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Summers, CS (2014) *Patterns of Authorship: The Translation of Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster*. *German Life and Letters*, 67 (3). pp. 378-398. ISSN 0016-8777

<https://doi.org/10.1111/glal.12048>

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PATTERNS OF AUTHORSHIP: THE TRANSLATION OF CHRISTA WOLF'S KINDHEITSMUSTER

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ABSTRACT

Christa Wolf is widely regarded as the most internationally successful writer to have emerged from the GDR. However, a definition of authorship as a discursively constructed function presumes shifts in authorial identity as texts cross discursive boundaries, rendering 'international' authorship a fragmented, unstable category. Emerging at the intersection of textual, individual and institutionalised realities, the author-function is vulnerable to reshaping by a new receiving discourse. Intervention by agents in the translation process, on the textual level and in the interpretive frames provided by the paratexts that mediate between text and discourse, results in an understanding of the author that may exist in tension with her other discursive identities. Wolf's example shows that the translated author's function is subject to shift as it becomes dependent for its circulation on the institutions of a target culture: the author's East German identity and her relative absence from target-culture discourse leave her vulnerable to appropriation by a powerful receiving discourse such as English-speaking literary culture, and the author-function that emerges has strongly influenced her international profile. Amongst Wolf's translated texts, the English translation of *Kindheitsmuster* (1976; *A Model Childhood*, 1980) demonstrates most clearly the discursive reformation of translated authorship.

Christa Wolf wird oft als weltweit bekannteste Schriftstellerin der ehemaligen DDR anerkannt. Wenn man jedoch die Autorschaft als eine aus dem Diskurs stammende Funktion betrachtet, müssen auch Veränderungen dieser Identität durch das Überqueren der Grenzen zwischen Diskursen erwartet werden, wodurch sich die Kategorie der 'internationalen' Autorschaft als fragmentiert und unsicher erweist. An der Grenze textueller, individueller und institutionalisierter Realitäten zu finden ist die Autorfunktion für Umgestaltungen durch einen neuen Empfängerdiskurs leicht anfällig. Eingriffe im Laufe des Übersetzungsprozesses auf textueller Ebene wie auch innerhalb des interpretativen Rahmens der Paratexte, die zwischen Text und Diskurs vermitteln, führen gegebenenfalls zu einem Verständnis der Autorin, die in Spannung zu anderen Interpretationen der Autorin stehen können. Das Beispiel Christa Wolfs zeigt wie die Autorfunktion eines übersetzten Autors durch die Abhängigkeit von Institutionen der neuen Zielkultur für Veränderungen anfällig wird: Die ostdeutsche Identität der Autorin und ihre verhältnismäßige Abwesenheit von der Zielkultur führen zu der Aneignung ihrer Texte und ihrer Autorschaft durch den mächtigen englischsprachigen Diskurs. Die Autorfunktion, die daraus entstanden ist, hat ihren internationalen Ruf stark beeinflusst. Unter den aus dem Deutschen übersetzten Wolf-Texten tritt die diskursive Umgestaltung der übersetzten Autorschaft in der englischen Übersetzung von *Kindheitsmuster* (1976; *A Model Childhood*, 1980) am deutlichsten hervor.

Key words: authorship, translation, Christa Wolf

INTRODUCTIONⁱ

‘Als könnte ein Fremder, einer, der außen steht, dir die Rede abschneiden’.ⁱⁱ

With texts published and read in more than thirty languages, Christa Wolf remains one of the most internationally successful authors associated with the former GDR. Bearing in mind the economic power of the English-speaking literary field and of American and British markets in particular, continuing interest in Wolf from the English-speaking world can be seen to have had a formative influence on this ‘international’ authorship. Widespread and influential interest in her writing and in her person is reflected in Anglophone discourseⁱⁱⁱ by significant studies of her work and by commentary on key moments in her public life including tributes following her death in December 2011.^{iv} Wolf’s continuing success in the English-speaking world might be attributed in part to a long-standing relationship with Farrar Straus Giroux, a powerful mainstream publisher in the USA, responsible for publishing the majority of her texts in English translation since Christopher Middleton’s translation of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* in 1970 and including the recent posthumous publication of Damion Searls’ *City of Angels: or, the Overcoat of Dr Freud* (2013).^v Continued interest in Wolf from FSG, and from Virago as her British publisher from the early 1980s, has undoubtedly contributed to the longevity of her authorial profile in the Anglophone literary field, and consequently in an international field dominated by Anglophone markets and institutions.

However, the promotion of Wolf’s writing in English has had an ambivalent value with regard to her international profile, since linguistic and contextual shifts inherent in the translation process introduce tensions into the identity of the ‘international’ author. A poststructuralist understanding of authorship as a discursive construction or ‘function’,^{vi} continually reasserted and reframed by the institutions that prescribe it, reveals the inevitable reconstruction of authorship as it moves between linguistically defined discourses. The stability of the ‘international’ writer’s authorial identity is contested by the influence of powerful institutional agents (publishers, editors, translators, reviewers) who participate in the construction of authorship. Institutions such as publishing houses ‘re-present’ translated authors, in the most literal sense: by emphasising particular aspects of the author’s life and

writing, the publisher may introduce to the receiving culture a selective account of the writer's authorship that serves commercial or other interests as much as (or more than) those of the author. Paradoxically, then, the more 'international' and widespread the recognition of an author's writing, the greater the fragmentation and localisation of that author's identity.

Christa Wolf is a writer whose reflective and self-critical style permits, and even invites, multiple interpretations of her writing. Known for her dissatisfaction with the policies and practices of the SED but later criticised (most famously in the early 1990s) for her apparent complicity with these, Wolf problematises the easy categorisation of her writing within the ideological frameworks of a now outdated Cold War binary of communist East and capitalist West. While her texts often direct criticism at her particular political and cultural context and her characteristic 'subjective authenticity'^{vii} aims at an aesthetic that flouts what are conventionally understood as the dogmatic and limiting norms of the socialist realist model, her writing is deeply rooted in the contrasting socialist philosophies of Bloch and Becher. Wolf's subjective authenticity, which values individual experience as a vehicle for experiencing and testing 'truths' about the world, is rooted in an attempt to use literature to relate socialist principles to the individual and to lived experience.

