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“THE DARK PLACE WHERE TALENT LEADS”:

**THE MERITS AND SHORTCOMINGS
OF FEMINIST CRITICISM
IN THE STUDY OF
SELECTED WORKS BY
CHRISTA WOLF**

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**A dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements
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G. Weingartz

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INTRODUCTION

*Und 'stürzen' kann man Monarchen oder Ministerpräsidenten,
Nicht/ aber eine Schriftstellerin.*

Christa Wolf

... schreibend über die Dinge zu kommen

Christa Wolf

During earlier research, it became evident Feminist Literary Criticism could offer useful insights when reading Christa Wolf's work. At the same time, such criticism revealed certain limitations - which inhibit a full and accurate reading of Wolf's work. Given this situation, an exploration of the merits and shortcomings of Feminist Literary Criticism when applied to selected works of Christa Wolf became necessary. The research question has been articulated thus: What are the merits and shortcomings of Feminist Literary Criticism when applied to selected works of Christa Wolf? Because the Feminist Movement lacks dominant theory, the question arose whether Feminism could be seen as a literary theory/criticism that could be used as an appropriate means of investigating Christa Wolf's work. A corollary to the research question consequently emerged: does Feminism offer a literary theory or rather a philosophy/ideology based on a diversity of gender presumptions? In order to seek answers to these questions, the following dimensions needed to be addressed:

- (a) A brief historical background and critical overview of Feminism;
- (b) An exploration of the multiplicity and diversity of the Feminist approaches and methodologies and the question of whether an integrated Feminist theory exists at present;
- (c) A further exploration of differences between the Anglo-American and French 'schools' of Feminist because such theories impact upon the study; German Feminist Criticism is also dealt with;
- (d) A consideration of debates concerning the terms **female** writing, **feminist** writing and **feminine** writing based on Feminist distinctions between female, feminist and feminine as well as the difference between gender and sex.

- (e) A consideration of Christa Wolf's creative vision of a Utopian Society and its relationship to the Feminist Movement's critical stances towards patriarchies throughout history.
- (f) A discussion of the discrepancies between female and feminist re-tellings of mythical materials as well as the manner in which Wolf deconstructs and reconstructs prehistoric myth in such a way that patriarchal misrepresentations are made evident.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The opening chapter offers a critical overview of the main premises of Feminist Criticism, drawn from major and/or contemporary sources. Part of this discussion will fall on writings generated especially by German and American feminist critics who focus on the reception of Christa Wolf's work. The focal point of discussion will be whether, in fact, the Feminist Movement offers a literary-critical theory which can be applied meaningfully to the works of Christa Wolf.

Chapter 1 is followed by three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), each devoted to discussion of an individual text by Wolf: *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, *Kassandra* and *Medea* respectively. Methodologically, each chapter manifests a tripartite structure consisting of:

- (a) a detailed discussion of Feminist Criticism of the specific text;
- (b) a hermeneutic examination of the text itself;
- (c) an explication of the similarities and differences between (a) and (b) to show the merits and shortcomings of Feminist criticism of the text.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter 5, examines some of Wolf's non-fictional work with a view to delineating her perspectives on the major gender themes and motifs in her fiction while the final chapter offers a discussion of the findings. The dissertation concludes with a list of references.

In order to comprehend the diversity of theories and ideologies offered by Feminist Criticism, the aim of the introductory chapter will be to give an overview of the most important tenets of modern feminist theory. The introduction also aims to establish a link between some of these feminist theories and some of Christa Wolf's own views on female writing in order to form a basis upon which later chapters will elaborate.

The introduction is divided into the following categories:

- (1) an explication of the most important terminology in Feminist theory that will be used throughout the research essay;

(2) an outline of the most important critical approaches within the framework of Feminist Criticism and the main feminist critics;

(3) and a short overview of Woolf's humanist vision as well as her insights about gender which will be explicated in later chapters in detailed discussions.

Of great importance is how she sees her role as a female writer and how that contributes to her social responsibility. Is she a feminist in the narrowly defined terminology, does she view both sexes to be equally important in society or, like Virginia Woolf, does she promote the idea of androgyny for the female individual?

(1) TERMINOLOGIES OF FEMINISMS: A WORLD OF THEIR OWN

*Feminist theory is a broad church
with a number of co-operating and competing approaches;
it is probably more appropriate to talk of feminist theories
rather than feminist theory.*

(Mary Jacobus)

The gender/sexual revolution for women reached its height in the late 1960s and was closely involved with the 1968 youth revolution in Germany and France. This powerful break with the patriarchal political, cultural and social systems of the time yielded two very provocative and revolutionary works that are concerned with women's issues. These works are still considered as the basis of many modern feminist criticism and female ideologies. Mary Ellmann's *Thinking about Women*, which appeared in 1968, is primarily concerned with the search for female stereotypes in the work of male writers and critical reviews by male reviewers, stereotypes which constitute the basis for the so-called *Images of Women* criticism. *Thinking about Women*, however, does not deal with the political and historical aspects of patriarchal society, which are quintessential in understanding the basic tenets of feminist criticism. Ellmann focuses on the female writer-reader relationship and sees the act of reading a text as a life-nurturing experience for the female reader. She is not concerned about women as social constructs, who are shaped by culture and society, but says: '*I am most interested in women as words*' (as quoted in Moi: 1985, p. 31).

The second ground-breaking text for feminist critics is Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, published in 1969. Her book marks the new era of Feminism at the time because it rejects the ideology of the American New Criticism which was primarily concerned with the text as sole object of literary

criticism and investigation. In opposition to the New Critics, Millett seeks the dimensions of the social and the cultural contexts in order to understand the process of literary criticism better. Her theory differs from that of Ellmann; where Ellmann investigates the writer-reader convention within the literary text, Millett pays little or no attention to the formal dimensions of the text; she analyses mainly the content. Another drawback about Millett's analysis is the fact that she deals only with texts by males such as those of Henry Miller and D H Lawrence, and that immediately puts her back into the realm of male-based literature. It is important, nevertheless, to view *Sexual Politics* as the 'Mother' (Moi: 1985, p. 24) of, and precursor to, the later tradition of Anglo-American Feminist Criticism; one of the reasons is that she is the first feminist literary critic to defend the reader's right to '*posit her own viewpoint*' (Moi: 1985, p. 25) and to reject the rigid hierarchy of the text and the reader.

For many feminist critics, it is essential to venture back to the texts that were the precursors of the 1960s feminist texts: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1927) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). It is De Beauvoir who created the famous dictum upon which many feminist theories were subsequently devised: *One is not born a woman, one becomes one*. This statement is essential in understanding three very important distinctions in feminist criticism: (a) **feminine writing**; (b) **feminist writing**, and (c) **female writing** (Showalter: 1977).

(a) Feminine Writing

This term is used in the period between the 1840s and 1880. Women writers such as George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) and Ralph Irons (Olive Schreiner) used male pseudonyms in order to be accepted by publishers. Many of these women writers wrote in imitation of masculine models while focusing on feminine concerns.

(b) Feminist Writing

This period is very important as it signifies the winning of the female vote and the suffragette movement with its feminist protests and demands.

(c) Female Writing

From 1920 onwards, women writers focused on self-discovery, exploration of their own inner space and of their female experience and self-awareness. The Modernist novels by Virginia Woolf constitute one of the most important examples of this period as well as later works by Christa Wolf such as *Nachdenken über Christa T* (1968) and *Kassandra* (1983).

It is important to note that these three categories are not rigid in their definition and may well overlap while some women writers might even be assigned to more than one of these distinct stages. Widely accepted definitions view the term *female* as a biological term and *feminine* as a cultural construct laid down mainly by the patriarchy. Certain women are not viewed by society as 'feminine', because they don't comply with the traditional views of femininity, such as being 'soft', 'emotional', although they are biologically women. The same idea applies to males who are not masculine in the eyes of society. Femininity is therefore not exclusive to females; it is also applicable to certain men. *Feminist* is viewed as a political position.

Another term used in Feminist criticism – *l'écriture féminine* or feminine writing - is particularly predominant in the works of the French Feminist, Hélène Cixous. *L'écriture féminine* signifies a particular kind of writing: '*poetic, non-realist – which undermines the logic, truths, definitions of the dominant order. Feminine writing is available to both male and female writers, though there are social and psychoanalytical reasons why practitioners of feminine writing are more likely to be female*'. (Eagleton: 1991, p. 226). The various reasons why feminine writing is predominantly assigned to female writers will be discussed in later chapters as will Cixous's theory of *l'écriture féminine*.

A factor making it difficult to pinpoint feminist theory is the unwillingness of most feminist critics to define their ideologies, which sometimes results in contradiction within the realm of feminist criticism. Because of the multiplicity of views of the various feminist critics, it is almost impossible to use the term 'feminism'. In order to do justice to feminist criticism, it is more accurate to make use of the term 'Feminisms', the crucial plural form, to describe the various and sometimes contradictory ideologies within Anglo-American and French Feminism. One of the texts that has been particularly helpful in defining this term is *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Diane Price Herndl and Robin R. Warhol (1993). They justify their use of the term *Feminisms* thus:

We've used the plural form 'feminisms', rather than 'feminism', to acknowledge the diversity of motivation, method and experience among feminist academics. From the outside, 'feminism' may appear monolithic, unified, or singularly definable. The more intimately one becomes acquainted with feminist criticism, however, the more one sees the multiplicity of approaches and assumptions inside the movement (Price Herndl & Warhol: 1993, p. x).

Lastly, it is important to distinguish between the terms *women* and *woman*. Throughout this dissertation, these two terms will be used as an integral part of the research methodology.

Woman is not used in the usual traditional sense when referring to a certain female in the singular. Used in most of the theoretical criticism of the French feminists, it denotes 'a *writing-effect, an excess which has escaped the control of the master narratives*'. (Eagleton: 1991, p. 228). It also refers to woman as archetype in Jungian terms. Sometimes *woman* is associated with negative archetypal terminology within the patriarchy: Lilith, the Whore, the negative Mother, the Sorceress. Gilbert and Gubar (1979, p 85 as cited from Moi, 1986) define the male fear of the female principle: " *Women are the 'terrible sorceress-goddesses' as the Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, all of whom possess duplicitous arts that allow them both to seduce and steal male generative energy*". Göttner-Abendroth (1990, p. 55) also sums up the patriarchal fear of women: in the following passage, this fear is linked to the male mythological portrayal of Medea: '*Magic, vilified as 'witchcraft', was a primary target of the evolving patriarchy*'. It is the 3000-year-old misreading and misrepresentation of women such as Cassandra of Troy that Wolf wants to deconstruct in order to controvert the marginal roles assigned to both ancient and modern women.

The second term that will be used as a recurring theme is *women*. In Anglo-American feminism, *women* denotes political, cultural, and biological dimensions which aim to unite the gender as a group in the real, extra-textual world. Thus, it may be said that French feminism places more emphasis on the abstract dimension, that is to say, on woman as a construct within the psychoanalytical or literary realm whereas Anglo-American feminist criticism puts the emphasis on women as a group, i.e. real women within real contexts in the various cultures and societies. These different and differing approaches have produced criticisms of each other; there have been, and continue to be, many debates among feminists as to which school of feminist thought is indeed the more helpful in reading literary texts.

(2) FEMINISMS: CRITICAL THEORIES AND CRITICS

Constructive criticism should, however, indicate the position from which it is speaking; simply to say that one is speaking as a feminist is not a sufficient response to that responsibility. (Toril Moi, 1985, p. 3).

To summarise critical theories, schools of feminist thought, and important feminist critics within just a few pages is an impossible and daunting task and would be an injustice to *feminisms* as a whole. This short summary therefore aims to deal with the most important feminist schools in order to explicate basic concepts in the criticism. This is not to say that other schools of thought (e.g. the German school) will be omitted from the main body of the research; however, only the Anglo-American and French Feminisms will be considered in this short overview. The Feminist

critics dealt with here are those who have made such internationally significant contributions to the field that they have to be included, together with very short synopses of their ideologies. In Chapter 1, *feminisms* as a holistic concept will be introduced and will be discussed in further detail so as to provide room for other schools of feminist thought other than the traditional Anglo-American and French feminist schools.

In order to show how and where Anglo-American and French *feminisms* originated, it is worth noting the two categories into which Selden and Widdowson (1993: p. 206-213) divide Feminist literary criticism: the first category is *First Wave Criticism*. They explain the trademark of this earlier period of Feminism thus: '*Feminist criticism of the earlier period is more a reflex of 'first-wave' preoccupations than a fully fledged theoretical discourse of its own*'. (1993: p. 206). Predominant feminists who worked and wrote in this particular period are Olive Schreiner, Elizabeth Robins, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, Rebecca West, Ray Strachey, Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby. As mentioned in the first part of the Introduction, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir are the most important literary figures of the *First-Wave Movement*. Mary Eagleton (as quoted in Selden & Widdowson: 1993, p. 207) describes Woolf as '*The founding mother of the contemporary debate*' who introduced many of the issues which preoccupied later feminist critics. Both Anglo-American feminist critics like Elaine Showalter and French feminist critics like Toril Moi have discussed Woolf's work from various perspectives. Maggie Humm (Selden & Widdowson, p. 207) suggests that the *First-Wave Movement* ended with Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). More about these two *First-Wave* writers will follow in later chapters.

Simplistically put, the *Second-Wave Movement* comprises Anglo-Americans and French critics, but such a definition belies their numerous disagreements. As Mary Eagleton (1991, p.11) writes: '*Instead of speaking to each other, the Anglo-Americans and French seem frequently to be speaking past each other*'.

Despite the dissension between the two main movements within the *Second-Wave*, certain themes predominate: '*the omnipresence of patriarchy; the inadequacy for women of existing political organisation; and the celebration of women's difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation*'. (Selden & Widdowson: 1993, p. 212-213). These themes are expounded mainly in the works of Anglo-American feminist critics such as Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) which '*explores the destructive neutralisation of women within patriarchy*' (Selden, & Widdowson, p. 213), the socialist feminist critic Sheila Rowbotham, the feminist psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell and radical (lesbian) feminists like Kate Millett and Adrienne Rich. In Anglo-

American feminist theory, these theories of the *Second Wave Criticism* also result in Elaine Showalter's concept of *Gynocriticism*, that concentrates on women writers and women's culture.

In dispute with the Anglo-American Feminism are the French feminist theorists, the most significant of whom are Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. They emphasise not the *gender* (the biological category, namely female as mentioned in Part (1)) of the writer, but the '*writing effect of the text*' (Selden & Widdowson, p. 213), i.e. the *feminine*. Cixous devised the concept of *l'écriture féminine*, an exclusive woman's literature. Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* is a direct contradiction to Elaine Showalter's *Gynocriticism*: *Gynesis* focuses on the textualisation of *woman* (see Part (1)), rather than the emphasis of the Anglo-Americans on specific *women* as real, biological entities. Mary Eagleton (1991, p. 10) has made a very useful distinction between Anglo-American and French Feminisms: "*When the French speak of 'l'écriture féminine' they do not mean the tradition of women's writing that Woolf and Showalter have laboured to uncover, but a certain mode of writing which unsettles fixed meanings. On the other hand, when Anglo-Americans use the term 'feminine', they are usually referring to that cultural stereotype which patriarchy tells us is the appropriate, even the 'natural' form of behaviour for women*".

Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl's anthology, *Feminisms*, seeks to distinguish between Anglo-American and French feminist critical theories. This distinction remains very general and, as such, is well-suited to the aims of this dissertation. The two compilers describe French feminism as having its roots in '*the psychoanalytic premises of Freud and Lacan, and adopts or adapts the deconstructive methods of Jacques Derrida. It is poststructuralist in that it focuses on discourse and on the constructedness of subjectivity and of representation*'. (1997, p. xv). In Chapter 1, the basic premises underpinning the theories of Freud, Derrida and, more specifically, Lacan will be summarised in order to understand the works of French feminists like Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray.

Feminisms also opts to give a broad description of Anglo-American feminism:

By contrast, Anglo-American feminism is generally more interested in history. That can mean literal history (accounts of the lived experience of people in the world), or literary history, or both. Anglo-American feminism tends to focus more than does French feminism on the interaction of texts with the extratextual world they simultaneously address and represent (1997, p. xv).

The editors of *Feminisms*, however, warn against the possibility that the above-mentioned categories for both *feminisms* might result in superficial distinctions, some French feminists might indeed concern themselves with extratextual issues and Anglo-American feminists might be

interested in the theory of discourse. Chapter 1 will also address these problems and whether there are indeed feminists whose work may be construed as interdisciplinary.

CHAPTER 1

HERSTORY/ HER STORY: THE (HIS)TORY OF NO-WOMAN'S-LAND

Feminist literary history is not a study of woman as nature or of a natural woman, but of women intervening in culture, making culture and being naturalized by culture in subtly different ways at different times.

Janet Todd

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 is divided into four main sections in order to explicate the intricate structures of feminist literary criticism:

- (1) to illustrate some reasons why Feminisms do not have one literary critical theory;
- (2) to discuss the underlying pluralism of feminist literary theory and its main focal points, the unifying and dividing 'theories' of the feminist school of thought;
- (3) to comment on the specific and frequently used vocabulary or terminology of both French and American feminist schools;
- (4) to explain how this feminist vocabulary has impacted upon the German feminist critics and whether their specific vocabulary can be linked to that of Christa Wolf. In other words: Do the feminist critics miscontextualise Wolf's work to suit some particular Feminist ideology, or do they study her work more accurately and scrupulously within its intended context? The intended contexts of Wolf's work will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Because Feminisms – reasons for the plural are given later - constitute the central construct on which the rest of this dissertation depends, an understanding of the diversity of theories and ideologies encompassed, albeit rather loosely, under this portmanteau term, becomes crucial. At the same time, it is self-evident that, within the scope of a dissertation, it is not possible to attempt comprehensiveness of breadth and depth.

(1) FEMINISMS: A THEORY OF NON-THEORY?

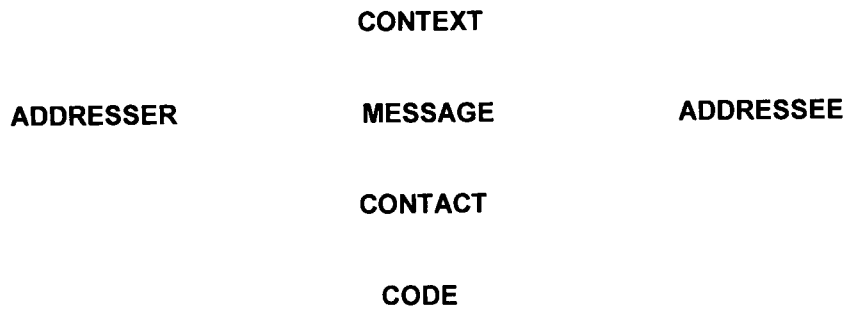
Feminists tend to be schooled in the tradition of rhetorical argument rather than in the rigorous application or development of any particular methodology or critical paradigm. Nonetheless, because we claim to see things differently, feminist critics have been called upon to articulate our own theoretical posture [...] we are continually asked to define

'feminism' [...] so that it might at least be understood in relation to what is called 'feminist criticism' (Meese, 1986).

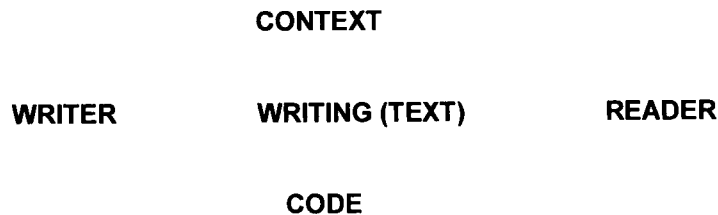
Chapter 1 begins by looking at the possibility of regarding Feminisms not as a literary theory but rather as a non-theory based on purely ideological and political grounds. Nonetheless, the aim of even a non-theory should be to give an alternative to the criticised theories; in this case, all traditional theories such as Deconstruction, Structuralism, Post-Modernism etc. If the non-theory fails to produce any kind of alternative theory, how can feminist non-theory be taken seriously by any literary community or even be studied by aspiring feminist critics? The feminist ideology of non-theory thus poses a serious problem. However, in order to understand the ideology behind feminist non-theory, it is important to look at the various reasons why no theory has been adopted.

To summarise critical theories, schools of feminist thought, and important feminist critics within just a few pages is an impossible and daunting task and would be an injustice to *feminisms* as a whole. This summary therefore deals with the most important feminist schools in order to explicate basic concepts in the criticism. The Feminist critics dealt with here are those who, in the main, have made such internationally significant contributions to the field that they have to be included, together with very short synopses of their ideologies. *Feminisms* as a concept will be introduced and then discussed in further detail so as to provide room for other schools of feminist thought other than the Anglo-American and French feminist schools. The German school will be considered briefly later in the chapter.

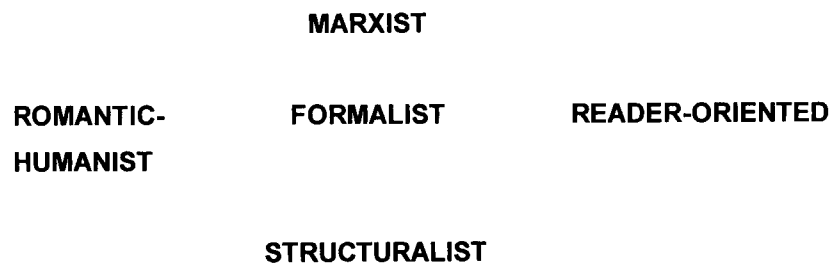
The assumption that the feminist schools of thought do not have any underlying theory, as they would like to claim, might not, in fact, be totally convincing. As the concept of GENDER in various forms - biological, political, historical, sexual, for example - has been adopted as an ideology by all feminists (as the word *feminist* already suggests), GENDER becomes the underpinning theory, thought, or ideology of the feminist context. In order to make the feminist context of GENDER clear, a model devised by Roman Jakobson, the Russian Formalist, serves as a useful analogy by which to illustrate this argument. The following diagram (Jakobson in Selden & Widdowson: 1993, pp3-4) helps to distinguish between the various focal points of the literary process:



This diagram of linguistic communication facilitates the understanding of the structures behind various literary genres, periods, and ideologies. Thus, the **ADDRESSER** sends a message to the **ADDRESSEE**; the **MESSAGE** contains a **CONTEXT** (or 'referent') and is 'transmitted through a **CONTACT** (a medium, such as live speech or writing)'. For the purposes of discussing literature, the **CONTEXT** is usually the printed text (except drama and performance art). In the literary context, Jakobson's model may be reconstituted in the following way:



To demonstrate the applicability of Jakobson's model to various predominant literary theories, the diagram above can be reconstituted using the following theories: Romantic-Humanist, Marxist, Formalistic, Structuralist and Reader-Oriented. This particular hypothetical model does not mean that all other theories are excluded; the above theories serve merely as examples of how one could distribute them in Jakobson's model:



The reason for not incorporating Feminisms in Jakobson's model is that the feminist schools reject all theory, including the ones mentioned above. Selden and Widdowson explain the exclusion of feminisms in Jakobson's diagram:

Feminist criticism [...] is not given a place in our diagram, because its project by definition is to attempt a global reinterpretation and redeployment of all approaches as an aspect of revolutionary sexual politics. And that word 'politics', which feminism has here foregrounded, is a key term in understanding theory in general (1993, p4).

In fact, what Selden and Widdowson have overlooked are the very words they have used to describe feminisms: 'revolutionary sexual politics'. These are critical in understanding how feminisms can be used in Jakobson's model.

All revolutionary activity occurs within a given context, usually a political one. Feminism is no exception. Consequently, most Feminist critics write within the politically-inspired context of their time, as will be discussed shortly.

The other crucial word Selden and Widdowson refer to is *Sexual*. The word *sexual* in itself refers to a certain context, whether this context is linked with gender, the sexual activity of women such as the *Body-theory* of Irigaray or Cixous's concept of female *jouissance*, or to the lesbian ideologies of Rich and Wittig. The fact remains that *sexuality* is redefined within the context of women. Thus, the entire phrase, "revolutionary sexual politics", can be linked to one of the parts of Jakobson's model: the **CONTEXT** of the literary process.

The **CONTEXT** may well be the basis of all feminist criticism and is therefore closely linked with gender, politics, and female sexuality. Thus the fact that most feminists deny any theory may not be totally demonstrable or convincing. Umberto Eco defines these so-called external circumstances (**CONTEXT**):

In order to establish a theory of settings, one must assume that a semantics of verbal language cannot be outlined unless one accepts as a general background the intertwined influence of many semiotic codes. A theory of settings requires that external circumstances also be subject to semiotic convention (1977, p111).

All feminists, whether French or Anglo-American, challenge the existing attitudes and theories of the Patriarchy. Although these feminists claim that they do not have a unifying theory, they do have an underpinning feminist ideology. This feminist doctrine is gender-based, again reinforcing the context of gender. Although Feminist critics may articulate themselves from any angle, whether socio-political, psychological, biological, or historical, the underlying frame of reference remains gender-based. Moreover, these different feminist angles can still be seen as congruent with the Jakobson diagram. Julia Kristeva, the Bulgarian-French feminist critic, focuses on the

psycholinguistic context of Feminism and aims to define the pre-Oedipal state of woman's language, an approach pertaining to the **CONTEXT** of Jakobson's model. Another French critic, Hélène Cixous, focuses on an exclusive women's language that differs from male-based, patriarchal language, what she calls *l'écriture féminine*. Cixous's *women's writing* thus corresponds to the **WRITING** and the **CODE** aspects of Jakobson's model. Elaine Showalter, an American feminist, has also devised a gender-based approach, which she calls *Gynocriticism*. Gynocritics focus primarily on the study of women's writing, studying texts written exclusively by women. Their approach deals with the **WRITER** aspect of Jakobson's diagram. On the other hand, Alice Jardine, a French-based feminist, deals with *gynesis*, a feminist approach focusing on the woman as reader, thus drawing on the **READER** aspect of Jakobson's model.

Despite an apparent methodological diversity, the unifying aspect of the above-mentioned feminists resides in the gender context: they deal with **women's** language, **women's** writing, **woman** as writer, **woman** as reader. When these feminist approaches are removed from their gender-focused context, no feminist ideology remains.

Because Jakobson's diagram is based on a male-dominated theory founded in Russian Formalism, feminist critics would most certainly find it disagreeable. The fact that the Jakobson's model categorizes genre, literary theory, and literary movements might be perceived as rigid and prescriptive because not all theory can always be labelled and then fitted into a particularly part of the model. However, Jakobson's model proves most successful in explaining **CONTEXT**. Even matriarchally-based feminist criticism refers back to contexts within the matriarchal society or to certain ideologies or frames of reference (i.e. the so-called goddess cults). Chapter 3 considers the possibility of matriarchal societies (mentioned in Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*) which cannot be separated from Wolf's own research on prehistory and ancient mythology.

The fact remains: any ideology, even when such an ideology aims to reconstruct or deconstruct all existing theories and ideologies, does so within a given context or framework. Although the feminist paradigm may strive towards the avoidance of any sort of theory, it remains gender-based, no matter whether the various schools define feminisms as female, feminine, feminist, woman/women-focused, matriarchal, matrilinear, anti-patriarchal or anti-misogynist. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that Feminisms at present do not yet have a single and cohesive theory underpinning its work. The only "theory" that might presently be construed as "feminist" is a theory of non-theory, based on gender assumptions. It is therefore important to look at some of the reasons why feminist schools up to the present day refuse to define feminist theory or to produce an alternative theory or methodology to male-based literary theory.

A code is a way of modeling the world: verbal languages are primary modeling systems, whereas secondary modeling systems are all the other cultural structures, from mythology to art (Umberto Eco: 1984, p186).

Code, together with context, plays an essential part in language and literature. The excerpt from Eco emphasizes that code and verbal language mould systems, and these systems would certainly encompass political ideology and 'art' – including forms of creative expression such as literature; in the specific case of Feminisms, literature is closely linked with female gender. Although feminists would wish it otherwise, it is impossible for them to articulate critical positions and writings without their having to resort to a code, a context, or both because all language, written or verbal, constitutes some form of code. The concept of language constituting a certain code is opposed by feminist critics like Hélène Cixous (1976, as cited from Meese: 1986, p98): *'It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system [...]'*. Cixous regards the 'encodedness' of the phallogocentric community as something to be surpassed and ignored, but she does not give any kind of alternative to male-dominated theory. She calls feminism a *practice*, that in itself stands in contradiction to theory, but still has to be practised in some form or other. Practice entails a habitual action or performance or a repeated activity undertaken in order to improve a skill. It seems that Cixous confuses the practice of writing with an activity that cannot be defined. The opposite is true: one has to perform a specific, habitual activity in order to call it a practice, thus one would have to define this specific activity, otherwise it cannot exist as a practice.

Showalter is somewhat apprehensive about the constant challenging attitude of Feminisms towards the patriarchy. This attitude can sometimes be self-defeating, because it emphasizes exactly what Feminists are trying to avoid: binary oppositions. By trying to oppose all existing male-generated theory and methodology, feminists paradoxically reinforce the man/woman dichotomy they reject: *'The feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing, or even attacking male critical theory keeps us dependant upon it and retards our theoretical problems'* (1981, as quoted in Meese: 1986, p135).

In the light of Showalter's observation, Meese defines the unwillingness of American Feminisms to adopt an underpinning or unifying feminist theory: *'American Feminists are suspicious of definition – the basis of exclusionary practice. Instead, having been constrained and divided by definitions imposed upon us by others, we tend to value autonomy and individual development. Definitions, whether formulated by feminists or not, threaten to divide us'* (1986, p73). The

mention of 'autonomy and individual development' corresponds to many of Wolf's themes and motifs articulated in both her theoretical and non-theoretical work. Female (and male) autonomy is one of the most important themes in *Nachdenken über Christa T.: 'Die Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen'*. In this regard, Feminisms have merit because they embrace female individuality, an important idea that thematically underpins both *Kassandra* and *Medea*.

Whereas the emphasis on female individuality is found in both Wolf's work and feminist ideology, it does not mean that Wolf is an outspoken feminist activist. The fact that a Feminist like Meese uses the plural 'we' means that she presumes to be talking on behalf of other feminists. There is thus always an underlying paradox in Feminisms. The word *feminist* already suggests a degree of prescriptiveness and essentialist ideology. One cannot be labelled as both individualist and feminist and yet presume that no paradox is involved. Any '-ism' is prescriptive and entails its own theory and methodology. When Anna Kuhn asks Wolf whether she sees herself as a feminist, it becomes clear that Wolf rejects the term:

Im Grunde muß ich sagen, daß ich mich zur Zeit mit keinem -Ismus voll identifizieren kann. Jeder -Ismus, denn ich überhaupt akzeptiere, deckt vielleicht ein Stückchen von mir, oder dem entnehme mich, was ein Teil von mir braucht. Oder dem gebe ich, was ein Teil von mir geben kann. Allein aus den ziemlich anderen Umständen, unter denen ich lebe, könnte ich mich nicht mit dem amerikanischen oder selbst westdeutschen Feminismus – soweit er mir bekannt ist – identifizieren. Jede Bewegung oder Organisation hat in ihrem Land ihre bestimmten historischen und örtlichen Bedingungen; ich würde mich vergewaltigt fühlen, wenn ich mich damit identifizieren wollte [...] Also will ich mich nicht scharf abgrenzen, das ist sowieso nicht meine Art. Nichts, was ich an 'Ismus' kenne, ist weit genug (Wolf, 1984, p111).

Meese's confirmation of Feminisms's non-theory – discussed earlier – seems to indicate that feminist criticism is becoming increasingly paradoxical in its articulation:

To refuse to theorize could in itself be to create a theory; it can be posited as an act rather than a re-action when related to the general as opposed to the particular. This refusal to theorize as an activity that resists specification in the form of continual conscious 'de-centering' instead of being silenced or seeking an 'equal' voice, offers a specific potential for feminist criticism' (1986, p144).

While Meese is correct when she goes on to explain that Feminisms do not have a centre of theory to discover, her statement poses a real problem, that of paradox. On the one hand,

Feminists have articulated certain ideologies that are encapsulated in gender. Is the center of the feminist critical movement not perhaps the concept of gender? Even Meese admits to Feminisms' contradictory and paradoxical essence: *'[...] we need to conceive a feminist criticism as Culler suggests, all criticism, as an infinite progression that refuses to identify a center because it is always de-centered, self-displaying and self-contradictory. Further, there can be no center because the boundary or circumference cannot be determined'* (1986, p150). Meese's observations about the de-centeredness of feminist criticism are still rooted in the assumption of a patriarchal 'centre'; in order to de-centre feminisms, there has to be something to serve as the centre, and that "something" remains 'logos' or 'phallogocentrism'.

The feminist movement thus still re-acts to the patriarchy, although Meese herself argues, contradictorily it would appear, that feminists do not re-act, but rather act/perform activity. It is understandable that the literary community continually questions this 'act of feminism' because it always contradicts itself:

First, we do not really have a theory. Such a view is comfortable for non-feminists since by relegating feminist criticism to what they regard as an inferior or non-position, they can easily dismiss us and write us out of recent history once again. If we fail to produce an original articulation of what we do [...] we will always be in a reactive position within the control of the phallogocentric economy, rather than acting to transform it (Meese: 1986, p136).

It becomes clear that Feminisms are based essentially in revolutionary and political activity. The refusal to give a literary/critical alternative is rooted in political statement originating in the Second Wave Movement of the 1960s. In their Introduction to the new edition of *Feminisms*, Price Herndl and Warhol state that the political dimension is essential to feminist ideology: *'Its [Feminisms]' overtly political nature is perhaps the single most distinguishing feature of feminist scholarly work. Of course, as feminists have long insisted, all scholarly work is political, but not all scholars are as forthright about their politics as feminists are'* (1997, pp x-xi).

If Feminisms are to be taken seriously by literary movements, whether pro-feminist or not, either they would have to drop the name Feminism(s) so that there is no -ism attached to them or re-name themselves in such a way that no theory or methodology is presumed by, or applicable to, them. Until such times, it is reasonable to propose that Feminisms cannot be considered as a critical movement, because (a) no literary criticism exists without epistemology, and (b) no epistemology, no body of knowledge, can be based entirely on political activism - Kate Millett's

phrase encapsulates Feminisms' political approach: *'The essence of politics is power'*. (1968, as quoted in Price Herndl & Warhol, 1993, p117) - while rejecting of all theory.

The term 'logos', originally meaning 'the word', is one of the main concepts in the patriarchy that the feminist critical schools oppose because 'Logos' entails rational and coherent thought, something that feminists find too restrictive and prescriptive. Abrams explains many feminists' unwillingness to accept the logos-centered world and its literatures:

The claim of French theorists, whatever their differences, is that all Western languages, in all their features, are utterly and irredeemably male-engendered, male-constituted, and male-dominated. Discourse [...] using a term coined by Derrida, is 'phallogocentric', that is, it is centered and organized by implicit recourse to the phallus both as its supposed 'logos', or ground [...] not only in its vocabulary and syntax, but also in its rigorous rules of logic, its proclivity for fixed classifications and oppositions (1988, p211).

(2) THE MINEFIELD OF FEMINISMS: CRITICAL THEORIES AND CRITICS

Constructive criticism should, however, indicate the position from which it is speaking; simply to say that one is speaking as a feminist is not a sufficient response to that responsibility.

Toril Moi

In order to show how and where Anglo-American and French *feminisms* originated, it is worth noting the two categories into which Selden and Widdowson (1993, p206-213) divide Feminist literary criticism: the first category is *First Wave Criticism*. This so-called First Wave Movement included the Suffragette Movement, a politically inspired group of women who fought for the right of women to vote.

Selden and Widdowson characterise the trademark of this earlier period of Feminism thus: *'Feminist criticism of the earlier period is more a reflex of 'first-wave' preoccupations than a fully fledged theoretical discourse of its own'* (1993, p206). Predominant feminists who worked and wrote in this particular period include Olive Schreiner, Elizabeth Robins, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, Rebecca West, Ray Strachey, Vera Brittain, and Winifred Holtby. Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir remain the most important literary figures of the *First-Wave Movement*. Mary Eagleton (as quoted in Selden & Widdowson: 1993, p207) describes Woolf as *'The founding mother of the contemporary debate'* who introduced many of the issues which

preoccupied later feminist critics. Both Anglo-American feminist critics like Elaine Showalter and French feminist critics like Toril Moi have discussed Woolf's work from various perspectives. Maggie Humm (Selden & Widdowson, p207) suggests that the *First-Wave Movement* ended with Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). The Women's Movement of the 1960s – the so-called Second Wave – together with the 1968 Revolution, was politically inspired. The universal motto of the Second Wave Feminisms is *the personal is political*, linking personal feminist aspirations with politics, and so contextualising the feminist ideology. Simplistically put, the *Second-Wave Movement* comprises Anglo-Americans and French critics, but such a definition belies their numerous disagreements. As Mary Eagleton (1991, p11) writes: '*Instead of speaking to each other, the Anglo-Americans and French seem frequently to be speaking past each other*'.

Despite the dissension between the two main movements within the *Second-Wave*, certain themes predominate: '*the omnipresence of patriarchy; the inadequacy for women of existing political organisation; and the celebration of women's difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation*' (Selden & Widdowson: 1993, p212-213). These themes are expounded mainly in the works of Anglo-American feminist critics such as Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) which '*explores the destructive neutralisation of women within patriarchy*' (Selden & Widdowson, 1993, p213), the socialist feminist critic Sheila Rowbotham, the feminist psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell, and radical (lesbian) feminists like Kate Millett and Adrienne Rich. In Anglo-American feminist theory, these theories of the *Second Wave Criticism* also lead to Elaine Showalter's concept of *Gynocriticism*, which concentrates on women writers and women's culture.

Disputing much of what constitutes Anglo-American Feminism are the French feminist theorists, the most significant of whom are Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. They emphasise not the *gender* of the writer, but the '*writing effect of the text*' (Selden & Widdowson, p 213), i.e. the *feminine*. Cixous devised the concept of *l'écriture féminine*, an exclusive woman's literature. Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* is a direct contradiction to Showalter's *Gynocriticism*: *Gynesis* focuses on the textualisation of *woman*, rather than the emphasis of the Anglo-Americans on specific *women* as real, biological entities. Mary Eagleton has made a very useful distinction between Anglo-American and French Feminisms:

When the French speak of 'l'écriture féminine' they do not mean the tradition of women's writing that Woolf and Showalter have laboured to uncover, but a certain mode of writing which unsettles fixed meanings. On the other hand, when Anglo-Americans use the term 'feminine', they are usually referring to that cultural stereotype which patriarchy tells us is the appropriate, even the 'natural' form of behaviour for women" (1991, p10).

Also seeking to distinguish between Anglo-American and French feminist critical theories is Diane Price Herndl and Robyn R Warhol's extensive 1207-page anthology, *Feminisms*. Their distinction remains very general and, as such, is well-suited to the aims of this dissertation. The two compilers describe French feminism as having its roots in 'the psychoanalytic premises of Freud and Lacan, and adopts or adapts the deconstructive methods of Jacques Derrida. It is poststructuralist in that it focuses on discourse and on the constructedness of subjectivity and of representation' (1997, p xv).

Feminisms also opts to give a broad description of Anglo-American feminism:

By contrast, Anglo-American feminism is generally more interested in history. That can mean literal history (accounts of the lived experience of people in the world), or literary history, or both. Anglo-American feminism tends to focus more than does French feminism on the interaction of texts with the extratextual world they simultaneously address and represent (1997, p xv).

The editors of *Feminisms*, however, warn against the possibility that the above-mentioned categories for both *feminisms* might result in superficial distinctions, some French feminists might indeed concern themselves with extratextual issues and Anglo-American feminists might be interested in the theory of discourse.

At this point, the question of *Feminisms*'s multiplicity of approaches arises. It is important to look at Pluralism and Multiplicity as concepts in the Feminist critical context, as these concepts are used to formulate a Feminist vocabulary, as will be shown.

Toril Moi (1986, p148), a Danish Feminist critic working mainly within the paradigms of French Feminism, regards the definition of *Feminisms* (especially the complex concept of 'woman') as essentialist and rigid. However, Moi wishes Feminists would abandon what she regards as a 'minefield of femininity and femaleness' lacking in definition and coherence. She opts for a direction different from this *minefield*. Moi's 'other' approach entails a Pluralism that incorporates a variety of feminist approaches. She argues that Feminists do not have any other choice than to be Pluralists because there is 'no pure Feminist or female space from which we can speak'. She supports her observation by saying that all ideas, including feminist ones, are essentially contaminated by patriarchal ideology and cites examples in feminist history: Mary Wollstonecraft based her work on male perceptions of the French Revolution and Simone de Beauvoir was inspired by Sartre's Existentialist perceptions.

Price Herndl and Warhol also embrace the idea of pluralistic feminist approaches:

We have used the plural form 'feminisms', rather than 'feminism', to acknowledge the diversity of motivation, method, and the experience among feminist academics. While the multiplicity of approaches and assumptions inside the movement can lead to conflict and competition, it can also be the source of vitality and genuine learning. Such diversity – if fostered, as it has been in some feminist thought – can be a model for cultural heterogeneity' (Price Herndl & Warhol: 1997, p x).

For Price Herndl and Warhol, the multiplicity of feminist approaches fosters and encourages interdisciplinary studies. However, such studies may sometimes be the source of disagreement among feminist scholars, particularly between the Anglo-American school, which is predominantly historical and sociological in its approach, and the French school with its primary focus on psycho-linguistics.

In embracing the idea of "Feminisms" and multiple feminist approaches, Meese argues:

'There is only feminism(s), the content of which is still vigorously debated and has not been decided. It would seem that men's fear of the extension of their own monological vision leads them to believe that Feminism is – or, [...] feminism(s) wants to be a gynocentrism that has as its goal the reversal of their own phallocentrism' (1986, p86).

Meese goes on to maintain that some literary critics, like Terry Eagleton, consider Feminisms as an alternative theory to the already existing literary theories. Feminisms, according to Meese, are not an alternative method that '*define[s] the object of analysis differently, ha[s] different values, beliefs and goals, and offer[s] different kinds of kinds of strategy for the realizing of these goals'* (Meese: 1986, p138). Given Meese's viewpoint of pluralism, one could argue that Feminisms are not only a theory of non-theory, but also one of non-theories/non-theoretical approaches. The only problem with such a diverse and multiple range of feminist theories is that these theories might result in Moi's inevitable '*minefield*'. This feminist *minefield* may well allow various feminists in numerous inter-disciplinary fields to express themselves freely, unencumbered by the restrictions of only one literary theory. However, the vast scope and potential viewpoints of pluralist approaches do not make them necessarily Feminist. There is no underpinning feminist theory to substantiate all these non-theories.

Another problematic area of Feminisms' pluralistic approaches is that Feminist critics want to protect and defend their critical positions by refusing to articulate any theory. Although Price

Herndl and Warhol (1997, p xii) clearly state that 'we [do not] position ourselves as 'pluralists', or as theorists who think 'anything goes', it is almost self-evident from the essays in the *Feminisms* anthology, that they were carefully selected to reflect the majority of the various feminist approaches. Some of these essays do move in the direction of attempting to articulate feminist theory, but, nonetheless, there is still no overriding methodology or approach. One is left in the vast *minefield* of non-theories, paradoxes, self-contradiction, and self-protection – to say nothing of a good deal of confusion: 'Like socialists, feminists can in a sense afford to be tolerantly pluralistic in their choice of literary methods and theories, precisely because any approach that can be successfully appropriated to their political ends must be welcome' (Moi: 1989, p118). Reinforcing Moi's view about pluralism, Moore affirms the idea of pluralistic feminist ideologies: 'At stake in these different approaches is the belief that meanings of femininity and sexual difference are multiple, contradictory and changing' (Moore: 1987, p155).

Meese (1986, p141) proposes that Pluralism is another kind of response to the challenge of defining Feminist criticism. She quotes Annette Kolodny, who, ironically, published an article that is entirely congruent with the *minefield* theme: 'Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Theory', (1980). Kolodny advocates 'a playful pluralism, responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, but captive of none, recognizing that the many tools needed for our analysis will necessarily be largely inherited and only partly of our own making'. She maintains that Pluralism does not 'necessitate' feminists' consent to sexist criticism, and speaks out specifically against the formulation of exclusively feminist methods and procedures. Finally, Kolodny describes the 'project' of feminist criticism: 'Let us generate an ongoing dialogue of competing potential possibilities - among feminists and, as well, between feminists and nonfeminist critics' (1980, p14).

