumed with producing culture is no longer devoted to the advancement of humanity. Adorno and Horkheimer comment:

The idea of 'fully exploiting' available technical resources and the facilities for aesthetic mass consumption is part of the economic system which refuses to exploit resources to abolish hunger.

While both Wolf and the Frankfurt School critics are concerned with the dangers of advancing technology, the Frankfurt School limits its commentary to the effect of technology on culture. Wolf, through the cultural medium of literature, addresses her criticism to the authoritarian role which technology now plays in society. Although both parties postulate their theories within the framework of a Marxist tradition, their thoughts were composed at different points in history and therefore stem from varying socio-historical situations. The Frankfurt School cultural critics' theories on the production and consumption of culture stem from their experiences in capitalist culture. They do not support the status quo, but seek to unmask it. Christa Wolf, whose ideas on the production of literature and the limitations of language stem from her experience in socialist society, does not stand in opposition to her society as did the members of the Frankfurt School. Rather she strives to surpass the limits of expression in order to spur GDR society toward self-improvement.

Despite conflicting backgrounds, however, both Wolf and the members of the Frankfurt School serve as cultural critics in their attempt to reveal the dangers of technological advancement to the production of culture. The Frankfurt School portrayed the demise of "culture" as the fault of the Culture Industry. The advances in technology forced the mass production of culture, which in turn, caused a decline in its quality. Wolf, expanding these ideas to encompass all of society and all of technology, sees technology as a danger to everyday life, thereby postulating a decline in the quality of life. This deterioration of the quality of life disturbs the production of literature, or in the broader sense, culture. This fearsome technology has created doubt in the minds of the producers of culture. Wolf seeks to overcome this apprehension in her endeavor to surpass the boundaries of expression. She portrays herself and her fellow writers as "contemporaries of a civilization that with insane short-sightedness focuses solely on products, that turns its most loved and valued possessions — money and technological perfection — toward self-destruction" (BP, 4). Wolf's quest for a means of self-expression serves as way to overcome the decline in the quality of life. At the same time, however, this search acts as a criticism of the society which has permitted itself to be consumed with a passion for technology at the expense of humanity.

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1 Christa Wolf, "Shall I Garnish a Metaphor with an Almond Blossom?" trans. Henry J. Schmidt New German Critique 23 (Spring/Summer 1981): 3. Further references to this work will be noted parenthetically in the text as BP (Buchner Prize).


Jäger 147.


Some of the fears which Wolf expresses in this speech manifested themselves in the reality of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, which Wolf portrayed in her narrative *Störfall* (1987).


In this instance, Wolf does not restrict her definition of society to particular political ideologies; both capitalist and socialist societies are criticized.