The tensions in Wolf's writing, symptomatic of its emergence from a particular socio-cultural context, reveal complexities of her authorship that require sensitivity and negotiation by those with the responsibility to render, promote and respond to her writing in translation. Although Wolf's contact with her translators and with other agents in the Anglophone literary field seems to have been limited, they have played a pivotal role in managing the construction of her authorship on various discursive levels in and around the text. The results of this negotiation can be identified by examining textual detail of the translations alongside decisions made in the production of paratexts, or the material that contributes to its interpretation in the target discourse, such as cover design and reviews.^{viii} Such intervention in the discursive framing of the translated text (and author) is seen most clearly in the English translation of *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), carried out by Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt and first published by FSG as *A Model Childhood* in 1980.^{ix} The English translation and its cover designs, together with correspondence surrounding its publication and with some

reviews, reveal conscious efforts to situate Wolf's text in discourse familiar to the Anglophone reader. Dramatic in this particular case but nonetheless typical, such shifts demonstrate the reframing of Wolf's authorship in translation, and reveal the influence of institutionalised discursive agents such as the publisher (or editor) and the reviewer on the construction of translated authorship.

COMPETING DISCOURSES: TRANSLATING AUTHORSHIP

The observation that authorial identity shifts with the repositioning of text and writer in new cultural contexts supports an understanding of authorship as a discursively constructed identity. Such an approach, exemplified in the poststructuralist attempt to free textual meaning from the sovereign authority of an 'author' figure, has resulted in accounts of authorship as a composite construction, amongst which Foucault's definition of the author as a discursive 'function' is highly influential. For Foucault, discursive participation is prescribed by institutional constructions that are infused with ideology, and in which meaning is provisional and contingent. The function of the author is a principle of classification that enables the containment and ordering of meaning in and around the text.

Foucault argues that the concept of authorship, whilst not under the sole control of the writer, nonetheless performs a unifying function as 'a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence' ('The Order of Discourse', p. 58). The name of the author also contributes to the ordering of discourse by mediating between the identities of 'writer' (the individual who produces a text) and 'author' (the constructed persona to whom it is attributed and whose identity informs a reading of the texts): it is 'what gives the disturbing language of fiction its unities, its nodes of coherence, its insertion in the real' (ibid.). To maintain this verisimilitude, the author-function is charged with 'neutralis[ing] the contradictions that are found in a series of texts' ('What is an Author?', p. 128). In other words, ambiguity and contradiction in textual interpretation are minimised in the interests of coherent discourse. Foucault identifies St Jerome's exegetical principles as the core of this authentication process:

- A normative standard of textual quality, to which the writer's contribution is expected to cohere, informs the exclusion of ostensibly inferior texts from an author's listed 'works';
- Discourse maintains the expectation of coherent alignment with a particular theoretical (or perhaps ideological) position throughout an author's work;
- The author-function is interpreted as uniformity of textual style, for example avoiding 'words and phrases not ordinarily found in the other works' (ibid.);
- Texts must cohere with the author-function through their historicity, in other words they must not refer to events or figures coming after the death of the author. More generally and in the modern context, this category reflects a demand for contextual accuracy, in other words the compatibility of the text with the perceived reality of the writer's context.

Foucault surmises that these norms, whilst no longer acting as essential markers of authenticity, continue to act as ordering principles in the construction of authorship.

Significant tensions and contradictions with expectational criteria arise not only between texts but also in their interaction (and therefore the interaction of the author-function) with surrounding discourse. Criteria such as 'quality' and 'accuracy' are relative and subjective in their definition, and the acceptability of particular theoretical positions is subject to shifting appropriation by the institutions responsible for the circulation of discourse. Whilst the author-function is a constraining unity, it is itself made fluid and complex by the constant struggles for power between the institutions that control the discourse in which it circulates. Foucault notes this contextualising power of the institution when he remarks that 'the author-function is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine and regulate the realm of discourses' ('What is an Author?', p. 130). Thus a shift in discursive context (such as translation) must also bring about shifts in the expectations of that writer's authorship. Applied practically to the publication of a text, it is clear that institutional agents such as editors, translators, designers and reviewers have the power to intervene in the articulation of the author-function.

In translation, authorship continues to act as a constraining and unifying category, ensuring that the author, and not the translator, is legally and discursively inscribed as the origin and creator of the text.^x From a Foucauldian perspective, the author's success in the new discursive context of a translating culture can be seen to depend on the consonance of the author-function with the ordering unities of that discourse. The application of St Jerome's exegetical criteria, just as formative in this new author-function as they were in the first, may result in a fundamentally different author-function in the translating culture from that established in the source culture:

- A standard of textual quality is established in relation to existing target-language literary discourse and, where relevant, to previous translations of the writer's work. Qualitative perceptions of a translated text may also be informed by target-culture assumptions about the quality of literature from the source culture (or of translated literature in general);
- The new discursive context may understand different theoretical positions as acceptable, requiring the alignment of the writer's work with a world-view that may be distant from or even opposed to that favoured in the source culture;
- Shifts in the style of the text may be consciously or unconsciously effected to align it with existing norms for the translation of the writer's work if it has been previously rendered into the translating language, or with target-culture norms, for example avoiding visible elements of the source language or culture that might take the form of 'words and phrases not ordinarily found in other works' ('What is an Author?', p. 128);^{xi}
- The perceived contextual accuracy of the text, judged by a new host discourse, draws on dominant assumptions about the source culture that circulate in the target culture and may therefore differ from a source-culture expression of self. A degree of contextual accuracy is also required of the translation as a text produced and circulated in the target culture, in other words as an articulation of a target-culture self.

Conflict within the translated author-function, or between the translated author and the translating culture, is negotiated in the translation and presentation of the text. Inevitable tensions between accounts of a writer's authorship, resulting from the translation of texts into new discursive contexts,

problematise the concept of international authorship by revealing the multiplicity of discourses that compete to define the authorship of the international writer.