So far, no evidence of any underlying feminist theory has been found, only non-theories and an overall pluralistic approach. Nonetheless, this does not mean that all feminist critics of all feminist disciplines all agree unanimously on the concept of Pluralism. In this research, it has been possible to quote only a few feminist critics in order to point out that non-theory results inevitably in pluralist thought and incoherence. It is this incoherence that makes it difficult to substantiate or even understand feminist criticism. Many feminists pride themselves on being vague in articulation so as to defy all established literary theory. This is not to say that the feminist critical movement should accept any theory merely because it is acknowledged and well established in the literary community. The most problematic area of the feminist approach(es) is that none of them provides a reasonable alternative to the patriarchal theories and patriarchal attitudes that these feminists attack.

Because of the multiple approaches of Pluralism, it may be accurate to state that feminist criticism has certain unifying aspects that, paradoxically, also divide it. The unifying aspect, discussed earlier in the chapter, remains Gender, whether Feminisms deal with Psycho-Linguistics, Sociology, Biology, Literature, or Language.

Patricia Spacks (1981, p14) takes feminist criticism to *'include any mode that approaches a text with primary concern for the nature of the female experience in it [...]'*. Spacks here states that the unifying aspect of feminist literary criticism, is gender; that is, reading a text with regard to its female/feminine aspects or the lack of them. One of the shortcomings of 'reading as a feminist' is that feminists sometimes take passages from literary texts (and from their intended context) and read them in such a way as to suit only feminist ideology. One merit of this *'female experience'* is that it sometimes emphasizes and appreciates the intended genderised context of literature that might otherwise have been overlooked by male critics. Looking at literature through a specific feminist 'lens' constitutes the act of re-writing, re-viewing, re-inventing, re-constructing and deconstructing texts.

One example of deconstruction designed to suit feminist ideology is to be found in the work of the French feminist critic and poet, Hélène Cixous. As one of Jacques Lacan's student, Cixous trained as a psychoanalyst, later re-writing some of Lacan's psycho-analytical theories, especially where the concept of the female is concerned. Following the tradition of re-writing, Lacan originally based his psychoanalytical theories on those of Freud, through re-interpreting and reassessing the function of basic Freudian concepts. The 'RE'- concept will be discussed a little later, along with the feminist vocabulary that deals predominantly with re-writing, re-visioning, deconstructing and revising all male-based and –inspired approaches, stereotypes and theories.

The feminist 'RE'-concept automatically defuses the 'landmines' of the multi-layered feminist *minefield* of non-theories. By not having an original feminist theory, feminist are in a constant mode of theorizing and predominantly re-writing male concepts. As a result of this 'Re'-concept, the convoluted *minefield* becomes more defined because there is some sense of coherence in some of the links between the various feminist approaches or 'landmines'. That said, major differences in approach and emphasis among the various feminist critical schools of thought persist. Differences in approach between the two predominant schools, the French and Anglo-American, still create huge divisions in the coherence of Feminisms:

'In opposition to the French – and to some extent British feminist criticism, [...] the American version is historical and empirical in its orientation. In its early phases it stressed intellectual equality and the need for equal opportunity, while downgrading that

'difference' of men and women celebrated by the French thinkers. Women were seen more as a class than a caste, distinct only in being universally oppressed' (Todd: 1988, p17).

Mary Jacobus identifies one of the problematic themes Feminists are dealing with, the so-called *split* in Feminist thought and in their critical approaches:

Thus the current theoretical impasse in feminist criticism, [...] is more than a problem of finding 'exacting definitions and a suitable terminology', or 'theorizing in the midst of a struggle'. It comes from our own divided consciousness, the split in each of us. We are both the daughters of the male tradition [...] a tradition which asks us to be rational, marginal and grateful; and sisters in a new women's movement which engenders another kind of awareness and commitment (1984, p39).

Although Jacobus's idea of the *split* provides useful insight into Wolf's *Kassandra*, its essentialist feminist underpinning prevents it from an accurate depiction of what Wolf wishes to convey through *Kassandra*'s split between the '*wir*' and the '*sie*'.

Wolf did not create *Kassandra* as a Feminist statement or to condemn all men, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. However, Jacobus's excerpt does have linking qualities to the hermeneutic meaning of *Kassandra* – '*We are both the daughters of the male tradition [...] and sisters in a new women's movement*' (Jacobus: 1984, p39). As Jacobus puts it: '*We must seek the repressed messages of women in history, in anthropology, in psychology, and in ourselves*' (ibid).

The *split* as a construct sums up the main division of Feminism. The main *split* between the various feminist schools is seen in their different approaches, the Anglo-American school dealing predominantly with the socio-historical implications of Feminism and the French school of feminist thought theorizing mainly within the psycho-linguistic paradigm. The *split* or division has been aggravated by the 'competition' of the multiple schools of feminist criticism to be 'politically correct':

These different modes of feminist criticism, the denunciation of patriarchy on the one hand, and the study of women's writing on the other, have often been presented as rival approaches, each competing to be more politically correct than the other [...] it might be helpful to point out that each has (inevitably) its limitations, and that these limitations have specific political implications' (Belsey & Moore: 1989, p9).

Nevertheless, there are approaches that the broad community of Feminists share: the first being the predominant use of gender to evaluate texts. This is prevalent in the approaches of Elaine Showalter, who distinguishes between a *feminist critique* and *gynocritics*. The former mainly deals with the woman as *reader* and the latter approach with the woman as writer. Showalter suggests that Feminist literary criticism should aim to review works by women writers, both the so-called 'forgotten' women of the past centuries and modern women writers. Nevertheless, the focus on women writers is placed in a specific genderised context.

Feminist criticism(s) have a strong political dimension as is demonstrated in the work of various feminist critics. Price Herndl and Warhol articulate the purpose and unifying aspect of Feminisms as follows: '*But even when they [feminist critics] focus on such comparatively abstract matters as discourse, aesthetics, or the constitution of subjectivity, feminists are always engaged in an explicitly political enterprise, always working to change existing power structures both inside and outside academia*' (1997, p x).

The Second Wave Movement of the 1960s, for example, was founded on the credo: 'the personal is political'. Whereas some feminist critics have called Feminisms a 'practice' or an 'activity', or even a 'non-theory', Dale Spencer regards feminist literary criticism as a 'politics', thus emphasising the political foundations of Feminisms: '*This process of reworking and reformulating theories is potentially infinite: feminism is a politics in progress. It is not surprising, therefore, that a new current is already being identified within feminist criticism*' (1989, p18).

'*Formulating theories*' is a key-phrase in understanding the intricate and sometimes convoluted expression of the diverse and multiple feminist approaches. The act of 'theorizing' is important because it conveys the incompleteness of feminist theory. This is where the political agenda of Feminisms becomes clear. Because most of the critical schools rewrite existing literary theories, Feminists refuse to formulate an underpinning theory or methodology: '*In keeping with Millett's approach, feminists have politicised existing critical methods (in much the same sort of way that Marxists have), and it is on the basis that feminist criticism has grown to become a new branch of literary studies*' (Moi: 1989, p117). Politics, like gender, is encapsulated in a specific context and therefore constitutes at least a hint of theory; a 'theory' of female 'power': '*For Millett, the 'essence of politics is power', and the task of feminist critics and theorists is to expose the way in which male dominance over females constitutes 'perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its fundamental concept of power*' (ibid). Most feminist critics, like Moore, regard any apolitical literary criticism as non-feminist; works produced by women should be viewed and studied in a political, genderised context: '*The apolitical study of female authors is*

obviously not in itself feminist: it could very well just be an approach which reduces women to the status of scientific object' (Moore: 1987, p129).

There is a last unifying aspect of Feminisms. The feminist literary community has attached its own meanings to an established vocabulary that circumnavigates terms such as the female, feminist and feminine. All through these differing feminist approaches, certain ideas and phrases have been generated; 're-writing', 'deconstructing', and 're-viewing' form the basis of many feminists' critical works and their terminology.

(3) ALTERING VOCABULARIES: TOWARDS A WORD-WORLD OF THEIR OWN

Feminist criticism has tried a variety of theoretical approaches. The most natural direction for feminist criticism to take has been the revision, and even the subversion of related ideologies, especially Marxist aesthetics and structuralism, altering their vocabularies and methods to include the variable in nature.

Mary Jacobus

Feminist theory is a broad church with a number of co-operating and competing approaches; it is probably more appropriate to talk of feminist theories rather than feminist theory.

Mary Jacobus

While it is self-evidently not possible to list or explicate every meaning attached to every word or phrase as used by feminist critics, feminist terminology and meanings central to this research will be dealt with more specifically in the chapters devoted to the discussion of Wolf's individual texts.

Any understanding of feminist terminology is necessarily rooted in the political and literary evolution of Feminism.

The gender/sexual revolution constituted a powerful break with the patriarchal political, cultural and social systems of the 1960s. The later years of this decade also yielded two very provocative and revolutionary works concerned with women's issues, works that are still considered to be the basis of many modern feminist critical ideas and female ideologies. Mary Ellmann's *Thinking about Women*, which appeared in 1968, is primarily concerned with the search for female stereotypes in the work of male writers and critical reviews by male reviewers, stereotypes which constitute the basis for the so-called *Images of Women* criticism. *Thinking about Women*, however, does not deal with the political and historical aspects of patriarchal society, which are

quintessential in understanding the basic tenets of feminist criticism. Ellmann focuses on the female writer-reader relationship and sees the act of reading a text as a life-nurturing experience for the female reader. She is not concerned about women as social constructs, who are shaped by culture and society, but says: '*I am most interested in women as words*' (as quoted in Moi: 1985, p31).

The second ground-breaking text for feminist critics is Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, published in 1969. Her book marks the new era of Feminism at the time because it rejects the ideology of the American New Criticism that was primarily concerned with the text as sole object of literary criticism and investigation. In opposition to the New Critics, Millett examines the dimensions of social and the cultural contexts in order to understand the process of literary criticism better. Her theory differs from that of Ellmann; where Ellmann investigates the writer-reader convention within the literary text, Millett pays little or no attention to the formal dimensions of the text; in the main, she analyses the content. Another drawback about Millett's analysis is the fact that she deals only with texts by males such as those of Henry Miller and D H Lawrence, and that immediately puts her back into the realm of male-based literature. It is important, nevertheless, to view *Sexual Politics* as the 'Mother' (Moi: 1985, p24) of, and precursor to, the later tradition of Anglo-American Feminist Criticism; one of the reasons is that she is the first feminist literary critic to defend the reader's right to '*posit her own viewpoint*' (Moi: 1985, p25) and to reject the rigid hierarchy of the text and the reader.

However, for many feminist critics, it is essential to venture even further back, to the texts that were the precursors of these 1960s texts: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1927) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). It is De Beauvoir who created the famous dictum upon which many feminist theories were subsequently founded: *One is not born a woman, one becomes one*. This statement is essential to any understanding of three very important distinctions in feminist criticism: (a) **feminine writing**; (b) **feminist writing**, and (c) **female writing** (Showalter: 1977).

(a) Feminine Writing

This term is used in the period between the 1840s and 1880. Women writers such as George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) and Ralph Irons (Olive Schreiner) used male pseudonyms in order to have their work accepted by publishers. Many of these women writers wrote in imitation of masculine models while focusing on feminine concerns.

(b) Feminist Writing

This period is very important as it signifies the winning of the female vote and the success of the suffragette movement with its feminist protests and demands.

(c) Female Writing

From 1920 onwards, women writers focused on self-discovery, exploration of their own inner space and of their female experience and self-awareness. The Modernist novels by Virginia Woolf constitute one of the most important examples of this period as well as later works by Christa Wolf such as *Nachdenken über Christa T* (1968) and *Kassandra* (1983).

It is important to note that these three categories do not constitute rigid categorisations and may well overlap while some women writers might even be assigned to more than one of these distinct stages. Widely accepted definitions view the term *female* as a biological term and *feminine* as a cultural construct laid down mainly by the patriarchy. Certain women are not viewed by society as 'feminine', because they do not comply with the traditional views of femininity, such as being 'soft', 'emotional', although they are biologically women. The same idea applies to males who are not masculine in the eyes of society. Femininity is therefore not exclusive to females; it is also applicable to certain men. *Feminist* is viewed as a political position.

Another term used in Feminist criticism – *l'écriture féminine* or feminine writing - is particularly predominant in the works of the French Feminist, Hélène Cixous. *L'écriture féminine* signifies a particular kind of writing: 'poetic, non-realist – which undermines the logic, truths, definitions of the dominant order. Feminine writing is available to both male and female writers, though there are social and psychoanalytical reasons why practitioners of feminine writing are more likely to be female' (Eagleton: 1991, p226).

Even the term "Feminism" is not without its ambiguities. Because of the multiplicity of views of various feminist critics, it is almost impossible to use the singular term, 'feminism'. To do justice to feminist criticism, it is more accurate to make use of the term 'Feminisms', the crucial plural form, to describe the various and sometimes contradictory ideologies within Anglo-American and French Feminism. One of the texts that has been particularly helpful in defining this term is *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Diane Price Herndl and Robin R. Warhol (1993). They justify their use of the term *Feminisms* thus:

We've used the plural form 'feminisms', rather than 'feminism', to acknowledge the diversity of motivation, method and experience among feminist academics. From the outside, 'feminism' may appear monolithic, unified, or singularly definable. The more

intimately one becomes acquainted with feminist criticism, however, the more one sees the multiplicity of approaches and assumptions inside the movement (Price Herndl & Warhol: 1993, p x).

Further, it is important to distinguish between the terms *women* and *woman*. Throughout this dissertation, these two terms will be used as an integral part of the research methodology. *Woman* is not used in the usual traditional sense when referring to a specific female in the singular. Used in most of the theoretical criticism of the French feminists, it denotes 'a writing-effect, an excess which has escaped the control of the master narratives' (Eagleton: 1991, p228). It also refers to woman as archetype in Jungian terms. Sometimes *woman* is associated with negative archetypal terminology within the patriarchy: Lilith, the Whore, the negative Mother, the Sorceress. Gilbert and Gubar (1979, p85 as cited from Moi, 1986) define the male fear of the female principle: 'Women are the 'terrible sorceress-goddesses' as the Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, all of whom possess duplicitous arts that allow them both to seduce and steal male generative energy'. Göttner-Abendroth (1991, p55) sums up the patriarchal fear of women: in the following passage, this fear is linked to the male mythological portrayal of Medea: 'Magic, vilified as 'witchcraft', was a primary target of the evolving patriarchy'.

Women is the second term that will be used as a recurring theme. In Anglo-American feminism, *women* denotes those political, cultural, and biological dimensions which aim to unite the gender as a group in the real, extra-textual world. Thus, it may be said that French feminism places more emphasis on the abstract dimension, that is to say, on woman as a construct within the psychoanalytical or literary realm whereas Anglo-American feminist criticism puts the emphasis on women as a group, i.e. real women within real contexts in their various cultures and societies. These different and differing approaches have produced criticisms of each other. Consequently, there have been, and continue to be, many debates among feminists as to which school of feminist thought is considered to be the more helpful in reading literary texts.

In addition to this critical/theoretical vocabulary, one needs to be sensitive to a 'family' of words (found in numerous research articles and texts) dealing with feminist critical approaches and other diverse feminist issues. One of the first words in this 'family' of feminist terminology is the RE-concept. As can be seen in previous sections of this chapter, Feminist critics reinterpret all existing theories and concepts, whether and however related to socio-historical, psycho-linguistic, semantics, or politics. Myra Jehlen, for instance, reaffirms the feminist RE-concept: '*Feminist thinking is really rethinking, an examination of the way certain assumptions about women and the female character enter into the fundamental assumptions that organize all our thinking [...] reconsideration of the relation between female and male*' (1981, p191).

More specifically, Annette Kolodny (1980, p174) states her idea of feminist criticism, which involves the 'rereading' of literature, and, therefore, a focus on a reader-specific vocabulary (the **READER** in Roman Jakobson's diagram): '*The variety and diversity of all feminist literary criticism finally coheres in its stance of almost defensive rereading*'. Quoting Tillie Olsen (1978), Kolodny reinforces the 'rereading' feminist approach that applies to centuries of established male literature and misogynist language: '*Tillie Olsen's commonsense observation of the danger of 'perpetuating – by continued usage – entrenched, centuries-old oppressive power realities, early-on incorporated into language', has been given substantive analysis in the writings of feminists who study 'language as a symbolic system closely tied to a patriarchal social structure'*'. From Olsen's words, Kolodny deduces that women's writing is embedded in specific symbolic language, that is usually unfamiliar to the male reader who dismisses the female symbolic world because he fails to understand it. Consequently, such a male reader will dismiss this symbolic female language as '*undecipherable, meaningless, and trivial*'. Nelly Furman (1978, as quoted by Kolodny: 1980, p174) insists that language is not '*gender neutral*', but is instead '*imbued with our sex-inflected cultural values*'.

A new approach for feminist writers is required to counterbalance the tradition of conventional forms of male expression and male-literary language over the centuries: feminists '*will be forced virtually to 'wrestle' with that language in an effort 'to remake it as a language adequate to our conceptual processes*' (Stanley & Robbins: 1977, as quoted by Kolodny, p174).

So far, the following words and phrases have been identified in the feminist language and vocabulary: *revision; rethinking; reconsideration; defensive rereading; opposition to traditional male language; wrestling with male language; specific symbolic structures of women's writing*. It is important to take into account that these words and phrases are utilised specifically by feminist writers and critics and therefore have semantic meaning that differ from their traditional usage by non-feminist critics and writers.

An understanding of the specific language employed by Feminists serves as a useful means by which to compare feminist language with Christa Wolf's specific uses of language.

Feminist language has also promulgated the term, *reconstruction*. Since the publication of *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, Wolf has constantly worked with the idea of a new world, the reportrayal of prehistoric women in mythology (*Kassandra* and *Medea*), and the concept of a new language (*Was bleibt*). As will be discussed later, Wolf uses some feminist terminology differently from common feminist usage. Although she always articulates the importance of womanhood and criticises the misrepresentation of women, she does so in a less aggressive, less political way.

Jonathan Culler's criticism proves to be fruitful in comprehending Wolf's language of deconstruction. Although Wolf is not a deconstructionist in a comprehensive, traditional way, she does deconstruct male myths and the male-generated false presentations of *Kassandra* and *Medea*. Culler suggests that deconstructive criticism seeks the 'otherness' of texts, that is their '*difference from what is already dealt with by the cultural modes of literature as an institution*' (1975, as quoted by Meese: 1986, p xi). Meese interprets this '*otherness*' as a repression in interpretive or constructive '*acts*' as they '*naturalize*' texts according to

genre, gender, culture, or models of behavior and personality – the implicit understandings and assumptions that produce the analogies we need in order to read [...] deconstruction is compatible with feminist criticism, and when gender is the focus for examining difference, deconstructive criticism might even be said to be identical with the feminist project (Meese: 1986, p xi).

Quite evidently, deconstruction is one of the key concepts in the feminist vocabulary. Although some members of the feminist literary community reject all theory, including deconstruction, many others view the concept of textual deconstruction as a promising literary strategy to reconcile their feminist approaches. In addition to *deconstruction*, Meese points out other important words and phrases of the feminist language, including *gender*; *culture*; *difference*; and *otherness*. Earlier, she talks of *the political analysis* of Feminist criticism and urges deconstructionists to be more '*radically political*' and feminists to become '*more self-consciously polyvocal and destabilizing in its theory*' (Meese: 1986, p x).

Although many of the phrases and words the feminists use are not newly-coined or entirely new *per se*, and are also used by non-feminists, feminist literary critics employ their language and/or vocabulary in very specific manners. Semantically, these words are attributed different ideological meanings to suit feminist ideological stances. Feminist vocabulary is deeply entrenched in both politics and gender, and seeks reconciliation with deconstruction as one of their polyvocal or pluralist approaches.

(4) BOTH SIDES OF THE WALL OR FEMINISMS IN THE GERMANIES: A SHORT OVERVIEW

Sie [feministische Literaturwissenschaft] geht aus von der Prämisse einer historischen, sozialen, wirtschaftlichen, ideologischen und kulturellen Frauenunterdrückung, die auch die Gegenwart noch bestimme; Literatur und literarisches Leben seien ebenso patriarchalisch organisiert wie der Wissenschaftsbetrieb

Jutta Osinski

As has been discussed earlier in the chapter, Anglo-American and French Feminists have very specific languages and vocabularies, rooted in both gender and politics. Throughout Chapter 1, different aspects of Feminisms have been explicated in order to give a clearer understanding of the diverse feminist concepts in the differing schools of thought. It has been established that the Anglo-American and French Feminists were the main initiators of both the First and Second Waves of Feminism. Although other feminist schools of critical thought adopting somewhat different approach(es) have been established in other countries, almost all these approaches nevertheless have their intellectual roots in French and Anglo-American feminist criticism. "French" and "Anglo-American" are terms that refer to the particular approach to which their adherent Feminists are committed, rather than to their nationality. Moi, for example, is Danish but works predominantly within the paradigms of French feminist criticism.

Given the predominance of the French and Anglo-American factions, it is sensible to ask whether an independent German feminist school of thought exists. In seeking to organise themselves as a distinct and different group, Feminists in the former Federal Republic have faced two major problematic issues especially: *'In the first place, postwar German society encouraged conformity, and the avoidance of anything that could be construed as extreme. Secondly, in the very shadow of the Berlin Wall, the Marxist and Socialist origins of 19th-century feminism created suspicion'* (Cannistraro & Reich: 1999, p1192). The same authors emphasize West Germany's failure to recognise the Feminist Movement's first initiatives in 1971. Subsequently, the Feminist Movement failed, primarily but not exclusively because of their pro-abortion affiliations: *'In 1971, a national conference of women began a drive to legalize abortion. Not only was the law's anti-abortion stance intensified, but pro-abortion groups became subject to police harrassment and those suspected of political activism found themselves in jobs'* (ibid).

One of the consequences of the West German government's rejection of these feminist pro-choice groups was female terrorism, the most extreme mode of feminism. Ulrike Meinhof (1934-1976), a West German journalist, promoted the feminist cause by leading terrorist activities: *'In*

1970, she [Meinhof] helped to found the Red Army Faction, which was responsible for a burst of murder and arson over the next decade. Meinhof herself was captured in 1972, and died in her cell four years later under mysterious circumstances' (ibid). However, some believed that the whole Ulrike Meinhof affair was blown out of proportion by the German media. Heinrich Böll, Nobel prize-winning West German author, complained about Meinhof's mistreatment by the press (especially by the so-called *Boulevardzeitungen*) and subsequently wrote a novel about the affair: *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1976). Equally violent ideas were articulated even before the Meinhof affair in women's literature. One example is Monique Wittig's novel about an exclusive community of Amazons: *Les Guérillères* (1969), translated into German in 1980 as *Die Verschwörung der Balkis*. Jutta Osinski (1998, p61) describes Wittig's novel as *'eine kriegerische Befreiung der Frauen aus Gewaltverhältnissen'*. The very language of this critical remark exemplifies the militant side of Feminisms.

In contrast to the more radical manifestations of Feminisms, a more congenial setting was to be offered by the Green Movement, an environmental protection group. Many West German Feminists helped the Green Party to become a political force to be reckoned with. Many Feminists hoped that *die Grünen* would in return promote the Feminist cause, but these ideals proved to be in vain: *'On the whole, however, the predominantly male leadership resisted attempts to become involved on women's issues'* (Cannistraro & Reich: 1999, p1192). However, although there have been no real attempts of the *Grünen* to improve the Feminist cause, *die Parteivorsitzende* of the Green Party is a woman, Renate Kühnast, who also serves as the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture of Germany after the Ministers of Agriculture and Health resigned after the German BSE scandal.

On the East side of the Berlin Wall, women's issues looked somewhat different from Feminisms in the Federal Republic of Germany. In principle, women in the GDR had more rights in relation to their West German counterparts. After the official founding of GDR in 1949, women enjoyed the same privileges as men; they were encouraged to have jobs, and to work in industry and factories; women writers too became part of the *Bitterfelder Weg*. Wolf herself worked in a factory during the *Bitterfelder Weg* and subsequently based her novel, *Der geteilte Himmel*, on her experience. Indeed, one of the reasons why Wolf does not regard herself as a traditional Feminist is that her experiences as a woman in the GDR led her to believe that no Feminist Movement was needed because women and men were accorded equal treatment:

Gerade die Erfahrung der Frauen ist sehr unterschiedlich in der DDR und der Bundesrepublik. Die Systeme gleichen sich insofern, als es sich in beiden Fällen um patriarchalische Gesellschaften handelt. Aber bei uns ist die Generation von Frauen, zu

der ich gehöre, von Anfang an vollständig gleichberechtigt in den damaligen Aufbauprozeß einbezogen worden. Es war eine Vereinnahmung dabei, indem wir das Gleiche tun konnten wie ein Mann. Daß die ökonomische und juristische Gleichberechtigung einfach im Gesetz verankert war, das machte die Entwicklung und das Selbstbewußtsein von Frauen in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik sehr verschieden (Wolf: 1984, pp95).

Although a totally separate German Feminism may not yet exist, there are still several important German feminist critics to consider: Heide Göttner-Abendroth, who bases her works on the matriarchal culture and matriarchal religion; Manfred Jurgensen, who writes predominantly about *Frauenliteratur*; and Sigrid Weigel, Inge Stephan, and Jutta Osinski, whose critical works prove insightful in the evolving sphere of German feminist criticism. What follows is a synopsis of how Anglo-American and French Feminist criticism has impacted on and influenced German Feminisms.

Jutta Osinski's work, *'Einführung in die Feministische Literaturwissenschaft'* (1998), is one of the best German attempts to deal with Feminist concepts and the numerous Feminists who made an impact on the Feminist Movement. Like other Feminists, Osinski emphasises the anti-establishment roots of the national Feminist Movement: *'Was die nationale Neue Frauenbewegung einte, war, zumindest anfangs, ihr antiinstitutioneller Charakter'* (1998, p27). The emancipation of women in the GDR also serves as one of Osinski's focal points: this is helpful in understanding Wolf's background as a woman writer in East Germany: *'In der Verfassung der DDR von 1949 wurde das Gleichberechtigungsprinzip verankert. Das hatte ideologische Gründe: Schon Marx, Engels und Lenin betonen, daß der Sozialismus die Emanzipation der Frau in sich schließt; Diskriminierung von Frauen gilt als Bestandteil einer Klassengesellschaft, die überwunden werden soll'* (Osinski: 1998, p35). The theory about women's emancipation goes even further back than Socialism, to the *Aufklärung* in literary history, as will be discussed later.

Throughout her text, Osinski not only makes references to French and Anglo-American Feminists, but also discusses their critical works. Feminists like Millett's "Images of Woman" aesthetics, Showalter's concept of "hismeneutics" versus "hermeneutics", Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism (Psychoanalyse und Feminismus)*, and Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering (Das Erbe der Mütter)* are discussed. Feminist vocabulary, as discussed in Section (3), is utilised throughout Osinski's work: *'Feministinnen sollen Modelle der Psychoanalyse nutzen [...] das patriarchalische System zu rekonstruieren'* (Osinski: 1998, p51).

The engendered context of Feminist literary criticism is reinforced by Osinski when she explicates Millett's "Images of Women Aesthetics": *'daß Literatur nicht neutral, sondern geschlechtsgebunden geschrieben und gelesen wird, im kulturellen Kontext eines Herrschaftsverhältnisses zwischen den Geschlechtern Geschlechterbeziehungen widerspiegelt'* (Osinski: 1998, p45). Osinski also deals with feminist critical works by Anglo-American Feminist critics like Jane Gallop, and Gilbert and Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic/Die Verrückte auf dem Dachboden*). She also explicates the intellectual 'Avantgarde' Movement of the French Feminist critics – *'prende la parole - Frauen sollten selbst sprechen und schreiben'*. The feminist concept of *l'écriture féminine* is linked with leading critics of the French Feminist Avantgarde: Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Chantal Chawaf, Annie Léclerc, Sarah Kaufmann, and Monique Wittig. Another French Feminist critic cited in Osinski, is the Danish academic, Toril Moi (*'Sexus, Text, Herrschaft. Feministische Literaturtheorie'*). The following comments from Moi are especially relevant to the 'melting pot' and 'minefield' which characterise Feminist literary criticism's problem areas:

Wenn, wie bereits behauptet, alle Definitionsversuche von 'Frau' notwendigerweise einen essentialistischen Charakter annehmen, liegt die Vermutung nahe, daß die feministische Theorie weiterkäme, wenn sie den Streit um Weibliches und Weiblichkeit eine Weile ruhen ließe und die Probleme von Unterdrückung und Emanzipation aus einem anderen Blickwinkel angehe' (Moi: 1989, as quoted by Osinski: 1998, p166).

Osinski's work include several German feminist critics, and especially the 'Hamburger Schule' that consists essentially of Sigrid Weigel, Inge Stephan, and Marianne Schuler. Osinski also refers to Vinken, a feminist Deconstructionist (*'Dekonstruktiver Feminismus. Literaturwissenschaft in Amerika'*, 1992), and reaffirms some of the words in feminist 'language' already mentioned: *'Defiguration'*; *'Refiguration'* and *'Repräsentation'*. Osinski mentions other equally important German Feminist critics such as Elisabeth Lenk, who created the concept of *'Die sich selbst verdoppelnde Frau'*, and Silvia Bovenschen's critical work, *'Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit'*.

Finally, Osinski summarizes and categorizes the feminist approaches that she found valuable throughout her study of feminist literary criticism: her *sozialgeschichtlich-ideologiekritisches* model reveals the 'Anglo-American' influence. Osinski identifies four sub-categories and names their corresponding feminist critics:

- (1.1) *Literaturhistorische Frauenforschung (Barbara Becker-Cantarino)*
- (1.2) *Patriarchatskritische Frauenbildforschung/feminist literary criticism (Kate Millett);*

- (1.3) *Erforschung von Frauenliteratur im Patriarchat/gynocriticism (Showalter) and*
- (1.4) *Interdepenz-Geschichte von Literarischen Frauenbildern und Literaturproduktion von Frauen' (Osinski: 1998, p168).*

(IN)CONCLUSION

The construct known as 'Feminisms' constitutes the indefinable context of this research. It has a vocabulary but lacks a theory. It is rooted in gender and political ideology. It can be radically militant. It may even be violent in both its language and its political activities. It is intellectually sophisticated, and yet equally naïve. It is against theories, establishments, and patriarchies. It is complex, confused, pluralistic, and paradoxical.

CHAPTER 2

THE DISENCHANTMENT OF CHRISTA T.

Nachdenken, ihr nach-denken. Dem Versuch, man selbst zu sein.

Christa Wolf

The right to name

Mary Daly

Chapter 2 aims to deal primarily with Christa Wolf's second novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968). *Christa T.* was in many ways a ground-breaking novel within the GDR because Wolf rejected the rigid paradigms and prescriptions of Socialist Realism. Subsequently, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, received mixed media attention and the critics were divided about Wolf's novel. Most East German critics saw the novel as a blatant rejection of the aesthetic ideals of Socialist Realism whereas literary critics from the West regarded *Christa T.* as breaking free from Marxist attitudes which held the collective rather than the individual as the centre of its ideology. With this novel, Wolf provides a new pathway for women writers in the GDR, as well as male writers and poets, by which to explore the path of individuation in literature.

In the writing of *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, Christa Wolf neither excludes nor discriminates against male characters through any sort of negative depiction. In adopting these strategies, she avoids typical feminist attitudes and approaches. This said, it is nonetheless true that the two major protagonists in the novel are indeed both women: Christa T. and the female *Erzählerin* or narrator. *Christa T.* is, in fact, a novel about very specific female life experiences contained in various sources which the *Erzählerin* discovers after Christa T.'s death. Many critics claim that the character of Christa T. is in fact Wolf herself, thus introducing an autobiographical aspect and theme into the novel. Other critics have speculated on the possibility that Christa T.'s character is based on a real-life female friend of Christa Wolf. These are the issues considered in this chapter.

Following on from the discussion of of Feminisms and female literary criticism in the light of the Introduction and the discussion in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 looks at the feminist criticism and female discussion of *Christa T.* However, in order to discuss *Christa T.* in the fairest and most objective manner, Chapter 2 aims to present:

- (1) a brief introduction and background of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* within the various critical assumptions of East and West German literary critics;

- (2) Wolf's own views about *Christa T.*, as well as writing and the writer in general;
- (3) a hermeneutic discussion of *Christa T.* as well as the focus on the process of individuation as *Leitmotiv* and *Leitthema*; and
- (4) an overview of the merits and shortcomings of feminist literary critique of *Nachdenken über Christa T.*

(1) INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

'Der Autor ist nämlich ein wichtiger Mensch.' (Christa Wolf)

Alexander Stephan (1991, p7) sums up the severe critical assessment by literary critics of *Nachdenken über Christa T.*: 'Beschimpft als 'Politrukesse' [Hans-Dieter Sander:1969] und als Mitdenkerin von 'bürgerlichen Vorurteilen' [Wilhelm Girnus: 1983], der 'Ich-Faszination' [Annemarie Auer:1977], eines 'gebrochenen Verhältnisses zum Hier und Heute und Morgen [Max Walter Schulz:1969] und eines Hanges zum 'Abstrakten' [Klaus Jarmatz: 1980].

In order to understand the many critical articulations about *Christa T.* such as those cited above by Stephan, it is useful to explore some publication details concerning the novel. *Nachdenken über Christa T.* was published in 1969 by Luchterhand Verlag in the Federal Republic, selling over 250 000 copies there as well as being translated into 32 languages. In the GDR, on the other hand, *Christa T.* was published for the first time only in 1973 after the seventh *Schriftstellerkongreß* on 14-16 November of that year. Subsequently, 80 000 copies were sold in the GDR in the period 1973/1974. The discrepancy in these sales figures would seem to reflect the extent of the conflict between the prevailing aesthetic and ideological ideals of the GDR and Wolf's own.

There are, however, so many discrepancies between the exact publication information and estimated information about *Nachdenken über Christa T.* Heinrich Mohr (1971, p216-217), a West German critic, seems to convey information that is closest to the exact. He writes at length about the secrecy in which the novel was handled after publication and the unfair treatment its author received: 'Auf der Leipziger Buchmesse im Herbst 1969 war das 'Nachdenken' nicht ausgestellt; es war auch in keinem Buchkatalog oder Verlagsprospekt angezeigt. Über die Details des Vorgangs von Veröffentlichung und Unterdrückung gibt es mehr als Mutmaßungen als exakte Nachrichten'. Mohr distinguishes between the estimates of both the West and East German critics: 'Die bundesrepublikanischen Kritiker geben die Höhe der Auflage im Mitteldeutschen

Verlag sehr unterschiedlich an: die niedrigste Schätzung spricht von 500, die höchste von 4 000 Exemplaren. Am häufigsten wird die Zahl 800 genannt'. Der Mitteldeutsche Verlag did not wish to respond to Mohr's inquiries for authentic information and the only person who could provide him with the correct information was Roland Wiegenstein. Mohr writes about the exact time *Christa T.* was ready for publication and the number of copies sold:

Christa Wolfs Roman hat in einer ersten Fassung schon 1965 vorgelegen. Die überarbeitete Fassung wurde 1968 in einer Auflage von 5 000 Exemplaren gedruckt. Davon kamen 800 Exemplare 1969 zur Auslieferung. Das aber heißt, der größte Teil wurde an ausgewählte Kritiker, an Funktionäre und Bibliotheksbeamte verschickt, ein kleinerer Teil kam an einige Buchhandlungen. Dann erfolgte die definitive Ablehnung des Buches. Die restlichen 4 000 Exemplare wurden vom Mitteldeutschen Verlag an den Luchterhand Verlag verkauft. (Mohr:1971, 217).

Overall, a similar discrepancy is evident in critical responses to the novel, although there are exceptions. The overwhelming response by East German critics at the time *Nachdenken über Christa T.* was published in 1968, can be regarded as negative and mostly ignorant. Wolf's novel proved to be well ahead of its time and the contemporary prose writing of most other GDR writers. East German literary critics were not yet ready for the dramatic changes instigated by a woman writer of Christa Wolf's insight and calibre. In 1969, Wolf made a statement that emphasized the 'subjectivity' of *Christa T.*: '*Die Spuren, die die Ereignisse in unserem Innern hinterlassen*'. (Quoted in Huyssen, A: 1991). Most GDR literary critics regarded the word *Innern* as the centre of literary subjectivity, and thus contrary to Socialist Realist ideals. Wolf's sentence (quoted above) was regarded as extremely controversial: '*Dieser Satz hat Kontroversen ausgelöst. Kritiker aus der DDR warfen der Erzählerin vor, sie verherrliche Innerlichkeit und Idylle, sie reduziere die Beziehung von Individuum und Gesellschaft aufs bloße Private, ihr fehle eine objektivierende und kritische Distanz zu ihrer Figur*'. [Critics like Haase (1969), Kähler, Sachs and Gugisch (all 1972)]. (Quoted in Huyssen:1991, p99).

These GDR literary critics pointed out even more negative themes in *Christa T.* The novel was an embodiment of negativity and resignation of the self: '*Man sprach von Resignation und Pessimismus [Haase and Käler: 1969 and 1972], mangelnder Vorbildhaftigkeit [Gugisch:1972] und fragwürdiger politischer Ästhetik [Adamede:1969]*'. (Huyssen:1991, p99). Some critics in the Federal Republic also read *Christa T.* as a novel about pessimism and regarded it as a novel about suicide, exactly the opposite of the way in which Wolf wanted her work to be understood: '*Auch im Westen wurde das Scheitern der Christa T. betont, am schärfsten von Raddatz [In: Der Spiegel:1969], der den Roman als Geschichte eines Selbstmords las*'. (Huyssen:1991, p99).

Alienation/*Entfremdung* is another theme in *Christa T.* that the GDR critics found problematic and a sensitive issue to deal with. One of the theoretical assumptions of Marxism was that all people were equal in society, therefore society in the GDR was said to be dialectic and without discriminatory practices. In writing *Christa T.*, Christa Wolf contradicted the GDR's so-called dialectic society where the individual would and could never be alienated from society. However, Christa T. is a highly alienated individual, who believes in the ideals of Marxism, but who finds the practice of these ideals to be hypocritical. '*Anpassen lernen*' is only one of the examples cited in the novel to show that not all individuals can adapt themselves to fit into the community: '*DDR Kritiker sind außerordentlich empfindlich gegenüber jeglichem Anzeichen von Pessimismus und Resignation, wie sie sich scheuen, das Problem der Entfremdung in der DDR überhaupt ernsthaft anzugehen*'. (Huysen:1991, p99). The problem of alienation of the individual became progressively difficult to ignore as a literary theme in the GDR. Six years after it was banned, *Christa T.* was published in the GDR in 1974, indicating the changes that had occurred in Marxist society and GDR literature in the meantime: '*Es gibt Anzeichen, daß das Subjektwerden des Menschen heute auch offiziell in der DDR als Problem anerkannt wird. Nach sechs Jahren praktisch wirksamen Verbots wurde 'Nachdenken über Christa T.'* zum fünfundzwanzigjährigen Jubiläum der DDR neu aufgelegt'. (Huysen:1991, p114).

Some GDR literary critics stated their disapproval of Christa Wolf's novel quite unequivocally. One example of this intense dissatisfaction came from Max Walter Schulz, the Director of the Johannes R. Becher Institute of Literature from 1964 and the Deputy Director of the *Schriftstellerverbandes* of the GDR. Schulz saw *Christa T.* as too subjective and contrary to the aesthetic ideals of Socialist Realism. It is, however, very ironic that, as the Director of the Johannes R. Becher Institute, Schulz failed to see the significance of Wolf's novel. He also overlooked the fact that Wolf had drawn on, and quoted from, the writings of Becher, a former GDR Minister of Culture and himself a poet. *Christa T.*'s motto is a quotation from Becher's diaries, and forms the *Leitmotiv* of the novel: '*Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?*' (1951). Not only does the motto stress the alienation of the individual and the individuation process, it reconfirms that GDR society did not exist in perfect harmony. Schulz denies the manifestation of individuation or the *Zu-sich-selber-Kommen*: '*Wir kennen Christa Wolf als eine talentierte Mitstreiterin unserer Sache. Gerade deshalb dürfen wir unsere Enttäuschung über ihr neues Buch nicht verbergen. Wie auch immer parteilich die subjektiv ehrliche Absicht des Buches gemeint sein mag, so wie die Geschichte nun einmal erzählt ist, ist sie angetan, unsere Lebensbewußtheit zu bezweifeln, bewältigte Vergangenheit zu erschüttern, ein gebrochenes Verhältnis zum Hier und Heute und Morgen zu erzeugen. Wem nützt das?*' (Schulz:1969, p71).

Schulz goes on to point out what the aesthetic ideals of Socialist Realism should be and what should be avoided: *'Wenn man an die ganze Innerlichkeitsproblematik herangeht, tut man gescheiter sie von vornherein als die Innerlichkeitsproblematik des Ganzen zu betrachten. Betonte Innerlichkeitsproblematik läuft von alters her noch Gefahr, sich individualistisch zu belasten. Von solchen alten Belastungen muß sich unsere Literatur frei machen. Sozialistisch-realistische Literatur verfügt weder über den inneren noch über den äußeren Auftrag, dem Individualismus auf ihrem gesellschaftlichen Gelände sonstige schöne Denkmäler zu setzen'*. (Schulz:1969, p71).

Socialist Realist ideology generally isolated GDR writers to such an extent, that they had no outside influences, apart from those from other communist countries and states. These writers had little, if any, contact with new literary developments in the West after the building of the Berlin Wall. GDR writers were expected to concentrate on the inner politics of East Germany and, as individuals, to fit into collective society, *Anpassung um jeden Preis*. Schnell describes this *Anpassung* and *Ankunftsliteratur* as *'Eine Ankunft ohne Abschied'* (Schulz: 1969, p71), emphasizing the isolation that the GDR suffered after the *Berliner Mauer*.

Critics like Klaus Sauer, however, have opposing views to those of Schulz. Sauer emphasizes the notion that *Christa T.* was published during a turbulent time within the GDR and that one should appreciate Wolf's courage to take a new and revolutionary turn in literature. Despite the anticipated critical and negative feedback expected from non-conformist behaviour, Wolf took an uncompromising stand: *'Mit einer Entschiedenheit ist Christa Wolf Verfechterin des Literaturprogramms der Gründerjahre der DDR, die ihr keine taktischen Kompromisse erlaubt'*. (Sauer: 1979, p84). Sauer regards Wolf as one of the resilient leaders of the new writers' revolution, one who would always attract subsequent criticism from ignorant and stagnant critics refusing to accept change. With *Christa T.*, Wolf set a new example of prose writing that laid the foundation of her later novel, *Kassandra* (1983), in which a new woman's literature is discussed: *'Dagegen setzt Christa Wolf eine neue Schreibweise, die auf die ideelle Durchdringung des Stoffes nicht Verzicht leistet, doch darauf achtet, daß mit dieser Durchdringung nicht zugleich auch ideologische Sperren errichtet werden'*. (ibid).

Karl Mandelkow regards Christa Wolf as a post-Bitterfelderweg writer who set the boundaries for a new GDR literature. Mandelkow's statement is very insightful in its delineation of the extent to which Christa Wolf had broken away from being a Bitterfelderweg-writer as early as 1963 when she wrote *Der Geteilte Himmel* early in her career. Mandelkow notes Wolf's doing away with rigid Realism, prevalent in most Bitterfelderweg literature and one of the aesthetic goals of Socialist Realism.

One of the reasons for choosing Realism as a literary articulation in the Socialist paradigm would be that ordinary men or women in the workplace could relate to, and identify with, the plot and characters in the various genres. Any form of literature that did not comply with the Realist goal was regarded as elitist, and created for the members of the bourgeoisie. Literary works had to incorporate real-life persons in the everyday-working environment. In order to capture the workplace, writers had to gain practical experience in places like factories or industry. The whole process of incorporating industrial experience was known as the *Bitterfelderweg* with its main motto: *Kumpel, greif zur Feder!*

In her early works, Wolf may be regarded as being part of the so-called *Ankunftsliteratur* Generation, a term that is best described by Schnell:

Es war avant la lettre, eine realitätsbewußte und willentliche Annahme des später so genannten 'real existierenden Sozialismus', mitgeteilt aus der Sicht einer noch jungen Autorin. Der Begriff 'Ankunftsliteratur', der sich für die Werke dieser Generation eingebürgert hat, ist mithin, obwohl unschön, doch nicht unzutreffend. Es drückt einen schon vor 1969 wahrnehmbaren pragmatischen DDR-Bezug aus, der sich seit dem Jahr des Mauerbaus [1961] kaum anders als programmatisch verstehen ließ (Schnell:1993, p174/175).

In 1968, however, the *Ankunftsszene* changed dramatically in the GDR. Writers like Wolf made an effort to promote individualism, the *Zu-sich-Selber-Kommen des Menschen*. In the GDR, she was one of the first to incorporate this new subjectivity in her novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* As has already been discussed, the critical reaction in the GDR was overwhelmingly negative, because the time had not yet arrived for the GDR to accept the shift from Socialist Realism to a new form of literary expression and subjectivity.

Schnell (1993, p175) links the 'new subjectivity' directly to Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.*: *'Für die Literatur bedeutet dies, mit Christa Wolf zu sprechen, eine Abkehr von den 'generationslosen Einheitsmenschen' der 'Antifaschismus'-Prosa und der 'Aufbau'-Werke. Ihr Werk 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' aus dem Jahre 1968 kann als beispielhaft gelten für diese 'Prosa der uneingepaßten Subjektivität'.* It is important to note Schnell's use of the word *uneingepaßten*. Thematically, Christa T. is *eine Unangepaßte* or *eine Außenseiterin*, who struggles all her life to fit into socialist society, but ultimately fails to do so.

Schnell also discusses the literary debate in the GDR about *Christa T.* He writes about the revisions and changes of the text the publishers wanted Wolf to make to suit their political

agenda: 'Die Mächtigen in der DDR haben auf Christa Wolfs Text Einfluß genommen und Revisionen erzwungen. Sie haben versucht, das Erscheinen des Buchs zu verhindern, die Erstauflage gering zu halten, die Auslieferung zu hintertreiben, den Verkauf zu unterbinden, Rezensionen zu begrenzen und die Neuauflage zu verzögern' (Schnell: 1993, p179). This process of editing and revising is what Schnell calls 'eine repressive Kulturpolitik'. He argues that Wolf was criticised so severely because in the GDR her views were two decades ahead of her time and most of her GDR contemporaries were not yet ready to accept change: '[...] in Christa Wolfs Erzählung scheint von der Entwicklung etwas vorausgeahnt, die zwei Jahrzehnte später Wirklichkeit werden sollte. Eine prognostische Qualität, die keiner politischen Position entsprang, sondern einer poetischen Haltung' (Schnell: 1993, p129). Wolf herself affirms the notion of writing about the *innere Problematik* she has been accused of by GDR critics.

At the second Bitterfelderkonferenz in 1964, Wolf remarked: 'Es sollte ruhig mal einer über das Abweichende schreiben' (As quoted in Schnell; 1993, p129). After the eleventh Tagung des ZK der SED in December 1965, views were even more critical of any form of literary dissidence, especially after Erich Honecker's declaration at the Tagung: 'Unsere DDR ist ein sauberer Staat [...] In ihr gibt es unverrückbare Maßstäbe der Ethik und Moral, für Anstand und gute Sitte'. (ibid).

Later, a dossier was filed by the *Hauptabteilung XX des Ministeriums für Staatsicherheit (MFS)* in April 1975 that included the names of writers like Stefan Heym, Christa Wolf, Reiner Kunze, Bettina Wegner and others. Part of the dossier included information about 'negative und feindliche Aktivitäten von Personen aus dem kulturellen Bereich' (as cited by Schnell:1993, p132).

As a critic from the Federal Republic, Mandelkow argues that Wolf's deviation from Socialist Realism is more ideologically objective than those of the GDR literary critics:

Mit "Nachdenken über Christa T." hat Christa Wolf für die Bitterfelder Erzählprosa in der DDR Maßstäbe gesetzt, die nur um den Preis eines verdinglichten Realismus unterlaufen werden können. Man sollte meinen, [...] daß mit Werken wie Christa Wolfs 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' der geschlossene Regelkreis gesprengt ist und diese Literatur damit auch ohne 'Übersetzung' für einen bürgerlich-westlichen Leser rezipierbar geworden sei (Mandelkow: 1976, p173).

With the arrival of *Christa T.* on the literary scene, West Germans were able to identify with the literature from the GDR without getting caught up in endless Marxist propaganda and Socialist jargon. What Mandelkow is suggesting is that *Christa T.* can be included in world literature

because it contains themes and motifs of universal, rather than specifically East German, significance.

One of the first West German critics to respond to *Christa T.* in depth was Heinrich Mohr. He argues that, in writing *Christa T.*, Wolf was deliberately trying to go against the Socialist Realist ideology in this novel so as to evoke reaction from the GDR Establishment. He sees Wolf as an politically engaged writer, who served the GDR community and belonged to relevant political organisations such as the *SED*. It is sometimes problematic to establish whether Mohr is praising Wolf for her 'community service' and the political relevance of her work, or regarding her as a writer who could never break away from the hypocrisy and bigotry of political engagement. Mohr's opinions of *Christa T.* are thus in many ways ambiguous because they do not reflect the usual positive critical assessment of the West German critics or the overwhelmingly negative responses of the GDR critics:

Christa Wolf läßt sich nicht als eine naïve und weltfremde Autorin interpretieren. Bereits ihre Biographie zeigt, daß sie sich auskennt in der DDR, und in den kulturpolitisch relevanten Instanzen und Organisationen ganz besonders. Sie hat das 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' wissentlich und willentlich 'gegen den Strom' geschrieben und hat, als sie das Buch veröffentlichte, gewiß Ärger erregen wollen (Mohr: 1971, p118).

Frauke Mayer places the writing of *Christa T.* within a new phase of the GDR's history during which technological developments prevailed. She calls these developments the 'technical revolution':

"'Nachdenken über Christa T.' ist in einer Entwicklungsphase der DDR entstanden, in der die enorm forcierte 'Wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution' neben dem ökonomischen Aufschwung technokratische Wissenschaftsgläubigkeit hervorbrachte, die gesellschaftliche Probleme nur noch unter dem Aspekt ihrer wissenschaftlichen bzw. technischen Lösbarkeit in den Blick treten ließ'. (Mayer:1975, p139).

Many critics, both East German and West German, have failed to recognise the role of the 'technological revolution' in the GDR. Section 2 discusses Wolf's views about technocratic issues as well as her literary intentions about *Christa T.* The ideologically conflicting views of German literary critics provide a yardstick against which the author's own perspectives on, and reasons for, writing *Christa T.* may be compared and contrasted.

(2) DER SCHRIFTSTELLER IST EIN WICHTIGER MENSCH: CHRISTA WOLF'S VIEWS ON WRITING.

One of the remaining questions about *Christa T.* is the autobiographical dimensions of the novel. Some critics go so far as to claim that they know that Christa T.'s character was based on one of Wolf's real-life friends:

Hans Mayer teilt in einer Fußnote mit, daß es eine 'reale' Christa T. mit 'ähnlich ablaufender Lebensgeschichte' gegeben hat. Sie war eine Freundin von Christa Wolf. Beide studierten in Leipzig zusammen Germanistik. An die Examensarbeit über Theodor Storm, die im Roman zitiert wird und eine wichtige Rolle spielt, erinnert sich Hans Mayer, der damals Ordinarius in Leipzig war (Mohr:1971, p193).

In *Lesen und Schreiben* (1972), Wolf reflects mainly upon issues such as the role of autobiography in *Christa T.* She stresses that writers should think clearly about personal experiences, not to under- or over-emphasise them: *'Die Gefahr, bestimmte persönliche Erlebnisse, bestimmte Zeitereignisse zu über- oder unterschätzen, bedroht jeden. Man braucht manchmal lange Zeit, um die Bedeutung einer Entscheidung, einer Bekanntschaft, die Tragweite eines Irrtums oder einer Unterlassung ganz zu begreifen'*. (LS:1964, p22). In *Selbstinterview* (LS: 1968, p76), Wolf denies any outside 'Stoff' that helped her to write *Nachdenken über Christa T.* According to Wolf, there was hardly any milieu ('*Gebiet unseres Lebens*'), content or plot, that encouraged her to write the novel or to sum it up in a few words. However, she does admit to a certain subjective motive for writing *Christa T.*:

Ein Mensch, der mir nahe war, starb zu früh. Ich wehre mich gegen diesen Tod. Ich suche nach einem Mittel, mich wirksam wehren zu können. Ich schreibe, suchend. Es ergibt sich, daß ich eben dieses Suchen festhalten muß, so ehrlich wie möglich, so genau wie möglich. Ich dringe in die frühere Welt dieser Toten ein, die ich zu kennen glaubte und die ich mir nur erhalten kann, wenn ich es unternehme, sie wirklich kennenzulernen (ibd).

Wolf's description of her late friend corresponds to one of the main themes of *Christa T.*: *'Um schreibend über die Dinge zu kommen'*. In reflecting upon Christa T., the *Erzählerin* has certain autobiographical nuances, because Wolf herself wrote the novel to come to terms with her friend's death and to get to know her better in the process. Wolf also writes about the relationship between fact and fiction/imagination since she uses both to structure the novel: *'Ich stütze mich*

nicht nur auf die trügerische Erinnerung, sondern auf Material: Tagebücher, Briefe, Skizzen der Christa T., die mir nach ihrem Tod zugänglich gemacht wurden' (LS, p76).

Wolf describes the creative and associative processes, using the potent richness of the image of *Inselchen*, to talk about the making of the novel: 'In dem Strom meiner Gedanken schwimmen wie Inselchen die konkreten Episoden – das ist die Struktur der Erzählung [...] ich stand auf einmal mir selbst gegenüber, das hatte ich nicht vorhergesehen'. (LS, p77). She then notes the process in which she exchanges autobiographical memories for invention/imagination: 'Das Material habe ich souverän behandelt. Die Erinnerung habe ich durch Erfindung ergänzt. Auf dokumentarische Treue habe ich keinen Wert gelegt. Ich wollte dem Bild gerecht werden, das ich mir von ihr, Christa T., gemacht hatte. Das sie und das Ich, um das ich nicht umhingekommen bin, verwandelt' (ibid).

Taking the importance of the *ich* into account (which can be seen in Wolf's replies in *Selbstinterview*), the motto of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* can be linked to the search of the *Ich*. Many critics have failed to see the crucial connection of Becher's quotation to the *Leitmotiv* of the novel. Becher's excerpt is taken from one of his diaries in which he stresses the very subjective *Innerlichkeitsproblematik* of an individual; he contemplates and reflects upon the restlessness of a person who has yet to discover the *Zu-sich-Selber-Kommen*. In *Selbstinterview* (LS, p72), Wolf admits that she uses subjective elements in her novel:

Als ich schon bei der Arbeit war, als das Material, die Fakten, mir geläufig und wieder fremd geworden waren, sah ich allmählich, wenn nicht eine Idee, doch so etwas wie ein Motto. Ich fand es bei Becher formuliert und werde es meiner Arbeit voranstellen: 'Denn diese tiefe Unruhe der menschlichen Seele ist nichts anderes als das Witterungsvermögen dafür und die Ahnung dessen, daß der Mensch noch nicht zu sich selber gekommen ist. Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?'

The last sentence of Becher's quotation is the motto of *Christa T.*, but Wolf goes on to reflect upon the whole of Becher's excerpt: 'Es ist ein großer Gedanke, daß der Mensch nicht zur Ruhe kommt, ehe er zu sich selber gefunden hat, Die tiefe Wurzel der Übereinstimmung zwischen echter Literatur und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft sehe ich eben darin: Beide haben das Ziel, dem Menschen zu seiner Selbstverwirklichung zu verhelfen'. (LS, p78). Thus Wolf stresses the importance of a sincere literature that not only reflects the truth but also links truth with socialist society. This link, however means that only the truth must be reflected and should not be shielded away from, especially in the case of socialist society. Consequently, the type of individual that Christa Wolf wants to write about, and reflect upon, is exactly the restless individual that Becher

wrote about: the person who has not yet found her niche in society, who finds it almost impossible to fit in or conform. Wolf explains why she finds it boring to portray individuals who are *anpassungsfähig*:

Die Literatur nimmt sich, wie unsere Gesellschaft, gerade der Unruhigen an. Menschen darzustellen, denen diese Unruhe fremd ist: Selbstzufriedene, Platte, allzu Anpassungsfähige – das erscheint mir langweiliger und unergiebig. Es kann allerdings nötig sein. Zum Beispiel, um den Hintergrund zu zeigen, von dem ein unruhiger, produktiver Mensch sich abhebt, oder um die besondere Qualität seiner Unruhe herauszuarbeiten. Auch, um die Gründe zu finden, warum seine Unruhe steckenbleibt – wenn dies der Fall sein sollte; warum sie nicht aus sich heraustreten und sich voll verwirklichen kann (LS, p78).

From this excerpt, major motifs of *Christa T.* (as well in Wolf's later novels) can be identified: the stress on the individual's paradoxical interaction with society; the emphasis on the *Außenseiterin*, *Unruhige* and not on the *Anpassungsfähige* and the reasons for the individual's *Unruhe*. Many GDR critics have accused Christa Wolf of ignoring society, by focusing primarily on the individual's subjective experience. From her responses in *Selbstinterview*, it becomes clear that, for Wolf, the depiction of society remains important, especially the connection between literature and socialist society. However, she has grown immensely in her portrayal of characters since *Der geteilte Himmel*: Rita finds her purpose and meaning in society and completes the individuation process, whereas Christa T. neither finds herself as a writer nor as an individual.

Another common observation made by some literary critics, mainly from the GDR, is that *Christa T.* is fraught with pessimism and resignation, that Wolf sees no hope in socialist society. These observations are contradicted by Wolf herself: '*Frage: Also keine Trauer? Antwort: Doch: Trauer. Aber nicht Verzweiflung oder Resignation. Ich halte es für das äußerste an Anti-Resignation, wenn man sich mit dem Tod nicht abfindet, wenn man gegen ihn aufbegehrt*'. (LS, p78). The *Trauerthematik* is central to the reflection by the *Erzählerin* of Christa T.'s character. Critics have assumed that *Christa T.* was, in fact, a *Selbstmordroman* in which the *Trauerthematik* is similar to that in Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774).

One reason given for connecting the two novels are Wolf's intertextual references to *Sturm und Drang* texts such as *Kabale und Liebe* (1784) by Friedrich von Schiller as well as female Romantic novelists such as Bettina von Arnim and Annette Freiin von Droste-Hülshoff. The references to these *Sturm und Drang* texts and authors are, however, used in an entirely different context and with a purpose other than that by which the critics connect despondancy, resignation

and suicide. In 1979, Wolf explored the imaginary meeting between Heinrich Von Kleist and Karoline von Günderode in the novel *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Wolf's retrospective view about the time in which she wrote *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, is even more forthright than her views in *Selbstinterview*, but her retrospection is true about *Christa T.*: '[...] eine Zeit, da ich mich selber veranlaßt sah, die Voraussetzungen von Scheitern zu untersuchen, den Zusammenhang von gesellschaftlicher Verzweiflung und Scheitern in der Literatur'. (Wolf:1982, as cited in Schnell:1993, p209). Schnell (ibid) goes on to say that the seventies produced a certain feeling of *ortlose Dichtung*. *Christa T.* is the precursor to this *Ortlosigkeit* that was prominent in the work of GDR dissident writers in the seventies. Schnell calls this decade of GDR writing '*Scheitern in der Literatur*' and calls the heading of the chapter '*Autoren in der Zirkuskuppel – Ortlos*'.

However, although *Christa T.* manifests certain facets of *Scheitern*, the novel itself is not about resignation and pessimism: '*Ich habe gefunden, daß sie [Christa T.] in der Zeit, die ihr gegeben war, voll gelebt hat*'. (LS, p78). Wolf's statement is supported in the novel by one of its repeated *Leitmotive*: '*Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?*' Wolf contradicts the opinions of most GDR critics that socialist literature should include no *Innerlichkeitsproblematik* or *Gefühlsleben*:

Deutet sich hier etwas an wie Rückzug in die Innerlichkeit, Ausflucht ins Privatleben? Ich finde nicht. Die absurde Meinung, die sozialistische Literatur könne sich nicht mit den feinen Nuancen des Gefühlslebens, mit den individuellen Unterschieden der Charaktere befassen; sie sei darauf angewiesen, Typen zu schaffen, die sich in vorgegebenen soziologischen Bahnen bewegen [...] (ibid).

As one of the writers in a generation who built up the GDR in many ways, including its literature, Wolf was involved in the *Bitterfelderliteratur* and part of the *Ankunftsliteratur* discussed earlier in Chapter 2. Wolf, however, started to move from Socialist Realism by the time she wrote *Christa T.*, she no longer saw the need for concepts like *soziale Produktionsverhältnisse* and the positive heroine like Rita Seidel: '*Die Jahre, da wir die realen Grundlagen für die Selbstverwirklichung des Individuums legten, sozialistische Produktionsverhältnisse schafften, liegen hinter uns*'. (LS, p79). The GDR critics' accusations that Wolf was no longer actively involved in society are false. The reality is that she developed beyond the *Grundlage* necessary to build a new GDR literature since these foundations were no longer appropriate for changing times and a more differentiated society, particularly by the end of the 1960s: '*Unsere Gesellschaft wird immer differenzierter. Differenzierter werden auch die Fragen, die ihre Mitglieder ihr stellen – auch in Form der Kunst [...]*'. (ibid). Wolf emphasizes the *Gefühlsleben* of the socialist individual; the focus is no longer exclusively on the *Vernunft* and the *Wissen* of the person. The greater differentiation occurring in

GDR society resulted in perceptions of greater complexity in the people themselves, particularly in dealing with emotion.

One of the *Leitmotive* of *Christa T.*, *Empfindsamkeit*, explains, in part at least, why Christa T. is celebrated and remembered by the *Erzählerin*. Christa T. is a highly *empfindliche* female individual, who cannot stand bigotry (described in her crisis after the *Kabale und Liebe* oral examination) or cruelty of the sort depicted in the Hammurabi-incident. Christa Wolf herself, like the *Erzählerin*, finds *Empfindsamkeit* commendable: '*Empfindsamkeit ist nicht Rührseligkeit. Neben anderen Wirkungen hat die Literatur seit altersher versucht, die Sensibilität des Menschen zu steigern. Echte Empfindsamkeit lehnt die Jugend nicht ab. Warum nicht an die alte Losung erinnern: denkend fühlen und fühlend denken?*' (ibid). In addition, Wolf repeatedly explores the theme of *Selbstkritik* in her work. Being self-critical, Wolf believes, enables one to understand better one's own history and the present better while making it easier to break vicious cycles impacting on one's future: '*Aber ich habe herausgefunden, daß man um jeden Preis versuchen muß, den Kreis dessen, was wir über uns selbst wissen oder zu wissen glauben, zu durchbrechen und zu überschreiten.*' (ibid).

Three years before *Christa T.* was published, Christa Wolf was already talking about portraying characters not necessarily as socialist society wanted them to be but from a multitude of alternative possible perspectives. This new portrayal means that a character should not always cohere with socialist propaganda or fit into the positive heroine stereotype of Socialist Realism. The characters should be real; that is, they should reveal some evidence of their process towards individuation. They should be portrayed as they really found themselves:

Menschen, wie sie wirklich geworden sind, müssen in voller Schärfe kommen, nicht gemildert durch unser Wunschdenken, unsere gute Absichten und vor allem nicht durch vorgefaßte Meinungen von unserer Gesellschaft. Wir müssen sie darzustellen versuchen, wie sie sind und uns von der Zwangsvorstellung lösen, daß wir eine im ganzen vorwärtsschreitende historische Bewegung zu illustrieren haben (Wolf:1965, as quoted in Baumer:1988, p39).

In another interview, this time with the *Moskauer Monatschrift Woprossy Literatry* (which dedicated the whole of a December issue to GDR literature), Wolf extends her new view of character portrayal in GDR literature. She contends that writers should write truthfully, without defending or excusing the situation in which they find themselves in the GDR. Not only should writing be truthful but also unbiased, possessed of what she terms *Wirklichkeitserkundung*: '[...] sie [Wolf] fordert den Mut, 'unseren eigenen Lebensstoff schonungslos und wahrheitsgetreu zu

erzählen' und setzt fest 'also sollte der sozialistische Autor auf keines der bequemen Kapitulationsangebote eingehen, von welcher Seite sie ihm auch gemacht werden mögen, wie immer man sie auch begründen mag'. (Wolf:1970, as quoted in Mohr:1971, p232).

More specifically, Wolf contextualises her ideas about truth, fact, and fiction in *Christa T.*:

In dem Interview mit Carl Corino (1974) sagt Wolf: 'Es gab sie, diese Christa T., es gab ihr Leben, dessen Fakten und einzelne Stationen die ich kannte oder nach ihrem Tod kennenlernte [...] und es gab auch diese Dokumente, aus denen ich zu einem Teil einige von ihnen zitierte. Dann aber [...] war ich natürlich vor die Frage gestellt, daß ich allein damit nicht auskam und daß manches, worauf es ankam in der Interpretation dieses Lebens, natürlich erfunden werden mußte (As quoted in Hilzinger:1986, p45).

In the light of the way in which Wolf regards facts, imagination and character portrayal, it is equally important to note the process leading up to a novel such as *Christa T.* Christa Wolf names a few factors and themes she deals with before and during her writing: *Sehnsucht*, and multidimensionality of character, setting and experience. It is valuable to a writer, Wolf believes, not to isolate or categorise a character too much, nor to confine her in a *Schachtel*: '*Die Sehnsucht, sich zu verdoppeln, sich ausgedrückt zu sehen, mehrere Leben in dieser einen Schachtel, auf mehreren Plätzen der Welt gleichzeitig sein zu können – das ist, glaube ich, einer der mächtigsten und am wenigsten beachtetsten Antriebe zum Schreiben*' (Wolf:1965, as cited from Hilzinger:1986, p45). What Wolf is emphasizing here is variety of character, setting (real or imaginary), and experience.

As an example of the multidimensionality of character, Wolf talks about Christa T. In Socialist Realist terms, Christa T. would have completed her individuation process by overcoming her *Zweifel*, *Unruhe* and inner conflict with the help of the classless society. However, Wolf portrays Christa T. in such a way, that the character fails to achieve this individuation. In this way, Wolf incorporates the *Scheiternthematik* into the novel: '*Wolf ging es um das Erfassen der 'inneren Dramatik' der Christa T.-Figur, die 'dazu bestimmt gewesen war, zu schreiben, und [...], ein langsam reifender Mensch, durch innere und äußere Gründe nicht mehr dazu gekommen ist, diese Bestimmung zu verwirklichen*'. (Wolf: 1968, as quoted in Hilzinger:1986, p45). Christa T., however, is not disregarded as a character, just because she fails to realise herself. Despite failing to become both herself and a writer, Christa T. still serves as an example to the reader, because of all her other qualities like *Selbstkritik* and *Empfindsamkeit*.

What Christa Wolf hopes to achieve by drawing the reader into the inner turmoil of Christa T. is her association with the turbulent life experiences prevalent in the life of Christa T. These experiences, building up ultimately to her death, are discussed in Section 3 of Chapter 2. Wolf describes the important authentic elements that would constitute writing for her: *'Autoren, die ich für authentisch halte, müssen ihre andauernde innere Auseinandersetzung mit der Bildung, Verfestigung, Wiederauflösung und Infragestellung von Erfahrung ausdrücken. Jemand, der nicht anders als schreibend existieren kann, macht die vielleicht wichtigsten Erfahrungen mit sich selbst, indem er schreibt - gleichgültig, worüber er gerade schreibt'*. (Wolf: 1987/1988, as quoted from Hörnigk: 1989, p8).

This process of individual experience is closely linked to the therapeutic process of writing, as shown in *Christa T.*: *'schreibend über die Dinge zu kommen'*. The therapeutic process includes the experiencing and the identifying of *Schmerz*, two processes that lead to personal freedom: *'Schreiben, wenn man als Selbstbefragung betreibt, kann da eine Hilfe sein, ähnlich einer gründlichen Therapie, sich dieser Einschränkung durch Autoritätsgläubigkeit zunächst bewußt zu werden und dann, in einem jahrelangen, schmerzhaften Prozeß die Angst loszuwerden, die einer echten inneren Freiheit entgegensteht'*. (ibid). Wolf believes, that even while being ill, one can still continue writing as a way to heal, not always physically perhaps, but mentally: *'Das Aussprechen von krankmachenden Sachverhalten' [...] Ich meine, man kann auch schreiben, wenn man krank ist. Um gesund zu werden: Schreiben kann auch Therapie sein'*. (Wolf: 1973, as cited in Stephan:1991, p18).

Not only should the writer manifest an awareness of *Schmerz*, she should build it into the characters that she creates. Thus Wolf emphasizes that the writer should not avoid dealing with *Schmerz* in the creative process; *Schmerz* is essential to writing. Dealing with *Schmerz* recurs as a *Leitmotiv* in *Christa T.*:

[...] daß eine andauernde Wachheit gegenüber Warnsignalen, die aus unserer Umgebung oder aus uns selbst kommen – eine Krankheit zum Beispiel – und der andauernde Versuch, den schmerzhaften Punkten im Schreiben nicht auszuweichen, allmählich eine Veränderung bewirken können, im Sinne von offener, selbständiger, angstfreier, toleranter werden. Daß man – auch ich – es lernen mußte, gewisse früher verpönte Gefühle zuzulassen, zum Beispiel Trauer (Wolf: 1987/1988, as quoted from Hörnigk: 1989, p9).

The *Trauer* that Wolf talks about is exactly one of the concepts to which GDR critics were opposed and for which they criticised her. In the following excerpt from Wolf's interview with Hörnigk, she responds to the critical views of *Christa T.* from the GDR:

Als 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' erschien, gab es in der ernstzunehmenden Kritik (die neben der bestellten, politisch sich entrüstenden erschien) ein großes Erschrecken darüber, daß heutzutage jemand traurig sein und das auch noch zeigen konnte. Es war die Zeit des großen öffentlichen Optimismus. Mir war diese Trauer beim Schreiben zwar bewußt gewesen, weil ich sie ja eben schreibend verarbeitete, doch hatte ich mir nur nicht klar gemacht, auf wieviel Widerstand sie stoßen mußte; aber diese Kritik, die mich zuerst sehr traf, half mir dann, mich zu dieser Trauer um den Verlust eines Menschen und um den Verlust derjenigen Teile meiner Selbst, die diesem Menschen nahe waren oder es hätten sein können, zu bekennen. Denn dies war ja der eigentliche Verlust, den ich in diesem Buch beklagte, und dadurch habe ich diese Anteile in mir erhalten können oder wieder zum Leben erweckt (ibid, p10).

Together with the experiencing of *Schmerz*, Wolf emphasizes the sense of loss evident in both *Christa T.* and herself. However, this sense of loss did not correspond with the *Optimismus* of the *Zeitgeist* in the GDR at the time of *Christa T.* As can be seen from Wolf's response, the experience of individual loss in writing came naturally, and was not forced. Therefore, the many critics, who claimed that Wolf wrote *Christa T.* to make a statement to provoke the authorities, fail to understand Wolf's motives for producing her novel. In receiving such an overwhelmingly negative response from GDR literary critics, Christa Wolf realised that she did not, and could no longer, agree with them on literature and the concept of writing. As a writer, she had deviated from the conventional socialist path in her prose and there was no turning back to what she believed earlier about the origins of GDR literature: '*Meine Existenz in diesem Land als gesellschaftliches Wesen wurde in Frage gestellt, ich habe danach längere Zeit gebraucht, um wieder schreibfähig zu werden [...] ich begriff auf einmal, daß ich nicht dasselbe wollte wie sie, daß sie sich durch mein Buch bedroht fühlten und darum so heftig reagierten*'. (ibid, p32).

To argue that Wolf did not write *Christa T.* to attract attention is correct. However, in writing the novel, she did want to be unconventional, looking, as she was, for new ways to formulate ideas other than by telling a story or constructing a plot: '*Ich suchte ja nach einer Möglichkeit, mich auszudrücken, die nicht konventionell sein durfte, die konventionelle Methode, eine 'Geschichte' zu erzählen, hätte das Netzwerk von Beziehungen, mit dem ich umging, nicht fassen können*'. (ibid, p34). The conventional telling of a story did not suit Wolf's purposes: she wanted to create a reflective novel, partly of fiction, partly of truth. Wolf rightly compares her writing to a piece of

ground or garden where she shovels to loosen the soil for herself, a piece of earth that she can call hers, where she can create freely and experience *Schmerz* without societal restrictions. She makes this comparison in a response to Hörnigk when she cites Günter de Bruyn: '*Günter de Bruyn hat mal gesagt, Nichtübereinstimmung mit der Welt, in der zu leben man gezwungen ist, wird in besonderem Maß von dem als schmerzlich empfunden, der Übereinstimmung ersehnt*'. (ibid, p38). Wolf agrees with de Bruyn's statement:

Da hat er recht. Er benennt da Schmerzen einer frühen Phase bei mir. Heute ersehne und erwarte ich nicht mehr 'Übereinstimmung', ich versuche mir nur immer wieder ein Stück Boden freizuschaukeln, auf dem ich mit beiden Füßen stehen kann, von dem aus ich das Meine schreiben, hin und wieder schreiben kann (ibid).

Another theme Wolf regards central to her work is *Anpassungsfähigkeit*. Rather than depict individuals who adapt themselves to circumstances, she prefers to write about those who cannot: '*Bobrowskis Frage ist und bleibt stimulierend, weil sie hilft, die Welt einer menschenwürdigen Moral und nicht die Moral der Menschen einer noch wenig menschenwürdigen Welt anzupassen: Das wäre auch der physische Tod der Menschheit[...]*'. (Wolf: 1973, as quoted in Hörnigk:1989, p131).

Wolf's anti-*Anpassungsfähigkeit* was severely criticised by GDR critics, who regarded her philosophy as a deviation from Socialist Realism. Although Wolf admitted that, at first, she felt hurt by this kind of criticism, she states later that she would not try to defend herself or her work. She refers to one of the important roots in her work: the *Umgang* with experience. This type of life experience forms the foundation of every new work that she creates. After the severe criticism of *Christa T.*, she realised even more how important it is to convey *Lebenserfahrung* in a specific time and society, her *Erfahrung* of herself and with her own writing – all lead finally to the marriage of art and literature, the two most important components of Wolf's life:

Ich sah auch keinen Anlaß, mich für irgend etwas zu rechtfertigen. Aber ich hatte das Bedürfnis, die Erfahrung aufzuarbeiten, die ich beim Schreiben dieses Buches gemacht hatte, indem ich sie zu artikulieren suchte und mich gleichzeitig fragte, was daran nur für den Einzelfall eines Buches bedeutsam, was verwendbar war für spätere Arbeiten. Insofern unterscheiden sich bei mir die einander ablösenden (oder einander durchdringenden) prosaischen und essayistischen Äußerungen nicht grundsätzlich voneinander. Ihre gemeinsame Wurzel ist Erfahrung, die zu bewältigen ist: Erfahrung mit dem 'Leben' – also der unvermittelten Realität einer bestimmten Zeit und einer bestimmten Gesellschaft -, mit mir selbst, mit dem Schreiben – das ein wichtiger Teil

meines Lebens ist -, mit anderer Literatur und Kunst (Wolf: 1974, as quoted from Hörnigk: 1989, p126).

In this same interview with Hans Kaufmann, Wolf returns to the motto of the novel and the main theme throughout *Christa T.: Die Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen*. The more she understood about social relations, the more difficult it became to utter the word *ich*. She argues for a new type of writing, that she baptised provisionally: 'subjektive Authentizität'. Subjective authenticity should report objective reality, a paradox that is productively deployed in *Christa T.:*

Plötzlich hängt alles mit allem zusammen und ist in Bewegung, für 'gegeben' angenommene Objekte werden auflösbar und offenbaren die in ihnen vergegenständlichten gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen; es wird viel schwerer, 'ich' zu sagen, und zugleich oft unerlässlich: Die Suche nach einer Methode, dieser Realität schreibend gerecht zu werden, möchte ich vorläufig 'subjektive Authentizität' nennen – und ich kann nur hoffen, deutlich gemacht zu haben, daß sie die Existenz der objektiven Realität nicht nur nicht bestreitet, sondern gerade eine Bemühung darstellt, sich mit ihr produktiv auseinanderzusetzen (ibid, p128).

The subjective reporting of objective reality runs parallel to Christa Wolf's belief that a writer should write about life's *Schwierigkeiten*, regardless of what society might think of the truth. Together with these *Schwierigkeiten*, the author should investigate the circumstances and the characters found in this objective process, while experimenting with all these elements. Thus achieving writing without fear:

Der Autor müßte also ohne Rücksicht auf augenblickliche Schwierigkeiten [...] diese Bedingungen untersuchen und seine Figuren, die er gefunden hat oder erfindet, in solche Bedingungen bringen und mit ihnen experimentieren. Was er da sieht und findet, müßte er ohne Scheu sagen, aufschreiben und nicht fürchten müssen, daß es der Gesellschaft, in der er lebt, schadet, sondern davon ausgehen, daß alles, was wahrheitsgemäß gesagt ist, ihr nutzt [...] (ibid).

Lastly, Wolf again emphasises the *Zu-sich-selber-Kommen* of the individual as a means for creating the circumstances in writing to promote this individuation process:

Aber es wird davon abhängen, ob die Menschen sich Bedingungen schaffen, um zu sich selbst zu kommen; ob sie an sich selbst wieder ein solches Interesse finden (Interesse im Sinne von Teilnahme, gereinigt natürlich von Mystifikationen), daß sie sich selbst so

wichtig und so spannend und so wertvoll machen, sich zu retten ('Die Dimension des Autors: 1990, p766).

While Section 3 is given over to the theme of finding oneself as it is to be found in *Christa T.*, it also engenders a hermeneutic interpretation of the novel, purpose of which is to establish whether the novel may be categorised as belonging to the feminist genre. While the hermeneutic interpretation attempts to deal comprehensively with the most important themes and motifs of *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, it is, self-evidently, impossible to deal with all the details of the novel within the limitations of this research.

(3) NACHDENKEN ÜBER CHRISTA T.: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION

Die drei Farben der Sehnsucht zum Weg des Selbst

Nachdenken über Christa T. starts with a very specific motto from Johannes R. Becher: 'Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-Selber-Kommen des Menschen?' This motto is taken from Becher's 'Tagebuchskizzen' called 'Aufstand im Menschen'. He began writing his diaries in the Second World War period, while, in the post-war years, he gave voice to the shock he felt about the mental *Erstarrung* of the world after the war. The motto reinforces the idea that every individual was supposed to be lifted from any kind of *Selbstverfremdung* by the socialist state. In the case of Rita, the female protagonist in Wolf's 'Der geteilte Himmel', for example, the individual overcomes this *Selbstverfremdung* and finds her place in a socialist society. In *Christa T.*, the protagonist was never able to overcome her alienation from the world and from herself/her self.

The novel's title is reinforced in the opening sentence: 'Nachdenken, ihr [Christa T.] nachdenken'. The *Erzählerin* creates a *poetologisches Programm*, describing the reasons why she is reflecting on the late Christa T. *Nachdenken/Nach-denken* has a three-tiered structure: 'denken über', 'sich erinnern' and 'Nachfolgen im Denken' (Stephan:1976, p80). Another semantic possibility of the word, *Nachdenken*, could refer to the process of reflection after Christa T.'s death: 'hinterher, später darüber nachzudenken'. The novel is an outcome of the female narrator's *Nachdenkens*-process, which parallels Wolf's own therapeutic process after her friend's death, mentioned in Section 2. The italics in the novel identify excerpts from Christa T.'s own writing. The first italic passage of Christa T. emphasizes one of the main themes of the novel, the search or the quest of the self, in this case Christa T.: 'Dem Versuch, man selbst zu sein'. The *Erzählerin* bases her novel on the documentative sources she finds after Christa T.'s death, i.e. her *Hinterlassenschaft*: 'So steht es in ihren Tagebüchern, die uns geblieben sind, auf den losen

Blättern der Manuskripte, die man aufgefunden hat, zwischen den Zeilen der Briefe, die ich kenne' (CT, p. 7).

Christa T. may partly be seen as a *Künstlerroman*, in the same mold as Hermann Hesse's 'Klingsors letzter Sommer' (1920). Like Hesse's novel, *Christa T.* is literature about literature; in other words, writing about the *Schreibprozeß*. The *Künstlerroman* also entails *Künstlerproblematik*, and searches for a definition of the artist's role in society. In Wolf's novel, it centres on how Christa T. attempts to fit into reality and society.

The *poetologisches Programm* is partly paradoxical: the *Erzählerin* recounts her real memories of Christa T. and so reflects on the truth of Christa T.'s life. The *Erzählerin* also reads her late friend's *Hinterlassenschaft*; her most private and inner thoughts, which constitute Christa T.'s own truth. However, gaps remain in the life story of Christa T.: the years between the time she fled from the Red Army and when the *Erzählerin* saw Christa T. at the educational college. The *Erzählerin* consequently has to create her own imaginative or fictional account to fill these 'time gaps'. One of the *Erzählerin's* fears is that Christa T. will be forgotten because it becomes easier to find solace in forgetting than to experience the pain of remembering: 'Endgültig abgewiesen, suchen wir Trost im Vergessen, das man Erinnerung nennt'. (CT, p8). The novel is essentially about the fight against forgetting Christa T.: 'Vor dem Vergessen, beteuern wir aber doch, müsse man sie nicht schützen. Da beginnen die Ausreden: Vor dem Vergessenwerden, solle es heißen'. (ibd).

Although the title of the novel suggests that Christa T. is the protagonist, it becomes clear that the reflecting process is more complex than just the 'Nachdenken über Christa T.', that it is also about the 'wir', the reader that reads the novel. Christa T. does not need anybody anymore, but the 'wir' needs her and needs to learn more about her example: 'Denn sie selbst, natürlich, vergißt oder hat vergessen, sich, uns, Himmel und Erde, Regen und Schnee'. (ibd). Consequently, the *Erzählerin* has the authority to write about Christa T. in the ways she desires: 'Ich verfüge über sie. Sie bewegt sich, wenn ich will'. (ibd). There is a sense of *Selbsttäuschung* on the part of the *Erzählerin*, she thought that she knew Christa T., but, after her death, she discovers that she really knew little about her friend: 'Denn die Angst ist neu. Als sollte sie noch einmal sterben, oder sollte ich etwas Wichtiges versäumen'. The *Angst* of the *Erzählerin* is about Christa T.'s almost dying twice: first, physically and, secondly, in her memory: 'Fast wäre sie wirklich gestorben. Aber sie soll bleiben. Dies ist der Augenblick, sie weiterzudenken, sie leben und altern zu lassen...' (ibd). According to the *Erzählerin*, Christa T. died too young, she will never grow old, have grey hair or wrinkles like the *Erzählerin*, she will be eternally young in the memory: 'Sie, die Ältere, nun schon jünger: Fünfunddreißig, schrecklich jung'. Because of this dying too young, the *Erzählerin*

wants to do everything in her power to keep Christa T. alive: *'Etwas von Zwang ist unleugbar dabei. Zwingen, wen? Sie? Und wozu? Zu bleiben? Aber die Ausreden wollten wir hinter uns lassen'*. The *Erzählerin* views these *Ausreden* as futile, she simply wants to reflect uncompromisingly. Nonetheless, the *Nachdenken* is not exclusively about Christa T.'s life as there is a selfish dimension about the reflection; the *'wir'*: *'Und bloß nicht vorgeben, wir täten es ihretwegen. Ein für allemal: Sie braucht uns nicht. Halten wir also fest, es ist unsererwegen, denn es scheint, wir brauchen sie'*. (ibd).

A later passage in the novel explains why Christa T.'s life should be remembered and celebrated. The *Erzählerin* uses martyrdom as a metaphor to illustrate Christa T.'s own martyrdom. In 1961, Christa T. takes a trip with her husband, Justus, to an ancient monastery: *'Reliquienschrein. Die Knochen der Heiligen hinter der Glasplatte'*. (CT, p11). The emphasis falls on the martyrdom of the forgotten saints through the centuries. Modern society fails to remember and understand their martyrdom: *'[...] den Martyrien der Heiligen, unter der Apokalypse, die uns nicht mehr betrifft.'* (ibd). This forgotten martyrdom is linked with Christa T.'s suffering and martyrdom that goes unnoticed all her life. Only after her death does the *Erzählerin* realise the extent to which Christa T. was a martyr in her own time. The suffering of these martyrs/saints becomes the new martyrdom of sufferers in modern times, and here, specifically, in the GDR. These modern martyrs will, in due course, also be forgotten and be left in oblivion for centuries to come: *'So eines Tages, wird man unter unseren Martyrien spazieren'*. (ibd). Significantly, the word *martyr* comes from the Greek *martur*, meaning witness. As an individual in the tumultuous times between the Nazi regime and the establishment of socialism in the GDR, Christa T. is witness to many horrors, crimes, and changes in ideology. Because she is unable to fit into the socialist society, her struggle not to compromise herself transforms her into a witness, a martyr. One of the images reinforcing the idea of ancient and modern martyrdom is the wooden crucifix found in the monastery. The *Kreuzthema* is the reason for writing the novel about Christa T.: *'Das hohe hölzerne Kreuz auf dem Westgrat über dem Gebirgstal hebt sich schwarz vom gelben Abendhimmel ab. Wir können wohl nur, sagt Christa T., in aller Ruhe damit rechnen, daß nicht verlorengehen wird, was noch so dringend gebraucht wird'*. (ibd). Through these words, Christa T. emphasises the realisation that *Empfindsamkeit* is an attribute that should never be lost, especially because of its scarcity in modern society. Christa T. therefore represents qualities, such as *Leidenschaft* and *Empfindsamkeit*, that most individuals do not seem to possess. Like the medical student whom Christa T. meets again after years, people are *'abgetötet'* or *'abgestumpft'*. However, throughout her life, Christa T. attempts to fit into society, but without success: Christa T. was different: *'Der bekannte Blick, dunkel, leicht spöttisch, ein wenig vorwurfsvoll...sie gab sich ja Mühe hineinzupassen, sie fiel nicht aus bloßem Übermut heraus...'* (p36).

The *Leidenschaftsthema* is reiterated throughout the novel. Christa T. has experienced bitterness, because society failed to understand her *Leidenschaft* and *Empfindsamkeit*: *'Das ist mein Grund, über sie [Christa T.] zu sprechen. Erbitterung aus Leidenschaft. Kam das Wort schon vor? Wird es befremden? Komisch wirken? Altmodisch?* The consequent bitterness Christa T. experiences results in martyrdom because her inner qualities are seen as old-fashioned. The *Erzählerin* goes back to ancient times when *Leidenschaft* was seen as brutal heroism and reflects upon the question of whether *Leidenschaft* should be linked exclusively with ancient heroes and their crimes against humanity: *'Oder wird man uns immer noch glauben machen wollen, auf ewig sei Leidenschaft mit jenem ehrsüchtigen Offizier verbunden, der im Duell fällt, oder mit dem Aufstieg und Fall von Monarchen und Führern?'* (CT, p130). Wolf explores the hero theme in more depth in *Kassandra*.

Again, the *Erzählerin* emphasizes Christa T.'s *Leidenschaft* and consequently why she is exemplary to the living: *'Christa T. hatte mit uns das Glück, in dem Alter, in dem man mit Leidenschaft rechnet, gezwungen zu werden, sich selbst hervorzubringen.'* (ibid). Christa T.'s dedication to the utopian ideals of Socialism refers back to the communists who had set the pathway for individuals like Christa T.: *'Nur daß die Kämpfe der Alten auf einmal unsere Kämpfe wurden, das fühlten wir gleich [...] Und daß sie uns nicht gestatten würden, in die Rolle der Betrogenen zurückzuweichen. Doch auch die Rolle der eisern Gläubigen war abgesetzt, die Bühne, auf der man solche Rolle spielt, war verdunkelt.'* (ibid). Christa T. rejects the role of the ironfisted uncompromising socialist believer. This kind of unwavering communism is described as a dark stage upon which the *eisern Gläubigen* are the actors.

Another recurrent theme in the novel is *Wahrheit*, a concept crucial to Christa T.:

[...] 'Die Wahrheit' sagten wir, konnten es nicht lassen, diesen Namen immer wieder auszusprechen: Wahrheit, Wahrheit, als sei sie ein kleinäugiges Tier, das im Dunkel lebt und scheu ist, das man überlisten und fangen kann, um es dann für allemal zu besitzen. Wie wir unsere früheren Wahrheiten besessen hatten [...] Nichts ist so schwierig wie die Hinwendung zu den Dingen, wie sie wirklich sind, zu den Ereignissen wie sie wirklich passieren.... (ibid).