In this context of competing authorial functions, Anglophone editions of and responses to Wolf's writing have been influential in the development of her international authorial profile. Beginning with *The Quest for Christa T.* (1970), she has typically been described by her Anglophone reviewers as 'a sensitive writer of the purest water', as 'a committed socialist of independent temper' who 'has been attacked and partly silenced by the Communists' or as a writer whose 'concerns are ours', demonstrating the perceived compatibility of her translated writing with Anglophone discourse.^{xii} However, this compatibility is consolidated at the expense of aspects of her writing that do not correspond to the expectations of quality, theoretical position, style or contextual accuracy demanded by the Anglophone context. The negotiation of these criteria can be seen clearly in the translation of *Kindheitsmuster* (1976; *A Model Childhood*, 1980), a text in which the narrator's reflections address not only a German-specific history but also more widely relevant questions such as the problems of memory and remembering, or the injustice of war. A particular challenge is posed to Anglophone discourse by the theoretical position suggested in Wolf's criticism of American intervention in Vietnam. The 'neutralisation' of such tensions, sometimes resulting in substantial shifts away from the style or content of the German text, reflects characteristic features of Wolf's Anglophone author-function.

KINDHEITSMUSTER AND THE ANGLOPHONE AUTHOR-FUNCTION

Kindheitsmuster (1976) was the third of Wolf's texts to be translated into English, but only her second to attract interest from Anglophone literary discourse. Joan Becker's translation of *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963; *Divided Heaven*, 1965), published in the GDR by Seven Seas, had been largely ignored by British and American voices apart from one review, which criticised its 'fatigued traditionalism of style and structure', and from some retrospective criticism of its attempt to emphasise a socialist message not foregrounded in the German text;^{xiii} it was not until the publication of *The Quest for Christa T.* in 1970 that Wolf's name began to circulate in English-speaking discourse

beyond academic circles. Christa T. had been well received by Anglophone reviewers, who felt it was not a political text and that it had ‘abolished the border’ between the literatures of the two Germanies; some considered it ‘the first novel of any consequence to emerge from Ulbrecht’s [sic] East Germany’, and a number of reviewers cited the text’s difficult path to publication in East Germany as a sign of its quality.^{xiv} The author-function established by the publication and reception of Christa T. in English defined the discursive expectations to which the translation of *Kindheitsmuster* would be expected to conform: a high standard of quality; a theoretical position at odds with the doctrines of the SED; the demand for ‘sensitive’ style and a clear plot; and the potential for ordering within Cold-War political binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’ that contextualised its German publication and English translation.

Like Christa T., *Kindheitsmuster* draws on the author’s autobiography as a medium for confronting the recent German past and for questioning the reliability of the narrating or remembering self. The narrative alternates between four different temporalities and identities: a third-person, autobiographical ‘Nelly’ and her childhood in the Third Reich; a recent visit to her childhood home by the narrator, who is addressed as a second-person ‘you’; the subsequent process of writing the text, assigned to the same second-person persona; and finally a present-tense ‘I’ who is glimpsed only briefly at the end of the text. The intersection of these different realities in the identity of the author/narrator establishes a shifting perspective on memory and the recent past, questioning the reliability of the narrator, the status of events as ‘past’ and the ability of the individual to engage fully with the trauma of lived experiences (shown for example by the distancing of the childhood narrative through the third person). The themes addressed in *Kindheitsmuster* develop some of the questions raised by *The Quest for Christa T.*, such as the writer’s understanding of memory as control and revision of experience, her anxiety about the restrictive influence of political doctrine on formative experience, and her wariness of the animalistic drives that exist in tension with the humanism of the individual. This continuity of thematic focus and of an uncertain narrative style certainly seems to allow a coherent author-function to account for both texts in translation.

However, where Christa T. may have been received in translation as an apolitical text, or at least one characterised by a critical perspective on the GDR, *Kindheitsmuster* could not be so easily aligned with this theoretical position. Although Wolf's anxiety about the relationship between political doctrine and the individual did imply a critique of the GDR – and this was certainly the approach taken by GDR critics such as Annemarie Auer^{xv} – the text also engages with political perspectives and tensions far beyond the East German context. Wolf explicitly criticises contemporary international conflicts that implicate nations on both sides of the Cold War, and makes several references to the American intervention in Vietnam that are unambiguously critical. The opposition of Wolf's text to a pro-Vietnam theoretical position still claiming legitimacy in American discourse represented a potential obstacle to the coherence of her existing Anglophone author-function, and to the success of the translated text and its author. With its criticism of the Vietnam conflict, Wolf's text was in danger of exhibiting the 'wrong' kind of contextual accuracy by being too closely aligned to a socialist (or communist) perspective on the conflict, rather than to the institutionalised position of the target culture. As we will see, this particular aspect of the text was negotiated by publisher and reviewers in a way that permits a coherent author-function but weakens the discursive implications of Wolf's comments.

The accessibility of the text to the Anglophone reader is also challenged by Wolf's engagement with specifically German or autobiographical experience such as the narrator's Nazi childhood. Originally entitled *A Model Childhood*, the translation was renamed *Patterns of Childhood* from the 1984 edition onwards. The new title, shifting away from a misreading of 'model' as a term of approbation and from a strong focus on Nelly's particular childhood, met approval from Wolf.^{xvi} It is also much more suggestive of the 'patterning', beyond the national-socialist experience, that is implied in Wolf's title. However, the translation was in fact consistently marketed and received in English translation as being principally a memoir of the Nazi past, and it is this aspect of the text that dominated the approach of both publisher and reviewers in the framing of the translation. The implications of this selective emphasis are discussed in the following analysis, which explores the

influence of Wolf's American publisher and of her Anglophone reviewers, in the text and in the surrounding paratexts that frame its interpretation and contribute to her Anglophone author-function.