'Die Dinge wie sie wirklich sind' constitutes yet another recurrent motif that is closely related to Christa T.'s writing. The small-eyed, shy animal that lives in the dark is a potent metaphor, referring, as it does, to a variety of 'truths' prevalent during the time of the Christa T./Christa Wolf generation. These truths were modified, adapted, manipulated continually as ideologies changed,

as were the truths within the Socialist ideology – from the beginnings of the GDR to the later disappointments caused by oppressive forms of Communism.

The *Tatsachen* motif links with the *Wahrheitsthema*. Christa T. always questioned the so-called given facts: *'Die Macht der Tatsachen, an die wir glaubten... Aber was ist Macht? Was sind Tatsachen? Und schafft nicht auch Nachdenken Tatsachen?'* (CT,p60). Subsequently, *Tatsachen* are the product of *Nachdenken*, neither reflection nor telling necessarily constitute reality – how things really happened:

Wie man es erzählen kann, so ist es nicht gewesen. Wenn man es aber erzählen kann, wie es war, dann ist man nicht dabei gewesen, oder die Geschichte ist lange her, so daß einem Unbefangenheit leichtfällt. Allein daß man trennen muß und hintereinanderreihen, um es erzählbar zu machen, was in Wirklichkeit miteinander vermischt ist bis zur Unlösbarkeit... (CT, p66).

The *Tatsache* theme that the *Erzählerin* reflects upon, originates from Christa T.'s diaries:

Nach dem merkwürdigen Satz von der Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen, stand da: 'Tatsachen! An Tatsachen halten. Und darunter in einer Klammer: 'Aber was sind Tatsachen?' [...] Wie könnte denn alles, was passiert, für jeden Menschen zur Tatsache werden? Sie hat sich die Tatsachen ausgesucht, die zu ihr paßten – wie jeder ... Übrigens war sie süchtig nach Aufrichtigkeit (CT, p169).

The 'sie' refers to Christa T., always searching for the truth or, at least, the truth that she felt comfortable with. The *Erzählerin* describes Christa T. as addicted to the truth. The 'preferred' truth is later explored in *Kassandra*, hiding the truth and seeing it the way the individual wants it to be constituted:

Würde sie die wenigen Blätter vollenden lassen, die sie uns hinterlassen wollte, und die, wenn nicht alles täuscht, eine Nachricht gewesen wären aus dem innersten Innern, jener tiefsten Schicht, in die man schwerer vordringt als unter die Erdrinde oder in die Stratosphäre, weil sie sicherer bewacht ist: von uns selbst (CT, p172).

The *Erzählerin* describes Christa T. as somebody who loved reality, and who had a love for real changes in her times: *'Sie hält viel auf Wirklichkeit, darum liebte sie die Zeit der wirklichen Veränderungen... Das Ziel - Fülle. Freude. Schwer zu benennen.'* (CT, p171). *Tatsachen* and *wirkliches Leben* are brought together in Christa T.'s writing, the two concepts that moulded her

Hinterlassenschaft: 'Würde sie an dem Schreibpult sitzen lassen [...] die Erfahrungen aufzeichnend, die die Tatsachen des wirklichen Lebens in ihr hinterlassen haben'. (p172).

Writing was the means by which Christa T. tried to become herself, her road to individuation: *'Schreiben ist groß machen'. (CT, p165). Schreiben is the Grundthema of the novel and explores Christa T.'s wish for Selbstfindung and the difficulty of saying 'I': 'Die große Hoffnung oder die Schwierigkeit, 'ich' zu sagen'. The difficulty of saying 'I' characterises the 'secret' Christa T. and is articulated only in her diaries. After her death, her Geheimnis was suddenly clear to the Erzählerin: 'Ihr Geheimnis, auf das ich aus war, seit wir uns kannten, war kein Geheimnis mehr. Was sie im Innersten wollte, wovon sie träumte und was zu tun sie seit langem begonnen hatte, lag offen vor mir, unbestreitbar und unzweifelbar....Ihr langes Zögern, ihre Versuche in verschiedenen Lebensformen...' (CT, p166). The centre of Christa T.'s search of and for herself/her self is her utilisation of the third person 'SIE' when she writes about herself, emphasizing her difficulty of saying 'ich':*

In ihren nachgelassenen Manuskripten lese ich die Stücke in der dritten Person: SIE, mit der sie sich zusammentat, die sie sich hütete, beim Namen zu nennen, denn welchen Name hätte sie IHR geben sollen? SIE, die weiß, daß sie immer wieder neu zu sein, neu zu sehen hat, und die kann, was sie wollen muß. SIE, die nur die Gegenwart kennt und sich nicht das Recht nehmen läßt, nach ihren eigenen Gesetzen zu leben (CT, p167).

Die Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen is closely related to Christa T.'s Anderssein, and the Schmerz that it caused her: 'Der Schmerz kann noch größer werden. ICH, denkt das Kind, ICH bin anders...Sehnsucht, ein bißchen Angst, Schmerz und etwas, was einer Geburt ähnelt'. (CT, p26). The Schmerzmotiv is repeated in Wolf's work: 'Es hat damit zu tun, allein zu sein mit einem Schmerz, den man aushalten muß, den man zum erstenmal nicht wegblasen darf'. (p25). In a later passage, Schmerz and the birth motif are tied together. However, here the birth is a 'second' birth process: '...Schmerz empfinden, Sehnsucht, etwas wie eine zweite Geburt. Und am Ende 'ich' zu sagen: Ich bin anders'. (CT, p59). Christa T.'s writing celebrates eigene Innerlichkeit, i.e. the experiencing of 'Schmerz', the problematics of saying 'I' and modern 'Angst'. Such writing may be considered in tune with the Geist of modern literature: '[...] warum sie gerade jetzt dem Kind in sich selbst nachgehen mußte. Wie aber innerlich beteiligtes Schreiben immer auch mit Selbstbehauptung und Selbstentdeckung zu tun hat; wie jeder nicht nur die Leiden, sondern auch die Ermutigung hat, die zu ihm passen...' (ibid).

Christa T. continuously experiences alienation and Schmerz, as a result of her traumatic childhood experiences and the distressing events in her later life. These events haunt her for life,

to such an extent that every time Christa T. experiences a new trauma, she is reminded of past events. The first trauma Christa T. suffers as a ten-year old is of the cat being smashed against the wall by the *Pächter*. This episode makes her question the inherent goodness of humankind – *Was ist der Mensch* – and makes her wonder if human beings are not in fact evil by nature. After the *Kater* event, Christa T. changes forever and becomes alienated from the world and herself: *'Nicht dieses Mädchen, ein anderes, späteres war es wohl, das auf einmal 'irre' wurde – irre woran? – und anfang, in den Spiegel zu starren, abwesend, verzweifelt, und fremd zu sein...'* (CT, p25). Other traumas follow: Christa T. sees how the Gestapo remove a gypsy in a green car from their village to a concentration camp/KZ; as a *Flüchtling* fleeing from the Red Army, she finds a little boy frozen to death in the snow: *'...da kommt ein Gesicht hervor, ein Junge. Der Beifahrer schippt das kleine Gesicht wieder zu und sagt zu Christa T.: Das wär's gewesen. Sie lebt, und der ist vielleicht gestorben, als sie schlief.'* (CT, p26/27). These childhood traumas add to Christa T.'s emotional baggage, baggage which she finds impossible to shed throughout her life:

Wer würde fragen, ob das Gepäck zu schwer wird mit der Zeit? Merkwürdig, wie es nach Jahren wieder da ist, beim Anblick einer vermoderten Gasmasken in einem friedlichen Wald, auf einem Weg allerdings, der sie mit der dunklen Hälfte der Welt, der sie immer entrinnen wollte, wieder in Berührung bringen soll... (ibd).

This *'dunkle Hälfte der Welt'* prevails in her adult life when, as a teacher, she experiences two further distressing episodes which reinforce the destructive, anti-life aspect of human nature: the children who remove the eggs from an *Elsternest* and smash them against a big stone; and Hammurabi, a boy in Christa T.'s class, who bites off the head of a toad.

Christa T. grows up in a village called *Eichholz*, in protected, stable surroundings, the daughter of a free-thinking and liberal *Dorfschullehrer* who painted oil paintings in his spare time. Even as a child, Christa T. realises that she is different from other people and starts to write diaries: *"'Ich möchte gerne dichten und liebe auch Geschichten.'* *Die Zehnjährige, im Ton einer Feststellung. Dichten, dicht machen, die Sprache hilft. Was denn dicht machen und wogegen?'* (p21/22), a question that the *Erzählerin* answers a little later. *'Nun war sie wohl für immer in die andere Welt geraten, die dunkle, die ihr ja seit je nicht unbekannt war – woher sonst ihr Hang, zu dichten, dichtzumachen die schöne, helle, feste Welt, die ihr Teil sein sollte?'* (p24). Christa T. has to protect herself against the dark half of the world that she encounters for the first time when she is ten years old.

Without being arrogant, Christa T. is already able to articulate her *Anderssein* to other people: *'Sternkind, kein Herrnkind'*. (p21). Throughout her life, she tries to remain part of the brighter half

of the world but gradually becoming progressively more aware that she is unlike most people, more *empfindlich*, particularly after the gypsy has been removed from the village and she has to stay behind with feelings of guilt because she is saved: *'Der Schmerz kann noch größer werden. ICH, denkt das Kind, ICH bin anders'*. (p26).

Christa T.'s feelings of guilt escalate after the war when she realises that she has been part of the cruel system in one way or the other, she goes through a personal crisis leading to a psychotic breakdown: *'Damals brach sie zusammen... sie verbrannte ihre alten Tagebücher'*. (p32). Afterwards, Christa T. realises the mistake she has made by burning her diaries; she might have lost the opportunity to work through her childhood experiences and gain some understanding of those years. She also knows that she has broken with her innocence forever: *'Die Lebenszeit wird nicht ausreichen, wieder davon sprechen zu können, 'ihre' Lebenszeit nicht'*. (p33). It is clear that, although Christa T. goes through the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* regarding ideologies, she never goes through personal *Bewältigung*, as her difficulty in saying 'I' reveals. Christa T.'s writing reflects the self-critical approach, what Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) called *'Gerichtstag halten über sich': 'Verteidigung höhnisch zurückweisen; das Urteil sprechen: lebenslänglich. Es annehmen. Es selbst vollstrecken. Lebenslänglich. Kein leeres Wort'*. (p32).

Christa T.'s self-critical writing relates to her vulnerability as a person, the *Erzählerin* reflects upon a photo of Christa T., taken between the years 1949-1952 when she was a *Volksschullehrerin*: *'Sieht kräftig aus, aber inwendig ist sie zart oder was.'* (p33). The *Erzählerin* recounts Christa T.'s *Schutzlosigkeit*: *'Aber Schutz anbieten mit der eigenen Schutzlosigkeit...'* (p34). Christa T.'s *Schmerz* is one of the virtues that can be seen on the photograph of her and the class. To experience pain is one of Christa Wolf's main themes; in the novel, the *Schmerzthema* is emphasized: *'Sie hat etwas zu verbergen, eine Wunde, könnte man denken, die schwer heilt. Sie ist zurückhaltend, gefaßt'*. (p36). Because of her *Schutzlosigkeit*, the young Christa T. temporarily finds solace in the theory and ideals of Socialism, she sees the socialist ideology as a path to herself: *'[...] Ja, so wird es sein. Dies ist der Weg zu uns selber. So wäre diese Sehnsucht nicht lächerlich und abwegig, so wäre sie brauchbar und nützlich'*. (ibid).

The *Erzählerin* remembers Christa T.'s *Angst* and her tendency to vanish suddenly for considerable periods while studying *Germanistik* in Leipzig in 1951: *'Christa T. war scheu. Vor allem anderen die Angst, einem selbst könnte zustoßen, was gang und gäbe war: spurlos zu verschwinden'*. (p36). Christa T.'s *Verschwinden* links with her philosophy of not deceiving oneself or having delusions, about telling reality as it is - these concepts are prevalent throughout her writing: *'Sie muß frühzeitig Kenntnis bekommen haben von unserer Unfähigkeit, die Dinge so zu sagen, wie sie sind. Ich frage mich sogar, ob man zu früh davon erfahren und für immer*

entmutigt werden, ob man zu früh klarsichtig, zu früh der Selbsttäuschung beraubt sein kann'. (ibid). Part of the reason for her bouts of sudden disappearance was her desire to be always on the move, to stay curious about things, and to think of new challenges for herself:

Sie hat diesen Vorgang – wegzugehen – später noch öfter wiederholt, dahinter verbirgt sich ein Muster, schon ablesbar beim erstenmal, hinter sich lassen, was man zu gut kennt, was keine Herausforderung mehr darstellt. Neugierig bleiben auf die anderen Erfahrungen, letzten Endes auf sich selbst in den neuen Umständen. Die Bewegung mehr lieben als das Ziel (p44/45).

The most powerful driving force behind Christa T.'s writing is to cope with the *Lebensproblematik*: 'Und was man, wenn man sich davon bedroht fühlt, allerdings nicht mehr mit Schweigen übergehen kann'. (p37). Writing thus gives a voice to the *Lebensproblematik* and, in many ways, counteracts silence: 'Daß ich nur schreibend über die Dinge komme!' (ibid).

As a non-conformist, Christa T.'s *Hinterlassenschaft* reflects the chaos of her existence, she is unable to write systematically and makes notes randomly: 'Der Tagebücher, Skizzen, Beobachtungen, Geschichten, Titellisten, der Entwürfe und Briefe. Soviel Achtlosigkeit läßt sich nicht mehr als Unordnung tarnen oder als Flüchtigkeit'. (ibid). Some of her documents date right back to early childhood: 'Sie hat, übrigens, unter keine ihrer Arbeiten ein Datum geschrieben. Aber alles, die Schreibart der Manuskripte, die Beschaffenheit und das Alter des Papiers, deutet darauf hin, daß die Skizzen über ihre Kindheit eben aus jener Zeit stammen'. (p59). Christa T. tries to make sense of the chaos around her and in herself through writing: 'Der Vorwurf der Schwäche schimmert durch, mit der sie sich gegen die Übermacht der Dinge zu wehren meinte: schreibend. Und, trotz allem, über die Dinge kam'. (p37).

One of the major crises in Christa T.'s life is the Günter episode. Günter is one of her fellow students or *Kommilitone*. As part of a seminar, they have to talk about Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*: '[...] Arbeiten Sie anhand von Schillers 'Kabale und Liebe' den Vorrang der gesellschaftlichen vor den persönlichen Motiven im Verhalten Ferdinands heraus'. (p68). The theme of the seminar is significant because Schiller's play deals mainly with a love-triangle, a situation in which Günter finds himself with Inge and Kostja. Günter relates the assignment to his own life, so making it subjective and "bourgeois", a concept that contradicts the socialist response that the system expected: 'Unglückliche Liebe sei, in der neuen Gesellschaft, kein Grund mehr, sich umzubringen'. (p69). The whole Günter-episode disillusioned Christa T. because she realises that Günter's work is not evaluated as 'Günter's' but as an example of the greater socialist idea: 'Günter würde nicht als Günter abgeurteilt werden, sondern als Beispiel, wohin ein Mensch gerät,

der dem Subjektivismus verfällt'. (ibid). Christa T. retreats after the whole incident, and experiences an existential crisis during which she writes a letter to her sister (although she never sends it), talking about ending her life; the same theme - *'Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?'* - is repeated: *'In dem Brief steht aber, daß sie sterben wollte und sonst zu nichts Lust hatte. Wie konnte einer, den man fast jeden Tag sah, unversehens auf Sterben verfallen?'* (p71). She sees that the only way out is to end her life: *'Ein Leben mit anderen Gestrandeten würde ich nicht führen... Ehrevoller, ehrlicher ist immer noch der andere Weg...'* (p73).

The Günter incident causes Christa T. to doubt herself yet again: she does not fit in anywhere and is afraid that she is too *empfindlich* and *lebensuntüchtig*: *'Welch eine Vermessenheit: Man könnte sich am eigenen Zopf aus dem Sumpf ziehen. Glaub mir, man bleibt, was man war: lebensuntüchtig...Zu empfindsam, unfruchtbar grübelnd, ein skrupelvoller Kleinbürger...'* (p72). Christa T. again asks herself the question: When is one supposed to live, if not now? *'...Wann – wenn nicht jetzt? Wann soll man leben, wenn nicht in der Zeit, die einem gegeben ist?'* (p73). She blames herself for not being whole; it is solely her own fault that she is isolated from the rest of the world: *'...Keine Lücke für mich. An mir liegt es'*. (ibid). The letter describes what Christa T. believes to be her shortcomings, emphasizing her existential crisis and self-criticism: *'Ich weiß nicht, wozu ich da bin... Ich erkenne alles, was falsch an mir ist, aber es bleibt doch mein Ich, ich reiße es doch nicht aus mir heraus!'* (p72). The *Erzählerin* recounts Christa T.'s *Todeswunsch*: *'Eine Kälte in allen Sachen. Die kommt von weit her, durchdringt alles. Man muß ihr entweichen, ehe sie an den Kern kommt. Dann fühlt man sie nicht mehr'*. (ibid).

In the letter to her sister, Christa T. writes about the paradox she always has lived with: on the one hand, she admits to not being a recluse and fears loneliness and alienation, but, on the other hand, she needs time to be alone to reflect: *Ich bin kein Einsiedler [...] aber kein Zwang darf dabeisein, es muß mich zu ihnen drängen. Dann wieder muß ich allein sein können, sonst leide ich'*. (p73). Despite all her feelings of despondency and self-isolation, Christa T. still believes in the socialist ideal and the time that she lives in. These times are also paradoxical and correspond with her own personality: *"Das alles ändert nichts, unlösbarer Widerspruch, an meiner tiefen Übereinstimmung mit dieser Zeit'*. (ibid). However, it is impossible for Christa T. to conform to socialist society and/or to compromise herself. A psychiatrist diagnoses her as a neurotic individual who wants to kill herself, because she cannot adapt to the real world. Like all the other *Tatsachenmenschen/Hopp-Hopp Menschen*, he recommends that she conform to society: *'Todeswunsch als Krankheit. Neurose als mangelnde Anpassungsfähigkeit an gegebene Umstände[...] Sie werden sich anpassen lernen'*. (p74). A medical doctor, who had once been one of Christa T.'s students, echoes the same thought: *'Der Kern der Gesundheit ist Anpassung...Anpassung um jeden Preis'*. (p110). Christa T., however, did not want this

*Anpassung: 'Anpassen lernen! Und wenn nicht ich es wäre, die sich anzupassen hätte? –Doch so weit ging sie nicht'. (p76). This excerpt articulates the Kernfrage of the novel: what if it was not Christa T. who needed to adapt herself, but society that needed to modify itself?: 'Die Welt einer menschenwürdigen Moral anpassen und nicht die Moral der Menschen einer noch wenig menschenwürdigen Welt: Das wäre auch der Tod der Menschheit' (Wolf, 1973 as quoted in Hörnigk, 1989, p131). This Kernfrage plunges Christa T. into an even more depressed state and existential crisis: 'Mein Denken ist dunkler, merkwürdig mit Empfindungen gemischt. Muß es deshalb falsch sein?' (p75). Christa T. writes about the terrible split in herself. She uses the metaphor for the mind that possesses all the senses and calls this metaphor *Augentier*: "Sie gibt kein Zeichen nach Außen, 'Alle Korrespondenz ist mir so lästig! Augentier, sagt sie zu sich. Warum kann der Verstand nicht sehen, hören, riechen, schmecken, tasten? Warum dieses Auseinanderfallen in zwei Hälften?' (ibid). This sense of splitting causes Christa T. to regress: "Dann wieder, beim kleinsten Versagen, schrecklicher Rückfall" 'Wie dünn die Decke ist, auf der ich gehe. Wie lange noch?' (ibid). One of the themes relating to the *Augentier*-metaphor is the *Sehnsuchtt*thema, as both place strong emphasis on seeing as a crucial sensory ability. *Sehnsucht* in the following context has a two-tiered structure of semantic meaning: "Da Sehnsucht von 'sehen' kommt: die Sucht, zu sehen, hat sie zu sehen angefangen und gefunden, daß ihre Sehnsucht, wenn sie nur ruhig und gründlich genug hinsah, mit den wirklichen Dingen auf einfache, aber unleugbare Art übereinstimmte'. (p88).*

Christa T.'s sense of two-tiered longing and seeing is manifest throughout her writing and shows the problematics of the writer: 'Ich kann nur sagen: Sie hat es mitgenommen. Denn ihr Weg dorthin war nicht frei von Gegenkräften, daher langwierig wie viele Wege unserer Generation'. (p93). Christa T.'s writing is marked with difficulty and 'Mühe': 'Aber ein Weg war es immerhin, eine Richtung war eingeschlagen, was kommen soll, hat sich angekündigt, hat, nach langer Mühe, sogar zu erkennen gegeben, von welcher Art es sein müsse; seine Wirklichkeit, seine Mühe läßt sich unbestreitbar wie die Spannung am Ausschlag des Zeigers ablesen an der Stärke ihrer Unruhe' (p93).

While studying *Germanistik*, Christa T.'s writing is influenced by writers of the Poetic Realist epoch of the nineteenth century. Poetic Realism is marked by paradox: on the one hand, its style is reminiscent of Realism with causality, continuity and sober-mindedness as its significant features; on the other hand, the style is poetic, imaginative, and dramatic. The work of the Poetic Realist epoch can therefore be described as *Kompromißliteratur*: 'Sie [Christa T.] liest Raabe, Keller, Storm, hält sich an Nüchterne'. (p93). The influence of these 19th century writers is clearly seen in Christa T.'s diaries and her concept of writing: 'Hart schreiben...trockener Humor, scharfer Blick, zwischen echtem Gefühl und Sentimentalität unterscheiden, vor Verfälschung

hüten: Genauigkeit'. (ibid). The difficulty of saying 'I' is still evident in her diaries: *'Nie hätte sie zu schreiben gewagt: Meine Geschichten'*. (ibid). Christa T. always remains on the periphery of her own world and of herself: *"Sie, die Schreiberin - 'daß ich nur schreibend über die Dinge komme!' - weiß sich selbst von einem Hang zum Peripheren bedroht"* (p96). Writing is always a means to *Selbstverwirklichung* for Christa T. At the same time, she also believes in changing the world, not merely interpreting it, an ideal prevalent in, and typical of, socialist literature: *'[...] die Frage ist fertig: wie man denn - und ob überhaupt und unter welchen Umständen - in der Kunst sich selbst verwirklichen könne'*. (p95).

Christa T.'s diaries are also witness to her belief in distancing oneself in one's writing:

Davon hat 'man' Distanz zu gewinnen, hat sich abzustößen, allen Mut zusammenzuraffen, und wenn er sich gegen einen selbst richtet: Es ist wahr: Die Konflikte ergreifen den ganzen Menschen, zwingen ihn in die Knie und vernichten sein Selbstgefühl. Aber sie vertragen ja auch alle miteinander nicht allzuviel [...] Darin liegt doch ihre Lebensschwäche (p96).

This 'distancing' of oneself is shown in her *Arbeit* about Theodor Storm. Although in one sense at least, she is writing more about herself than Storm, she never employs the term 'I', preferring rather 'one' and 'them': *"Kein Ich kommt auf, natürlich nicht. Jetzt noch nicht. Ein 'wir' und ein 'Man': 'Das Grauen eines ungebrochenes Menschen mit leidenschaftlicher Lebensliebe vor dem Sterbenmüssen, dem drohenden Nichts, weht einem immer wieder Schauer aus seinen Gedichten entgegen....'* (p96). The paradox of Poetic Realism is seen in Christa T.'s *Arbeit* about Storm: the undercurrents of her writing about him are subjective, but grammatically she resists subjective nouns like 'I', thus engendering an underlying soberness of writing: *'So lese ich sie zum erstmal, gefaßt auf den überlegenen Tonfall, die vorgeformten, klappernden Sätze [...] Auf mitgehendes Verständnis...war ich nicht gefaßt, noch weniger auf Selbstprüfung und fast unverhüllte Selbstdarstellung....'* (p95). Christa T.'s self-analysis, however, shimmers through this sentence of her *Arbeit*: *'Ihn [Storm] hat der Konflikt zwischen Wollen und Nicht-Können in den Lebenswinkel gedrängt...'* (p97). This *Nicht-Können* becomes a crisis for Christa T., she fears the day that she will be unable to continue writing: *'Es faßte sie plötzlich eine große Angst, daß sie nicht schreiben könne, daß es ihr versagt sein werde, je in Worte zu fassen, was sie erfüllte'*. (p114). Her fear for not having enough time becomes a self-induced prophecy: *'Hab' ich wirklich noch Zeit?'* The inherent difference between Christa T. and Storm is that he realised that he could not have everything in life without compromising himself and the truth sometimes. Christa T. rejects compromises where the self and the truth are concerned. Her sense of no compromise is also evident in her discussion with the principal after the *Hammurabi/Kröte*

incident; Christa T. regards it as weak to compromise herself: *'Ihr war nicht eingefallen, daß man das nicht alles haben konnte...Keine Kompromisse; die Wahrheit und nichts als die Wahrheit...'* (p104).

Nonetheless, the paradox or the 'split' that characterizes Christa T.'s life can be read as a cathartic experience. In the following excerpt, she perceives the *Widerspruch* in Storm's life, although she is, in fact, also writing about herself as well: *'Der Widerspruch, in dem er lebte, hätte ihn zerreißen sollen. Er aber, der 'letzter geistiger Konsequenz aus dem Wege geht', bleibt vergleichsweise heil, 'klagt aus, was sein empfindsames Gemüt verletzt, ehe die Konflikte ihre volle Höhe und Schärfe gewinnen können'*. (p97). Storm, according to Christa T., tries to escape the reality of his own art, therefore he writes partly as a Realist: *'Die Verpflichtung, tragisch zu enden oder sich einer vollen Lebensleistung zu stellen. Also glücklich zu sein. Alles dazwischen ist Schwäche'*. (ibid). Christa T.'s no-compromise attitude ties in with the *'wann, wenn nicht jetzt'*-theme of living one's life immediately without compromising oneself: *'Denk mal nach. Lebst du eigentlich heute, jetzt, in diesem Augenblick? Ganz und gar?'* (p99). The Hammurabi-episode emphasizes the profound influence of the *Aufklärung* on Wolf's own thinking, her belief in the *Humanitätsideal* when she created Christa T.'s character, and her beliefs in humankind as well as her idea that the human individual is inherently good: *'Wir müssen groß von uns denken, sonst ist alles umsonst'*. (p97). This humanist vision is proof of Christa T.'s vision of herself as a writer: *'Sie, Christa T., hat eine Vision von sich selbst gehabt...'* (p115).

Nachdenken über Christa T. articulates a very specific female experience, although it is not necessarily feminist in nature. Christa Wolf neither attacks the world of a housewife or motherhood nor does she convey the idea that women should resign themselves to being only wives and mothers. However, Christa T.'s experience of motherhood and marriage result in losing herself gradually to the drabness of everyday existence. If Christa T. were fully fulfilled with being only a mother and living her life through her husband, there would have been no need to have an affair or to have a *Todeswunsch*. She endures continuous self-doubt about her choice of getting married: *'Aber kann ich doch machen, was ich will?'* (p120). Although Wolf postulates an idea about *Hausfrausein*, the following extract certainly reveals the creeping sense of futility in pleasing one's husband or losing one's curiosity about new things, or in moving to new destinations, as Christa T. likes to do: *'Kinder zu Welt bringen, alle Mühe auf sich nehmen, denen sie ihr Leben verdanken. Tausend Mahlzeiten zubereiten, immer aufs neue die Wäsche in Ordnung bring. Die Haare so tragen, daß sie dem Mann gefallen, lächeln, wenn er es braucht, zur Liebe bereit sein'* (p121). What the excerpt also articulates is Christa T.'s compromising of herself: she does not even wear her hair the way it pleases her. The act of compromise is illustrated where a metaphor - a stage/scene that needs to be changed or the hiding behind the

curtain - is used for the lack of variety: *'Das Spiel mit Varianten hat aufgehört. Es kann nicht mehr die Rede davon sein, nach Wunsch die Bühne zu wechseln oder einfach hinter dem Vorhang zu bleiben'*. (p135). Christa T. has lost the freedom of possibility, she cannot change the 'scene' on impulse as she used to do as a student.

The strain of family life begins to take its toll to such an extent that it precipitates her later *Müdigkeit*, when life begins to be too heavy: *'Aber er [der Tag] hat ein Gewicht, gegen das meine beiden Hände auf die Dauer nicht ausreichen'*. (p136). Her domestic situation constitutes yet another manifestation of her on-going existential dilemma.

Christa T.'s later sense of futility results in the recurring impossibility of action as well as the 'split' in herself and her paradoxical nature: *'Niemand kann man durch das, was man tut, so müde werden wie durch das, was man nicht tut oder nicht tun kann. Das war ihr Fall. Das war ihre Schwäche und ihre Überlegenheit.'* (p137). The paradox of Christa T.'s life becomes even clearer towards the end of her life: *'und es ist auch schwer zu erklären, in welchem Sinn Christa T. sich immer für unzureichend, in welchem anderen dagegen sie sich für zureichend hielt...'* (p136). The sense of *Sinnlosigkeit* of her existence drives Christa T. to a continual weariness that results in her leukemia: *'in den letzten Jahren haben wir sie nie anders als müde gesehen. Heute kann man ja fragen, was diese Müdigkeit verriet, damals unterblieb die Frage wegen Sinnlosigkeit'*. (ibid). This weariness can be regarded as a kind of *Verführung* into another world, into death in her particular case: *Todesmüdigkeit*: *'Im letzten Jahr muß diese Müdigkeit, über die wir uns manchmal aufhielten, in heftige Todesmüdigkeit übergegangen sein... Die Krankheit näherte sich als Müdigkeit, verführerisch...'* (p144). Christa T. becomes *'Todmüde, sterbensmüde'*. (p173).

The woman-oriented theme is continued in Christa T.'s concern with, and anger about, the resignation of the *Strassenbahnschaffnerin* who is in the same hospital ward as she herself. Wolf asks whether cruelty to women should be tolerated at all in and by society. Again: why should the woman always compromise herself and suffer in silence: *'...Die Resignation der jungen Frau, ihre müde Hingabe an die Leiden, die der Mann ihr zufügte...'* (p128). Relevant women's issues are postulated in the *Strassenbahnschaffnerin*-episode: *'Er schlägt sie...er vergewaltigt sie, jetzt hat sie die dritte Abtreibung gemacht'*. (p129). Although Christa T.'s own domestic situation differs dramatically from the physically violent and brutal life of the *Strassenbahnschaffnerin*, Christa T. too has suffered in her own way. The drabness of her own existence as housewife and mother has created a deadly cycle; she even experiences her house as a *'Käfig'*:

Alle ihre Versuche, den toten Kreis zu verlassen, der sich um sie gebildet hatte, kamen in schrecklichem Gleichmut nur immer wieder zu ihr zurück. Sie spürte, wie ihr unaufhalt-

sam das Geheimnis verlorenging, das sie lebensfähig machte: die Bewußtheit dessen, wer sie in Wirklichkeit war. Sie sah sich in eine unendliche Menge von tödlichen banalen Handlungen und Phrasen aufgelöst (p154).

The *Augentiermotiv* recurs Christa T.'s wish that her senses would not become senseless/senseless, that she would still have the capacity to hear and see and smell purposefully. This is her reason for having an affair with the *Förster*. The distinction between her and Flaubert's infamous *Madame Bovary*, is that Christa T. admits her infidelity to Justus: '*Sie mußte erleben, daß noch Sinn in ihren Sinnen war, daß sie nicht umsonst immer noch sah und hörte und schmeckte und roch*'. (p155). The affair with the *Förster* is a means of ensuring that she is not entirely numb yet, that she is still living life, that her senses are not yet dysfunctional.

Christa T.'s *Hausbauprojekt* is a means of escaping the deadly routines of family life. In designing her dream house, she proves to herself that she is still alive and able to fulfill her mental capacities. The project also becomes a substitute for her high hopes of becoming a writer. Ironically, they are hardly ever spending time in that house and Christa T. felt that they never 'nestled' in properly: '*Das Haus ist gebaut worden. Aber man kann die Nächte zählen, die sie unter seinem Dach geschlafen hat*' (p149). The house is built not very long before her death; any time Christa T. might have for living in the house was already running out. The fact that the house is facing the lake is also symbolic for Christa T.'s restless and ambivalent personality. The hill, on which her white house is built, symbolises not only her increasing *Abschied* from the world as she becomes terminally ill but also her isolation as an individual. Being isolated like a hill emphasises her non-conformity and alienation from the world around her that she has experienced all her life. Because she could never really fit in with the norms of society, Christa T. was never happy with herself. Her ambivalent personality leads her to fail in her ideals to become a writer and being a housewife and mother constitutes yet another part of her existential plight. Nevertheless, the reader can identify with her, despite the complex ambivalence of her character: '*Sie braucht uns nicht. Hatten wir also fest, es ist unseretwegen, denn es scheint, wir brauchen sie*' (C.T., p8).

Christa T.'s sense of living with a purpose may be connected to her wish for *Selbstverwirklichung* through writing: '*Wenn sie am Leben geblieben wäre, hätte dies nicht der letzte Beweis dessen bleiben können, daß sie sich mit den Gegebenheiten nicht abfand*'. (ibid). She comes to fear the inexactness of words, the sense of not writing *wie die Dinge wirklich sind*: '*Sie hatte Angst vor den ungenauen, unzutreffenden Wörtern...Sie hielt das Leben für verletzbar durch Worte*'. (p168). The exactness of words has relevance to *Tatsachen*: "*Nach dem merkwürdigen Satz von der Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen, stand da: 'An die Tatsachen halten. Und darunter in einer Klammer: 'Aber was sind die Tatsachen?'*" As has already been discussed in an earlier excerpt

of the novel, Christa T. chooses to live according to her own *Tatsachen* that she feels are relevant: *'Wie könnte denn alles, was passiert, für jeden Menschen zur Tatsache werden? Sie hat sich die Tatsachen herausgesucht, die zu ihr paßten – wie jeder...Übrigens war sie süchtig nach Aufrichtigkeit.'* (p169).

Christa T. regards phantasy as indispensable for humanity and for her own writing: *"Was halten Sie für unerlässlich für den Fortbestand der Menschheit? Gewissen, stand da in ihrer Schrift. Phantasie'* (p170). Chapter 19 is a résumé of the novel's most important themes and motifs: *'Sie hat immer Angst davor gehabt, steckenzubleiben, ihre Scheu war die andere Seite ihrer Leidenschaft, zu wünschen'*. (ibid). Although the theme of Christa T.'s *Unvollkommenheit* is repeated throughout the novel and, despite the fact that Christa T. is no perfect role-model, the *Erzählerin* would still choose not to change Christa T.: *'Wenn ich sie erfinden müßte – verändern würde ich sie nicht. Ich würde sie leben lassen, unter uns, die sie, bewußt wie wenige, zu Mitlebenden gewählt hätte...Ich hätte sie leben lassen'*. (p172). What Christa T. regards as her own *Unvollkommenheit*, is the constant paradox in which she lived: *'Ich will leben und muß sterben. Ich. Das kann nicht nur, es wird verlorengehen'*. (p175). Near the end of her life, she writes paradoxically about *Schmerz*: *'Der Schmerz, den ich empfand, machte mich zugleich froh...'* (p181).

Part of Christa T.'s struggle with *Vollkommenheit* lies in admitting to the experience of *Schmerz*: *'Es vergeht einem Hören und Sehen, aber auch der Schmerz, auch die Angst. Die Grenzen werden wohl verschwimmen....Ein Ineinanderübergehen hebt an, ein Austausch von Elementen'*. (p174). Part of the difficulty of writing for Christa T., resides in overcoming the fear of calling the fear of death by its name: *'Sie nennt die Angst nicht bei ihrem Namen, sie sagt Schock, sie sagt Einsamkeit, Hilfsnamen....und als sei 'Angst' nun für immer noch ein anderes Wort für 'Tod'*. (p175). *Angst* and *Tod* become synonymous with Christa T., and, right up until her death, she refuses to succumb: *'Sie muß erfahren haben, daß gegen den Tod kämpfen und gegen die Angst kämpfen ein und dasselbe ist'*. (ibid). Contradicting the doctor, Christa T. believes that she can still look forward to experiencing life at thirty: *'An Angeboten, sich abzufinden, hat es nicht gefehlt: Mit dreißig, glauben Sie mir, hat man alles wirklich Wichtige hinter sich...Ich habe das Wichtigste noch vor mir'*. (p176).

Towards the end, Christa T. starts having to admit that she will have to succumb to a greater and stronger force than herself/her self, to death: *'Sie hat wohl Respekt vor sich bekommen und auch Respekt vor der Kraft die gegen sie war.'* (p177). However, she sees life as something precious, in contradiction to her view of life after the Günter-episode when she was a student: *'Ihr kam es wunderbar vor, daß sie auf der Welt war, daß man auf der Welt ist'*. (p178). The *Erzählerin*

emphasizes Christa T.'s tragedy of being born too late to be helped by modern technology. Had she been born just a few years later, her life might have been saved: '*...daß wir uns selber sehen; deutlich fühlt sie, wie die Zeit für sie arbeitet, und muß sie doch sagen: Ich bin zu früh geboren*'. (p179).

Christa Wolf symbolically brings the seasons and Christa T.'s death together. Christa T. dies in winter, in February; the earth is frozen at her funeral.

The novel ends with one of Christa T.'s favourite themes: *Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?* while Johannes R. Becher's motto is echoed in the words of Christa T.: "*Dieser 'lange, nicht enden wollende Weg zur sich selbst' ...Die Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen*".

(4) DIE BLAUE BLUME: THE MERITS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF FEMINIST LITERARY CRITIQUES OF NACHDENKEN ÜBER CHRISTA T.

Eine Autorin ist weder ein Pfarrer noch ein Psychologe (Christa Wolf)

In contrast with *Kassandra*, Christa Wolf's 1983 novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* was reviewed more from various political perspectives rather than from any feminist stances. Because the Feminist Movement in the Federal Republic reached its peak only in the 1970s, *Christa T.* was a precursor of later feminist-oriented novels. In the GDR, however, a feminist movement was not officially part of the political playground because Socialist ideology, in both theory and practice, viewed women as equals in politics and the workplace (at least initially). Consequently, there appeared to be little need for women to become involved in feminist politics. Socialism drew its equality for women from the *Aufklärung*, the first epoch to view women somewhat differently from the centuries-old misogynist articulations by playwrights such as Euripides (480 BC-406 BC), Seneca (4 BC-65 AD) and Grillparzer(1791-1872). German romantic literature was one of the successors of the *Aufklärung* (i.e. rebelling against the principles of the its predecessor), following the *Sturm-und-Drang* period and *Weimarer Klassik*. To explain the roots of Feminist writing in both East and West Germany, many feminist literary critics start with the German Romantic period. Cocalis and Goodman (1982:p13), for example, explain how women were viewed overall in German Romanticism: '*As they become the symbol for the mediation of life, women also became the symbol for the mediation of art: the muse, Diotima or the mystical image as the BLAUE BLUME, the symbol of the hero's poetic yearning for Poetry and self-fulfilment*'.

Wolf's preoccupation with Romanticism constitutes a theme that is restricted to little more than intertextual references in *Nachdenken über Christa T.* These intertextual references are the

precursors of her later novel, *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, in which she explores the imaginary meeting in person between Heinrich von Kleist and Karoline von Gündderode, both writers of the Romantic epoch. It is important to explore some possibilities of Wolf's being a woman writer dealing with specific female issues, if not feminist ideas. Sayre and Lowy (1995) link Romanticism with a specific feminist vision, found in Wolf's works: 'Few modern authors have given such powerful expression to the 'elective affinity' between Romanticism and Feminism such as Christa Wolf'. (p105). She is a female writer who later became extensively involved with activities protesting against the use of nuclear energy, such as the tragic incident at Chernobyl in the 1980s, writing *Störfall* (1987), as a direct result. *Frauen und Frieden* was a concept she stood for, speaking out against technocracy and war. Romanticism was no less vigorous in its condemnation of *technische Vernunft* that was emerging as part of the industrial era in the 1800s:

Considered as a worldview, Romanticism can be defined as a form of cultural criticism of 'modernity - 'the capitalist/industrial/technological civilization born in the nineteenth century and still predominant - which is inspired by premodern values. The disenchantment of the word, the quantification and reification of social relations, the destructive force of mechanization, the reign of abstract rationality [...] are among the aspects of this civilisation criticized or rejected by the Romantics in the name of a constellation of values including imagination, subjective experience, fantasy, community [...] Christa Wolf's Romanticism belongs indeed to the utopian/revolutionary current - reinterpreted in feminist terms (Sayre & Lowy: 1995, p105).

Nachdenken über Christa T. articulates some of these Romantic ideals, which serve as recurrent themes in the novel. Christa T. is disenchanted with the world of *Tatsachenmenschen* and *Hopp-Hoppmenschen* and regards phantasy and imagination - two traits of central importance to Romanticism - as crucial to the survival of humanity,. *Subjective experience* is a *leitmotiv* in the novel that links with Wolf's concept of *subjective authenticity*.

According to Sayre and Lowy, Wolf can be regarded as belonging to the Romantic tradition that was interested in female suffrage and the emancipation of women, although '*her style of thought and writing has little in common with the female novelists of the nineteenth century.*' That said, Christa Wolf cannot be viewed only as a writer belonging to the Romantic tradition, as this fails to take into account one of the most important influences on her work: Marxist Humanism. Although Socialism certainly drew concepts from the *Aufklärung* and *German Romanticism*, socialist ideals do not value the idea of subjectivity. This is the dichotomy of *Wirklichkeit*, *Wahrheit* and *Phantasie* that can be found in *Christa T.* While Sayre and Lowy actually mention Wolf's use of Marxist Humanist (and even refer to literary critics such as Anna K. Kuhn), they do not go into any

significant detail about it, focusing almost entirely on Romanticism: '*In spite of its diversity and its undeniable evolution, Wolf's work as a whole can be characterized by this double perspective: feminism together with Romanticism in its utopian/revolutionary dimension, which in Wolf's case assumes the form of a Marxist Humanism*'. (p105).

Sayre and Lowy argue further that the Romantic and the Feminist were both prevalent aspects of Wolf's work from the earliest writing onwards: '*In contrast to Anna K. Kuhn (1988), we would stress an underlying continuity to Wolf's work and argue for an increasing consciousness and elaboration of Romantic and feminist problematics which were present in Wolf's work from the start*'. (ibid). Wolf, however, contradicts this view. As has been outlined in sections 1 and 2, she denies being a feminist and categorising or devoting herself to any one exclusive gender or political ideology. However, one of the merits of Sayre and Lowy's combined Romantic/Feminist theory is the argument that Wolf did indeed re-write and re-think parts of the socialist ideology of her time. With *Christa T.*, she broke free from the narrowly defined paradigms of Socialist Realism and set new boundaries for subjectivity and the exploration of the female self: '*Drawing on the Romantic tradition in both its early and late stages then, Wolf develops her own vision through a process of feminist reappropriation and reinterpretation*'. (p106). Nevertheless, Wolf remains averse to the term Feminism. The *reappropriation and reinterpretation* of the woman writer would therefore be more appropriate to *Christa T.* Indeed, various critics have interpreted *Christa T.* as a novel within the feminist paradigm.

A number of critics have pointed out that *Christa T.*'s consciousness has a feminist dimension. In particular, Myra Love (1979 as quoted in Sayre and Lowy, 1995) demonstrates how, although Wolf does not use the term 'patriarchal' until ten years after the publication of *Christa T.*, both the character and the narrator break down a whole set of either/or, mutually exclusive oppositions characterising patriarchal culture. Love also notes the utopian potential of *Christa T.*'s feminine consciousness: '*By appropriating the sort of subjectivity which Christa T. embodies, the narrator is also appropriating, by a process of solidarity, the utopian potential of a historically female subjectivity*'. (as quoted in Sayre, Lowy:1995, p107). Evident in these observations by Sayre and Lowy, and Love too is the confusion and random use of the concepts: 'female', 'feminine' and 'feminist'. As has already been discussed in chapter 1, these three concepts not only have historical significance, but constitute three dimensions that have to be distinguished as discrete. Although more than one dimension might be attributed to a women writer - and these concepts are not mutually exclusive - one should be extremely careful not to regard them as one and the same dimension or synonymous. Helen Fehervary and Sarah Lennox attribute an interesting historical dimension to Wolf's writing, which they refer to as 'female perception of history':

[These authors] highlight the feminist dimension and Wolf's reinterpretation of Marxism through women's experiences. From women's lives, Wolf derives an entirely new potential of experience and knowledge. What has been attributed to Wolf in all her works as her 'critical', human' or 'utopian' Marxism, is her female perception of history, and the utopian 'traces' and 'hopes' which Bloch talks about in his theoretical works take on an indelibly material character in the reality of women mediated by Wolf (as quoted in Sayre, Lowe:1995, p108).

To the 'female perception of history' should be added what Sayre and Lowy call *Zivilisationskritik*: *'One must add, however, that the values which inspire her Marxist/feminist utopia and her rejection of positivist/patriarchal ways of life are deeply rooted in the Romantic tradition of Zivilisationskritik'. (ibid).* The merit of Sayre and Lowy's conclusive observation is that it draws attention to crucial dimensions of Wolf's evolving vision: *'According to Wolf, one can find in her letters and poems the desperate hope that 'between men and women there could exist other relations than those of domination, subordination, jealousy, property: egalitarian, friendly, helpful ones'. (Wolf:1991, as quoted in Sayre, Lowy:1995, p109).*

Helen Fehervary (1980, p46) regards Wolf as writing within the male literary tradition, although, as a woman writer, she deconstructs traditional patriarchal concepts: *'Christa Wolf has turned increasingly to an aesthetic of deconstruction. Indeed, a main theme of Wolf's work has been her rootedness as an author in the male tradition and, as a female author, her difficulty of 'saying I', as she terms it'. Fehervary's argument of Wolf's 'rootedness...in the male tradition' contradicts Sayre and Lowy's perception that the feminist influence was evident in her work from the beginning. Fehervary's approach is more accurate because Wolf's work was indeed rooted in the male tradition of Socialist Realism and the predominance of male authors in the *Aufklärung*. Wolf's work is distinguished from the work of most Romantic female writers; Wolf does not utilise exclusively the traditional 'female' forms of writing which usually did not include the narrative genre: *"The historical 'I' of female authorship lies in what has been concealed by the literary canon in the silent tradition of oral history, letters, diaries, autobiography, and fiction that has never been written down, let alone published. The 'I' of female authorship ultimately calls for the creation of authorship, not its deconstruction'. (Fehervary:1980, p47).**

Fehervary regards Wolf's *"I' of female Authorship"* as an aesthetic of deconstruction, meaning by implication that Wolf has created a new and modern type of female writing:

The ultimate consequence of Christa Wolf's aesthetic of deconstruction is the freeing of textual space for the creation of something new, a break with the patrilinear tradition of

the fathers in order to unravel the hidden threads of female authorship [...] for Christa Wolf this process [the opposition between the literary exercise of power and illiteracy] involves the insistence on a literary voice which heretofore has seemed to be silent, but in fact has simply not been heard (ibd).

The unheard female literary voice is exactly Christa T.'s situation. Only after her death does the *Erzählerin* discover the richness of her *Hinterlassenschaft*, emphasizing the significant impact of her work, the *hidden threads of female authorship*. Wolf's disapproval of 'logos' and the consequent logocentricity and phallogocentricity (articulated by Jacques Lacan) is echoed in *Christa T.* who regards phantasy and imagination as essential to the survival of humankind: '*For the female writer there is no restrictive logocentricity, hence no image or Other [as articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in 'Le Deuxième Sexe'] upon which to transfer hope. The authenticity of the self is the only place to go. Female authorship is an intersubjective expansion of the self.*' (Fehervary:1980, p57).

One of the merits of German feminist criticism is the unraveling of false ideology, articulated in *Christa T.* Adelson (1982, p344) pays particular attention to this issue: '*What we, as feminist critics can/must do, is to uncover the ideological falsifications of social conditions. By uncovering them, we slowly begin to change them, because ideology functions only as long as it remains invisible. And therein lies the revolutionary potential in feminist criticism.*' Adelson's idea of female aesthetics links with Fehervary's 'female aesthetic of deconstruction':

It would not serve us well to use one concept of feminist aesthetics or another to categorize a given piece of literature as acceptable or not. That would be prescriptive criticism. Instead we should work towards a concept of feminist aesthetics, while at the same time coming to terms with a variety of literary texts in a manner that is meaningful to our own lives (ibd).

Christa T. is an example of the deconstruction of certain logocentric concepts such as 'logos' and what constitutes factual reality. Although the novel is only a precursor to the de- and re-construction of the patriarchy articulated in Wolf's later work (such as *Kassandra*), *Christa T.* is a partial example of deconstruction by a female author:

I believe that feminine artistic production takes place by the means of a complicated process involving conquering and reclaiming, appropriating and formulating, as well as forgetting and subverting. In the works of those female artists who are concerned with the

women's movement, one finds artistic tradition as well as the break with it (Bovenschen:1977, as quoted in Adelson:1982, p352).

The nearest that Alexander Stephan comes to defining Christa Wolf in gender terms is his articulation of 'die schreibende Frau' that features as a main theme in *Christa T.* The novel uses intertextual references to writing women such as Bettina von Arnim and Karoline von Günderrode as well as Christa T. herself. The theme of *weibliches Schreiben* is continued in *Kassandra*, emphasizing a new generation or rivulet of women's writing that defies the 'silent tradition':

Frauen, vor allem voran Bettina von Arnim und Karoline von Günderrode, aber auch DDR-Autorinnen Maxie Wander und – erneut Anna Seghers ziehen ihre Interesse auf sich. Von Frauen, schreibenden Frauen insbesondere, die seit Jahrhunderten von der Gesellschaft ausgeschlossen wurden, gerade deshalb aber womöglich noch weniger deformiert sind als ihre männlichen Partner, erhofft sie sich entscheidende Impulse für die Debatten für ein menschenwürdiges Leben [...] Genau das freilich vermag sie ihren Frauenfiguren, von Christa T. bis zu Kassandra [sowie auch Medea], vorerst nur indirekt, gleichsam auf dem Umweg über sich selbst gewähren (Stephan:1990, p23/24)

Stephan's further observations are associated with the female banishment of *ideological falsifications of social conditions*, articulated by Leslie Adelson. These observations foreground the *frauentypische* dimensions of Wolf's work, starting with the likes of *Christa T.*:

Am wichtigsten aber – und damit wird neben den gesellschaftskritischen Aspekten der Storm-Analyse vor allem Christa Wolfs Engagement für eine Frauenliteratur weiter ausgebaut – beginnt sich mit dem Fräulein von Sternheim ein Frauentyp anzukündigen, der sich von dem korrupten, unmoralischen und unproduktiven Hintergrund der herrschenden, durchweg männlichen Kreise abhebt (Stephan:1990, p87).

The ironic play on the *Tatsachen*, mentioned earlier, may be considered as an integral *Aussage* in *Christa T.* and the tradition of the female novel:

Und so geht es weiter: Die Tradition des Frauenromans (auf die bereits Gabriele Wohmann in 'Christ und Welt' [1969] kritisch aufmerksam gemacht hat), die Unsicherheit der nach Fakten suchenden Chronistin, das ironische Spiel der bisweilen durchaus sentimentalen Christa T. und ihrer 'Erfinderin' mit dem larmoyanten Roman der Empfindsamkeit (ibid).

In order to gain an insight into how German literary critics conceive of 'Frauenliteratur', Rothmann's concept of German women's literature can be considered useful. It is important to look briefly at the definition of 'Frauenliteratur' so as to establish whether Christa Wolf belongs to this tradition of modern women's literature:

Der Begriff 'Tendenzwende' ist umstritten. Er meint, grob gesagt, die seit Mitte der siebziger Jahre erfolgte Abkehr der Schriftsteller von unmittelbaren politischen Engagement und ihre Hinwendung zum Privaten, zu 'neuer Sensibilität', 'neuer Subjektivität', 'neuer Innerlichkeit' und 'neuer Irrationalität'. Tatsächlich sind dies die auffälligsten Eigenschaften der Gegenwartsliteratur. Dennoch sollte die Tendenzwende mehr als eine Kurskorrektur denn als glatte Umkehr der Schriftsteller verstanden werden (Rothmann:1992, p327).

Wolf's work, and especially *Christa T.*, offers an example of *Gegenwartsliteratur* that may be characterised by 'Sensibilität', 'Subjektivität', and 'Innerlichkeit'. Having established that *Christa T.* belongs to the genre of the modern novel developed in the 1970s in Germany, one needs to explore the possibility of this novel belonging to the *Protestbewegung* and subsequent feminist movement:

Aus der Protestbewegung hervorgegangen, subjektiv und autobiographisch begründet, ist auch der größte Teil der Frauenliteratur, die sich seit Anfang der siebziger Jahre breit entwickelt. Frauenliteratur meint im engeren Sinne feministisches Schrifttum, das wenig Wert auf künstlerische Gestaltung legt, meint die autobiographischen Selbsterfahrungsberichte von schreibenden Frauen auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität; ein Schrifttum also, das wie alle Zielgruppenliteratur der Gefahr ausgesetzt ist, im Sektierischen oder Allzuprivaten steckenzubleiben (Rothmann:1992, p336).

Rothmann's observation about *Frauenliteratur* is relevant to the study of *Christa T.* Although Wolf's novel advocates individual subjectivity, she remains within the acceptable boundaries of *künstlerische Gestaltung*, which means that she draws from various epochs, such as the *Aufklärung*, Romanticism, Realism, and Marxism. Intertextual references and historical background (the Nazi period and founding years of the GDR) are woven into the text, so as to avoid the danger of the 'Allzuprivaten'.

Despite all these defining characteristics, women writers like Wolf disassociate themselves from the term 'feminism': '*Christa Reinig, Christa Wolf, Gabriele Wohmann, Irmtraud Morgner und andere bekannte Autorinnen lehnen die einengende Bezeichnung Frauenliteratur für ihre Bücher*

ab, weil sich ihr Zugriff auf die Frauenproblematik nicht an feministischen Programmen orientiert'. (Rothmann:1992, p337). What seems to be relevant here is that Wolf features with women authors from both East and West Germany who do not consider themselves as feminist writers. Another aspect that distinguishes *Christa T.* from the traditional feminist canon is the influence of socialist ideology, including the importance of the individual and society, but not necessarily the ideology of feminisms: '*Bei Christa Wolf scheint die Rolle der weiblichen Heldinnen in den Romanen 'Der geteilte Himmel' [...] und 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' [...] zunächst noch vorwiegend durch die sozialistische Gesellschaft bestimmt*'. (Rothmann, p338). However, *Christa T.* moves beyond some of the restrictions that Socialist Realism imposed and, as a woman writer, she articulates a 'new subjectivity', a concept that might be regarded as at least an integral part of *weibliches Schreiben/Frauenliteratur*, if not Feminisms: '*Ihr Werk 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' [...] kann als beispielhaft gelten für diese 'Prosa der uneingepaßten Subjektivität'*'. (Rothmann, p176). Rothmann notes '*Christa T.*'s '*neues Selbstbewußtsein*': '*Die Ankunft im Alltag führt zur Entdeckung des Einzelnen, mit dieser entwickelt sich ein neues Selbstbewußtsein*'. (ibid).

Werner Krogmann regards this *neues Selbstbewußtsein* as belonging unequivocally to the stream of *weibliches Schreiben*:

Werner Krogmann analysiert wie Christa T [...] ein alternatives Wertesystem auszubauen, eine 'Weiberphilosophie' ernst nimmt, die Lebensfreude, Empfindens- und Mitleidensfähigkeit, Sinnengenuß und Moralität gegen die 'männliche' Kultur der bloß rationalen Effektivität stellt. Daraus leitet sich ein bestimmtes Konzept 'weiblichen Schreibens' ab, das nicht so sehr formale Besonderheiten meint als die Unverwechselbarkeit weiblich-menschlicher Erfahrung und humaner Wertung (Krogmann:1989, p2009)

A great deal of Krogmann's vocabulary echoes the typical feminist vocabulary discussed in chapter 1, such as the emphasis on the concept of 'pleasure' or *jouissance* (articulated by Cixous), and the *Empfindensfähigkeit* that defies the logocentric patriarchy. Further, Krogmann links Wolf's work with other fields of discourse: '*Sie hat ein Publikum mit den Herausforderungen dieses Diskurses [philosophischen Diskurses] konfrontiert, das dazu wenig Zugang hatte, und zwar vor allem auf folgenden Feldern: der feministischen Diskussion, der Verständigung über die 'Dialektik der Aufklärung[...]*'. (ibid).

Myra Love (1979, quoted in Schmitz-Burgard: 1987, p475) is another feminist literary critic who regards *Christa T.* as a feminist novel, especially in the relationship between the two female protagonists. According to Love:

The subversive potential of female subjectivity expressed in the figure of Christa T.; the relationship of the two female protagonists as a counterpatriarchal example of female friendship and solidarity; and the possibility of a new mode of appropriating experience, perception and expression which rejects the patriarchal interconnection of subjectivity and domination.

Schmitz-Burgard points to the shortcomings of Love's article on *Christa T.*, as well as its merits: 'Loves Interpretation bietet jedoch überaus wertvolle Einsichten in Wolfs keimenden Feminismus in 'Nachdenken über Christa T. (wie sie sagt) und in den patriarchalischen Überbau der DDR'. (p476). Love fails to see the purpose of *Christa T.*: the relationship between the reflecting *Erzählerin* and Christa T. is not about building solidarity against the patriarchy, but rather about articulating Christa T.'s desire for self-fulfillment through writing and her role as exemplar to later generations.

Anna K. Kuhn articulates an argument that holds more merit than Love's viewpoints about *Christa T.* Instead of regarding *Christa T.* as solely feminist, Kuhn regards the novel rather as integrating *weibliche Erfahrung*. In addressing Christa Wolf, Kuhn writes:

Da Sie selbst deutsche Literatur studiert haben, wissen Sie, daß es sich um ein traditionell männliches Gebiet handelt und das Studium der deutschen Sprache eine sehr männliche Disziplin ist [...] daß etwas Wesentliches fehlte (in Werk der Kritiker): die Einschätzung von genau dem, was Ihr Werk für mich so faszinierend und belangvoll macht, seine Beziehung zu weiblicher Erfahrung (Kuhn:1987, p245).

Kuhn's observation that *Christa T.* could have been written only by a 'woman' can be considered as a merit since she avoids using the word 'feminist', a term that Wolf does not identify with as a woman writer. The term, 'woman', does come much closer to the way the author regards herself. She admits that she does find women characters more interesting to write about: '*Ich entsinne mich, daß ich sagte: 'Dieses Buch konnte nur von einer Frau geschrieben werden', ein Behauptung, zu der ich mich auch jetzt, nach ungefähr sechs Jahren, noch bekennen würde'* (ibid).

Manfred Behn refuses to accept the concept of 'Frauenliteratur' when applied to a novel like *Christa T.* because he regards the term as derogatory to Wolf's work:

Grundsätzlicher hingegen blieb die Abgrenzung zur Ästhetik Christa Wolfs bei einigen Rezensenten des extrem konservativen Lagers, die für die Sensibilität der Autorin den

diffamierend gemeinten Begriff 'Frauenliteratur' parat halten und sich im übrigen darauf konzentrieren, durch eine Suche von 'Stellen' die Divergenz zwischen Christa Wolf und ihrer Gesellschaft nachzuweisen (Behn:1978, p18).

Wiegenstein (1969, p80) has a similar argument to Behn's, concerning *Christa T.* and 'Frauenliteratur': *'Man kann das [Christa Wolfs Buch] 'weiblich' nennen, und es gibt in diesem Roman einige wenige Passagen, die sich fatal dem nähern, was als 'Frauenroman' keine gute Presse hat'.*

In 1976, Wolf herself (D. A.1:1990, p165) acknowledged that she has received positive feedback from women readers as far as the female experience is concerned. However, at the time of writing *Christa T.*, she did not have any particular female audience in mind to whom she wished to convey a particular feminist experience: *'Ich weiß aus vielen Briefen, daß es Leser gibt, gerade Frauen, die sich mit bestimmten Figuren identifizieren, die manchmal ein stärkeres Engagement empfinden, als ich es selbst heute empfinden würde oder kann'.* Although Wolf has repeatedly denied being a feminist, she does acknowledge the impact of women's issues on her first years as a professional woman writer, a situation that was more the exception than the rule at that time in both the GDR and the Federal Republic: *'Aber ich war eben damals ja auch noch eine Ausnahme: als schreibende Frau in all diesen von Männern besetzten Gremien'.* (Wolf: 1989, as quoted in Hörnig:1989, p25). As a woman writer, she felt she needed to prove herself in a male-dominated profession.

In the interview with Hörnig, Wolf emphasizes an important theme of *Christa T.*: *'schreibende Frau'*, contradicting many feminist critical views that, when she wrote *Christa T.*, she was already within the feminist dimension. Wolf thus emphasizes the importance of the writing woman and her creativity, but not with a feminist agenda. Hörnig significantly writes a subsequent piece of Christa Wolf's history as a woman writer, involved in matters of equality, showing that Wolf was not ignorant to women's issues:

Christa Wolf war, so ist zu vermuten, nicht nur wegen ihres kritischen und zugleich bekennden Engagements eine gefragte Rednerin [...] Sie war auch es auch als Prototyp einer emanzipierten und gut aussehenden Frau, die die gesetzlich verankerte, in der Praxis jedoch noch längst nicht überall durchgesetzte Gleichberechtigung der Frau in den verschiedenen Sphären gesellschaftlicher Tätigkeit zu demonstrieren imstande war. Die Zahl der sich in der Öffentlichkeit artikulieren den jungen Frauen - war damals noch relativ gering, so daß die wenigen, die sich nach vorn wagten, entsprechend umworben wurden (Hörnig:1989, p.97).

Sonja Hilzinger emphasizes Christa T.'s *Scheitern*; her inability to reach *Selbstverwirklichung*. According to Hilzinger, Christa T. could not find the path towards female self-individuation because of her confinement in some of the traditional female roles of the time:

Christa T.s Erfahrungen im traditionellen weiblichen Lebenszusammenhang erweisen sich als problematisch für ihre Sehnsucht nach Selbstverwirklichung. Diese geschlechtsspezifische Art der Selbstentfremdung schlägt sich im Verlauf ihrer beginnenden Krankheit als Depression und Müdigkeit nieder. Im Widerstand gegen diese Krankheit und schließlich gegen den Tod entwickelt Christa T. ein Potential, das sie jedoch nicht mehr völlig entfalten kann (Hilzinger:1986, p35-36).

Wolf's original intention with the character of Christa T. was not necessarily to depict her fight against traditional female roles but to explore the individual's subjective experience rather than the emphasis on the collective inherent in the socialist ideology of the GDR. However, Hilzinger does have a valid argument in pointing out that Christa T. found *Selbstverwirklichung* through writing, what Hilzinger calls '*inneres Abenteuer*':

Im Gegenstaz zu den typologisch verwandten Entwicklungsromanen des 19.Jhts, worin die menschliche Reifung der (männlichen) Protagonisten – man denke etwa an den Grünen Heinrich – durch das Reisen, das eine symbolische Aneignung von Welt darstellt, befördert wird, läßt Christa Wolf ihre Protagonistin die Selbstverwirklichung im Schreiben, d.h. im inneren Abenteuer suchen [...] (p38).

Lastly, it is important to take a brief look at the viewpoints concerning Feminisms and feminist literary criticism prevalent in the GDR at about the time *Christa T.* was published. Socialism, as already noted earlier in this chapter, was the only official ideology favouring the equality of women: '*Aside from a small faction of radical bourgeois feminists, only the Socialists supported suffrage for women*'. (Cocalis; Goodman:1982, p24). The predominant theme in *Christa T.*, the writing woman, was actively supported by Socialism: '*Women in the socialist movement were actively encouraged to write [...]*'. (p27-28). Later, as the socio-political dimensions were beginning to change unequivocally in the GDR, female writers like Christa Wolf began to challenge some of the concepts of Socialist Realism:

Because of the political and social milieu, the discussion of subjectivity takes on totally new dimensions in East Germany. But here too, the issue is raised most radically by women writers like Christa Wolf, Gerti Tetzner, Brigitte Reimann, Irmtraud Morgner, and Maxie Wander, who have led the way in employing relatively subjective literary

techniques to criticize the discrepancy between self-fulfillment in the public and private spheres (Cocalis; Goodman:1982, p41).

The important issue here is the discrepancy in the GDR between equality in the economic system, in which women were encouraged to work, and the social discrimination that still confronted women. In the beginning, this discrepancy was not noticeable, but, as society became more diverse, writers – and women writers especially – grew increasingly aware of the constrictions under which they were compelled to live:

In a feminist context, such criticism [the discrepancy between self-fulfillment in the public and private spheres] would entail demonstrating that the emancipation of women is not purely a matter of legislating equality or of instituting socialist changes in the economic system, but that deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes must be modified in both men and women to achieve the goals of Socialism (Cocalis, Goodman:1982, p42).

The discrepancy between politics and the private domain is articulated even more clearly by Cocalis and Goodman in their explanation of the GDR's changing society. Wolf began to question patriarchal society 13 years later in *Kassandra*, a novel that shows the extent of the development in her thought since *Christa T.*

The contradiction of theory and practice by Communism concerning equality in the GDR is not directly explored in *Christa T.*: *'Part of the problem lies in inherent contradictions of legislation in East Germany that insures equality while upholding traditional structures of the nuclear family; part of it lies in literary images of women that have evolved as the canon of Socialist Realism since 1945'. (Cocalis, Goodman, p42).* These traditional structures in GDR were called *Doppelbelastung*, a term emphasizing the 'double load' of women: in addition to their work roles, they also had to assume their societally-established domestic roles: *'These female figures were active in capacities other than wife, mother, sex-object, but they were expected to fulfill those roles in addition to their new professional ones (Doppelbelastung). (p43).*

To some extent, *Christa T.* explores the discrepancies articulated above, namely the private sphere:

It was not until 1968, when Christa Wolf articulated a need for a new 'subjective authenticity' in her novel 'Nachdenken über Christa T.', that women writers like Tetzner, Reimann, Morgner and Wander began to question socialist ideals and to point out the

discrepancies between the rhetoric and the reality of women's self-realization in the private sphere (ibid).

These women novelists, encouraged by Wolf's *Christa T.* challenged the concept of 'Doppelbelastung':

In their new search for autonomy, they challenged the premise of 'Doppelbelastung', the prevailing concepts of sexuality, moral attitudes, monogamy, and abortions. These women authors also began to portray female figures such as non-typical characters, [in the likes of the Christa T. character] to expand the concept of literature to include non-literary forms [...] (Cocalis, Goodman, p44).

Cocalis and Goodman state specifically that Wolf does not associate herself with the traditional feminist genre, although they do emphasise the importance of her humanist vision that includes the idea of equality for women and, more especially, for 'writing women': *'Women writers like Wolf or Morgner do not identify themselves as feminists, but their humanitarian vision is one in which the economic substructure underlying a patriarchal ideology is radically transformed – without the aid of the Eternal Feminine – in a manner that finally eliminates biological stereotypes' (ibid).*

Biddy Martin (1982, p421) explains the later agenda adopted by women writers in the GDR:

Although the oppression of women and sexual repression generally are not an official focus for change within the GDR, more and more writers are addressing the problems inherent in patriarchy, focusing on the dichotomy between the world of production and the private sphere that acts as a barrier to emancipation.

The apparent ease with which Socialist Realism portrayed female and male roles, by ignoring the 'dichotomy' between them is gradually exposed by female GDR writers:

What becomes increasingly apparent in the literature is that relationship between material conditions and the emancipation of both women and men is more complex than suggested in traditional GDR analyses, which assume an almost automatic, if gradual, process of liberation as a parallel with, and concomitant to, socialist changes in material conditions (p422).

According to Martin, it is a fallacy to take the productive/working and private/social equality of women as givens within the paradigm of communist East Germany: *'Ultimately, the concept of*

productivity, as it has been interpreted in the GDR, and the fallacy that equality with men within existing structures can be equated with emancipation, have been challenged in the literature of women writers'.(ibid). Again, Martin's vocabulary includes words such as 'women authors' and 'equality', but not 'feminist' as such: 'Although Wolf's work [before 'Kassandra'] does not deal directly with the specific experience of women, it is certainly no accident that she located her critique of GDR society in the figure of a woman' (ibid).

Balzer and Mertens (1990, p458) give a brief background to the term 'Weibliches Schreiben': 'Die maskuline Bezeichnung dieses immerhin erst gegründeten Verbandes [Verbandes deutscher Schriftsteller] reflektiert ein Bewußtsein, das 'Frauenliteratur' [...] negativ besetzt sieht und Autorinnen als Teil einer geschlechtlich nicht zu differenzierenden, insgeheim oder uneingestanden aber doch als männlich definierten Kunst begreift'.

The shortcomings and merits of the feminist critique are not always easily discernible, because of some very fine distinctions between concepts such as 'weibliches Schreiben', 'schreibende Frauen', 'female literature', and feminist intended literature. Critics such as Sayre and Lowy identify Christa Wolf as a female writer in the Romantic tradition, a tradition closely related to feminist literature. According to these authors, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* was written in an already-established feminist tradition, whereas Anna K. Kuhn sees the novel as merely the start of later female-based articulations prevalent in *Kassandra*. Myra Love interprets *Christa T.* as a definite feminist novel, especially the relationship between the two female protagonists who, she maintains, form a strong bond against patriarchal domination. The views of Helen Fehervary and Sara Lennox concerning *Nachdenken über Christa T.* do at least take Christa Wolf's involvement with Marxist Humanism into account, a concept that draws heavily on Ernst Bloch's utopian vision, a vision that is explored in Chapter 3 in dealing with *Kassandra*.

If the over-riding theme of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* is expressed in Johannes R. Becher's question: *Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommmn des Menschen?*, then perhaps the answer is to be found in the words of the American poet, Erica Jong: 'Everyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to follow the talent to the dark place where it leads' (Jong, as quoted in Tonay:1997).

CHAPTER 3

THE SILENT TRADITION: KASSANDRA'S DAUGHTER

We don't know the story of Cassandra's daughter.

We have to write it ourselves.

Joseph Schwartz

Inwieweit gibt es wirklich 'weibliches' Schreiben?

Insoweit Frauen aus historischen und biologischen Gründen

eine andre Wirklichkeit erleben als Männer.

Christa Wolf

Chapter 3 has the following aims:

- (1) to provide a brief background of *Kassandra* and a discussion of the *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung:Kassandra* that comprises the four *Frankfurter Lesungen*;
- (2) to undertake a hermeneutic discussion of *Kassandra* with specific emphasis on *weibliches Schreiben* and female tradition; and
- (3) to examine feminist literary criticism of *Kassandra* and some of the ways in which Christa Wolf's own views do or do not correspond to Feminisms. This third section will shed light particularly on Wolf's use of the RE-concept discussed in Chapter 1.

(1) DIE VERBORGENE FRAU: BACKGROUND AND VORAUSSETZUNGEN EINER ERZÄHLUNG: KASSANDRA.

Es kommen die Schreckensmomente,

wo die Frau sich im Spiegel sucht und nicht mehr findet.

Das Spiegelbild ist irgendwohin verschwunden,

der Blick des Mannes gibt es ihr nicht zurück.

Elisabeth Lenk

Man befreit sich von einer Sache nicht,

indem man sie vermeidet, sondern indem man

durch sie hindurchgeht.

Inga Buhmann

The literary reception of Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*-project is marked by paradox similar to that accorded the publication of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* However, *Kassandra* was published 14 years after *Christa T.*, and the overall response was less harsh and less negative than in 1969. Times were changing, both in the Federal Republic and the GDR. The sale figures are evidence of a new consciousness: "*In kaum mehr als einem Jahr verkaufte Luchterhand von der gebundenen Ausgabe über 200 000 Exemplare und übertraf damit die Gesamtauflage von 'Nachdenken über Christa T.' seit 1969*" (Stephan: 1991, p139). The novel's success might be attributed, in part, to Wolf's subtle criticism of the GDR at the time and, in part, to the improved status of women globally. Her indirect criticism could be accomplished only by using mythological parallels to prevailing political power structures. (Wolf's reconstruction of mythology is discussed later in Chapter 3.)

Another reason for *Kassandra*'s success in the early eighties may be traced to the growing consciousness of women's need to be emancipated because major decision-making was still predominantly in male hands at that time:

Die Gründe für diesen Erfolg liegen auf der Hand: mit den Themen Frauen und Frieden verbindet Christa Wolf in ihren Büchern über Kassandra zwei Komplexe, denen die lesende Öffentlichkeit während der 80er Jahre ein ungewöhnliches Maß an Aufmerksamkeit widmet. Frauen, so wird es zunehmend deutlich, drängen in jene Position der Gesellschaft, wo die Entscheidungen über unsere Zukunft gefällt werden (Stephan: 1991, p139).

Sonja Hilzinger, who attended Wolf's lectures in Frankfurt in 1982, describes Wolf's link with the emancipatory movement and women's consequent interest in what *Kassandra*'s author had to say about the subject:

Es ist kein Zufall, daß die Zuhörenden bei den Frankfurter Vorlesungen mehrheitlich Frauen sind. Aus dem Interesse und der Offenheit so vieler Frauen für dieses Thema und für diese Autorin ließe sich der Wunsch – vielleicht die Forderung – ableiten, daß es mehr solche Veranstaltungen geben sollte, die uns zum Suchen und zum Lernen bringen können (Hilzinger: 1984, p46).

Lieskounig explains some reasons for *Kassandra*'s major acclaim by critics:

There are several factors which would account for the impact which 'Kassandra' had at the time of its publication. In 1983, the book seemed appropriate and urgent, and

certainly corresponded to the 'Zeitgeist' of that period, even more in the West than in the East. The feminist movement was still very strong in West Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Lieskounig: 1987, p67).

Kassandra revealed powerful insights into Wolf's own situation within the confines of the GDR. The novel also serves as an example of the intellectual and social issues manifesting themselves in the late 1970s and 1980s in both Germanies:

the reader is in fact presented with Christa Wolf's own socio-historical coordinates and her reality. This kind of alternative life corresponds more or less exactly with the prevailing Zeitgeist of the late seventies and early eighties. In those years we find all the ingredients of the New Sensitivity, the New Physicality, the feminist emancipation movement, and the Green Movement (Lieskounig: 1987, p72).

Lieskounig's observation - 'her own reality' - is an important link between Wolf and the creation of *Kassandra*. Wolf's reinterpretation of the myth of *Kassandra* involves the interpolation of autobiographical materials. Moreover, Wolf creates a new reality, a new vision of *Kassandra* which differs from the traditional male-biased interpretations of the myth. Similarly, Lieskounig associates the character of *Kassandra* with the 'Frauenhaus' of the 1980s that not only represented but also manifest the intellectual uprising of women's own culture:

Christa Wolf's 'Cassandra' is a contemporary woman, even if she seems to represent the proto-'Green' movement that, according to the book, was started by women in the ancient city of Troy. Wolf's Cassandra-figure corresponds almost fatally to the 'head-woman' of an intellectually inclined and poetically sensitive, alternative 'Frauenhaus' such as existed in West Berlin by the hundred, in about 1980 (ibid).

Kassandra's success could well be ascribed to the relevant themes and realities of the time that the novel addresses such as *Frauen und Frieden* and the culmination of the *Frauenbewegung* in both the Germanies, albeit to a lesser extent in the GDR.

ERSTE VORLESUNG. EIN REISEBERICHT ÜBER DAS ZUFÄLLIGE AUFTAUCHEN UND DIE ALLMÄHLICHE VERFERTIGUNG EINER GESTALT

The first *Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesung* incorporates the *Prozeßcharakter* of Wolf's *Reisebericht* on travelling to Greece in early 1980, which encompasses both Wolf's reading of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and her observations about ancient cultural monuments (including the *Koren* of

Erechtheion). The destruction by technological society of these monuments, Wolf observes, creates an unavoidable conflict between modern Greek and Athenian culture and its ancient counterparts. It is equally important to note how the *Kassandra-Stoff* and –*Thematik* evolve gradually through the lectures until the Fourth *Poetik-Vorlesung* in which the historical facets of the *Kassandra-Gestalt* are finally explored. A discussion of these dimensions from the *Erste Poetik-Vorlesung* follows.

Glancing at Aeschylus's *Oresteia* for the first time before her plane trip to Greece, Christa Wolf already begins to feel a certain bond with the *Kassandra*-character: '*Kassandra. Ich sah sie gleich. Sie, die Gefangene, nahm mich gefangen, sie, selbst, Objekt fremder Zwecke, besetzte mich*' (V, p10). She also asks herself whether Aeschylus is going to identify himself with any particular character in his *Oresteia* or whether he intended to create an art work in which all his characters would be depicted fairly: '*Auf wessen Seite steht eigentlich dieser Aischylos? Oder versucht er das Kunststück, einem jeden gerecht zu werden*' (V, p12). Further, Wolf contextualises Aeschylus's epoch historically through Homer, the epic poet writing 300 years before Aeschylus:

Zwischen ihm und dem früheren Homer, der die Kunde vom Troanischen Krieg weitergab, liegen mindestens dreihundert Jahre. Das Nachwort belehrt mich, daß Aischylos im Jahr 456 vor unserer Jahrrechnung für die 'Orestie' den ersten Preis im Tragödienwettbewerb von Athen errang. Und die Ereignisse, auf die er sich bezieht, verlieren sich, wie seine Gestalten, in der Dämmerung des Mythos. Da mag, denke ich, Gerechtigkeit dem Tragöden nicht so schwer geworden sein (ibd).

During her plane trip to Greece (20 March 1980), Wolf continues reading, and reflecting on, the *Oresteia*: '*Wie ein großes Netz hängen des Aischylos Zeilen mir vor Augen, durch dessen weite Maschen ich eine Gestalt sich regen sehe, in einer Art, die schwer zu benennen ist*' (V, pp12/13). At this stage in her literal and creative journey, Wolf's idea of *Kassandra* is still very raw and unrefined because she is still processing information about the epic she is reading. Nonetheless, the first characteristics about her *Kassandra* that Christa Wolf senses while reading the *Oresteia* include: '*Selbsterkenntnis, Distanz, Nüchternheit glaube ich, bei innigster Betroffenheit, aus ihrer [Kassandra] Stimme zu heraushören. Etwas wie Triumph?*' (V, p13). It should be noted that Wolf does not regard the *Kassandra*-character as vengeful on her enemies: '*Ist sie nun denen überlegen, die sie einst auslachten – 'Freund und Feind!' – und sie Törrin, Bettlerin, Lügenzauberweib, wahnwitzig, elend, Hungerleiderin genannt haben? Klagt sie die an? Gewiß nicht. Ihr Ton ist nicht rachsüchtig, - Ich scheine mich schärfer anzugehen, als ich wollen kann*'

(ibid). This brief sketch of Cassandra constitutes the initial germ of the 1983 novel in which Wolf creates a female protagonist who is self-critical, insightful and objective just before she dies.

Wolf does not concur with all she finds in the *Oresteia*. One of the passages with which she disagrees deals with Cassandra's sorrow at the slaughter of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra. Instead, Wolf believes that Cassandra would not have mourned Agamemnon because he represents the last of a succession of males who have behaved violently towards her: *'Und dann ein 'Irrtum' des Aischylos. Nie hätte sie gesagt: "Auch drinnen kann ich/Agamemnons Los beweinen". – Agamemnon – der letzte in der Reihe der Männer, die ihr Gewalt antaten (der erste war Apoll, der Gott) – ihn beweinen? Da müßte ich sie schlecht kennen'* (V, p15). When she comes to write the novel itself, Wolf stays true to this idea: Cassandra does not mourn the death of Agamemnon; instead, she mourns the slaughter of her brothers and sisters and the apocalyptic destruction of Troy. She mourns the loss of human life but not Agamemnon's death specifically.

Besides the Agamemnon issue, the *Schuld*motiv in the *Oresteia* constitutes another theme that Wolf finds problematic:

*"Nun führt der Seher mich, die Seherin, hierher,
Daß meine Schuld ich zahle, - her zum Untergang!"*

Welche Schuld? Was meint der griechische Dichter? Oder was läßt er sich, ohne es eigentlich zu meinen, da durchgehen? Ist nur von jener frühen Schuld die Rede, als sie den, wie man nun sieht, rachsüchtigen Gott betrog? Dem Chor der Greise, die doch auch eines biedereren Mitgefühls fähig sind, hat sie es gestanden (V, p16)

Wolf believes that Cassandra deliberately cuts all essential ties with the gods after Apollo demanded sexual intercourse with her. Although Cassandra still performs religious ceremonies and sacrifices animals to the gods, she inherently does not believe in them anymore. She participates in these ceremonies only to placate her father, Priam:

Unwahrscheinlich, daß in 'Wirklichkeit' Cassandra diese Schuld hat meinen können. Ich denke sie mir frei von Gottesfurcht. Doch eine andre 'Schuld' mag ihr zu schaffen machen: daß sie imstande war, sich so weit außerhalb des eignen Volks zu stellen, daß sie sein unheilvolles Schicksal 'sah'; der in den Kampf bedingungslos Verstrickte sieht ja nichts. Das 'Sehen' aber, das ihr auferlegt ist, scheint wie ein Einfall über sie zu kommen (V, pp16-17).

Kassandra's refusal to have sex with the god stems from male logic rather than female logic, according to Wolf. This leads to her speculations about Kassandra's choice of work; why would she choose to become a priestess, and why would she want to work in a male-dominated environment. Wolf posits these questions as a means of freeing her Kassandra-character from the restrictive stereotypical interpretations imposed on her by Western literature and myth. However, this should not be taken to mean that Wolf disregards the "historical" Kassandra (see the Fourth lecture), merely that Wolf wants to place some distance between her creation and the literary and mythical contexts of Kassandra:

Kassandra hat diesen Gott, oder was er immer war, natürlich geliebt, eben deshalb mußte sie ihn abweisen, als er zudringlich wurde. Abendländische Frauenlogik? Eher Männerlogik, siehe Aischylos. Warum aber hat sie, indem sie sich zur 'Seherin' ausbilden ließ, einen Männerberuf gewählt. Warum sollte sie werden wie die Männer. Wieso eigentlich 'Seher' ein Männerberuf. Immer schon? Oder seit wann? Und sind das überhaupt die Fragen, die Kassandra aus Mythos und Literatur herauslösen können? (V, p17).

As a pacifist, Wolf finds the violence and destruction of the male ethos intolerable and unacceptable. Consequently, she adopts an anti-war stance in both the *Voraussetzungen* and *Kassandra*. She asserts that the *Verherrlichung* of the *Raubkrieg* starts with epic poets like Homer in the *Iliad*, and subscribes to the Roman myth that the Trojan War was not launched because the Trojans wanted to take revenge (by stealing Helen) on the Greeks who kidnapped Hesione, Priam's sister. Support of this idea is provided by the fact that the Trojans do not even take Helen back to Troy but leave her in Egypt. Helen thus becomes the phantom reason for the war between the Greeks and Trojans. The real reason for the war is that Troy wanted a trade and sea route through the Bosphorus. Wolf incorporates this Trojan ploy by having Kassandra realise that Helen is not even back in Troy and that she has been used merely for propaganda purposes to incite the Trojans. Nobody ever asks for Helen to be revealed in public; she is always covered from head to toe. In their blind faith, the Trojans choose to see only what they wish to see, and so believe in it.

Ahnte Homer, ahnten die anderen Überlieferer des troianischen Sagenkreises, daß sie, dem Mythos folgend, an der Verschleierung der Tatbestände teilhaben? Daß der Kampf der Achaier gegen die Troer – wer immer das war – um Seehandelswege gegangen ist, um den Zugang zum Bosphorus, den Troia kontrollierte? So beginnt die Literatur des Abendlandes mit der Verherrlichung eines Raubkrieges (V, p19).

Here, Wolf is also concerned with the impact that ancient Greek artifacts had upon her. If the patriarchy is responsible for the horrors of the Trojan War, it is also to be blamed for allowing the dilapidation of the *Gea-Heiligtum* whose history is told through the symbol of the Acropolis. As one of the *Ur-goddesses*, Gea embodies and symbolises the lost matriarchy that Wolf encounters at the foot of the Athena-Nike temple: *'Ganz zuunterst, am Fuß der Bastion des Athena-Nike-Tempels, das Heiligtum der Erdgöttin Gea, verschüttet, zugedeckt, überbaut, unsichtbar uns Späteren'* (V, p22). Contrasting with the secret, hidden world of Gea is the statue of Pallas Athena, sculpted in ivory and rich gold, a huge symbol of the patriarchy; its patriarchal values such as war and violence contained in Phidias's statue:

Dafür die Nachbildung der Kolossalstatue der Pallas Athene des berühmten Phidias in Elfenbein und Gold, mit Helm, Schild, Speer und Brustpanzer bestückt, die verkleinerte Statuette der Siegesgöttin Nike in der Linken, mächtig und kalt. Mutterlos. Mit Schild und Speer als ein böser Gedanke dem Haupt des Vaters Zeus entstieg. Niemals gottverlassener, denke ich, und ihrer Natur entfernter als in dem kostbaren des Phidias (ibd).

Like the Acropolis, the *Koren* of Erechtheion foregrounds the contrast between ancient civilisation and its art, on the one hand, and the destructive forces of modern Greek society, on the other. It also embodies the contrast between the pre-classical matriarchal culture and the classical patriarchal culture of ancient Greece. Wolf describes the decay of the *Koren* in the museum in the Acropolis: *'Und dann tritt man, traten wir, vor die Koren vom Erechtheion, die im Museum auf der Akropolis vor der totalen Zerstörung sichergestellt sind. Sie stehen da in einem Halbrund, blicken auf uns Betrachter herab und weinen'* (V, p22). Wolf then goes on to ask: *'Das Thema jetzt schon anschlagen?'* (p23). One of the novel's themes centres on the *Koren*, matriarchal figures who have nowhere to belong in modern Athens because the city is a characteristically technocratic, patriarchal, rationalist, and brutal metropolis.

Wolf is witness to the destructiveness of technocratic society: the rock is literally weeping as tears of acid rain and toxic air flow down the cheeks of the sculptured rock and make holes in it: *'Der Stein weint, halten Sie das nicht für eine Metapher. Über die Gesichter der steinernen Mädchen sind Tränen geströmt, die sie zerfressen haben. Etwas, stärker als Kummer, hat sich in diese schönen Wangen eingegraben: sauer Regen, vergiftete Luft'* (ibd).

Technocratic depredations have also taken their toll on the stone sculpture of Medusa. Wolf feels that even the ancient repugnance that the Medusa evokes is outweighed by the carbon monoxide

of overloaded buses outside, themselves serving as embodiments of the entropy and *Umweltverschmutzung* of modern Greece.

Einmal trifft der Blick einer aus Stein gehauenen Medusa, des scheußlichen Gorgonenhaupts, doch zu versteinern habe ich inmitten der Menge keine Zeit. Die Wirkung der alten Verwünschungen scheint aufgehoben; beinahe erstickend in der verpesteten Luft der überfüllten Busse... (V, p27).

Looking at this decline, caused mainly by the 20th century, Wolf experiences not only an intense sorrow but also a profound discontentment with modern technocracy which has left its eternal and destructive imprint: *'Mögen diese Gesichter ehemals blick- und ausdruckslos gewesen sein – unser Jahrhundert hat ihnen seinen Ausdruck aufgenötigt, den der Trauer, der, als bekäme ich von ihnen her einen Stoß, in mir ein Echo findet'* (V, p23). In capturing the essence of this self-devouring trend, Wolf calls Athens *'Die Stadt, die sich selber frißt'* (ibid).

In her encounter with the Acropolis and Athens, Wolf experiences not only disenchantment with Greek self-destruction but also *Trauer* as well as several other negative feelings: *'Alles, was durch Trauer mitbewegt wird, beginnt sich zu rühren, Zorn, Angst, Grauen, Schuld, Scham. Ich bin angekommen. Ich verstehe diesen Stein- und Knochenberg'* (V, p23). This literal arrival parallels Wolf's creative arrival at the theme of *Kassandra*: the self-destruction of an ancient culture (Troy). In *Kassandra*, this motif of self-destruction is expounded in the contrast between Troy/Greece, on the one hand, and the Idaberg utopian community, on the other. She also remarks on the belligerence of modern Greece: *'Ich verstehe die überfüllte, hastige, mordlüsterne, Rauch und Abgase ausstoßende, dem Geld nachstürzende Stadt, die in Jahren einholen will, was in einigen ihrer westlichen Schwestern mehr als ein Jahrhundert gekostet hat'* (ibid). Concerned with the barbarity of modern civilisation, Wolf asks whether there is an alternative to this kind of brute behaviour: *'Die Barbarei der Neuzeit. Die Frage, die mich aufstört: Gab es, gibt es eine Alternative zu dieser Barbarei?'* (ibid). Wolf suggests that the alternative to this barbarism is the Idaberg community.