‘AUCH DAS KÖNNTE INS VERGESSEN SINKEN’: THE PUBLISHED TRANSLATION

There is much that could be said about the rendering of Wolf's text into English, and two textual aspects of *A Model Childhood* are briefly discussed here that are merely the most striking of a number of changes undergone by the text in the process of translation: intervention in the text through editorial omissions, and a stylistic shift in the narrative voice. While the existence of cuts to the English translation is no secret, their complicated history and significant implications have not yet been fully explored. As far as Wolf's narrative voice is concerned, a detailed textual analysis would show that linguistic features of the translation represent a comprehensive shift away from Wolf's uncertain, subjective-authentic narrative voice and towards a more confident, controlled narrating style. These shifts are similar to those noted in the translation of Christa T.:^{xvii} this stylistic tendency shared by the translators of the two texts suggests a coherent author-function, but one that moves away from the reflective and questioning narrative mode adopted by Wolf.

The impetus for the cuts in the English translation of Wolf's text can be traced back to her then editor at FSG, Nancy Meiselas. Writing to Wolf in January 1980, Meiselas requested permission to delete some sections of the text, giving reasons for the suggested cuts and attaching an itemised list of these.^{xviii} The reasons given by Meiselas implicitly reflect an attempt to maintain Wolf's Anglophone author-function by ensuring coherent quality (removing repetition where it was considered to be unnecessary), theoretical position (maintaining a less politicised approach), style (omitting reflective passages to focus more on the narration of Nelly's childhood, and perhaps seeing a move away from political commentary as synonymous with a more polished style) and contextual accuracy (avoiding commentary on contemporary events that would dilute the narrative of Nelly's childhood – and would create tension between Wolf's author-function and a target-culture self). However, Wolf was not persuaded by this reasoning and she replied in no uncertain terms to that

effect, returning Meiselas's list with her response to each suggested cut.^{xix} Interestingly, Wolf did agree to the omission of some reflective passages, although she was adamant that all political references must remain. Her response to Meiselas makes explicit the contextual relevance of events contemporary to the writing of the book, indicating the one-sidedness that would result from the loss of this associative meaning.

Bearing in mind the author's meticulous response to the suggested cuts, two omissions in the translated text are highly significant. The first is an early comment:

Wie es nicht umsonst sein mag, gleichzeitig den Blick für das, was wir „Gegenwart“ nennen, zu schärfen. „Massive Bombenangriffe der USA-Luftwaffe auf Nordvietnam.“ Auch das könnte ins Vergessen sinken. Auffallend ist, das wir in eigener Sache entweder romanhaft lügen oder stockend und mit belegter Stimme sprechen. (KM, p. 20, my emphasis)

The explicit reference to Vietnam, in the context of a comment about fictionalised reality and the relative morality that characterise accounts of conflict, is damning. Its omission from the English translation results in a much more general observation that lacks the accusatory stance of the German:

Just as it isn't useless to sharpen one's focus on 'the present'.

It is indeed interesting that we either fictionalise or become tongue-tied when it comes to personal matters. (MC, p. 8)

Translation decisions in this short extract also contribute to the exclusion of political comment on the present: the narrator contemplates a sharper focus on the present, perhaps suggesting more emphasis rather than a more critical eye, as Wolf's narrator encourages. The translation of 'in eigener Sache' as 'when it comes to personal matters' assists a shift away from political criticism by offering an evaluation of personal (rather than public) accounts of reality as unreliable.

This exclusion passed unnoticed until 1986, when a letter to Wolf's British publisher Virago highlighted the omission: this information was forwarded to an alarmed Straus at FSG.^{xx} Wolf, who wrote to Straus to protest against the omission in October 1987, had been alerted to the issue by her French translator of *Kindheitsmuster*, demonstrating both the significance of the omission and the important international role played by the English translation as a guideline for others. There is no trace of a discussion in the earlier correspondence about this particular sentence, and no recollection

in the later letters (an exchange from which Meiselas is noticeably absent) of individual responsibility, so it may be that the omission is a simple oversight. Whatever the reality, the cut was rectified in later editions of the text.

The second omission occurs much later on, and so far has not been replaced in more recent editions of the translation:

Du bist fast eingeschlafen, da sagt sie mit wacher Stimme: Genaugenommen könnte man Heulkrämpfe kriegen.

Du weißt sofort, was sie meint.

Wenn sie daran denke, dass vielleicht gerade jetzt, während sie gemütlich im Bett liegt, irgendwelche Amis irgendwelche Leute aus einem vietnamesischen Dorf umbringen, dann finde sie sich selbst zum Kotzen. Brauchst nichts zu sagen, sagt sie, ich weiß, dass ich Blödsinn rede, aber vielleicht ist es noch schlimmerer Blödsinn, ruhig zu schlafen, während diese Sachen passieren. (KM, pp. 356-7, my emphasis)

Here again, the omission limits the specificity of Wolf's commentary and ensures the compatibility of her theoretical position with target-culture discourse. The strong language of Lenka's revulsion at the imagined actions of the Americans ('zum Kotzen') speaks unequivocally against an institutionalised target-culture account of the conflict as a worthwhile venture. The omission of this sentence certainly works in favour of contextual accuracy for Wolf's Anglophone author-function.

The cuts to the translation, together with the surrounding correspondence, reveal intervention by the publisher in the construction of the author-function through the editing of the text; however, much responsibility for the reader's experience of the translated text typically lies with the translator, or in this case, the translators. The detail of the translation reveals further changes on the textual level that affect the style of the translation, with implications for the subjective authenticity of the narrative. In particular, the translated text consolidates the narrator's position by standardising expression and reorganising syntax, as in the following passage:

Im Zug, im Bus vor dir Dutzende Gesichter, dürr von Geheimnislosigkeit. Aber das Mädchen mit der runden Stirn, dessen spöttischer Blick dich trifft. Und der junge Mann am Fenster mit Kutte, Kollegmappe und der randlosen Brille, der die Fingerspitzen an die Augen drückt, müde, nicht blicklos. Die dunkelhaarige Frau, der man Enttäuschungen ansieht und die Mühe, sich nicht zu ergeben; die gierig, ohne aufzublicken, liest. (KM, p. 76)