In her search for answers to these questions, Wolf reflects about the indispensability of the word in everyday life, regarding herself as 'sprachlos' without it:

Aber ist es nicht gerade das Wort, das die Herrschaft über unser Inneres angetreten hat? Macht sein Fehlen nicht, daß ich mir verlorengelasse? Wie schnell wird Sprachlosigkeit zu Ichlosigkeit? Merkwürdiger Einfall: Eine Kassandra, träte sie auf – und es gibt sie, dem

Erscheinungsbild nach, unter den Frauen hier -, ich würde sie, da ich ihre Rede nicht verstünde, nicht erkennen, falls sie wie die frühe Cassandra in Rage geriet (V, p25).

Furthermore, the power of the word, Wolf believes, is inextricably linked to *Prophetenglaube*; the word creates order from chaos. However, she sometimes experiences Greece as chaotic, precisely because of her inability to communicate properly as she does not speak Greek: *'Prophetenglaube ist, glaube ich, größtenteils Glaube an die Kraft des Wortes. Wie auf einer Anfechtung ertappe ich mich bei der Zuversicht, dieses fremde Chaos hier, dem ich mich stärker ausgeliefert fühle als zu Hause, könnte um Worte herum eine geordnete Struktur annehmen'* (V, p25). Although Wolf realises that the Western world has created a fetish around *logos* - most frequently rearticulated in current theoretical discussions by Derrida's logocentrism - she admits, paradoxically, that she is herself an ardent follower of the word-fetish: *'Die Zentrierung um den Logos, das Wort als Fetisch – vielleicht der tiefste Aberglaube des Abendlands, jedenfalls der, dem ich inbrünstig anhängen. So daß die Sprachunmächtigkeit allein mir eine Ahnung möglicher Schrecken des Exils heraufruft'* (ibid).

Throughout her stay in Athens, Wolf remains preoccupied with the Cassandra story. Nonetheless, her preoccupation with Cassandra does not detract from her awareness of the powerful contrast that modern Greece provides with its ancient, mythical counterpart. One aspect of this contrast resides in the fact that modern civilisation can no longer be shocked because of its obsession with predominantly meaningless violence and death (in contrast with ancient belief in, reverence for, and understanding of, tragedy):

Welche Prophezeiung könnte uns noch überraschen, uns Ach- und Wehrufe entlocken wie dem Chor der archaischen Greise die Ankündigung, daß sein König gerade von seiner Königin geschlachtet wird? Sind wir nicht jenseits aller Verkündigungen und Prophezeiungen, also jenseits der Tragödie? (V, p27).

Although she contemplates many diverse issues raised by the Greek experience, Wolf comes to realise that storytelling is the antithesis to this *Abstumpfung* and has overtly humane implications, not only for ancient times but also for contemporary society:

Erzählen ist human und bewirkt Humanes, Gedächtnis, Anteilnahme, Verständnis – auch dann, wenn die Erzählung teilweise eine Klage ist über die Zerstörung des Vaterhauses, den Verlust des Gedächtnisses, das Abreißen von Anteilnahme, das Fehlen von Verständnis (V, p36).

She argues that storytelling essentially provides life with meaning, in much the same way that one builds a new house after the old one has been destroyed:

Erzählen ist human, und wenn das Erzählen nicht ausreicht, wenn man, ein anderer Odysseus, nach fast dreißig Jahren zurückkommt und sieht, man ist nicht erwartet worden, das Vaterhaus verfällt, die Familie lebt in schwierigen Verhältnissen, die Nachbarn schicken ihre Ziegen auf die Grundstück: dann geht man hin und baut eben das Haus wieder auf, versteht ihr das (V, p37).

The point that Wolf wishes to convey in this extract is that the act of storytelling is so powerful that it may change even deeply entrenched behaviours and convictions. Yet *Erzählen* can also subvert its positive aspects and destroy relationships, bring harsh truths to light and may, consequently, kill. *Erzählen* constitutes the act of 'seeing' or 'witnessing'. Wolf regards herself as one of Cassandra's daughters, both are female storytellers, *Zeuginnen*, and bearers of a new truth. From her perspective, storytelling has the power to work re-constructively, as the Wolfian re-telling of the Cassandra myth demonstrates.

Given that witness and prophecy are male-dominated occupations, it could be argued that Cassandra, as a witness and prophetess, could be perceived as the first professional female. This explains why, during a discussion with one of her many Greek hosts, Wolf asks the question: What other dignified professions could women of those times have had?

Kassandra, aber, vornehm geboren, hat das Privileg des Sprechens, des Gehört- und Genanntwerdens, selbst ihr Tod bleibt nicht namenslos. Ob er nicht glaube, frage ich Valtinos, daß sie, vor die Wahl gestellt, den ganzen Weg noch einmal gegangen wäre? Dies sei, sagt er, ein Gesichtspunkt von heute, denn eben das Moment der Wahl hätten die Alten nicht gekannt. Wenn schon heutige Gesichtspunkte: Finde er nicht auch, daß Kassandra die erste berufstätige Frau in der Literatur darstelle? Was hätte eine Frau werden können außer 'Seherin'? (V, p38).

Having focused on Cassandra as the first female professional, Wolf takes an equally incisive look at Clytemnestra. She too has suffered overtly negative portrayals at the hands of classical male epic poets. She is regarded as a vicious, murderous woman lacking any moral scruples because she murders her husband, Agamemnon, on his return from Troy after ten years' absence. Aegisthus, her lover, does not receive as much blame as Clytemnestra does, even though he delivers the last fatal axe blow to Agamemnon, after Clytemnestra has thrown a net over her

husband. Wolf dissects Clytemnestra's dilemma: she is compelled to surrender her power to her husband after she has enjoyed ten years of rule.

Both Cassandra and Clytemnestra have alternative stories. Wolf wants modern readers to consider the alternative possibilities of these other modes of portraying the lives of such mythological females. Both women are abused by Agamemnon, albeit in different ways: Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia, his daughter with Clytemnestra, and returns from Troy with a 'mistress', a *Beute*. Cassandra's abuse, on the other hand, is physical: she is taken away to Mycenae on a slave ship on which Agamemnon presumably forces himself on her sexually, thus making her his object. As a *Beute*, Cassandra is 'aus-gebeutet', deprived of all her rights or dignity. According to the classical epic poets, Clytemnestra's retaliation on her husband avenges her daughter's death. Although this view is in keeping with the fatalist concept of revenge and being avenged, Wolf finds Valtinos's idea that Clytemnestra might well be regarded as possibly the first feminist in history an attractive one as an aspect of her developing Cassandra story:

Dann... ist Klytaimnestra die erste Feministin: Zehn Jahre hat sie Mykene allein regiert; hat miterleben und dulden müssen, wie ihr Mann, der 'sehr entschlossene' Agamemnon, ihr liebstes Kind, die Tochter Iphigenie, der Göttin opfert, von er dafür günstigen Wind zur Kriegsfahrt seiner Flotte erhofft; hat sich zum Mann genommen den, der ihr gefiel: Aigisthos: Soll sie wegen der Rückkehr des Gatten auf ihre Rechte verzichten? An Herd und Spinnrocken zurücktreten? (V, p39).

In her discussion of the Clytemnestra story, Wolf explores in detail the *Doppeldeutigkeit* problem of the original Greek texts. Clytemnestra's behaviour accords with the ancient *Mutterrecht* when she takes revenge on Agamemnon for sacrificing Iphigenia. Agamemnon's action is presented as politically justified in the state's interest. Subsequently, Orestes, Clytemnestra's son, murders his mother in cold blood, an action according with the *Vaterrecht*. Through this deed, he avenges the death of his father.

Aeschylus's Cassandra is caught between the ancient *Mutterrecht* and the new *Vaterrecht* replacing it. Being caught in such a double bind constitutes a *Leitthema*, especially in the fourth lecture.

These inconsistencies, which are not adequately reflected in translations from the old Greek into modern Greek, result in double standards, according to Valtinos: 'Er [Valtinos] gibt ein Beispiel: Klytaimnestra, nachdem, sie ihren Gatten Agamemnon überschwenglich begrüßt hat, weist die Mägde an, rote Tücher vor ihm auf den Weg zu legen' (ibid). These *rote Tücher* resonate

symbolically with ideas of bloody punishment, while reinforcing the principles of the *Mutterrecht* and the *Vaterrecht*.

Wolf then contemplates how these double standards could have spilled over on a grand scale into Western civilisation. She focuses on one of the major discrepancies in Christianity's demagogic principles:

Zwar ist, so überlegen wir, die Doppelmoral der Alten vielleicht nicht so allgegenwärtig, alles beherrschend und durchdringend wie die Doppelmoral der christlich-abendländischen Zivilisation, die eine ungeheure, immer subtilere und spitzfindigere demagogische Gedankenarbeit leisten muß, um das Gebot DU SOLLST NICHT TÖTEN als sittliche Grundlage ihres Lebens anzuerkennen und es gleichzeitig, ohne moralisch zusammenzubrechen, für ihr praktisches Handeln außer Kraft zu setzen (V, p40).

Wolf ascribes these double standards to a *blinder Fleck*, a very important Wolfian concept, articulated primarily in *Kassandra*. Every civilisation, clan, culture, or community has a dark spot that they choose to ignore. *Kassandra* plays a major role in sustaining Troy's *blinder Fleck* by hiding the truth, even though she knows she is wrong in doing so, and thus leading a double life. Wolf blames Western literature in part for perpetuating this double-mindedness because it describes the dark spot while making that *Fleck* part of its inherent structure for centuries:

So entstand im Zentrum [der abendländischen-christlichen] Kultur jener dunkle blinde Fleck, der ihr das Wichtigste, ihr mörderisches Doppelleben, verbirgt: ein Defizit, das leider...mit Notwendigkeit auch jene Prozesse, die zur Selbstvernichtung führen, vor den treibenden Kräften dieser Zivilisation unsichtbar macht; eine Hexenmagie, die wir nun vielleicht zu spät durchschauen. Und die Literatur hat, indem sie sie beschrieb, die Doppelmoral mit strukturiert (V, p40).

According to Wolf, the *dunkler Fleck* shimmers through Aeschylus's portrayal of *Kassandra*. She argues that the reason for this double bind might be attributed to the fact that the Greek playwright was not really interested in contemplating *Kassandra*'s character: '*[...] Kassandra hat den Aischylos nicht wirklich interessiert; nicht wie die Mordenden ihn interessiert haben. Uns, kommen wir überein, langweilen Mordende bis zum Überdruß...Kassandra, vermute ich, definiert sich als Nichtmordende, Nichtwahnbesetzte. Woher kommen ihr die Lust und Kraft zum Widerspruch?*' (V, p42).

Dramatists like Aeschylus, Wolf proposes, see women as malicious and highly destructive creatures, taking revenge on one other. In contrast, Wolf brings together female figures such as Cassandra and Clytemnestra, who would appear to be diametrically opposed, and assumes that, under different circumstances, they could have bonded as 'sisters' or fellow women suffering abuse by the same man. Wolf's criticism of these malicious, destructive images of women being 'herded' back into the domestic environment where, as men believe, they belong, is strikingly appropriate: *'So will der männliche Dichter diese Frauen sehen: haßvoll, eifersüchtig, kleinlich gegeneinander – wie Frauen werden können, wenn sie aus der Öffentlichkeit vertrieben, an Haus und Herd zurückgejagt werden; genau dies geschah in den Jahrhunderten, deren Summe des Aischylos großes Drama zieht'* (V, p41).

ZWEITE VORLESUNG. FORTGESETZTER REISEBERICHT ÜBER DIE VERFOLGUNG EINER SPUR

In the second lecture, Wolf writes about the destruction of Crete and Troy from a more 'factual' historical and archaeological perspective and how this devastation impacted upon the history of *Kassandra's* origin:

Ich suchte – unter anderm, aber mehr war mir damals kaum bewußt – den Zeiten-Vergleich zwischen dem Kampf um Troia und dem Untergang der minoischen Kultur auf Kreta, die nämlich beide, wenn die wissenschaftlichen Datierungen stimmen, im 12. Jahrhundert vor unserer Zeitrechnung sich ereignet hätten – Kreta früher als Troja (V, p45).

In this same lecture, Wolf also relates her encounter with two American feminists, Sue and Helen, both of whom want to prove that Crete was essentially a matrilineal society where women ruled yet, simultaneously, shared equal power with men: *'Helen und Sue suchten eine Bestätigung für ihre These, daß auf Kreta die Frauen den Ton angaben und daß dies den Minoern gut bekommen war'* (ibd).

While Wolf contemplates the contrast between ancient Crete and its modern counterpart, Cretan graves remind her of the presence of apocalyptic violence in both ancient and modern times, and raise questions about modern civilisation's preoccupation with this earthly life without serious consideration of possible afterlives:

Unsre Gedanken, wenn wir sie vorauswerfen wollen, prallen gegen eine Wand. Wir gestehen es uns ein an diesen Gräbern auf Kreta. Wir geben uns unsere Beklemmung

zu. Aus einer Welt, die nur ökonomisch, nur diesseitig wäre, müßte der Mensch auf die eine oder andre Weise verschwinden (V, p51).

Wolf discovers that modern Crete is the embodiment of patriarchal values that have created a segregated society. She finds evidence everywhere of a gender-skewed society. Men gather on sidewalks or sit in outdoor restaurants, loudly voicing their opinions, while Crete's public areas are devoid of women. The Cretan culture is the total antithesis to what Sue and Helen expected: women have no opportunities here:

Eine Männerstadt. Angst, Abwehr, ja Abscheu haben meinem Körper ein Signal gegeben, mir wurde schlecht. Unsereins hätte, unsereins hat hier keine Chance. Der Süden. Der patriarchalische Süden (V, p53).

In the patriarchal south, it was through the heroic epos that archaeology was delivered from ancient to modern times and preserved: *'Und auch die Geschichte der Archäologie wäre, bis weit in unser Jahrhundert hinein, als männliches Heldenepos zu erzählen, jedenfalls aus dem Selbstverständnis ihrer Protagonisten heraus' (ibd).*

In Knossos, Wolf, together with Helen and Sue, discovers the ancient Terracotta statuettes depicting goddesses of various sorts. Wolf finds these figurines particularly moving because they represent an earthiness that is unlike the 'ideal' depictions of Apollo in classic art. The Terracotta women are very much like the Arisbe character in *Kassandra*, devoid of any prettified characteristics. These goddesses represent the Earth Mother, fertility, and nature in their simplest forms. The statuettes are the antithesis of the modern technological/destructive world's barren maleness:

Sue und Helen hatten, als wir sie wiedertrafen, nicht eine der Doppeläxte von Knossos, nicht eine der Darstellungen der Göttinmutter im Museum von Heraklion versäumt – angefangen von jenen Idolen aus dem Neolithikum, breitgesäßige, gebärfreudige, fruchtbare Frauengestalten, Vorstufen der Göttin Demeter, der Erd- und Fruchtbarkeitsgöttin, die auch die Hellenen übernehmen (V, p56).

Wolf contrasts primitive female art, which represents birth and fertility, with classical art, which is rooted in the depiction of ideals and the symbolising of barrenness and destruction:

Doch bin ich am stärksten angerührt von diesen kleinen Terrakottenfiguren, die keine Ideale bilden wie die Kunst des klassischen Altertums, sondern alle Spuren des

Alltagslebens tragen, die Abdrücke der Finger, die sie geformt haben, und die mir, viel stärker als irgendein Apollon von Belvedere, das Gefühl vermitteln, daß es, im Grunde, die gleichen Menschen waren, wie wir es sind, die damals, vor vier-, fünf- und mehrtausend Jahren eine Göttin um Kindersegen anflehten oder ihr dafür dankten (V, p58).

Sue and Helen firmly believe that the ancient Minoan kingdoms were based on matrilineal principles. For them, Minoan culture represents all their feminist utopian hopes and ideals. Wolf, on the other hand, reverts to historical fact: If the feudally-based Minoan culture engendered slavery (including women as slaves), how could Helen and Sue's theory be correct? Still, the feminists refuse to believe that the Minoans had a slave-culture (V, p62). Wolf accepts that these misconceptions are not wholly the feminists' fault: a number of archaeologists have helped to foster these erroneous assumptions as has Robert Graves (author of the (in)famous *The White Goddess*). Another reason for the continuing belief in the Minoan female culture is the fact that people want to believe what they perceive to be 'right', a continuation of the blind spot theme of the first lecture. Again, Wolf focusses the reader's attention on the decay of both Knossos and Phaistos with the word '*Trümmer*':

So, in sanften Vorstellungen befangen, von denen wir nicht ahnen, daß sie höchstwahrscheinlich Irrtümer sind – eingegeben von Archäologen, die diese Irrtümer genauso stark brauchten wie ihre Publikum; sehend, was wir sehen wollen, streifen wir durch die Trümmer von Knossos und Phaistos [...] (V, p61).

The endless landscapes of modern buildings in progress to be seen at the periphery of the bigger towns and, everywhere, a creeping sense of ugliness act as a reminder to Wolf that the ancient days of aesthetic beauty have vanished and have been replaced by the rubble and skeletal buildings that characterise the modern world:

Am Rande größerer Dörfer die Neubauten, Betonwürfel, deren Etage ausgebaut und bewohnbar ist, während das zweite, oft das dritte Stockwerk als Betonskelett aufragt, wartend auf den Zeitpunkt, da der Bauherr wieder flüchtig ist und weiterbauen kann. Den Schönheitssinn ihrer entfernten Vorfahren haben sie nicht geerbt, oder vielmehr, er ist hier wie überall zerstört worden durch die Vorherrschaft der Effektivität über alle anderen Werte (V, p63).

Helen and Sue find all the male art on display in Knossos repugnant: '*Sue und Helen verachten alle männliche Kunst, alle Abbilder des Mannes*' (V, p64). Wolf, however, does not share exactly

the same view but wonders about Homer's description of the destruction of Troy and where one should draw the line between myth and historical fact:

Die Zerstörung Troias soll zwei, drei Generationen nach der Blütezeit der kretischen Paläste stattgefunden haben. Die erste gemeinsame Quelle für beides: für die Zerstörung Troias durch die Achaier und für die Existenz eines kretischen Königs namens Minos, ist Homer, ist das Epos auf der Grenze zwischen Mythos und Geschichtsschreibung (V, p64).

The continuing decay caused by modern civilisation's industries and oil refineries strikes Wolf again when she visits the city of Aulis. She is upset by what she sees: *'Ich versuche mir Rechenschaft darüber zu geben, warum man mit so unbezähmbarer Erbitterung die Zerstörung einer Stadt wie Aulis durch Industrieanlagen, die Vernichtung von Eleusis durch Ölraffinerien zur Kenntnis nimmt: Eine andere Art von Empörung, beinah Beklommenheit, als sonst bei Landschaftszerstörung durch Industrie'* (V, p73). The place where Iphigenia was sacrificed, the Holy Street of Athens, has been desecrated by industry:

Warum soll der Ort, an dem Iphigenie durch ihren Vater Agamemnon geopfert wurde, unangetastet bleiben? Warum soll die Heilige Straße von Athen zu den Mysterien von Eleusis nicht durch Transportfahrzeuge entweiht werden? Wieso soll auf den Eselskarren, die Waren und Lebensmittel zur Stadt Eleusis und zum Demeterheiligtum brachten, kein Fluch liegen, aber auf den Öltransporten doch? (V, p73).

Getting to Mycenae, Wolf links the decay of the ancient Greek cities with the concept of *Leid*. This theme was introduced by the dramatist, Aeschylus, whose thought patterns, Wolf believes, are characteristically rationalised male thought. This male tradition was founded when the 'new gods' like Apollo took over from the goddesses. From then on, women were not only excluded from public life but also lost their rights. Wolf thinks this shift resulted from male fear of the power of the female principle. By destroying nature, the female principle, as representative of Mother Nature, was done away with as well, or so it was believed:

"Lernen durch das Leid" – dies scheint das Gesetz der neuen Götter zu sein, der Weg des männlichen Denkens auch, das die Mutter Natur nicht lieben, sondern durchschauen will, um sie zu beherrschen und das erstaunliche Gebäude einer naturfernen Geisteswelt zu errichten, aus der Frauen von nun aus ausgeschlossen sind; Frauen, die man sogar fürchten muß, vielleicht, weil sie – dem Denkenden, Leidenden, Schlafenden unbewußt -,

weil auch sie Urheberinnen jener Gewissensangst sind, die sein Herz wachklopft (V, pp75-76).

According to Wolf, *"lernen durch das Leid"* is the core of male destructiveness and its concomitant sacrifice of nature: *'Weisheit wider Willen. Kulturgewinn durch Naturverlust. Fortschritt durch Leid: die Formeln, vierhundert Jahre vor unsrer Zeitrechnung benannt, die der Kultur des Abendlands zugrunde liegen'* (V, p76).

Also in this second lecture, Wolf reports on the *Trümmerfeld* of Epidauros, the place where Asklepios, the demi-god, is buried. Asklepios exemplifies the new generation of gods who took over the healing art traditionally practised by women. Even his grave is built in a circular form associated with the Uroborotic snake, the circular symbol of the female principle:

"Wahrscheinlich diente er [ein Tholos] geheimnisvollen Riten; denn er soll über dem Grab des Asklepios – seine Mutter war eine Sterbliche – errichtet worden sein. Hier züchteten die Priester die dem Asklepios heiligen hellbraunen Schlangen". Asklepios, der männliche Gott, abstammend von Apollon, einem der 'neuen' Götter. Daß er die Heilkunst von den Frauen 'übernahm', um es neutral auszudrücken, darauf deutet er durch sein Wahrzeichen, die Schlange; in Rundgräbern wurden, wir sahen es in Mykenae, die Heroen begraben (V, p79).

After Mycenae, Wolf visits the Epidaurian theatre, built in 400 BC, to attend a performance of the *Oresteia*. About the end of *Eumenides*, the final part of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy, she remarks: *'Das alte Blutrachegesetz, in dem Orest sich verfängt: Nie durfte der Sohn sich an der Mutter ergreifen. Die Frau war tabu. Aischylos scheint damit zu rechnen, daß Nachklänge der heiligen Scheu vor der Frau auch sein männliches Publikum, welches inzwischen die absolute Herrschaft ausübt, noch beunruhigen'* (V, p81). Wolf emphasises the end of the play because it is there particularly that male fear of the female is projected. Aeschylus had to placate a predominantly male audience, whose fear of women was still fresh in their minds. Still, Orestes is plagued by the Furies because he committed the gravest sin of all by killing his mother: *'Entgegen den jahrtausendlangen Anstrengungen des Patriarchats gilt Muttermord im Bewußtsein der Menschen noch immer als über jedes andre Verbrechen grauenhaft. Daß der Sohn nur Sohn des Vaters ist, hat sich nicht durchsetzen wollen'* (V, p81).

Wolf is moved by the choir of the Furies, the ancient goddesses and patronesses of the *Mutterrecht*, who embody the spirits of Orestes's forefathers (The House of *Tantaliden*) but then follows, according to Wolf, the trivial *Agit-Prop-Nachspiel* which present the expiation of Orestes.

This is possible, because the matriarchal Furies are 'tamed' by Pallas Athene, the patriarchal goddess, who embodies the political views of Athens at the time of Aeschylus. The last interaction between Pallas Athene and the Furies has deeper repercussions:

After Athena casts the deciding vote in favour of Orestes, she "then calms down the enraged Furies, persuading them to take on a new function and settle in Attica as revered and beneficent powers, the Eumenides or Kindly Ones, and they are conducted in a procession to their underground sanctuary on the Areopagus (Dudley & Lang, 1969, pp19-20).

Because of this outcome, Wolf is unable to see that the play has a happy conclusion because she remains uncertain about how to resolve the paradox of whether Orestes should be seen as the murderer of his mother or as the avenger of his father. All that remains is *Zwiespalt*:

Der spitzfindige Wortstreit, ob in jenem unglücklichen Mann, Orest, der Muttermörder oder der Väterrächer zu erblicken sei, ist ja nur Ausdruck dafür, daß da, wo Zusammengehn und Versöhnlichkeit sich entwickeln sollte, ein Gegensatz aufgerissen ist, der sich als Zwiespalt im Manne wiederfindet und, da er unaufhörlich geleugnet, übertüncht, umgedeutet und verdrängt werden muß, Angst, Haß, Feindseligkeit hervorbringt und also, bis zu uns und jenen hin, die, wie wir es jetzt tun, in vier Monaten das Theater von Epidauros verlassen werden, seine schweren Folgen durch die Jahrtausende haben wird. Das Troia, das mir vor Augen steht, ist – viel eher als eine rückgewandte Beschreibung – ein Modell für eine Art Utopie (V, p82-83).

DRITTE VORLESUNG. EIN ARBEITSBUCH ÜBER DEN STOFF, AUS DEM DAS LEBEN UND TRÄUME SIND

Moving from her *Reisebericht*, Wolf reflects about her Grecian journey and the quest for Cassandra in her *Arbeitsbuch*. She wrote this journal between the 16th May 1980 and the 23rd August 1981. The third lecture comprises various reflections about the work of women writers such as Sarah Kirsch and Ingeborg Bachmann. Kirsch's poem 'Ende des Jahres' emblematises Wolf's concern about *Umweltzerstörung* and *-Verschmutzung* in modern Greece. The poem centres on the dangers of human extinction by the atomic bomb, summed up in the image 'Atompilze' (V, p84). Wolf's concerns about atomic power and the sort of war it facilitates are foregrounded in the third lecture where she writes about the 'Oberkommandos' of NATO and the 'Warschauer Pakts', who are discussing new 'Rüstungsanstrengungen' (V, pp84-85). Wolf's diction deliberately parallels Nazi times, while her profound concern about the possibility of

atomic warfare may be traced to her experiences of the devastation of war, experiences that had a life-long impact on her.

Wolf's observations about global warfare, at a time when the majority of humankind is reduced to impotent puppet-like objects, provides her with a powerful context within which to write about Cassandra's personal fate. She too has experienced several brutal forms of objectification: Apollo's sexual advances, her rape by Aias, son of Oileus of Opuntian Locris (Grant & Hazel: 1999, p19), her incarceration by Priam, and her forced political wedding to Eurypylos, son of Evaemon, who becomes an ally in the Trojan War. Wolf concludes that Cassandra is one of the first female mythological characters whose objectification has been recounted and who has come to exemplify a tradition of female objectification extending for more than three thousand years:

'- Annahme: In Cassandra ist eine der ersten Frauengestalten überliefert, deren Schicksal vorformt, was dann, dreitausend Jahre lang, den Frauen geschehen soll: daß sie zum Objekt gemacht werden' (V, p86).

Wolf's diary entry for the 8th July 1980 centres on modern technocratic *'Wahndenken'*; she writes of the threat of cataclysmic nuclear warfare: *'Nie sei die Gefahr eines Atomkrieges in Europa so groß gewesen wie heute' (V, p87)*. She believes that the nuclear bomb has brought the world to the boundaries not only of destruction but of several naked human emotions as well: *'Wenn die atomare Gefahr uns an die Grenze der Vernichtung gebracht hat, so sollte sie uns doch auch an die Grenze des Schweigens, an die Grenze des Duldens, an die Grenze der Zurückhaltung unserer Angst und Besorgnis und unsrer wahren Meinungen gebracht haben' (V, p88).*

Kassandra's *Abtötungstechniken* enable her to survive the deceptions, lies, and half-truths of her life in the palace. These *Abtötungstechniken* rely on the split between the human soul and body. When Cassandra becomes unable to cope with the truth of her visions, she separates body from soul, and falls into fits from which it takes her weeks to recover:

Sind vernunftbegabte Wesen denkbar, die nicht die Spaltung des heutigen Menschen in Leib/Seele/Geist kennen, sie gar nicht verstehen können? Cassandra erfährt, wie diese Operation lebendigen Leibs an ihr vorgenommen wird. Daß heißt, es gibt reale Kräfte in ihrer Umgebung, die, je nach Bedarf, partielle Selbstverleugnung von ihr verlangen. Sie erlernt Abtötungstechniken (V, pp88-89).

Despite Cassandra's objectification (mentioned earlier) and her relying on *Abtötungstechniken*, she is not perceived by Wolf as a tragic figure nor does Wolf believe Cassandra would have regarded herself as tragic; these perceptions are closely linked with the *Leitthema* of Cassandra,

the *Umgehen mit Schmerz*. This theme, in turn, suggests that only when one has lived through one's pain, and not attempted to avoid it, can one find the strength to resist the power of the patriarchy:

Es stellt sich heraus, daß ich – seit wann eigentlich? – Cassandra nicht mehr als tragische Figur sehen kann. Sie wird sich selbst nicht so gesehen habe. Besteht ihre Zeitgenossenschaft in der Art und Weise, wie sie mit Schmerz umgehen lernt? Wäre also der Schmerz – eine besondere Art von Schmerz – der Punkt, über den ich sie mir anverwandle, Schmerz der Subjektwerdung? (V, p89).

Continuing the *Schreibenthematik* of her first two lectures, Wolf writes more specifically about *Weibliches Schreiben* in the third lecture. Wolf relates Cassandra's visions entailing her sense of *Sehen* directly to female writing: *'Unvermeidlich der Moment, da die Frau, die schreibt (die im Falle Cassandra, 'sieht'), nichts und niemanden mehr vertritt, nur sich selbst, aber wer ist das' (V, p90)*. Wolf asks herself whether there is a kind of obligation to witness events that would engender writing, especially under constant atomic threat. This threat might mean that, like Cassandra's era, the time Wolf is living in, is also a *Zeitenloch*: *'Gibt es das ominöse Recht (oder die Pflicht) zur Zeugenschaft? Zählebiges Unterstellung, es müsse immer geschrieben werden. Wir können nicht wissen, ob wir in der dunkelsten Mitte oder am Ende der Geschichte sind' (ibid)*. In contrast to female witnessing is the heroic *epos* of the epic poet, Homer. Wolf argues that Homer emphasises only the actions of heroic men like Achilles and does no more than merely touch on the daily lives of women in the 'gaps' between the actions of the heroes:

Und, was die Ilias angeht, der erste uns bekannte Versuch, einer unter das Gesetz der Schlacht und des Schlachtens gestellten blanken Chronologie ein menschliches Gefühlsmaß aufzudrücken: den Zorn des Achill. Aber es ist die Linie männlichen Handelns, die der Erzähler verfolgt. Nur in den Lücken zwischen den Schlachtbeschreibungen schimmert das Alltagsleben durch, die Welt der Frau' (pp91-92).

In the third lecture, Wolf continues to unfold the *Kassandra-Gestalt*. This is not to say, however, that she neglects her concerns as a female writer *éngagée* with contemporary events in Europe and the persistent threat of nuclear warfare. Indeed, these events provide parallels that serve to illuminate events leading up to, and including, the destruction of Troy.

Reverting to her Cassandra story, Wolf intends to distinguish Cassandra from her mother, Hekabe, and her sisters in two ways: by not wanting to get married and by wanting to become a priestess:

Sie will etwas lernen. Für eine Frau von Stand ist Priesterin, Seherin der einzig mögliche Beruf (den in grauer Vorzeit überhaupt nur Frauen ausgeübt haben: als die oberste Göttin eine Frau war, Ge, Gaia, die Erdgöttin; ein Beruf, den im Verlauf anscheinend jahrtausendelanger Kämpfe Männer den Frauen streitig machten, in dem Maße, in dem Götter sich an die Stelle der Göttinnen schoben – wofür das Orakel von Delphi, das der Gott, Apollon, direkt von Gaia übernimmt, ein schlagendes Beispiel ist) (V, p96).

At the core of Cassandra's *Schmerz* is the confusion between her roles as king's daughter and as priestess. She painfully comes to realise that the 'wir' that she thought was her true 'wir' was, in fact, false. Freeing herself from the falsified *wir* causes her the most pain:

Dieser Beruf, ein Privileg, wird ihr zugeschoben: Sie soll ihn nach dem Herkommen ausfüllen. Genau dies muß sie verweigern – zuerst, weil sie begreift, daß 'die Ihren' nicht die Ihren sind. Ein schmerzhafter Loslösungsprozeß, in dessen Verlauf sie, wegen 'Wahrheitssagen', zunächst für wahnsinnig erklärt, dann in den Turm geworfen wird – von ihrem geliebten Vater Priamos (ibid).

Kassandra's realisation that she has to be true to herself – and that entails telling the 'truth' about her visions – is fostered by her befriending of minority groups beyond the borders of the official Troy:

Die Gesichte, von denen sie überwältigt wird, haben nichts mehr mit den rituellen Orakelsprüchen zu tun: Sie 'sieht' die Zukunft, weil sie den Mut hat, die wirklichen Verhältnisse der Gegenwart zu sehen. Das schafft sie nicht allein. Unter den heterogenen Gruppen im Palast und um ihn – sozial und ethnisch heterogen – findet Cassandra Anschluß der Minderheiten (V, p96).

There is, however, a price to be paid for living out her independence from her father; she loses her privileges and is seen as a mad woman: '*Dadurch begibt sie sich bewußt ins Abseits, entledigt sich aller Privilegien, setzt sich Verdächtigungen, Verhöhnungen, Verfolgungen aus: der Preis für ihre Unabhängigkeit*' (ibid). Cassandra is no tragic figure; consequently, she refuses to indulge in self-pity, even though she has lost everything by asserting her independence: '*Kein Selbstmitleid; sie lebt ihr Leben, auch im Krieg. Versucht, den Spruch aufzuheben, der über sie verhängt ist: daß sie zum Objekt gemacht werden soll. Am Ende ist sie allein, Beute der Eroberer ihrer Stadt. Sie weiß, daß es für sie keine lebbare Alternative gegeben hat*' (pp 96-97).

Through the character of Cassandra and her history, Wolf is able to link Troy's apocalyptic destruction with the threatening destruction of her own time: *'Eine Periode wird kommen, in der Machtstreben und Gewalt dominieren'* (V, p97).

Reflecting on parallels between modern atomic self-destruction and the destruction of Troy, Wolf concludes that modern technocracy inevitably results in *Alternativlosigkeit*:

Wie soll man Jüngere die Technik lehren, ohne Alternative zu leben und doch zu leben? – Wann hat es angefangen? fragen wir uns. War dieser Verlauf unausweichlich? Gab es Kreuz- und Wendepunkte, an denen die Menschheit, will sagen: die europäische und nordamerikanische Menschheit, Erfinder und Träger der technischen Zivilisation, andere Entscheidungen hätten treffen können, deren Verlauf nicht selbsterstörerisch gewesen wäre? (p107).

Wolf wonders whether (self-)destruction does not find its roots in prehistoric hunting traditions and the creation of tools to kill (p107). Such hunting evolved into the modern pursuit for consumer products, what Wolf calls a *'Wettlauf'* (p108), a process precipitating the destruction of contemporary society. At the same time, Wolf investigates the contemporaneous suffering of animals in the name of technology and whether it parallels the ancient animal sacrifices of Cassandra's time. Wolf offers the example of the toxic gassing of thousands of sheep in America, her description strongly and not coincidentally reminiscent of Zyklon B, the lethal gas Hitler had developed specifically for the extermination of Jews in the concentration camps: *'Man sieht die lahmen Tiere, die sich kriechend vorwärtsschleppen. In den Giftlagerstätten unter der Erde hält man Kaninchen als Meßgeräte...(Worin liegt der Unterschied zu den Opfertieren der Alten? Der Fortschritt, als sie von Menschen- zu Tieropfern übergangen)'* (V, pp111-112). The theme of sacrifice, both human and animal, is discussed in more detail in the hermeneutic interpretation of the novel.

The destructive nature of various regimes re-appears in Wolf's diary entry for 1st May 1981, which deals with the fighting of societal taboos (or the blind spot). The changing of these taboos lies in the hands of society itself. Wolf struggled all her life to rid herself of taboos and self-censoring: *'Um Kriege zu verhindern, müssen auch Menschen in ihrem jeweils eignen Land Kritik an den Maßstäben ihres eignen Landes üben. Rolle der Tabus bei der Kriegsvorbereitung: Unaufhörlich, unermesslich wächst die Zahl der unwürdigen Geheimnisse. Wie unbedeutend alle Zensur-Tabus und die Folgen ihrer Übertretung durch die Bedrohung des Lebens werden'* (V, p114).

Concerning societal taboos and self-censoring, Wolf regards human objectification (discussed earlier) as the main resource of violence: *'Das Objektivieren: Ist es nicht die Hauptquelle von Gewalt? Die Fetischisierung lebendig-widersprüchlicher Menschen und Prozesse in den öffentlichen Verlautbarungen, bis sie zu Fertigteilen und Kulissen erstarrt sind: selbst tot, andre erschlagend'* (V, p114).

In addition to the themes already mentioned, Wolf continues to reflect on female writing throughout the third lecture: writing women are witnesses to, and scribes of, their lives and times and can therefore be regarded as Cassandra's daughters. In the following extract, Wolf sums up her ideas about *Weibliches Schreiben*. She argues that there is such a concept as female writing in as far as women live a different reality from men. This different and differing female reality needs to be written down for generations to come, so honouring the tradition of Cassandra:

Inwieweit gibt es wirklich 'weibliches' Schreiben? Insoweit Frauen aus historischen und biologischen Gründen eine andre Wirklichkeit erleben als Männer. Wirklichkeit anders erleben als Männer, und dies ausdrücken. Insoweit Frauen nicht zu den Herrschenden, sondern zu den Beherrschten gehören, jahrhundertlang, zu den Objekten der Objekte, Objekte zweiten Grades, oft genug Objekte von Männern, die selbst Objekte sind, ihrer sozialen Lage nach, unbedingt Angehörige der zweiten Kultur; insoweit sie aufhören, sich an dem Versuch zu abzuarbeiten, sich in die herrschenden Wahnsysteme zu integrieren (V, pp114-115).

Wolf defines the main quality a female writer should possess in order to write her reality as inner and outer autonomy. Only when women are autonomous human beings does it become possible for them to meet men half-way, who should also desire their own autonomy:

Insoweit sie, schreibend und lebend, auf Autonomie aus sind. Da begegnen sie dann den Männern, die auf Autonomie aus sind. Autonome Personen, Staaten, und Systeme können sich gegenseitig fördern, müssen sie nicht bekämpfen wie solche, deren innere Unsicherheit und Unreife andauernd Abgrenzung und Imponiergebärden verlangen (V, p115).

Wolf goes on to voice her discontentment with early so-called *Frauenliteratur*: *'Aber: woraus speist sich mein Unbehagen bei der Lektüre so mancher Veröffentlichung – auch aus dem Bereich von Archäologie, Frühgeschichtsschreibung -, die sich selbst unter das Prädikat 'Frauenliteratur' begibt?'* (ibid). She goes so far as to suggest that *Weiblichkeitswahn* is a sign of immaturity or *Unreife*:

Jedoch bringt es der Fähigkeit zur Reife nicht näher, wenn an die Stelle des Männlichkeitswahns der Weiblichkeitswahn gesetzt wird und wenn die Errungenschaften vernünftigen Denkens, nur weil Männer sie hervorgebracht haben, von Frauen zugunsten einer Idealisierung vorrationaler Menschheitsetappen über Bord geworfen werden (V, p115).

Wolf ends this passage by referring again to female autonomy:

Autonomie ist eine Ausgabe für jedermann, und Frauen, die sich auf ihre Weiblichkeit als einen Wert zurückziehen, handeln im Grunde, wie es ihnen adressiert wurde: Sie reagieren mit einem großangelegten Ausweichmanöver auf die Herausforderung der Realität an ihre ganze Person (V, p116).

Wolf's concept of female autonomy also encompasses Cassandra's 'innere Geschichte'. Because Cassandra asserts her independence, she is punished by the state, becoming the object of 'fremder Zwecke' by being forced into a marriage by proxy with Eurypylos (V, p118). Cassandra increasingly frees herself from the false 'wir', from the propaganda machine of Troy, and the social confinement - *Gefängnis* - in which she, as the King's daughter, was compelled to reside: 'Zunehmend entzieht sie sich dann dem Dienst an den Ihren, der sozialen Maschinerie, in die sie eingebaut ist, und pflegt Umgang mit solchen, die – sei es durch Zwang, sei es freiwillig – auch draußen stehn wie sie. Ihre innere Geschichte: das Ringen um Autonomie' (ibid). This 'Ringen' is manifest in the novel at that point when Cassandra's soul becomes the battleground of two *Kämpfe*, the one for Troy and the other for her autonomy. Wolf admits that she bases her Cassandra on the 'historical' Cassandra of 'Ritual, Kult, Glauben und Mythos' (V, p119). She emphasises her on-going changes in her understanding of the Cassandra character. The longer the author busied herself with the Cassandra material, the more objectively she came to view the character, until she eventually emerged as the 'historical' Cassandra: 'Die Figur verändert sich andauernd, indem ich mich mit Material befasse, immer mehr schwindet der tierische Ernst, alles Heroische, Tragische, demzufolge schwinden auch Mitleid und einseitige Parteinahme für sie. Ich sehe sie nüchterner, sogar mit Ironie und Humor. Durchschaue sie' (ibid).

Originally planned as a *Lehrstück*, Cassandra evolved into *Schlüsselerzählung* (V, p119). Wolf's abandonment of the *Lehrstück* idea indicates her creative departure from the tenets of Socialist Realism. She contemplates the problems attached to the writing of history by non-historians or by individuals who did not personally experience the times they write about, and how these process affect Western literature. Outcomes of these processes would include, she believes, the

simplification of historical events, the condensation of epochs, and the diminution of the fullness of historical heroes and characters:

Was bedeutet diese Erfahrung für eine Literatur, die keine großen lebenskräftigen Idealgestalten mehr schaffen, keine zusammenhängenden – durch Krieg und Mord und Totschlag und die dazu fälligen Heldentaten zusammenhängenden – Geschichte mehr erzählen will? Welche Art von Gedächtnis verlangt und unterstützt die Prosa der Virginia Woolf? Warum sollte das Gehirn, das doch oft mit einem Netzwerk verglichen wird, die Erzählung einer linearen Fabel besser 'behalten' können als ein erzählerisches Netzwerk? Wie sonst könnte ein Autor gegen die Gewohnheit angehn (die den Anforderungen der Zeit nicht mehr entspricht), Geschichte als Heldengeschichte zu erinnern? Die Helden sind auswechselbar, das Muster bleibt (V, p117).

When Wolf finally comes to write *Kassandra*, she requires a less linear narrative structure because of her shift away from the Socialist Realist approach to her subject. She adopts the montage technique or 'Erzählerische Netzwerk': *'Erzähltechniken, die ja in ihrer jeweiligen Geschlossenheit oder Offenheit auch Denk-Muster transportieren. Empfinde die geschlossene Form der Kassandra-Erzählung als Widerspruch zu der fragmentarischen Struktur, aus der sie sich für mich eigentlich zusammensetzt. Der Widerspruch kann nicht gelöst, nur benannt werden'* (V, p120).

Wolf's preoccupations with *Kassandra* are inter-dependent with her continuing reflections on the industrial destruction of the time. For example, she reads the American writer, Lewis Mumford's book, *Mythos der Maschine* in which he draws a parallel between the contemporary organisational form of the Mega-technique and the *Machtblock* of the Roman Empire. As part of her criticism of the Mega-technique, one of whose manifestation was the atom bomb on Hiroshima, Wolf writes about weapons and the increase of 'falsche Alternative':

Wenn keiner, der mit Waffen zu tun hat, mehr den Finger rührte? Dann würden sie alle arbeitslos. Na und? Denkt man. Besser arbeitslos als tot. Aber so denken die nicht, denn sie fürchten mehr den sicheren gesellschaftlichen Tod als den unsicheren physischen. Dies nenne ich: falsche Alternativen. Ihre Zahl nimmt zu (V, p121).