The dozens of faces across from you, in the train, on the bus, are sterile from lack of mystery. But the mocking eyes of the girl with the rounded forehead meet yours. And the young man by the window, in the hooded jacket, with his lecture notebook, his rimless glasses, presses his fingertips to his eyes, not to avoid looking, but out of fatigue. The dark-haired woman whose face tells of disappointments, and of her struggle not to succumb to them, is reading voraciously.^{xxi}

Where Wolf omits verbs and allows clauses to function as sentences, her non-standard syntax lending a certain orality or immediacy to the description and embedding the narrator in the moment of observation, the translation standardises the narrator's expression and offers a more controlled account of her surroundings. The effect of this shift is a move away from the subjective authenticity of Wolf's narrator, who makes visible the process of narration and its interdependence with the experience narrated, and towards a more organised, 'invisible' narrative. This echoes the shift away from a reflective narrative voice, cited by Meiselas as a justification for some cuts. The narrator's relationship to the narrative becomes more distant, altering not only the style of the text but also its theoretical position, since the narrator's complex relationship to her story is central to Wolf's exploration of memory.

Similarly, in this second example the translation reorganises syntax when the narrator interrupts her own account of the return visit to her childhood home:

Die Frau auf der Treppe – wie grüßt man auf Polnisch? – wirst du nicht behelligen müssen. (KM, p. 26)

You won't have to bother the woman on the stoop. How does one say good morning in Polish? (MC, p. 12)

The positioning of the question, as an interruption of the narrator's statement, reflects its apparent spontaneity. The two temporalities of experience and narration overlap as the narrator finds herself distracted by a response to the situation she is describing. An experiencing self interrupts the narrating self, showing the fluid boundary between memory and experience. In the translation, however, the question is removed to a separate sentence and the narrative voice shows more control, distancing the telling of the story from the events as they happened. Similar shifts characterise the narrative voice throughout the translation, as it consistently shifts towards a controlled style that conceals the complexities of the narrating or remembering process that are central to Wolf's subjective-authentic narratives.

This article does not attempt a comprehensive critique of *A Model Childhood*, nor does it seek to vilify Meiselas or the translators. Though characterised by omissions and stylistic shifts, in places the translation does emulate Wolf's narrative style and political commentary more carefully. In any case, more important than the individual responsibility for changes undergone by *Kindheitsmuster* in translation is the observation that the widespread stylistic shifts in the translated text show a certain affinity between the output of the translators and the approach of Wolf's editor: the effects of this demonstrate the vulnerability of the translated author to the discursive constructs of the translating culture. Along with the more obvious political implications of the omitted comments on Vietnam, the omission of reflective passages (some of which were approved by Wolf) and the widespread stylistic shifts in the translated text effect an important move away from Wolf's doubting and visible subjective-authentic narrator, towards a more streamlined, confident account from a less visible narrator. Continuing a precedent set by *The Quest for Christa T*, Wolf's Anglophone author-function is affirmed by the text of *A Model Childhood*. This is continued in the surrounding material defined as paratexts, as the next two sections show.

‘ATMOSPHERIC DESCRIPTION OF A FATEFUL ERA’: COVER DESIGN OF THE TRANSLATION

The materials identified by Genette as paratext acts as an important interpretive guide to the text, representing what he describes as a ‘threshold’ (seuil) between the text and the discourse in which it participates. Genette has been criticised for his definition of the translation as a paratext to an original text;^{xxii} similarly, the above discussion has shown that the stability of the authorial function is constantly challenged by discursive agents and institutions with the power to define it, and that the author-function emerging from the translated text may challenge and compete with the function associated with the ‘source’ text. The translation must therefore be considered a text in its own right, with paratexts that contribute to its circulation in target-language discourse. Genette categorises paratexts as either peritext (material contained within the same volume as the text, such as covers, notes or prefaces) or epitext (material separate from the text such as letters, or interviews with the

author): here, the peritexts to the first edition of *A Model Childhood* reveal discursive influences on the interpretation of the text and of Wolf's authorship that will also be seen in the epitexts.

The front cover of the translation is striking. Standing out against the gold colouring, the photograph of a group of jubilant, saluting girls draws the eye with its bright red background (Fig. 1).

[image]Fig. 1: Front cover of Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood* (Farrar Straus Giroux edition, 1980)^{xxiii}

A powerful visual frame for a reading of the translation, this image emphasises the memoir of Nelly's Nazi childhood as the core of the text. Drawing selectively on the content of the text in this way (and particularly in combination with the title of the translation), the front cover encourages the reader to focus predominantly on the narrator's memories of the Third Reich, rather than on the broader and more complex questions encountered by the text. This is compatible with a theoretical position regarding the Third Reich as 'past' and 'other' that fits the Anglophone context of the published translation, and perhaps also increases the perceived contextual accuracy of the book as a representation of the contemporary German conscience: rather than looking accusingly beyond the German context, the writer is still occupied with the question of coming to terms with a specifically German experience that can now be considered to lie in the past.

The archived correspondence between Wolf and Meiselas reveals the editor's reservations about this cover design. Although she has been cast in a negative light with regard to her suggested cuts to the text, it seems Meiselas was concerned that the choice of photograph for the front cover of the translation might encourage a reductive understanding of the text, and she expressed this in a letter to one of the two translators.^{xxiv} Sure enough, this concern was echoed by Wolf when galleys of the text were sent to her for approval: her letter to Meiselas reflects not only her dissatisfaction with the design but also a degree of resignation that the fate of her translated texts is to be misrepresented by their covers.^{xxv} Meiselas was able to offer little comfort in response to this and it seems that the concerns voiced by author and editor were not shared by others at FSG, since the cover image remained unchanged.

Like the front cover, the blurb on the inner flaps to the dustcover draws focus to the content of the book as a childhood memoir by offering what is predominantly a summary of Nelly's childhood experience. The text is described as 'no sentimental journey; a plea to remember and learn from the past': rather than emphasising the problem of remembering, a process made difficult by the narrator's inability to distance herself from her lived experience, the peritext encourages the reader to interpret Wolf's text more simply as an invitation to engage with a clearly defined 'past'. The focus is largely on Nelly's experience as past and other, and although the reader is reminded at the conclusion that 'not only is *A Model Childhood* a narrative of the past, but it is also an appeal for vigilance and sensitivity in the present', the implication throughout the blurb has been that the troubled 'past' to be examined is a specifically German, 'other' history. This continues a theoretical position associated with Wolf's author-function in responses to the translation of *Christa T.*, where the focus of her social criticism was considered to be a specifically German past and present. *Christa T.* is mentioned in a very brief summary of Wolf's authorial identity on the back flap of the dustcover that identifies her as the author of the earlier text, linking the two in a coherent account of authorship that suggests continuity of quality, style and content.

Finally, the back cover of the hardback edition bears a quotation from the *Times Literary Supplement*:

This is a courageous book that breaks taboos and, as we have come to expect from Christa Wolf, it is infused with an integrity and a deep moral concern that raise it far above the narrow and self-conscious partisanship of much GDR literature. It speaks equally to East and West Germany – itself a daring accomplishment for an East German author – but also, with its atmospheric depiction of a fateful era and its patent and compelling truthfulness, to wider audiences beyond.^{xxvi}

This quotation displays a number of characteristics typical of the discursive mediation of Wolf's authorship in Anglophone discourse. Firstly, Wolf is framed as a brave, even controversial author, whose writing 'breaks taboos'. The implication is that the taboos are those of the GDR, validating Wolf's theoretical position through its opposition to the East German regime. This is strengthened by the author's perceived ability to rise above the East German context thanks to the 'integrity and deep moral concern' of her writing. Reinforcing the contextual accuracy of the translation by showing that

Wolf's opposition to East German norms not only endorses her theoretical position but enables her to appeal to a non-German readership, this distances the text from a qualitative expectation of East German writing as partisan and narrow (a stereotype to which *Divided Heaven* had been found to adhere too closely) and reassures the reader of the quality of the text despite its provenance. By celebrating Wolf's 'atmospheric description of a fateful era', the review argues for a continuation of the imagination and individualism identified in Christa T. and reinforces an interpretation of *Kindheitsmuster* that focuses on its account of the Third Reich. The significance of the text for the receiving Anglophone discourse, and most importantly for Wolf's developing Anglophone author-function, is defined here by the qualitative implications of the author's rejection of East German literary norms and by her alignment with theoretical positions familiar to the American reader. This is reflected more widely in British and American reviews of the text, which are explored in the next section.

'SHE SPEAKS FOR US ALL': REVIEWS OF THE TRANSLATION

As the covers to the translation show in their role as peritexts, the parameters Genette sets for his paratextual categories are problematic in the context of a poststructuralist understanding of authorship. He specifies that a legitimate paratext is one authored or authorised by 'authorial intention' (*Paratexts*, p. 3), a conclusion drawn from his assumption that authorial identity is unified and is conferred on the writer. He therefore excludes most reviews from his definition of the epitext, the paratextual material that circulates separately from the text itself.^{xxvii} However, as seen above, authorship is an unstable discursive construction that makes it impossible to distinguish as clearly as Genette does between the various 'authors' and authorities active in the paratext. Although they are discounted as paratexts by Genette because of their non-authorial origin, the reviews of a literary text contribute significantly to its framing in discourse and are to a certain extent 'authorised' by the writer through publication: by releasing a text (or sanctioning its release) into the public domain, the writer invites a response from those with discursive power and authority. For this reason, and in view of their status as interpretive guides 'authorised' by the institutional discourse in which the writer must

participate in order to be recognised, reviews are considered in this section as a significant example of epitextual influence on the author-function.

In general, the contemporary reviews of *A Model Childhood* echo the interpretive frame offered by the peritexts, in other words ascribing to the text a theoretical position not deeply embedded in politics, and whose scope extends beyond Wolf's specific (East) German experience. The British writer Stephen Spender, reviewing for the *New York Times*, commented that 'East or West, this defines pretty well the mortal sin of our time', identifying a shared contemporary reality (if not a shared 'sin') for reader and writer. This view was echoed in comments elsewhere that, for example, 'the problem [of racism] is universal', looking beyond Nelly's narrated experience to identify broader themes of the text. Wolf was seen to be an author in whose writing 'life and imagination triumph over ideology', and whose world-view 'is undeniably socialist, but [...] extends over the total range of German culture, seeing the West, from the East, as a mirror-image'.^{xxviii} Both these comments show awareness of Wolf's East German context as a potential influence on her writing, but like Graves' review on the back cover of the volume they also emphasise her ability to appeal to a global audience despite this. Wolf's writing is distanced from the partisan alignment of 'political' writing and allocated a position of universal relevance:

When she speaks of her experiences, drawing as she does on worldwide contemporary events, she speaks for us all, not just her own tortured conscience [...] the cancerous side of human nature is not restricted to one place, one time, one nation. The German scapegoat is no longer enough. [...] She will teach you not to point any political fingers.^{xxix}

This approach associates Wolf's author-function with a theoretical position comprehensible to the Anglophone or 'western' reader by arguing its independence from the writer's East German context. The reviews affirm contextual accuracy by implying that Wolf's theoretical position makes her vulnerable to punishment at home, framing her text as 'a valuable and valorous enterprise, especially for a writer in the GDR, where the Herrschaft has its own problems about what should be remembered and how'.^{xxx} Her author-function is doubly appropriated by Anglophone discourse as she is portrayed as a writer whose broad understanding of 'universal' questions also seems to mark her out as a dissident

voice in the GDR. The reader is encouraged to see that Wolf's ostensibly apolitical attempt to engage with supranational themes has made her the victim of politically motivated criticism at home.