Wolf's diary entry for 23rd August 1981 brings into powerful juxtaposition the 'necrophilia' of modern 'steel' society and the 'living word': *'Der heutigen Nekrophilie, die sich in Stahl, Glas, Beton manifestiert (die, übrigens, vor dem Theater natürlich nicht haltmacht), etwas entgegen-setzen wie 'das lebendige Wort'?* Wolf subscribes to the existential thinking of the Swiss author,

Max Frisch, who believes that, despite the destructive Mega-machine, writers should continue to write for the generations to come, even though one remains insecure about an uncertain future:

Das [lebendige Wort] subversiv, unbekümmert, 'eindringlich' im Wortsinn sein müßte und nicht danach fragen dürfte, ob es sein Ziel erreicht – ja, das nicht einmal ein 'Ziel' haben dürfte, und vielleicht so aus der einzigartigen Lage zeitgenössischer Autoren, die Max Frisch beschreibt: daß sie mit keiner Nachwelt mehr rechnen, eben jene einzig mögliche Folgerung zieht, die wieder Nachwelt, vielleicht sogar Zukunft schaffen hülfe (V, pp124-125).

Whether or not there is a generation to follow, writing itself remains crucial for the female author. A *Leitmotiv* in *Kassandra* is the creation of a future, despite the threat of apocalyptic destruction of Troy or the threat of cataclysm facing the contemporary world through atomic war and ecological destruction. The female writer should be conscious of these threats and experience her inevitable dolour so that she can write of such things and so engender a future. Contemporary women writers tend to undergo this process more than their male counterparts.

VIERTE VORLESUNG. EIN BRIEF ÜBER EINDEUTIGKEIT UND MEHRDEUTIGKEIT, BESTIMMTHEIT UND UNBESTIMMTHEIT; ÜBER SEHR ALTE ZUSTÄNDE UND NEUE SEHRASTER; ÜBER OBJEKTIVITÄT

Wolf's fourth lecture constitutes a *résumé* of the previous three lectures. These lectures report the experiences and the researches that led to the writing of *Kassandra*. This process is facilitated by her consideration of texts of Ingeborg Bachmann, one of the first prominent female writers to expose the repression of women by men as a theme in Western literary writing. This repressive objectification of women consists of various phases. Again, the scope of a dissertation inhibits a detailed discussion of these phases at this juncture so they are schematised below:

- (i) the substitution of the ancient matriarchal triple goddess (pp132-134) who, in Goethe's *Faust* Part 2, was still an object of intuitive reverence (pp135, 137) by the influence of Aristotelian patriarchal aesthetics (pp134, 142, 144);
- (ii) women were made monstrous so that reverence (still evident in Goethe's work) was replaced by fear of the female (p138);
- (iii) the metamorphosis of women into narrow-minded housewives (evident in Schiller's work) (pp140, 141);
- (iv) the transformation of women into bloodless abstract "idols" (exemplified by Goethe's *Faust* Part 2, in Helen's spell) (p.141);

- (v) women's loss of their functions as priestess and prophetess when the Delphic oracle became a male preoccupation (by which Gaia was replaced by Apollo), so that the aphorisms of the Pythia have to be interpreted correctly by male priests (pp142-143).

From this outline, Wolf (pp143-144) concludes:

[...] die Frau ein Werkzeug in der Hand der Männer. Am Dichter-, Seher-, Priesterberuf, der aus einer magischen Wurzel kommt, kann man am deutlichsten ablesen: Die Frau, einst Ausführende, ist entweder ausgeschlossen oder zum Objekt geworden. Jahrhunderte sind darüber vergangen. An einer Nahtstelle dieser konfliktreichen Geschehnisse steht Cassandra.

Therefore Cassandra becomes a key figure for female writing. This female writing is entirely different from traditional Aristotelian writing that Wolf consciously explicates in the fourth lecture. The Aristotelian aesthetic concludes the destruction of the matriarchal myth by the patriarchy (pp142-144).

Given this outline of Wolf's female writing as it appears in the fourth lecture, a more detailed exploration of that lecture now becomes relevant.

During 1981, Wolf writes what she calls a letter to a certain 'A', in which she contemplates who Cassandra really was. This contemplation leads her to read a poem, *Erklär mir Liebe*, by Ingeborg Bachmann. Bachmann, an almost exact contemporary of Wolf's, was a leading Austrian woman writer and a contemporary of Max Frisch and Paul Celan. Bachmann writes of the *Unterdrückung* of the individual woman, which leads Wolf to wonder whether, in writing the poem, Bachmann adopts a specific female perspective: '*Spricht sie als Frau, spricht sie als Mann?*' (V, p128).

Later in the same letter, Wolf admits that since she started her Cassandra project, everything else has been defined in terms of the Cassandra figure. Her project has changed her own perceptions or pattern of thinking about her own times, what she refers to as her *Seh-Raster*:

Mit der Erweiterung des Blick-Winkels, der Neueinstellung der Tiefenschärfe hat mein Seh-Raster, durch den ich unsere Zeit, uns alle, dich, mich selbst wahrnehme, sich entschieden verändert, vergleichbar jener frühen entschiedenen Veränderung, die mein Denken, meine Sicht und mein Selbst-Gefühl vor mehr als dreißig Jahren durch die erste

befreiende und erhellende Bekanntschaft mit der marxistischen Theorie und Sehweise erfahren (V, p131).

She acknowledges that working with the Cassandra figure has been a liberating experience because it has extended her reality far beyond what she understood it to be from only a Marxist perspective:

Wenn ich mir klarzumachen suche, was da geschieht und geschah, so ist es, auf den allgemeinsten Nenner gebracht, eine Erweiterung dessen, was für mich 'wirklich' ist; aber auch das Wesen, die innere Struktur, die Bewegung dieser Wirklichkeit hat sich verändert und verändert sich beinahe täglich weiter (ibd).

Wolf is surprised to discover that Aristotle's criteria about mimetic characters are not far from the modern media's dualistic perception of people: *"Der nachahmend gestaltende Künstler stellt handelnde Menschen dar. Diese Menschen sind notwendig entweder gut oder schlecht". Dies entspricht etwa, dachte ich überrascht, den Kriterien, die unsere meisten Zeitungsrezensenten auch heute noch an Bücher legen' (ibd).* Aristotle writes: *"Homer zum Beispiel zeichnet die Menschen mit höheren Qualitäten als die Durchschnittsmenschen." (Während die "Komödie Menschen darstellt, die minderwertig sind") (V, p132).*

Bringing together the Wolfian concepts that women (a) should be autonomous in their writing and (b) not see themselves as tragic, she writes that *'Man solle aufhören, das Los der Frau in der Vergangenheit zu beklagen. Daß sie sich dem Manne unterordnete, ihn umsorgte, ihm diene – genau das war die Bedingung dafür, daß der Mann sich auf die Wissenschaft, oder auch auf die Kunst, konzentrieren und in beiden Gebieten Höchstleistungen vollbringen konnte' (V, p136).* Again, Wolf suggests that one source of male fear of the female might be traced back to the emasculation of the ancient god, Uranos. This fear was perpetuated not only by classical male writers but also by German authors such Goethe and Heinrich von Kleist in his *'Penthesilea'*: *'Schauder ist zusammengesetzt aus Ehrfurcht und Furcht. Den Heutigen, denke ich oft, ist nur Furcht geblieben' (V, p138).*

Returning to Aristotle's concept of mimesis – the subject of Erich Auerbach's classic text (1953) – Wolf discusses the phenomenon of men imitating women in matriarchal times. This mimicking resulted in men wearing female clothes, and even engendered emasculation. This would suggest that the priesthood did belong to women once upon a time, and that the power of the female has not simply ceased to exist:

Das frühere Verhältnis: Männer identifizieren sich mit Frauen, ahmten mimetisch den Geburtsvorgang nach, entmannten sich, um Priester werden zu können (dies wird sogar von Apoll behauptet), schlichen sich in Frauenkleidern in das Priesterinnenamt (ebenfalls Apoll) – dieses Verhältnis ist nun mehr als umgekehrt, die Frau ein Werkzeug in der Hand der Männer. Am Dichter-, Seher, Priesterberuf, der aus einer magischen Wurzel kommt, kann man am deutlichsten ablesen: Die Frau, die Ausführende, ist entweder ausgeschlossen oder zum Objekt geworden (V, p143).

Wolf continues to explore the historical Cassandra who stands on the 'Nahtstelle' (V, p144) of apocalyptic times. Her heritage is paradoxical: her father, Priam, established Troy's patriarchy, while her mother, Hekabe, is of matrilineal descent. The patriarchy's predominant influence is shown through the difference between being priestess and being an oracle: a woman like Cassandra is regarded as only a *Seherin*, and is not allowed to do official readings of the future from the viscera of sacrificial animals as the oracle is entitled to do. This exclusive right belongs to men like Kalchas, Helenos and Laokoon (ibid).

Wolf quotes from Marie-Luise Fleißner's 'Tiefseefisch' and concludes that women authors do not possess their own authentic models:

Sage Dir alle großen Namen der abendländischen Literatur auf, vergiß weder Homer noch Brecht, und frage Dich, bei welchem dieser Geistesriesen Du, als Schreibende, anknüpfen könntest. Wir haben keine authentischen Muster, das kostet uns Zeit, Umwege, Irrtümer; aber es muß ja nicht nur ein Nachteil sein (V, p146).

Despite Wolf's observation about female *Muster*, she does find one example in the ancient female poet, Sappho, whose poems stem from 600 BC. Thus, the Sappho motto in the beginning of *Kassandra* sheds some light on Wolf's thoughts pertaining to *Weibliches Schreiben*. Together with *Kassandra*, Sappho remains one of those rare female *Zeuginnen* whose witnessing survived the centuries for future generations. Wolf regards both Sappho and *Kassandra* as working women: 'Zu jener Zeit war Lesbos eine der fünf Stätten in Griechenland, in denen es noch Schulen für Mädchen gab – Sappho stand einer von ihnen vor. Sie war eine selbständige berufstätige Frau' (V, p146). The Sappho motto is thus integral to the novel and Wolf's perception of female writing.

As a contrast to Sappho, Wolf quotes Goethe to demonstrate the classic and *aufklärerische* viewpoints perpetuated in his work. Wolf also uses Goethe to exemplify the concept of *Idol*, which prefigures woman's enslavement by the male:

"Helena: Ich als Idol verband ich mich.

Es war ein Traum, so sagen ja die Worte selbst.

Ich schwinde hin und werde selbst mir zum Idol."

Idol von griechisch 'eidolon'= Bild. Das lebendige Gedächtnis wird der Frau entwunden, ein Bild, das andre von ihr sich machen, wird ihr untergeschoben: der entsetzliche Vorgang der Versteinerung, Verdinglichung am lebendigen Leib (V, p148).

Using the *Idol*-concept, Wolf emphasises the core of *weibliches Schreiben*: the female uttering of the "Ich" (which features so prominently in *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, *Kassandra*, and *Medea*) and the rediscovery of the self: *'Ahnt man, ahnen wir, wie schwer, ja, wie gefährlich es ein kann, wenn wieder Leben in die 'Sache' kommt; wenn das Idol sich wieder findet? Als Frau 'ich' sagen muß?'* (V, p148). Wolf emphasises that the writing woman can so easily lose herself in the cauldron of male institutions: *'Ein generationsbreites Gelände, in dem die schreibende Frau beinah oder wirklich verlorengeht: an den Mann, an die Männer-Institutionen, Verbände, Kirchen, Parteien, Staat'* (ibid). However, in the light of Wolf's theme of female autonomy, woman can overcome these male-generated handicaps by finding the 'ich', thus overcoming the *Ich-* and *Sprachlosigkeit* imposed on her by the patriarchy.

Wolf rounds off her observations on Bachmann's concept of the repression of woman by man with the argument that this repression manifests itself in a myriad of male institutions, including 'literature' and 'aesthetics'. According to Wolf, any woman - Wolf is probably referring to Bachmann and herself here - who has tried to take on any of these institutions must get to know her *Selbstvernichtungswunsch*: *'Ich behaupte, daß jede Frau, die sich in diesem Jahrhundert und im unseren Kulturkreis in die vom männlichen Selbstverständnis geprägten Institutionen gewagt hat - 'die Literatur', 'die Ästhetik' sind solche Institutionen -, den Selbstvernichtungswunsch kennenlernen mußte'* (V, p149). For Wolf, Bachmann's *'Malina'* exemplifies this *Selbstvernichtungswunsch*, when the female protagonist vanishes through the wall, leaving behind only her male alter ego, Malina. The woman in the novel is thus destroyed, partly by her own means:

In ihrem Roman, 'Malina' läßt Ingeborg Bachmann die Frau am Ende in der Wand verschwinden und den Mann, Malina, der ein Stück von ihr ist, gelassen aussprechen, was der Fall ist: Hier ist keine Frau.

"Es war Mord", heißt der letzte Satz.

Es war auch Selbstmord (ibid).

Wolf regards Bachmann as one of those rare female writers who, through their work, has broken the female silence: *'Da kommt, nach diesen beinah dreitausend Jahren Stummsein, spora-*

dischen Sprechens höchstens, eine Frau, zu sagen: Ich sammle nur die Geschichten, die nicht bekanntwerden, und nur Geschichten mit letalem Ausgang. –“Todesarten”‘ (V, p150). For Wolf, Bachmann paradoxically embodies that nameless woman from *Malina* but, at the same time, as an author, is nowhere nearly as chaotic as the nameless woman:

Die Bachmann aber ist jene namenlose Frau aus 'Malina', sie ist jene Franza aus dem Romanfragment, die ihre Geschichte einfach nicht in den Griff, nicht in die Form kriegt. Die es einfach nicht fertigbringt, aus ihrer Erfahrung eine präsentable Geschichte zu machen, sie als Kunstgebilde aus sich herauszustellen. Talentmangel? Der Einwand entfällt, jedenfalls an diesem Beispiel. Es ist allerdings schwer begrifflich, daß ihr Rang als Künstlerin sich eben auch darin offenbart, daß sie die Erfahrung der Frau, die sie ist, nicht in 'Kunst' ertönen kann. Ein Paradox, o ja (V, p151).

Wolf sees Bachmann's 'obsession' to put female experience into words as unabashed and wild, hence her use of the concept of the 'wild' woman (as seen in *Medea*):

Eine Besessenheit muß Worte finden, die sich an das Ritual, das bändigt, nicht halten kann, die sich an nichts halten kann, unbändig ist, wild. Eine wilde Frau, man kann nur ratlos die Arme heben; eine andre Art, Fragen zu stellen (nicht mehr das mörderische: Wer-wenn?); eine andre Art Stärke, eine andre Art Schwäche (V, p151).

Referring to Bachmann's *Franza-Fragment*, Wolf contemplates the reasons why Franza stays the self-destructive victim-object:

Wodurch konnte sie so zerstört werden?, das ist die Frage, die im Franza-Fragment der Bruder sich stellt, das einzige männliche, das einzige menschliche Wesen, das die verstörte Schwester um Hilfe anrufen kann; es ist, soweit ich sehen kann, die den Stoff organisierende Frage, die aber leider, ja: leider, nicht objektiv, nicht auf alte oder neue, auch auf die allermodernste Romanweise nicht, zu beantworten ist (V, pp151-152).

The fact that Bachmann does not provide an answer to Franza's dilemma transforms it into a universal dilemma between women and men, according to Wolf. It remains impossible for both genders to wrench themselves away from mutual fear of the other. That fear is embodied in the *Leitthema* of Bachmann's work:

Und auch wir werden eher einen Schrecken erfahren als eine Antwort, oder sollen wir darauf gestoßen werden, daß dieser Schrecken für diese unsre Zeit die Antwort ist,

namenloses Entsetzen, und daß wir – Männer und Frauen – nicht fortschreiten, uns nicht lossprechen, uns nicht emanzipieren werden, wenn wir dieses Entsetzen nicht durchleben, wenn wir uns um dieses Grauen herumdrücken wollen? (V, p153).

Lastly, Wolf cites Bachmann's views about the male colonising of Franza, she remains merely the man's chattel, the one compelled to follow his lead: *"Ich bin von niedriger Rasse, er ist das Exemplar, das heute regiert, das heute Erfolg hat, das von heutiger Grausamkeit (ist), das angreift und darum lebt"* (ibid). For Wolf, the *Franza-Fragment* binds together all those aspects of female writing that constitute the subject-matter of the letter to 'A': *'Folgen jene Schlüsselsätze, die alle jene Frauen, von denen ich heute gesprochen habe – Seherin, Dichterin, Priesterin, Idol, Kunstfigur –zusammenbringen'* (V, pp153-154). In rounding off her discussion, she uses Bachmann's words to articulate what she believes to be the epitome of female repression:

"Er hat meine Güter genommen. Mein Lachen, meine Zärtlichkeit, mein Freuenkönnen, mein Mitleiden, Helfenkönnen, meine Animalität, mein Strahlen, er hat jedes einzelne Aufkommen von all dem ausgetreten, bis es nicht mehr aufgekommen ist. Aber warum tut das jemand, das versteh ich nicht..." (V, p154).

Ultimately, female writing is the articulation of the repression of women by patriarchal systems (as seen in Bachmann's work), an articulation resulting in the breaking of that repressive silence. Writing about that repression and the breaking of its silence becomes the means by which women inevitably achieve their emancipation. The female writer's function is to act as witness and scribe to facilitate that emancipation from the brutal and destructive grip of the patriarchy.

(2) DAS WINZIGE RINNSAL: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF KASSANDRA.

*Das Bedürfnis, auf eine neue Art zu schreiben, folgt,
wenn auch mit Abstand, einer neuen Art,
in der Welt zu sein.*

Christa Wolf

*Das hab ich lange nicht begriffen:
Daß nicht alle sehen konnten, was ich sah*

Kassandra

'Hier war es. Da stand sie. Diese steinernen Löwen, jetzt kopflos, haben sie angeblickt' (K, p5).
The first half of the first page is witnessed through the eyes of the modern third-person female

narrator and tourist in the 1980s. For her, the *Löwentor* is both a tourist attraction and a living witness of events 3000 old; Cassandra's slaughter by Clytemnestra. Wolf has designed the novel in two time frames: the *Erzählzeit* and the *Erzählte Zeit*. 'Mit der Erzählung geh ich in den Tod': the novel moves from third-person narrator to first-person narrator, the voice of Cassandra. Because Wolf does not mark the shift between *Erzählzeit* and *Erzählte Zeit*, the reader is left to discover the shift between the two time frames. The rapid move from third person to first person narrator suggests that both narrators are interchangeable; thus, the 3000-year-old Cassandra story remains relevant for the narrator's era. Cassandra's '*Frauenschicksal*' remains unaltered after three millenia (see the last pages of Chapter 6 and Wolf's observations about Bachmann's work in *Voraussetzungen*). Only on the last page of the novel does Wolf revert back to the third-person narrator's perspective embodied in the modern author/tourist. Through this narrating technique, the reader knows early on in *Kassandra* what to expect at the end: she will die. The novel thus constitutes an analysis of why the novel ends in this particular way. Called "epic analysis", this technique is frequently used in modern and post-modern literature. The 'how' of events takes precedent over the 'what'. The *Spannung* of events does not lie in the ending itself but in the poetic analysis of that ending. The *Deutung* in post-modern literature is emphasised rather than the *Darstellung*. The first 14 pages of the novel do not disclose enough for readers to understand its *Zusammenhang*; and therefore they cannot yet understand the *Deutung*.

The time frame of the second half of the first page is the *Erzählzeit*, two hours before Cassandra's execution in Mycenae. The setting of the *Erzählzeit* is in Mycenae on Agamemnon's cart on which Cassandra sits and talks to the *Wagenlenker* while the *Erzählzeit* itself comprises the short time in which Cassandra reflects about her life. One of her first reflections is on her loss of faith in the compassion of the gods, she is '*durchtränkt, geätzt, vergiftet von der Gleichgültigkeit der Außerirdischen gegenüber uns Irdischen. Gescheitert das Wagnis, ihrer Eiskälte unsre kleine Wärme entgegensetzen*' (K, p5). Ironically, Cassandra still clings on to life, despite her hopeless situation. Her reason for rejecting suicide instead of execution is that she finally wants to gain real insight about herself, the '*Lust*' der Erkenntnis. Cassandra wants to be alive for the remaining time '*denn ich zog Lust aus allem, was ich sah – Lust; Hoffnung nicht! -, und lebte weiter, um zu sehn*' (K, p6). This passion for life is the reason for Cassandra begging the *Wagenlenker* to let her linger a while longer on the cart; she has foreseen her own death by Clytemnestra.

This passage exemplifies modern/post-modern poetics and the desire to record and explicate one's awareness of the world, even though life is presumed to be inherently meaningless and hopeless ('*Hoffnung nicht!*'). Part of this awareness of the world comes from razing one's own defences/*Waffen*. Cassandra identifies several of her *Waffen* – her pride and ambition from the

time she was a young girl - *'Warum wollte ich die Sehergabe unbedingt?'* (K, p6) as well as her self-righteousness and self-overestimation: *'meinen Hang, mich zu rechtfertigen'*. Her last defence is her bombastic way of speaking and addressing people: *'Der Ton der Verkündigung'* (K, p7). Only because Cassandra has now razed her defences does it become possible for her to gain self-insight and *innere Wandlung*.

Her *Grenzsituation* - she is to be executed in two hours - precipitates the urgent desire to reflection *'Was ich begreifen werde, bis es Abend wird, das geht mit mir zugrund. Geht es zugrund? Lebt der Gedanke, einmal in der Welt, in einem andern fort? In unserm wackern Wagenlenker, dem wir lästig sind?'*(ibid). Cassandra confronts the problematics of post-modern poetics: even when Cassandra is without hope, her reflections do not necessarily have to die with her. The *Wagenlenker*/reader can choose to assimilate Cassandra's reflections. A hard-won insight need not necessarily be forgotten: *'Der Gedanke, einmal in der Welt, lebt in einem anderen fort'* (K, p7). The phrase, *'In einem anderen'*, refers to the *Wagenlenker*, that person who best understands Cassandra's message: *'Was für ein kluger Mann'* (K, p122).

'Ich mache die Schmerzprobe' (K, p8): Cassandra's newfound insight embodies the *Schmerzmotiv*. Dealing with one's own sorrow is a *Leitmotiv* in *Kassandra* (as in Wolf's other novels). Wolf's philosophy argues that one can be truly alive only when one has learnt to experience the *Schmerz* of one's past: *'Wie der Arzt, um zu prüfen, ob es abgestorben ist, ein Glied ansticht, so stech ich mein Gedächtnis an. Vielleicht daß der Schmerz stirbt, eh wir sterben'* (ibid). *Schmerz* thus enables the individual to find *Sprache* again: *'Wer wird, und wann, die Sprache wiederfinden. Einer, dem ein Schmerz den Schädel spaltet, wird es sein'* (K, p10). Wolf points out that the Greek victors are unable to experience sorrow, knowing only *'das Gebrüll und der Befehl und das Gewinsel und das Jawohl der Gehorchenden'* (ibid). Consequently, the victor knows only a distorted and raped *Sprache*, that results in *'Die Ohnmacht der Sieger'* and *'Gräßlichkeit des Sieges'* (ibid). This distorted *Sprache* is a blindness that also besets the Greeks: *'Greise, Frauen, Kinder. Über seine Folgen [den Sieg], die ich schon jetzt in ihren blinden Augen seh. Mit Blindheit geschlagen...'* (K, p10). The futility of war is another of the novel's *Hauptthemen* which is discussed in Wolf's *Voraussetzungen*. Wolf gradually develops the idea that military victory aids neither the victor nor the vanquished. The *Schmerz/Sprache* theme reaches its apogee in Cassandra's final conversation with the *Wagenlenker*, a conversation incorporating the *Sieg* motif:

Ich sage ihnen: Wenn ihr aufhörn könnt zu siegen, wird diese eure Stadt bestehn. Gestatte eine Frage, Seherin – (Der Wagenlenker.) – Frag. – Du glaubst nicht dran. – Woran. – daß wir zu siegen aufhörn können. – Ich weiß von keinem Sieger, der es

konnte. - So ist, wenn Sieg auf Sieg am Ende Untergang bedeutet, der Untergang in unsere Natur gelegt? Die Frage aller Fragen. Was für ein kluger Mann. Komm näher, Wagenlenker. Hör zu. Ich glaube, daß wir unsere Natur nicht kennen (K, p122).

Another theme inter-related to the *Sprachthema* is *Denken*. In the past, Cassandra could banish feelings of love through *Denken*; while awaiting execution in Mycenae, she uses *Denken* again to surmount her fear of death: '*Gefühle durch Denken besiegen*' (K, p10). Because she wanted to be a priestess, not a mother and wife, and because she wanted the gift of prophecy above everything else, it was crucially important for Cassandra to overcome love. Two hours before her death, Cassandra experiences an epiphany: '*Neugier, auch auf mich gerichtet, gänzlich frei*' (ibid). Her liberation from '*Selbstvorwürfe, jetzt ist meine die wichtige Fragen hindern*' allows Cassandra to experience unbounded happiness: '*Als ich dies erkannte, schrie ich laut*' and '*schrie ich laut, vor Schmerz oder Wonne*' (K, pp10-11). At this same time, Cassandra reflects about the possibility of her message being carried on by a *Sklavin*: if that happens, will forthcoming generations believe her life story, or will this be only a fruitless exercise? Will anybody draw any links to their own generation, and will the message still be valid? And, even more importantly, will anybody hearing or reading her message want to change the world? This passage constitutes one of the most central aspects of *Kassandra*: Wolf's insights into *weibliches Schreiben*

As a *Zeugin* of her time, Cassandra wants her witnessing of events to be passed down to future generations. Yet, she is unsure about this possibility. Through *Kassandra*, Wolf tackles the dilemma of the modern writer: Would her own writing/*Zeugnis* make a difference to world events or even to a single individual? '*Ich will Zeugin bleiben, auch wenn es keinen einzigen Menschen mehr geben wird, der mir mein Zeugnis abverlangt*' (K, p25). Wolf sees herself as one of *Kassandra's* daughters who record and pass on the truth about women's plight, not only in mythological times, but in contemporary situations too; they identify the gender-biased (mis)conceptions of ancient males that afflict men in modern 'civilisation'. The passage is central to the de-mythologising, de-construction, reconstruction, and re-writing of the *Kassandra* myth that has been so falsely told by generations of misogynist writers:

Aber, ich fleh dich an: Schick mir einen Schreiber, oder, besser noch, eine junge Sklavin mit scharfem Gedächtnis und kraftvoller Stimme. Verfüge, daß sie, was sie von mir hört, ihrer Tochter weitersagen darf. Die wieder ihrer Tochter, und so fort (K, p86).

Even when female literature is reduced to a tiny rivulet compared to the huge stream of male literature, *Kassandra* still wants to believe in the carrying forth of her message, even if it is for just one day: '*So daß neben dem Strom der Heldenlieder dies winzige Rinnsal, mühsam, jene fernen,*

vielleicht glücklicheren Menschen, die einst leben werden, auch erreichte. Und daran könnt ich glauben, auch nur einen Tag?' (ibid). The paradox contained in Wolf's concept of *weibliches Schreiben* is that Wolf/Kassandra knows that there are no guarantees attached to bringing forth the female message. As a post-modern author, Wolf questions the possibility whether literature makes any concrete difference. In *Kassandra*, Kassandra's message seems basically futile. But, as Wolf has said in many interviews and critical writings: she is nothing without writing. Consequently, despite the existentialist quality of much post-modern literature, Wolf still produces novels, just as Kassandra tells her *Lebensgeschichte*. Wolf could thus be regarded as a partly pessimistic, partly utopian female author because of the inherent paradox in her work.

To write authentically, Wolf believes, one must recognise the truth about oneself as well as the true *Bild*: 'Was ich lebendig nenne? [...] Das Schwierigste nicht scheuen, das Bild von sich selbst ändern' (K, p129). Wolf captures the passing-on of literature in the *Wagenlenker*-metaphor or those who listen to the truth about the future and pass it on: 'Lebt der Gedanke, einmal in der Welt, in einem andern fort? In unserm wackern Wagenlenker, dem wir lästig sind?' (K, p7). One of the most important themes incorporated by Wolf's reinterpretation is Kassandra's journey towards her authentic self, the true 'wir' that is not contained within the boundaries of Troy. Part of her inner journey is *Das Bild von sich selbst ändern*. Kassandra learns to see the true nature of herself/her self as well as the Trojans and the Greeks.

Reflecting on her old life in Troy, Kassandra understands now what drove her to *Sehen*, namely, what Panthoos calls *Eigenliebe* and Marpessa, *Hochmut* (K, p14). This passage engenders a *Beichte*, a secularised *mea culpa* prevalent in modern and post-modern poetics. If one of the main tasks of art is to promulgate a critical analysis of the self, then truth is more important than beauty (the latter being central to the philosophy of the *Aufklärung*). Kassandra returns to her earlier question: 'Warum wollte ich die Sehergabe unbedingt?' In the beginning, Kassandra fails to understand that the patriotic loyalty of the king's daughter is irreconcilable with the duties of a prophetess/priestess. Most important of these duties is the ability to tell the naked truth about visions and prophecies, even if these truths contradict state interests: 'Wie lange blind gegen das Naheliegende: daß ich zu wählen hatte zwischen meiner Herkunft und dem Amt' (K, p12). Only later, after her *Selbstfindung*, could Kassandra conduct her priestly duties properly: 'Das Glück, ich selbst zu werden und dadurch den andern nützlicher – ich hab es noch erlebt' (K, p14).

Only Kassandra's mother, Hekabe, could understand Kassandra's processes: she knows that her daughter would have to go through the individuation process alone: 'Ich weiß auch, daß nur wenige es bemerken, wenn man sich verändert. Hekabe die Mutter hat mich früh erkannt und sich nicht weiter um mich gekümmert. Dies Kind braucht mich nicht, hat sie gesagt' (ibid). This

profound insight from Hekabe makes it clear that, before war broke out, she, the '*ideale Königin*', was actually the ruling force of Troy, and not Priam, the '*ein nicht idealer König*'. Hekabe's hidden ruling of Troy reveals her matriarchal roots, a secret *Mütterherrschaft*.

Wolf uses Aeschylus's version to explain how Cassandra obtained her *Sehergabe*. The *Traum* or possibly *Traumbild* Wolf uses in the novel can also be read as the repression on Cassandra's part of a traumatic event. In Cassandra's dream, Apollo appears to her as *Apollon Lykeios*, or the sungod: '*Der Sonnengott mit der Leier...Apollon, der Gott der Seher*'. However, Wolf demythologises the traditional role of the gods in myth. The novel proposes a dichotomous and dualistic nature for Apollo: the bearer of light and illumination, and yet the simultaneous incarnation of darkness:

Der wußte, was ich heiß begehrte: die Sehergabe, die er mir durch eine eigentlich beiläufige, ich wagte nicht zu fühlen: enttäuschende Geste verlieh, nur um sich mir als Mann zu nähern, wobei er sich – ich glaubte, allein durch meinen grauenvollen Schrecken – in einen Wolf verwandelte, der von Mäusen umgeben war und der mir wütend in den Mund spuckte, als er mich nicht überwältigen konnte' (K, p18).

Parthena, Cassandra's *Amme*, is the only person to be honest with Cassandra about Apollo's true nature: '*Apollon Lykeios...der Gott der Wölfe und der Mäuse, von dem sie dunkle Geschichten wußte, die sie mir zuraunte und die ich niemandem weitersagen durfte. Daß dieser zwiespältige Gott der gleiche sei wie unser unanfechtbarer Apoll im Tempel, das hätte ich nie gedacht' (ibid).*

However, in *Kassandra*, it is through the dream itself that Apollo's true nature is unmasked. This *Kassandra-Traum* possesses psychological connotations: the threat to the female psyche by the male principle is exemplified by Apollo's spitting into Cassandra's mouth. Because this male threat resides in Cassandra's subconscious, it manifests itself appropriately in dream form. The dream also suggests the repression of some traumatic experience Cassandra has undergone, a process that forms an integral part of Freud's thinking. The repression of the subconscious as the result of a traumatic experience or a forbidden desire is defined by Freudian psycho-analytic theory as: '*a domain of the psyche encompassing the repressed functions, the primitive impulses and desires, the memories, images and wishes that are too anxiety-provoking to be accepted into the consciousness' (Reber: 1995, p823).*

Parthena's words - '*Kybele hilf!*' (K, p21) - alert Cassandra to an alternative world, the secret movement that did not exist officially in Troy. She feels disillusioned, knowing only her own world, the *Sichtbare*, and nothing of the Cybele cult, that is the *Unsichtbare*: '*Was ging vor. Wo lebte ich*

denn. *Wie viele Wirklichkeiten gab es in Troia noch außer der meinen, die ich doch für die einzige gehalten hatte. Wer setzte die Grenze fest zwischen Sichtbarem und Unsichtbarem?* (K, p23). To speak Cybele's name out loud was forbidden: *'...Es war ihr verboten...den Namen Kybele auszusprechen'* (ibid). Nonetheless, one night, Cassandra follows the women secretly to the outskirts of Troy, to the *Ida-Berg*, on the banks of the Skamander River. She observes the women, Marpessa included, going into a trance-like state, and performing ancient erotic dance-movements. Because Cassandra has never before experienced such abundance, she feels embarrassed and runs away:

Marpessa glitt in den Kreis, der meine Ankunft nicht einmal bemerkte – eine neue, eigentlich vertetzende Erfahrung für mich -, der sein Tempo allmählich steigerte, seinen Rhythmus verstärkte, schneller, fordernder, ungestümer wurde, einzelne Tänzerinnen aus dem Kreis schleuderte, auch Marpessa [...] – sie zu Gesten trieb, die mein Schamgefühl verletzten [...] Von Furcht und Schrecken erfüllt floh ich....(K, p22-23).

Cybele constitutes a threat because she is an ancient Mother-goddess. Associated with her are Demeter and Aphrodite, the post-matriarchal goddesses of fertility. With origins in Asia Minor, Cybele was worshipped as Goddess of the Mountains, subsequently called 'Idaea Mater'. Hence the name: Mount Ida, known as Kaz Dag in modern North Western Turkey. In later mythologies, Cybele is also depicted as the goddess of nature and, according to one mythical variant, is the mother of the plant-god, Attis. She is worshipped at her holy shrine in Pessinus, in Turkey, in the form of a meteor stone (Van Reeth: 1994, pp140-141). However, in Wolf's novel, Cybele is worshipped at unrecognisable ancient stone symbols. The author regards Cybele as: *"Sie, deren Sinnbild auch die Taube war, kommt ihrerseits wahrscheinlich von Anatolien her, wo sie Kybele heißt; es gibt zyprische Terrakotten mit der 'taubenköpfigen Aphrodite'"* (V, p102).

When Cassandra tells her mother about Cybele's existence, Hekabe displays neither shock nor surprise, perhaps because she has a hand in Cassandra's whole excursion to the Idaberg: *'Dann ist es ja gut'* (K, p23). Then Cassandra realises: *'Ja, sie hat mich doch früher gekannt als ich sie'* (ibid). She also understands that she is the *Herrschaftsprinzip* of the matriarchal Hekabe: one can rule only dominated people; those who cannot be ruled, like Cassandra, should only be loved.

The novel returns to the *Erzählzeit* in Mycenae. Cassandra reflects on the necessity of bringing together all the fragments of her *Lebensbericht* in the face of death. It is important for her not to succumb to fear: *'Nie war ich lebendiger als in der Stunde meines Todes, jetzt'* (K, p24). This *'Lebendigkeit'* implies the altering of one's own false image: *'Was ich lebendig nenne? Was nenne ich lebendig. Das Schwierigste nicht scheuen, das Bild von sich selbst ändern'* (ibid).

However, Panthoos, the Greek priest, has another, more cynical view of changing one's *Bild*: 'Worte, sagte Panthoos, da war er noch ein Widerpart für mich. Nichts als Worte, Cassandra. Der Mensch ändert nichts, warum ausgerechnet das Bild von sich' (ibd). Cassandra wants to retain control over her thought processes and not let them perish through fear: 'Todesangst. Wie wird es sein. Wird die Schwäche übermächtig. Wird der Körper die Herrschaft über mein Denken übernehmen' (ibd). At the same time, Cassandra reflects self-critically on her shortcomings: 'Wird, in einem gewältigen Schub, die Todesangst einfach wieder alle Positionen besetzen, die ich meiner Unwissenheit, meiner Bequemlichkeit, meinem Hochmut, meiner Feigheit, Faulheit, Scham abgerungen habe' (ibd) She does not want to lose consciousness before she dies: 'Ich will die Bewußtheit nicht verlieren, bis zuletzt' (ibd). Despite her hopeless situation, Cassandra still values the importance of *Zeugnis*, of reporting what she experienced and saw in her lifetime: 'Ich will Zeugin bleiben, auch wenn es keinen einzigen Menschen mehr geben wird, der mir mein Zeugnis abverlangt' (K, p25) Lastly, Cassandra does not want to shun critical self-analysis, however difficult this process might be: 'Hat es nicht jetzt schon, dies probate Mittel, mein altes, schon vergeßnes Übel wieder wahrgemacht: daß ich, gespalten in mir selbst, mir selber zuseh, mich sitzen seh auf diesem verfluchten Griechenwagen, unter meinem Tuch, von Angst geschüttelt' (ibd). She is wary of the easy way of escaping self-criticism, the escape into the creature, the child: 'Warum will ich mir diesen Rückfall in die Kreatur bloß nicht gestalten. Was hält mich denn?' (ibd) She now knows what it must have felt like to be merely a creature, an *Opfertier*.

To make sacrifice less barbaric in Troy, animals came to replace young humans. Panthoos is responsible for this. It is the *ERSTES SCHIFF* that brings the abducted Panthoos, then still a young man, to Troy. Lampos has been sent by the Trojans to go to Greece to ask the Pythia whether the hill upon which Troy is built is still cursed. However, Lampos deviates from his task and takes Panthoos as a *Beute* to Troy to satisfy his homoerotic lust. Panthoos hides his fear by being highly cynical about life. Cassandra too hides her fear of *Schmerz* by being arrogant: 'Wann ist bei mir der Hochmut gegen Schmerz zusammengebrochen' (ibd). However, as part of Wolf's de-mythologising of the Cassandra myth, she dissects meticulously the *Opfer*-principle: Troy remains barbaric because young men are still sacrificed within and by the brutal system of waging disastrous wars: " 'Knabenopfer', da ist das Wort. Ich sah keins mehr in Troia, obwohl..." (K, p38).

Kassandra's refusal to acknowledge the existence of violence, sacrificial and otherwise, contributes to her 'blindness' and repression of the truth, both of which contribute to her epileptic fits. Although these fits were real enough, she avoids dealing with the truth by manipulating them. She has her first burst of '*Wahnsinn*' after the suicide of her half-brother, Aisakos (the son of

Priam and Arisbe) after his wife, Asterope, has died at childbirth. Cassandra's second fit happens after the arrival of the *ZWEITES SCHIFF*, that brings back Hesione, Priam's sister, who has allegedly been kidnapped by Telamon, the Spartan: '[d]a ließ ich mich in die Dunkelheit zurückfallen...ich hielt mich in der Schweben, ein schmerzfreier Zustand' (K, p43). On that expedition, Kalchas, the Trojan priest, decides to stay in Greece. Cassandra never knows the real political games-playing that occur before and after the 'expedition'. However, Marpessa knows the truth and has to pay a price for her truthfulness: she is banished to the stables as a *Stallmagd* and is consequently raped on numerous occasions (K, p44). Although Cassandra hides behind her apparent *Wahnsinn*, she really wants to escape her own *Bild* and *Schmerz*, and her obligation to tell the real truth. With the arrival of the *DRITTES SCHIFF*, Cassandra has her third fit; she knows already that Paris (who has arrived on the ship) will ultimately bring about the destruction of Troy. Paris has been manipulated by Eumelos into kidnapping Helen, Menelaos's wife. Cassandra already knows that covering-up the real agenda will result in the destruction of Troy and that Helen is not, in fact, in Troy: '*Was in dieser Stunde seinen Ausgang nahm, war unser Untergang*' (K, p63). Yet she articulated her warning in a nonsensical manner, Cassandra's 'Wehruf': '*Aber die Stimme schert das nicht. Frei hängt sie über mir und schreit...Wehe, schrie sie. Wehe, wehe. Laßt das Schiff nicht fort!*' (K, p63).

Arisbe criticises Cassandra for manipulating the situation through the fits; her insanity amounts to self-delusion, escape, a façade behind which Cassandra can hide from the truth of her prophecies. By manipulating the situation, Cassandra avoids choosing between the conflicting roles of the priestess who is supposed to expose the failures of the monarchy and the royal princess who is committed to the denial of such failure. At that stage, Cassandra does not want to divorce herself from the corrupt system. Her '*Wahnsinn*' brings about a split in the self. Cassandra's own conflict between the system and the alternative world is described by a 'war' metaphor: '*Zwei Gegner auf Leben und Tod, hatten sich die erstorbene Landschaft meiner Seele zum Kampfplatz gewählt*' (K, p65). But her 'vices' or shortcomings (already mentioned) keep her from choosing her true self in the battle for the soul.

'*Wann Krieg beginnt, das kann man wissen, aber wann beginnt der Vorkrieg...Laßt euch nicht von den Eignen täuschen*' (K, p30). The pre-war conflict, war, 'Opfer', and the hero are the antithesis of the utopian *Idaberg*, which constitutes the third alternative and the *Zeitenlöcher*. Wolf de-constructs the false ideology behind war, the battlefield, and the hero: '*Doch sah ich, wie die, die auf dem Schlachtfeld waren, die Lügen derer, die den Kampf nicht kannten, allmählich glaubten, weil sie einander schmeichelten*' (K, p122). War is the main reason that these men lose their souls. Wolf associates the lost soul with the *Vogel*-metaphor as motif: '*Der Krieg griff den*

Männern in die Brust und tötete den Vogel. Erst als er nach meiner Seele griff, da hab ich 'nein' gesagt' (K, p83).

Although Cassandra knows that, after 'das DRITTES SCHIFF' arrives back, Helen is not in Troy, but in Egypt, and that Eumelos is lying to the Trojans, she still does not tell the truth: '*Denn warum schrie ich: Wir sind verloren!, warum nicht: Troer, es gibt keine Helena!*' (K, p73). Cassandra herself cannot understand at the time why she does not tell the concrete truth, although the reason lies in her self-censorship: '*Der Eumelos in mir verbot es mir*' (ibid). In a conversation with Priam in which he gives false justifications for the war, Cassandra still cannot stand up to him: '*Es geht doch um die Ehre unsres Hauses*' (K, p75). Subsequently Cassandra keeps silent about the Helen-lie, although she is torn between truth and lies: '*Darum, beteuerte ich ihm, ging es auch mir. Vernagelt war ich. Dachte, sie und ich, wir wollten doch dasselbe*' (ibid).

Instead of telling the truth about Helen, Cassandra censors herself: '*Wir sind verloren. Weh, wir sind verloren...Denn warum schrie ich, wenn ich schrie: Wir sind verloren!, warum nicht: Troer, es gibt keine Helena!...Der Eumelos in mir verbietet es mir*' (K, p73). Cassandra wants to avoid confronting the reality of her visions: '*Ich wollte die Welt nicht wie sie war*' (K, p43) and thinks that, if she is true to the gods, all lies will be justified. She does not want the world the way it is because she does not want to be part of the Trojan system. Consequently, she avoids telling the truth time and again.

The priestly ceremonies that Cassandra participates in are, in truth, just a façade to placate her own arrogance: '*Inbrünstig, so mußte es scheinen, verlor ich mich an die Zeremonien...die führende Teilnahme an dem großen Schauspiel...die Überlegenheit, die mein Amt mir gab*' (K, p103). These two driving forces, *Eigenliebe* and *Hochmut*, dovetail neatly with Cassandra's status as *Königstochter*. As Priam's only daughter with an interest in stately business and politics, Cassandra wants to please her father by manipulating the truth, if necessary. Thus Cassandra's desire to be a priestess is, at the same time, a wish to gain power: '*Priesterin werden, um Macht zu gewinnen?*' (K, p55). Wolf shows that Cassandra is not the only woman who wants power. Clytemnestra too is inflicted with the same 'blindness': '*[a]uch sie wird von jener Blindheit befallen, die an Macht gekoppelt ist*' (K, p45). Like the rest of Troy, Cassandra manifests a *Blinder Fleck*, that part of the self that refuses to recognise truth. Instead, she cleverly creates her own *Abtötungsmechanismen*, to avoid dealing with the painful truth about herself and Troy. One of these mechanisms is her *Wahnsinn*, which is manifest in her epileptic fits just described. Cassandra's *Blinder Fleck* is the fear of knowing the *Schlimme*, the dark side of the future: '*Man will das Schlimme gar nicht wissen*' (V, p21).