Negative responses to the translation also reflected an expectation of continuity, positioning the text in relation to an author-function drawing on Christa T. and on discursive norms of the translating culture. Some reviewers saw grounds for criticism in the supposed universality of Wolf's writing, with Michael Hulse in the *London Magazine* complaining of both *The Quest for Christa T.* and *A Model Childhood* that 'the quest for identity is a tired cliché of our century'.^{xxxii} A common feature of some American reviews was hostility towards Wolf's criticism of contemporary political conflicts such as the intervention in Vietnam: whilst her comments were discreetly ignored by many reviewers, her views attracted some complaints, for example that 'she moralises lazily on the Americans in Vietnam and the junta in Chile'.^{xxxiii} Another criticism frames it as a distraction from the main content of the book:

For all her sensitivity to nuance in these probings, Wolf reflects nothing more subtle than the dogma of her present ideological context in East Germany [...]. Maybe she believes it. Maybe it's the price of her discernment and candor on the real substance of the book. Either way, it can't spoil the rare quality of her effort to capture reality.^{xxxiii}

Here, Wolf's text is perceived to be diluted by the passages in which she apparently allows her writing to be informed by her political context. In line with the priorities implied by Meiselas, there is a strong indication that the main American (if not Anglophone) interest in Wolf's book was focused on the story of Nelly and its value as a memoir of her childhood in the Third Reich – this is what Crutcher considers to be the 'real substance of the book'. Nelly's narrative is emphasised in favour of the self-reflective or critical element of the writing, in particular where this conflicts with an acceptable theoretical position in the translating culture.

Wolf's comments on contemporary conflicts did not receive an unambiguously negative response. In the UK, one reviewer noted with approval the parallels drawn in the text, although stopping short of endorsing Wolf's stance on Vietnam:

Christa Wolf is not content to describe her childhood and the political atmosphere; she also wishes to show how communities are affected by evil regimes. Her remarks about

Nazi Germany are therefore interspersed with references to Laos, Chile and, here and there, Stalin's concentration camps.^{xxxiv}

Here, the implications of the text beyond the narration of a childhood memoir are acknowledged more clearly than in other reviews, although the theoretical position of the text is aligned with opposition to 'evil regimes' that side-steps the specific question of Vietnam. Instead, the list of criticised regimes includes a reference to Stalin that, coming from an East German writer and drawing on the context of both source text and translation, marks both a theoretical position familiar to target-language discourse and accuracy in relation to a target-culture view of Wolf's writing as 'dissident' criticism of the East German regime.

By selectively emphasising Nelly's childhood memoir and the thematic accessibility of Wolf's text, and by emplotting her political position as an act of dissent against the East German government's desire to control accounts of the past, the reviews contribute significantly to the habilitation of Wolf's text and her author-function into target-culture discourse. Like the peritexts to the translation, they align Wolf's author-function with dominant narratives of Anglophone discourse and encourage a favourable response from the target-language reader.

CONCLUSION: BREAKING TABOOS – BUT WHOSE?

The text, peritexts and epitexts of *A Model Childhood* show how Wolf's Anglophone author-function has been created and sustained in part by her translators, publishers and reviewers as they present her to a new audience. The discursive reframing of the translated text has resulted in an increased emphasis on Nelly's story, understood as the focus of the text and as an account of a now distant past that can and must be directly confronted. The omission of some of Wolf's political commentary, and of some self-reflective passages that destabilise the narrator's position and problematise a clear boundary between past and present, reconfigure the theoretical position and style of the translated text to reflect greater affinity with target-culture norms of quality, contextual accuracy and with the previous translation of Christa T. While Wolf's text was generally well received in its English translation, what is lost in the text and paratexts of *A Model Childhood* is the centrality of the narrator's interdependent relationship with her narrative, something that informs all Wolf's writing.

Whether by intention or not, she is ‘normalised’ by her translators, publishers and reviewers, removing from her writing the marks of problematic theoretical positioning and the engagement of the subjective as a lens for history or the real. The ‘taboos’ broken by Wolf’s text do not seem to be those of the translating culture.

Wolf’s translated authorship has been vulnerable to appropriation by dominant institutional expectations in Anglophone culture, such as stylistic norms, ideological positioning and the publisher’s commercial imperative. The broader visibility of authorship that is promised by ‘international’ recognition is therefore compromised since it refracts the author-function by exposing the author and her work to the demands and expectations of other discursive selves. Rather than the spread of a unified understanding of authorship, translation results in the creation of new authorial selves, which draw on discursive contexts as well as on texts and are often in tension with one another. In the context of a powerful translating environment such as Anglophone discourse this is especially influential, since the successful circulation of Wolf’s texts in English translation can to some extent be considered a barometer of her ‘international’ authorship.

While the writer might bemoan this further loss of control over her discursive identity – and it seems Wolf was not unaware of it – the appropriation of the author-function by multiple discourses may also work in her favour. In Wolf’s case, the circulation of her texts beyond the discursive space of the GDR and the German-speaking world enabled her to enjoy the status of a valuable cultural export, helping her to acquire an amount of autonomy as an author in a strongly regulated East German literary field; after Reunification and particularly in 1993 when Wolf revealed her brief period of involvement with the Stasi, a number of Anglophone voices joined her German advocates in their defence of her behaviour.^{xxxv} Despite her understandable frustration at the treatment of her texts in English, then, Wolf has also benefited from the refraction and multiplicity of authorial identity that is inherent to the process of translation. In that sense, hers is an excellent example of the complex relationship that can emerge between the author and the (translated) text.

(7559 words – excluding endnotes)

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- ⁱ Thanks are due to staff at New York Public Library (NYPL) and Farrar Straus Giroux (FSG) for their permission to access archival material relevant to this article. Every effort was made to contact rights holders to acquire permission to quote from archival material; where these requests remained unanswered, direct quotation has been avoided and close paraphrase has been used instead. Any copyright-holder requiring more information on this matter should contact the author at the following address: School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9JT.
- ii Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, in *Werkausgabe*, Band 5, ed. Sonja Hilzinger, Munich 2000, p. 13. Further references appear in the text as KM.
- iii Whilst recognising that the problematic term ‘Anglophone’ risks eliding the differences between diverse traditions, it is used here to refer broadly to an English-speaking discursive space dominated by voices from the USA and the UK.
- iv Important studies include Anna Kuhn, *From Marxism to Feminism: Christa Wolf’s Utopian Vision*, Cambridge 1988; Marilyn Sibley Fries (ed.) *Responses to Christa Wolf*, Detroit 1989; Margit Resch, *Understanding Christa Wolf: Return Home to a Foreign Land*, Columbia, SC 1977; Gail Finney, *Christa Wolf*, New York 1999. Obituaries include David Binder and Bruce Weber, ‘Christa Wolf Dies at 82; Wrote of the Germans’, *New York Times*, 1 December 2011; ‘Christa Wolf, Daily Telegraph, 1 December 2011; Carolyn Kellogg, ‘German Author Christa Wolf has Died’, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 December 2011; Kate Webb, ‘Christa Wolf Obituary’, *Guardian*, 1 December 2011; Holly Case, ‘Blind Spot: On Christa Wolf’, *The Nation*, 4 June 2012.
- v The personal interest of Chairman Roger Straus in Wolf and her writing led to an exchange of friendly and supportive correspondence over a number of years. Found in Box 396, Folders 7-9 and in Box 712, Folders 8, 9, 19 and 24 of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc. records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Hereafter referred to as FSG.
- vi Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, tr. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, Ithaca, NY 1977, pp. 113-38 (further references appear in the text); ‘The Order of Discourse’, tr. Ian McLeod, in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, London 1981, pp. 48-78 (further references appear in the text).
- vii Explained in detail by Wolf in ‘Selbstinterview’, *Werkausgabe*, Band 4, ed. Sonja Hilzinger, Munich 2000, pp. 139-44; ‘Subjektive Authentizität’, *Werkausgabe*, Band 4, pp. 401-37; ‘Lesen und Schreiben’, *Werkausgabe*, Band 4, pp. 238-82.
- viii Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, tr. Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge 1997 (further references appear in the text).

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- ix The archived correspondence shows that Ralph Manheim (translator of *Mein Kampf* and of texts by Brecht and Grass, among others) was originally to undertake the translation. Reasons for the change of translator are not clear from the archive.
- x Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation, Authorship, Copyright', *The Translator*, 1 (1995), 1-24.
- xi The significance and the rarity of a visible, 'foreignising' strategy in translation are discussed in detail in Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London and New York 1995.
- xii W. L. Webb, 'Complex Fatality', *Guardian*, 27 May 1971; Richard Eder, 'Cassandra by Christa Wolf', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 July 1984; Marilyn French, 'Heinrich Kleist Could Not Last', *New York Times*, 10 October 1982;. See also Virago's editions of *The Quest for Christa T* (1982), *A Model Childhood* (1982), *No Place on Earth* (1983) and *Cassandra* (1984).
- xiii *Divided Heaven* was reviewed by David Caute, 'Divided Hearts at the Wall', *The Nation*, 13 February 1967; later criticism came principally from Charlotte Koerner, 'Divided Heaven: By Christa Wolf? A Sacrifice of Message and Meaning in Translation', *The German Quarterly*, 57 (1984), 213-30; and Katharina von Ankum, 'The Difficulty of Saying "I": Translation and Censorship of Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel*', *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature*, 17 (1993), 223-41.
- xiv Ernst Pawel, 'The Quest for Christa T.', *New York Times*, 31 January 1971; Gudrun Tempel, 'Fiction in Germany: A Great Story', *Times Saturday Review*, 21 March 1970; John Barkham, 'The Literary Scene', *New York Post*, 2 February 1971.
- xv Annemarie Auer, 'Gegenerinnerung', *Sinn und Form*, 4 (1977), 847-78.
- xvi Letter on 7 November 1983, FSG Box 712, Folder 16.
- xvii Caroline Summers, 'What Remains of Christa Wolf? The Author-Function as a Translated Narrative', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester 2013.
- xviii Letter on 8 January 1980, FSG Box 712, Folder 18.
- xix Letter on 10 February 1980, FSG Box 712, Folder 18.
- xx Correspondence archived in FSG Box 712, Folder 19.
- xxi Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, tr. Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt, New York 1980, p. 47. Further references in the text as MC.
- xxii Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçaglar, 'What Texts Don't Tell: The Use of Paratexts in Translation Research', in *Crosscultural Transgressions. Research Models in Translation Studies II: Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. Theo Hermans, Manchester 2002, pp. 44-60.
- xxiii Reproduced with kind permission from Farrar Straus Giroux. This design has been used for the cover design of all FSG editions of Wolf's text, including those published since the change of title in 1984. Virago have used a different design.
- xxiv Letter on 12 December 1979, FSG Box 712, Folder 18.

xxv Letter on 5 May 1980, FSG Box 712, Folder 18.

xxvi Peter Graves, 'Reckoning with the Past', TLS, 7 April 1978. It is interesting to note the date of this review: Graves was writing about the German text, although his comments are applied here to the translation in a way that suggests no sensitivity to the difference or discursive autonomy of the translation from the German text.

xxvii The exception noted by Genette is what he terms the 'auto-review', written by the author (Paratexts, p. 352).

xxviii Stephen Spender, 'The Mortal Sin of our Time', New York Times, 12 October 1980; Thomas Flanagan, 'Memories of Nazi Germany', The Nation, 6 December 1980; Pat Rogers, 'Public Life', London Review of Books, 1 April 1982; Elizabeth Flinspach, 'An Unexemplary Person', Gay News, 15-28 April 1982.

xxix Barney Bardsley, 'The World will not be Perfect', Tribune, 14 May 1982.

xxx W. L. Webb 'The Crack-Up', Guardian, 22 April 1982.

xxxi Michael Hulse, 'Fleeing the Red Army', London Magazine, August/September 1982.

xxxii John Leonard, 'Books of the Times', New York Times, 29 July 1980.

xxxiii Anne Crutcher, 'Revisiting a German Childhood', Washington Star, 17 August 1980

xxxiv Norman Stone, 'Memories of the Nazi Heartland', Observer, 25 April 1982.

xxxv 'Das Kind mit dem Bade: Amerikanische Germanisten solidarisieren sich mit Christa Wolf', Die Zeit, 18 June 1993.