The novel is designed as a confession by Cassandra, a *Beichte* or *Bußetun*. Just before she is killed by Clytemnestra, Cassandra confesses to being stripped of all the arrogance and vanity she had as a prophetess: *'Ich will nicht mehr sprechen. Alle Eitelkeiten und Gewohnheiten sind ausgebrannt, verödet die Stellen in meinem Gemüt'* (K, p10). At the same time, she refuses to pity herself as she had done before, especially during and after her epileptic fits: *'Mitleid mit mir hab ich nicht mehr als mit anderen. Beweisen will ich nichts mehr'* (ibid).

Metaphorical blindness strikes Cassandra as a *Seherin*: *'Ich sah nichts. Mit der Sehergabe überfordert, war ich blind'* (K, p30). Cassandra's blindness contains a paradox: she does not want the world the way it is, but yet she wants to serve the gods: *Ich wollte die Welt nicht, wie sie war, aber hingebungsvoll wollte ich den Göttern dienen, die sie beherrschten: Es war ein Widerspruch in meinem Wunsch. Ich gönnte mir Zeit, ehe ich ihn bemerkte, immer habe ich mir diese Zeiten von Teilblindheit gegönnt. Auf einmal sehend werden – das hätte mich zerstört'* (K, p43). Thus, before she discovers her true self, Cassandra is 'blind' to the truth she sees because it would have been too traumatic for her to acknowledge and admit the whole truth. Wolf links humankind's contemporary blindness, epitomised by atomic warfare in the 1980s and on-going ecological destruction to the blindness 3000 years ago of Troy, the city whose political system ultimately proves so uncongenial to Cassandra.

In the world outside the boundaries of Troy, Cassandra discovers an environment other than what she is used to. There, she meets Arisbe, the mother of Priam's son, Aisakos. Arisbe is the one who tells Cassandra about Hekabe's dream before the birth of Paris. This dream is interpreted in two differing ways. Kalchas, the male priest and Troy's official oracle, interprets the dream negatively: Paris would be the destroyer of Troy. This male interpretation engenders a primal fear of *Vatermord*, shown in Priam's reaction to this dream; he orders that the boy be killed after birth. However, Arisbe sees another, more positive meaning: the snakes in the dream suggests the return of the snake goddess. The birth of Paris will thus initiate a return to the matriarchy. Hekabe and Arisbe might possibly have bribed the shepherd not to kill him.

The description of Arisbe is very similar to that of Cybele: a woman of massive physique. When Cassandra meets her for the first time, she describes her as: *'Arisbe, das massige Weib....mit ihrer Trompetenstimme...'* (K, p53). Reinforcing Arisbe and Cybele's inward beauty, a beauty grotesque by Western and, more especially, patriarchal standards, is the Stone Age statuette of the Venus von Willendorf discovered in Austria. Like Arisbe, the Venus von Willendorf is *'buried in the bulging mass of her own body... Caves were the bowels of the goddess...The Venus von Willendorf, a cult-image half-molded from a rough stone, is unbeautiful, because art has not yet found its relation to the eye. Her fat is a symbol of abundance...carries her cave with her...her*

facelessness is the impersonality of primitive sex and religion' (Paglia: 1991, p54-55). Equally unacceptable by 'civilised' standards lies the world beyond Troy, described as an organic plant world irreconcilable with the cultivated *Stein/Eisen/Waffen* world of Troy's 'Palastwelt: *Wieder im Umkreis der Stadt diese Neben-, ja Gegenwelt, die, anders als die steinerne Palast- und Stadtwelt, pflanzenhaft wuchs und wucherte, üppig, unbekümmert, so als brauche sie den Palast nicht, so als lebe sie von ihm abgewandt, also auch von mir*' (K, p52). Rejecting the life of the palace, the women of Mount Ida excavated their own caves: *'Zum erstmal sah ich die Wohnhöhlen am Steilufer unsres Flusses Skamandros aus der Nähe...'* (K, p50). However, at this point, Cassandra did not consider herself part of the 'sie' of the *Höhlenwelt*. Indeed, at the time, Cassandra's 'wir' was still the Trojan system.

The novel introduces Eumelos, a man with a humble background and a horse-shaped head, who is progressively creating a secret service, turning Troy into a fascist-like state. He controlled Cassandra's every move under the pretences of a 'body guard': *'Es war dahin gekommen, daß ich mich melden lassen mußte wie jeder andere'* (K, p54) Troy's military system supports the totalitarian regime and the hero-myth Eumelos embodies: *'Er zog die Schrauben an. Er warf sein Sicherheitsnetz [...] über ganz Troia, es betraf nun jedermann'* (K, p107). King correctly observes: *"Its militarism is embodied in Eumelos, while Priam represents its authoritarianism. A third dimension of the patriarchy – male sexuality and the myth of male supremacy – is epitomized by Paris'* (King: 1994, p335). The Eumelos motif is a *Leitmotiv* in the novel.

This motif recurs when Cassandra eventually realises the congruence between the Greeks and Trojans, between Agamemnon and Priam: *'Die trojanischen Männer werden den Griechen immer ähnlicher. Mit der Erkenntnis, daß die 'Ihren' nicht die ihren sind, beginnt für die trojanische Königstochter ein schmerzhafter Bewußtwerdungsprozeß, in dessen Verlauf sie sich von der Klasse ihrer Herkunft löst'* (Hilzinger: 1985, p94). There is no difference between Priam's willingness to sacrifice Paris and Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia. Both execute these deeds in the interest of the state. Because she fails to draw a line between the roles of a priestess and king's daughter, Cassandra is unable to recognise the similarity between the Greeks and the Trojans.

Wolf argues that the pompous behaviour of the Greeks (Iphigenia) and Trojans (Paris) is not to be taken tragically as has been done in Greek and Western literature for 3000 years. The Aristotelian *Ästhetik* glorifying tragic catharsis is nothing more than *'ein Recht auf Selbstsucht'* (K, p58). Wolf suggests through Cassandra that ancient tragedy should be replaced by the burlesque: *'Der Übertritt aus der Palastwelt in die Welt der Berge und Wälder war auch der Übergang von der Tragödie in die Burleske, deren Kern es ist, daß man sich selbst nicht tragisch*

nimmt' (ibid). The transition from Aristotelian, patriarchal tragedy to the more female burlesque results in a ridiculing of the nobility of catharsis in its attempts to venerate the crass brutality of reality while obscuring it. The Ida-world persists in unmasking the inherent hypocrisy of Troy and its male-centredness.

Wolf de-mythologises the idea of tragic catharsis, criticising instead male justifications of atrocious deeds against women over the centuries. The abuse of women was a powerful subject of classical tragedy: *'Sie handeln übereilt und töricht. Glauben das Unglaubliche. Tun, was sie nicht wollen, und betrauern selbstmitleidig ihre Opfer'* (K, p109). For example, within the context of male lust, Cassandra reflects on Clytemnestra. Under different circumstances, the two women might have been part of a 'sisterhood' since both have been abused by Agamemnon: he sacrifices Clytemnestra's daughter, Iphigenie, and rapes Cassandra, who is *versklavt*.

The world of the Idaberg too unmasks the hypocrisy of the patriarchy in much the same way that Wolf de-mythologises the hero-image of Achilles in classical literature. She believes that classical literature has glorified and idealised *Mordlust* and war. The male preoccupation with war is symbolised in the head of the secret service, Eumelos, especially through his propaganda: *'Die neue Zeit war in die Festung eingekehrt'* (K, p81). Eumelos's statements are evidence of the aggressive patriarchy taking over the matriarchy (Hekabe) of the old Troy.

No less vile is Achilles's behaviour in returning to the battlefield after the death of his lover, Patroklos. He kills Hektor out of revenge in a vile manner and then defiles the body by dragging it over the plains on the outskirts of Troy for everybody to witness. After this, he offers the body to Priam in return for an equal amount of gold. Priam even goes so far as to promise Polyxena to Achilles on a permanent basis if the Greeks retract their quest for Helen. Hektor's brutal death has a profound impact on Cassandra: she is psychologically so damaged by witnessing the event that she stops dreaming, a clear indication that her inner world has died: *'Von diesem Tage an träumte ich nicht mehr'* (K, p118). Achilles goes even further: he sacrifices twelve Trojan prisoners, including two of Hekabe's sons: *'In jener Nacht verließen uns die Götter. Zwölfmal der Schrei, der eines Tieres'* (K, p119). The novel proposes the existentialist view of a god-less world. Cassandra finally loses her faith in the gods after losing Troilus, Hector, and Polyxena and then witnessing the brutal slaughter of the twelve Trojan prisoners by Achilles: *'Denn an die Götter zu glauben, hatte ich inzwischen aufgehört'* (K, p104). Cassandra articulates her passionate protest on behalf of all women against the vile brutality of the male world. This brutality not only destroys the soldier physically, but inherently mentally kills human beings: *'Zwölfmal hatte das glühende Eisen in uns jene Stelle ausgebrannt, aus der Schmerz, Liebe, Leben, Träume kommen können. Das namenlose Weiche, das den Mensch zum Menschen macht'* (K, p119). Hekabe and Priam

are destroyed by witnessing this event: *'Hekabe, als sie von mir abfiel, war eine alte Frau, hohlwangig, weißhaarig'; 'Priamos, bar jeden Königtums, ein kranker Greis'* (ibid).

Further evidence of an aggressive patriarchy, this time in Greece rather than Troy, is to be found when, early in the war, Achilles kills Troilus out of homoerotic lust or, perhaps, with even sado-masochistic intent: *'Mörderlust und Liebeslust in einem Mann? Durfte unter Menschen das geduldet werden? Des Opfers starrer Blick. Das tänzelnde Herannah des Verfolgers, den ich jetzt von hinten sah, ein geiles Vieh. Das Troilos, den Knaben, bei den Schultern nahm, das ihn streichelte – den Wehrlosen, dem ich Unglückselige den Panzer abgenommen hatte! – ihn befangerte'* (ibid).

Consequently, Cassandra articulates her hate of Achilles, who kills her seventeen-year old brother, Troilus, her older brother, Hektor, and her sister, Polyxena. She calls him: *'Achill, das Vieh'* (K, p84). The hero of Homer's *Illiad* is, in fact, a homoerotic animal. Briseis, Troilus's widow, returns to her father, Kalchas, in Greece.

Kassandra is incarcerated because she befriends the *'Verräterin'*, Briseis, who escapes from Achilles, who has abused her sexually and psychologically to such a degree that she decides to return to Kalchas. Priam permits the incarceration, because he has become entangled in Eumelos's propagandist lies. After this, Kassandra realises that, through these lies, Troy is lost, a *'Geisterstadt'* (K, p90). However, Kassandra still will not turn her back fully on Troy, so the women of the Ida world withdraw from her. Hence Kassandra's existence *'Wurde zu Schatten. Entwirklicht'* (ibid).

Luckily, Kassandra is drawn back into the Ida world after her dream about the sun god, Apollo and the moon goddess, Selene. The dream poses the overt question: which of these two deities is more important? as well as the implicit question: which of the two principles, male or female, is the more important? However, these questions are incorrectly posed. The message of the dream is that the dream engenders not *Entweder-Oder*, but *Sowohl-Als-Auch*. The message of the dream thus discourages Greek dualistic thought. With Kassandra's *'Bewußtwerdungs- prozeß'*, Wolf criticises Greek dualistic thought, or the *Entweder-oder-Frage*: *'Für die Griechen gibt es nur entweder Wahrheit oder Lüge, richtig oder falsch, Sieg oder Niederlage, Freund oder Feind, Leben oder Tod. Sie denken anders. Was nicht sichtbar, riechbar, hörbar, tastbar ist, ist nicht vorhanden'* (K, p112). Because Greek dualistic thought presents rational, patriarchal and advanced/technocratic thought, Wolf points out there can be only victors and losers. There is no mid-way, no third alternative. In *Kassandra*, Killa, the slave woman, introduces Wolf's third alternative: *'Zwischen Töten und Sterben ist ein Drittes: Leben'* (K, p124). Kassandra's *Erlebnis*

of the *Idaberg* community mirrors Killa's third alternative: *'Es ist das andere, das sie zwischen ihren scharfen Unterscheidungen zerquetschen, das Dritte, das es nach ihrer Meinung überhaupt nicht gibt, das lächelnde Lebendige, das imstande ist, sich wieder aus sich selbst hervorzubringen, das ungetrennte, Geist im Leben, Leben im Geist'* (K, p112).

Positive intervention by the women of Mount Ida brings about Cassandra's inner healing. Wolf uses the ring-metaphor of the tree to depict Cassandra's *Genesung*: *'Ein Ring, das äußerste, der mich umschlossen hatte, zersprang, fiel von mir ab, viele blieben'* (K, p93). Cassandra's experience is like an airhole that enables her finally to breathe again: *'Ein Atemholen war es, ein Lockern der Gelenke, ein Aufblühen des Fleisches'* (ibid). However, this *'Ablösungsprozeß'* from the Trojan system is a long, painful process for Cassandra in which Anchises plays an integral part. He also enlightened Cassandra about his opinions of Achilles and Eumelos: they need each other as enemies to justify their deeds to their respective nations. Knowing that Troy has already lost the war, Anchises begins to weave supply baskets.

Wolf de-mythologises the heroic tradition of the epic poem. In *Kassandra*, traditional 'heroes' are far from idealised. Instead, they are depicted for what they are. Agamemnon and Achilles, for example, are portrayed as homoerotic pederasts (*'Die nackte gräßliche männliche Lust'* (K, p79) while Agamemnon is described as impotent. Of all Achilles's crimes, the most atrocious is Penthesilea's murder and subsequent necrophiliac desecration. His despicable crime provokes the vengeance of all the women of Troy, who fall into an atavistic trance: *'Sollte das Ungeschiedne, Ungestaltete, der Urgrund, uns verschlingen'* (K, p127). Unfortunately, because Panthoos, rather than Achilles, is the first man in sight, he is violently murdered by a mob of vitriolic women: *'Wir fühlten es, wir Frauen alle [...] Die Männer schwach, zu Siegern hochgeputzt, brauchen, um sich überhaupt noch zu empfinden, uns als Opfer [...] Selbst die Griechen spürten, hier war Achill zu weit gegangen'* (K, 126). The Trojan women experience Penthesilea's desecration as a crime against all females: *'Amazonen, Troerinnen, alles Frauen'* (ibid). Cassandra breaks down after this episode and is carried to the *Idaberg* community by Aeneas: *'Penthesilea. Laß uns tauschen. He. Liebchen. Nichts ist süßer als der Tod. Komm, Freund, und steh mir bei. Ich kann nicht mehr'* (K, p128) Wolf deconstructs these disturbing aspect of *abendländische Literatur* and uncloaks the hero:

It appears that Wolf-Cassandra is determined to destroy the Achilles-myth above all others as the most influential and far-reaching male heroic myth. Her anti-heroic, anti-tragic perspective is very consciously perceived and clearly defined. On the whole, the Greeks represent the 'moderns', the 'enlightened' ones to whom the (male-dominated)

future belongs. They are the determined and thorough ones, the brutal and successful and inhuman victors - and they are all men (Lieskounig: 1987, p73).

Although Wolf generally de-mythologises the heroic epic/myth, she does create a positive male character in the novel in Anchises. It could be argued that Anchises symbolises Ernst Bloch's 'Prinzip Hoffnung'. Anchises views people without Panthoos's malicious cynicism: 'Er durchschaute die Leute, vor allem sich selbst, und hatte Spaß daran, nicht Ekel, wie Panthoos' (K, p96). He even understands the reasons behind Eumelos's appalling behaviour towards women: 'Auch über die ihm übel wollen, denkt er unbefangen nach. Zum Beispiel Eumelos...Nehmt doch bloß mal...daß er keine Frau hat...(ibid). In addition, he has insight about the problematics of everyday life: 'Sein Mund lacht, aber seine Stirn ist traurig' (K, p97). The centre of Anchises's philosophy to the younger generation is: 'und uns Jüngre lehrte, wie man mit beiden Beinen auf der Erde träumt' (K, p141). In contrast to the war-making, destructive patriarchy, Anchises values the spirit of nature; he knows more about wood than about iron: 'Nie ließ er einen Baum fällen, ohne sich vorher ausführlich mit ihm zu besprechen [...] Über Holz und Bäume wußte er alles...' (K, p95). Situated beyond the borders of Troy, Anchises's hut symbolises his independence from the official system. The hut is situated under a fig tree, which, in ancient mythology, is a holy tree: 'Auch zu seiner Hütte unterm Feigenbaum vor dem Dardanischen Tor kam nur, wer zu ihm paßte' (K, p98). He does not belong to the Ida world, his hut is merely sited near the Skamander river, indicating that he takes up a *Zwischenposition* between Ida and Troy. Anchises never rejects anybody who wants to come to talk to him, regardless of whether or not they are the enemy: 'Übrigens, er sprach mit jedem, keinen, der ihn besuchen wollte, wies er ab' (ibid). To maintain his *Zwischenposition*, Anchises distances himself from any religion. He remains a radical humanist who does not believe in the gods but rather in humans.

The novel then turns to the self-destructive world of Polyxena. Part of Eumelos's (and Priam's) strategy was to use Polyxena as a *Lockvogel* to catch Achilles. Again, Cassandra did not want to admit that her sister needed her help: Polyxena acceded to the plan because of her self-destructive behaviour and self-hate. Cassandra ignores Polyxena's dream of Priam's violent behaviour towards her, primarily out of envy. Cassandra's envy blinds her towards her sister so she does not take Polyxena's dream seriously, consequently ignoring her evident psychological need for help. Wolf depicts the first part of Cassandra's *Schuld* toward her sister and her destructive relationship with Andron, one of Eumelos's helpers.

Kassandra makes the fatal mistake of suggesting that Polyxena might even have agreed because she loves Achilles. After his *Liebesnacht* with Polyxena, Achilles withdraws himself temporarily from battle. At the same time, Achilles's slave, Killa, escapes to the Idaberg and is slowly brought

to recovery by Oinone. At this point, however, Cassandra herself is not ready to receive such healing treatment.

The destruction in Troy is also seen in Priam's *Zerbröcklung*. The *Sänger* and *Palastschreiber* praise only living heroes, where the earlier tradition sang about heroes of the past. This prior tradition enables the recognition of the many heroes lost in battle. The new dispensations for the *Sänger* and *Palastschreiber* are central to Troy's fate which rests ultimately on the Helen myth and the memory of the fallen heroes. The focus is not on the living, but on those who are dead: '*Der Schwerpunkt aller Feiern sei von den toten Helden auf die Lebenden zu verlegen...Auf der Verehrung der toten Helden beruhte unser Glauben, unser Selbstgefühl. Auf sie beriefen wir uns, wenn wir 'ewig' und 'unendlich' sagten. Ihre Größe, die wir für unerreichbar hielten, machte uns Lebende bescheiden...*' (ibid). The members of Troy's establishment dispose of the old *Sänger* and appoint new *systemtreue* singers to sing the praise of false but living heroes: '*Neue Sänger waren nachgewachsen, oder die alten, wenn sie noch geduldet wurden, änderten den Text. Die neuen Texte waren ruhmredig, marktschreierisch und speichelleckerisch...*' (K, p106).

It is the hoax regarding Helen's whereabouts that leads to Troy's ultimate destruction: '*In Helena, die wir erfanden, verteidigten wir alles, was wir nicht mehr hatten...So daß aus Worten, Gesten, Zeremonien und Schweigen ein andres Troia, eine Geisterstadt erstand...*' (K, p90). At this point, Cassandra still concurs with Troy when she says to Eumelos: '*Ich will doch das gleiche wie ihr*' (K, p107). Only later, in a conversation with Aeneas, does Cassandra voice her opinion about the destruction and destructiveness of war. There are no victors: '*das Gesicht des Feindes annehmen und trotzdem untergehn*' (K, p108). Cassandra's view is indeed very relevant to Wolf and the time when the novel was written: in nuclear warfare, there are no victors. Nobody wins.

Finally, Cassandra has the courage to confront her own sorrow and the fragility of life. She defies the Trojan system by refusing to kill Greek prisoners in a dungeon as revenge for the death of the twelve Trojans. By so doing, she also saves Panthoos, one of the Greek prisoners. This *Nein-Politik* marks the dawn of the newly-evolved Cassandra character who eventually becomes the antithesis of the 'blind seer' of the past. Cassandra's *Nein* is also Wolf's negation of the dark patriarchal tradition. She rewrites Cassandra's soul and nature, demythologising Cassandra's centuries-long silence while creating an alternative world for women where men and women are equal. Cassandra says NO: '*Ich sagte Nein. Das war beinahe das einzige Wort, das mir noch blieb*' (K, p122). Cassandra's *Nein-Politik* recurs later in the novel, and represents of one of its major themes.

In the *Erzählgegenwart* of the novel, when talking to the old people surrounding the cart and the *Wagenlenker*, Cassandra reflects on these questions: Does humankind still have a future, taking all its cruelty and destruction into consideration?; and could literature and art create hope for humankind's future? The older people of Mycenae want to know from Cassandra what the fate of their city will be. Her answer – which reiterates Wolf's attitude to nuclear warfare - is: '*Ich sage ihnen: Wenn ihr aufhörn könnt zu siegen, wird diese eure Stadt bestehn*' (K, p122). At first, the *Wagenlenker* does not understand her answer: how could their world be possible without victory?

Gestatte eine Frage, Seherin – (Der Wagenlenker.) – Frag. – Du glaubst nicht dran. – Woran. – Daß wir zu siegen aufhörn können. – Ich weiß von keinem Sieger, der es konnte. – So ist, wenn Sieg auf Sieg am Ende Untergang bedeutet, der Untergang in unsere Natur gelegt? (ibd).

Kassandra regards the *Wagenlenker's* final question as the centre of her message: '*Die Frage aller Fragen. Was für ein kluger Mann*' (ibd). She answers: '*Komm näher, Wagenlenker. Hör zu. Ich glaube, daß wir unsere Natur nicht kennen. Daß ich nicht alles weiß. So mag es, in der Zukunft, Menschen geben, die ihren Sieg in Leben umzuwandeln wissen*' (ibd)

Back in the *Erzählte Zeit*, Cassandra starts to understand Amazon ideology somewhat better: the Amazons are not inherently violent and militaristic but, at the same time, they would rather be dead than being enslaved by men. Amazon ideology is based essentially on Greek dualist thought or what Cassandra calls the *Entweder-oder-Frage*. Penthesilea too believes that it is preferable to be killed on the battlefield than to be a man's slave: '*Lieber kämpfend sterben als versklavt sein, sagten ihre Frauen*' (K, p123). Wolf calls this dualistic view of the Amazons *Weiblichkeitswahn*. Penthesilea regards all men as *Schlächter* (K, p123) while Arisbe, in contrast, perceives the Amazons as *Schlächterinnen* (K, p124), because they resort to a characteristically male brutality. As has already been noted, Wolf, through Killa, presents a third 'alternative': *Zwischen Töten und Sterben ist ein Drittes: Leben*'. Consequently, the novel does not support *Weiblichkeitswahn* but proposes the idea of women revealing their 'other-ness' or '*Anderssein*' (ibd) to men. Men know no better than to make war and thus are the victims of their own power and cruelty; they need to be freed from themselves. That said, Wolf herself is strongly opposed against the 'war between the sexes': '*[K]ämpfe Männer wider Frauen, Frauen wider Männer ist da hirnverbrannter Selbstmord* (Stephan:1976, p144).

After the necrophiliac rape of Penthesilea's corpse by Achilles and the subsequent revenge on Panthoos taken by the Trojan women (including Cassandra despite herself), Aeneas carries Cassandra to Mount Ida. Provisionally safe from brutality, Cassandra recuperates slowly in the

Idaberg community. She finally understands the authentic *wir* during a conversation with Arisbe about the *Bilder* some of the women create of goddesses such as Cybele. Wolf comments on both the authentic *Bild* of Cassandra (the 'wir') and the inauthentic but universal *Bild* that people of all cultures have fabricated in order not to see women's real image: 'Was für das Steine waren? Ja sah ich die erst heute? Sie warfen trockne Scheite auf das Feuer, daß ich Licht bekam. Figuren? Ja. Vor undenklichen Zeiten aus dem Stein gehauen. Frauen, wenn ich recht sah. Ja. Eine Göttin in der Mitte, andre, die ihr opfern. Ich erkannte sie jetzt. Blumen lagen vor dem Stein, Wein, Gerstenähren. Killa sagte ehrfürchtig: Kybele. Ich sah Arisbe lächeln' (K, p129). Arisbe herself does not believe in these images and stone figures of women, but she does not stop others from worshipping the statuettes. According to Arisbe, these women need to put a name to these images in order to deny their own mirror image:

Killa, sagt Arisbe, brauche es, den Stein mit einem Namen zu belegen. Die meisten brauchten es. Artemis, Kybele, Athene [...] Allmählich würden sie vielleicht die Namen, ohne es selbst zu merken, als Gleichnis nehmen. – Du meinst, die Steine stehn für etwas anderes. – Natürlich [...] Aber wofür stehn die Bilder? – Das fragt sich. Für das, was wir in uns nicht zu erkennen wagen, so scheint es mir' (ibd).

Consequently, Arisbe hopes that those worshipped images will eventually be transformed into the women's own reflections. In this passage, Wolf stresses the crucial importance of reflecting upon one's own *Bild* rather than a foreign likeness:

*Du meinst, Arisbe, der Mensch kann sich selbst nicht sehen. – So ist es. Er erträgt es nicht. Er brauchte das fremde Abbild. – Und darin wird sich nie was ändern? Immer nur die Wiederkehr des Gleichen? Selbstfremdheit, Götzenbilder, Haß. – Ich weiß es nicht. Soviel weiß ich: Es gibt Zeitenlöcher. Dies ist so eines, hier und jetzt. Wir dürfen es nicht ungenutzt vergehen lassen.
Da, endlich, hatte ich mein 'Wir' (ibd).*

Kassandra finally discovers her true reflection in the mirror; the 'wir' beyond the boundaries of the city gates. Until that realisation, however, she sees only the *schönes Bild*: 'und um wieviel mehr hänge ich erst an seiner Gestalt. An dem schönen Bild' (K, p24). Cassandra has ignored the *Umgehen mit Worten* and perceives only false images: 'Ich habe immer mehr an Bildern gehangen als an Worten, es ist wohl merkwürdig und ein Widerspruch zu meinem Beruf [...] Das letzte wird ein Bild sein, kein Wort. Vor den Bildern sterben die Wörter' (ibd).

Kassandra's final acceptance of her true *wir* is linked with the *Zeitenlöcher* concept. A *Zeitenloch* is a fragment, break, or crack in [world] history, a 'time warp', that usually results in total destruction. Kassandra's Troy resides in such a *Zeitenloch*, the transition period from the Bronze Age to the Age of Iron: '*die Erfindung des verdamnten Eisens*' (K, p112). This period also includes the total apocalypse of Troy and the death of the matriarchy through new patriarchal forces. During a *Zeitenloch* a culture such as that of the Trojans is in a transitory state, a state captured in Penthesilea's words about Kassandra's own conflicting interests: '*Nicht Fisch, nicht Fleisch!*' (K, p124).

In the novel, Kassandra could anticipate the repetition of events so she chose not to flee with Aeneas to found Rome. As a *Seherin*, she foresees the future of other *Zeitenlöcher* including the destruction of Rome. Arisbe's interpretation of the *Zeitenloch* is, however, positive; one has the opportunity to disregard all false images and to discover one's own *Bild*. These 'bodenlose Abgründe' call for a *Neubesinnung* because the old morality and ideologies have been rendered invalid. The *Zeitenloch* should be construed positively as Kassandra's wish to be a witness of her own time reveals: '*Ich will Zeugin bleiben, auch wenn es keinen einzigen Menschen mehr geben wird, der mir mein Zeugnis abverlangt*' (K, p25). The utopia inherent in the *Zeitenloch* has the potential to become a new beginning for humanity.

The '*Zeitenlöcher*' theme brings about Christa Wolf's *Leitthema* in the novel: *Schmerz*. All her life, Kassandra has tried to escape the painfulness of reality and having to deal with personal pain. Her epileptic fits and 'Wahnsinn' serve as ways to escape her *Schmerz*. Christa Wolf finds the *Umgehen mit Schmerz* essential to the individual's *Subjektwerdung/Selbstfindung*; to experience pain brings about re-birth or catharsis, both of which are necessary to live, rather than to merely exist. Kassandra herself finds the link between *Schmerz* and the future of the individual. This realisation finally distinguishes between the false exterior or image and the inner self: '*Viel später ging mir auf, daß, wie ein Mensch sich gegenüber Schmerz verhält, mehr über seine Zukunft verrät als die meisten andern Zeichen, die ich kenne*' (K, p34). Finally, Kassandra understands that the bravado of the men is the only means by which they hide their fear of death and the experience of pain: '*Seit ich die Angst der Männer sah: Ihre ausgefallnen Tricks, die Angst zu leugnen oder vor dem Schmerz, dem Kampf zu fliehn*' (ibid). Panthoos exemplifies this fear. However, Wolf does emphasise the discrepancy between female and male psyches: the women of Troy do deal more freely with pain than the men: '*Priamos wurde immer unzugänglicher, starrer, Hekabe wurde weicher, dabei unbeugsam. Den Priamos tötete der Schmerz um seine Söhne, ehe noch der Feind ihn erstach. Hekabe, aufgerissen durch den Schmerz, wurde von einem Unglücksjahr zum anderen immer mitfühlender, lebendiger*' (K, p23).

Remembering the painful events of the past leads one to critical self-discovery as Cassandra finds out at the end of her life. As a priestess, Cassandra has developed numbing mechanisms to subvert her pain: *'Ich wußte noch nicht, daß die Fühllosigkeit niemals ein Fortschritt ist, kaum eine Hilfe'* (K, p55). After the *Zeitenlöcher*-conversation with Arisbe, Cassandra experiences pain for the first time: *'Auf einmal merkte ich, daß mir mein Herz sehr weh tat. Ich würde wieder aufstehn...mit wiederbelebtem Herzen, das der Schmerz erreichte'* (K, p130). After her realisation, Cassandra is able to dream again, a sign of a healing psyche. Ultimately, Cassandra belongs to the *Ida* world: *"Da, endlich, hatte ich mein 'Wir'"* (ibd)

The dichotomy between Cassandra's *wir/sie* initiates a convoluted process through which she reaches her *Subjektwerdung*. At the start, Cassandra associates the *wir* with the world of Priam and power, regarding Arisbe's world outside the borders of the *Zitadelle* as the *sie*. However, Cassandra is unable to remain untouched by Arisbe's world and undergoes a revolutionary process of self-discovery. At first, Cassandra separates the two opposing worlds, but, as time went by and she spends more time with the *Skamandros* community, her view becomes more integrated, as did the *wir/sie*. Yet Cassandra tries to remain loyal to Priam and regards the *wir* as residing within the borders of Troy. Arisbe tells her that she cannot belong to both worlds and must choose between the false and true *wir*: *" 'Sie!' Es gab sie schon, und sie suchten sich über mich 'klar' zu werden! Sei nicht kindisch, sagt Arisbe. Gibs zu: Viel zu lange bist du drauf aus gewesen, beides zu bekommen'* (K, p67). Cassandra finds it problematic to choose what she wants; power or self-insight: *'Worauf sollten sie setzen: auf meinen Hang zur Übereinstimmung mit den Herrschenden oder auf meine Gier nach Erkenntnis'* (ibd). After one of Cassandra's fits, Arisbe visits her and tells her to deal with her real image: *'Schluß mit dem Selbstmitleid...Tauch auf Cassandra...Öffne dein inneres Auge. Schau dich an'* (K, p66). The natural world of the *Idaberg* corresponds to Cassandra's spontaneous, abundant, and uninhibited side. Her concept of the *wir* that she has known all her life has become increasingly broken: *'Ein Teil von mir, der freudige, freundliche, unbefangene blieb dort, außerhalb der Zitadelle, bei 'ihnen'. 'Sie', sagte ich von den Leuten um Anchises, nicht 'wir', wir zu sagen war mir noch nicht erlaubt. Schwankend und diffus war das 'Wir', das ich, solange es nur ging, benutzte. Es schloß den Vater ein, aber schloß es mich noch ein? Doch ein Troia ohne Priamos den Vater gab es für mich nicht'* (K, p99). However, Cassandra clings to the last delusions of grandeur and power - the part that remains within the boundaries of Troy - as well as to her false *wir* and *ich*: *'Schweren Herzens kam der Teil von mir, der königstreu, gehorsam, übereinstimmungsbesessen war, jeden Abend in die Burg zurück. Durchsichtig, schwächlich, immer unansehnlicher wurde mein Wir, an dem ich festhielt, unfühlbarer daher für mich selbst, mein ich'* (K, p100). Only after these convoluted and painful experiences does Cassandra discover her true image - itself a *Leitmotiv* of *Weibliches Schreiben*.

After Cassandra is brought back to life by the Idaberg women, she returns to the *Zitadelle*. She continues her *Nein-Politik*, refusing to help with the plan to use Polyxena as bait to kill Achilles. As a result, Cassandra is put into solitary confinement in an old hero's grave where she finds herself surrounded by the bones of dead heroes. She later refers to the grave as a *Korb*, because it is lined with woven willow branches. While she is kept there, Cassandra again experiences immense pain, this time about her father and his love that she has lost. The symbolic meaning of this episode is self-evident: heroic times have been reduced to a pile of old bones. For the contemporary reader, Cassandra's *Nein-Politik* remains the only pertinent option while, for female writing today, the centre remains the *Neinsagen* of the male world.

Although Andron callously brings the news that Achilles has been killed in their plan with Polyxena, Cassandra does not change her *Nein-Politik*: '*Zehn-, hundertmal habe ich vor Priamos gestanden, hundertmal versucht, auf sein Gebot, ihm zuzustimmen, mit Ja zu antworten. Hundertmal habe ich wieder nein gesagt. Mein Leben, meine Stimme, mein Körper gabe keine andre Antwort her. Du stimmst nicht zu? Nein. Aber du wirst schweigen. Nein. Nein. Nein. Sie hatten Recht, und mein Teil war, nein zu sagen*' (K, p137). After Cassandra's release, she goes to live permanently in the cave community of the Ida world.

The Idaberg community represents the utopia of a new world, a *Gegenmodell* of the historical negative development of 3000 years of the Western world. They all know that Troy is near destruction: '*daß wir verloren waren*' (K, p138). However, these women continue to believe in future generations: '*Oft aber redeten wir über die, die nach uns kämen*' (K, p139). They still have hope that somewhere in future, a new world will arise: '*Jede fühlte, daß wir etwas ausprobierten, daß wir das höchste Vorrecht, das es gibt, genießen durften, [nämlich] in die finstere Gegenwart, die alle Zeit besetzt hält, einen schmalen Streifen Zukunft vorzuschieben*' (K, p140). Back in Troy, Cassandra is compelled to marry Euryelos for political reasons. Nevertheless, she returns to the Idaberg community where she gives birth to twins.

During the last days of Troy, Polyxena is slaughtered on Achilles's grave and Cassandra is raped by *Klein Aias*. Aeneas pleads with Cassandra to flee with him to Rome, but she refuses, knowing that Rome too will eventually be destroyed. Another reason is that Cassandra will not live to see Aeneas transformed into a 'hero' – '*Einen Helden kann ich nicht lieben. Deine Verwandlung in ein Standbild will ich nicht erleben*' (K, p144). Cassandra finally understands that, despite all the pain, the time is not yet ripe for a new world, and that Aeneas cannot alter this reality. That is why she says: '*Gegen eine Zeit, die Helden braucht, richten wir nichts aus, das weißt du so gut wie ich*' (ibid). Aeneas then throws the *Schlangenring* in the water, so symbolising the destruction of a utopia, the matriarchy, and the love between himself and Cassandra.

That the utopian community of Mount Ida features at the very end of the novel suggests that there is an alternative way of living, apart from the destructive brutality of the patriarchy. That the Idaberg is mentioned in the *Erzählte Zeit* suggests that the community constitutes a temporary rather than a permanent alternative to the patriarchy. This temporariness has been overlooked by some feminist critics. However, that such a community is temporary is less important than the fact that it exists at all; its very existence offers symbolic hope for liberation from the patriarchy. Wolf herself is less an advocate of the unrealistically utopian but more an advocate of humankind's potential. Wolf's female writing centres on changing the false image of oneself to an authentic one, on a willingness to be self-critical despite its concomitant *Schmerz*, and on understanding that changing the world begins with the changing of individuals rather than the changing of dialectics and ideologies.

The novel ends with the 'light' in both the *Erzählte Zeit* – 'Das Licht erlosch' and 'Das Licht erlischt'. The *Rahmenerzählung* comes together and the two narrators, Cassandra (first person) and the female author/tourist (third person) almost become one, showing the actuality/relevance/pertinence of the Cassandra myth to contemporary times. The ancient *Kassandraruf* is still as potent as it was 3000 years ago and carries a message to the post-modern reader, whose task it will be to decide how to read the novel and how to understand its meaning.

(3) WRITING KASSANDRA/THE WRITING KASSANDRA: FEMINIST CONCEPTIONS OF CHRISTA WOLF'S KASSANDRA.

Sonja Hilzinger summarises the main aspects of the novel; the three-tiered dimensions of Cassandra: 'Die Frau als Objekt und als Idol gibt es, seit es patriarchale Gesellschaftsformen gab. Es gab aber auch die Frau als Seherin, als Priesterin, als Dichterin und als Intellektuelle; immer ist dabei der Grundkonflikt der ursprünglichen Cassandra im Spiel' (Hilzinger: 1984, p35). And rightly so: Wolf finds the *Ur-sprung* of Cassandra's femaleness, her female intellect, and her *Zeugenschaft/Weibliches Schreiben*. Through these woman-concepts, Wolf re-writes and re-interprets. These Re-concepts have been explicated in Chapter 1, section 3.

Although Wolf deconstructs, she does not do so in the traditional deconstructionist (Post Modernist) manner. In *Voraussetzungen* as well as in *Kassandra*, Wolf covers terms and ideas relating to 'gender, culture, difference and Otherness'. Her concept of *Weibliches Schreiben* follows the example of 'prendre la parole'. Lastly, she uses the 'family of words' that includes 'rethinking', 'rereading', and 'rewriting'. In using the Re-concept, Wolf's language does mirror some of Feminist deconstruction methods. However, she does not employ feminist language to suit traditional feminist views because she does not consider herself as belonging to any specific

feminist school of thought. The centre of the difference between most feminist literature and Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* lies in intention: Christa Wolf and *Kassandra*'s journey involves the search for the reasons underlying the misunderstanding between women and men and the need to repair these un/reasons. In the main, feminist literature focuses primarily but not exclusively on negative portrayals of all male images, resulting in what Wolf calls '*Weiblichkeitswahn*'.

Wolf's *Voraussetzungen* and *Kassandra* also display the characteristics of 'weibliches Schreiben', articulated by the French feminist Cixous:

- *'Suche des weiblichen Ichs nach sich selbst, nach einem Ort der Identifikation;*
- *Annäherung des weiblichen Ichs an sich selbst über einen inneren Ort, an dem sie mit der Blockade des Unbewußten konfrontiert werde;*
- *Durchbrechen des historischen Schweigens der Frau als Unterdrückte und Verdrängte;*
- *Hinterfragen der Beziehung des weiblichen Ichs zu der Sprache, die sie spricht und die ihr ihre Gesetze diktiert'* (Cixous, 1980, as quoted by Hilzinger: 1984, p98).

Wolf attempts to free *Kassandra* from the clutches of *abendländische Literatur*: '*Es handelt sich also um den Versuch, der aus dem abendländischen Denken erwachsenden Ästhetik der Herrschaft, des Schreckens und der Vernichtung eine Ästhetik des Widerstands entgegenzusetzen'* (Hilzinger: 1985, p90). Thematically, Wolf does fit one of Cixous's descriptions of feminist themes: '*Cixous beschreibt mit dem Begriff 'weibliche Sublimation' einen produktiven Umgang mit Schmerz, Trauer und Verlust als Alternative zur Verdrängung [...]*' (Hilzinger: 1985, p92).

'*Wolf selber setzt keine Form fest, wie Frauen anders schreiben könnten'* (Jankowsky: 1991, p92). Jankowsky reiterates Wolf's arguments about anti-prescriptive woman's writing. Although some feminists do have prescriptions for feminist writing, there are schools of thought that refuse to categorise women's writing. East German female writing falls mainly in the last category. The new image of woman presented in *Kassandra*'s character has been well received by feminist and women critics: '*Das neue Bild der Frau als Heldin ihrer eigenen Autonomiestrebungen ist wichtig als positives Persönlichkeitsmodell. Diese 'Heldin' darf jedoch nicht als bloßes Spiegelbild des schon etablierten Helden in der abendländischen Literatur repräsentieren. Das heldinnenhafte Symbol muß die Dynamisierung der Gesellschaft, eine andere Bewegungsart für Sprechen und Handeln bedeuten'* (Jankowsky, p104). Wolf shows this 'otherness' of women in *Arisbe*'s conversation with *Penthesilea*.

Wolf herself admits to rewriting – even in childhood – quotes: '*Ich hab schon als Schulkind alle Zitate geändert*' (*Lesen und Schreiben*, p149). Ortrud Gutjahr emphasises Wolf's break with the silent tradition of women's literature: '*Dem Verstummen, dem Echo des in Schrift und Sprechen vergangener Zeiten Unausgesprochenen, versucht Wolf, mit ihrem Schreiben Ausdruck zu verleihen. Im Raum ihres Schreibens ist der Widerhall eines Sprechens, das nicht nur mit, sondern auch in seiner Zeit verstummen mußte, da es über die Lebensmöglichkeit der Zeit hinausging*' (Gutjahr: 1985, p53).

Wolf is not a feminist nor is there a feminist intent in writing *Kassandra*. Nonetheless, the novel speaks of fundamental changes in Wolf's work from *Nachdenken über Christa T.* Wolf makes indirect use of some feminist literary 'tools' like the RE-CONCEPT evident in the work of Rich and Cixous. Some feminist literary critics misuse *Kassandra* – or parts of it – in their attempts to demonstrate that Wolf is indeed a feminist writer. Others do more justice to the novel, pointing out the femaleness evident throughout the text rather than any feminist *roter Faden*. *Kassandra* incorporates the female *Bild, weibliches Zeugnis/Zeugin*: a search for a new language in which to tell the story of *Kassandra*. Wolf achieves what Günter Grass once proposed: '*schreibend verändern*' (as quoted by Schnell: 1993, p460). Or better still, in the tradition of Ingeborg Bachmann's 'neue Sprache': '*Hätten wir das Wort, hätten wir Sprache, wir bräuchten die Waffen nicht*'. It is men's passion for weapons and violence that inflicts an inevitable silence on *Kassandra's* daughters.

These events could have taken place only in a world where man considered himself superior to woman. In what Americans call 'a man's world'. That is, a world governed by brute force, humourless arrogance, illusory prestige, and primeval stupidity. Men love war because it allows them to look serious (John Fowles: 1968, p352).

CHAPTER 4

METAMORPHOSING MEDEA

*To find the lost heritage, identify its threads, and trace those threads
back to the present, we need to go as far back in our history as we can –
to our very beginnings*

Ann Moura

*So, the word **wild** is not used in its modern pejorative sense,
meaning out of control, but in its original sense, which means to live a natural life, one in which
the **creatura**, the creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries.
These words, **wild** and **woman**, cause women how to remember who they are and what they are
all about...*

They personify a force that women cannot live without.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Chapter 4 aims to deal with the following issues:

- (1) The introduction of the *deutsch-deutsche Debatte* of *Was bleibt* (1990) that ultimately led to the writing of *Medea. Stimmen* (1996);
- (2) A hermeneutic discussion of *Medea. Stimmen* with the emphasis on the four major re-writings of the Medea-myth by Christa Wolf;
- (3) Christa Wolf's own response about *Medea* (in the form of letters, diaries and interviews), as well as the viewpoints of feminist literary critics on the novel.

For the purpose of this chapter, the following abbreviations are used: *Was bleibt* (WB) and *Medea. Stimmen* (M.S).

(1) WAS BLEIBT AND THE DEUTSCH-DEUTSCHE DEBATTE

Keine neue Welt ohne neue Sprache

Ingeborg Bachmann

Most of *Was bleibt* was originally written in 1979, then re-written and altered in November 1989, after which it was published in June 1990. With this text, Christa Wolf expands the theme of Cassandra's search for a newly articulated language with which to change the existing world of

war and death. However, the critics responded vitriolically to *Was bleibt*; nothing remained of the overwhelmingly good criticism of *Kassandra*. Personal attacks were launched on Wolf, making her the *Sündenbock* of the times, culminating in a modern witch-hunt. She was accused of being a traitor and a bigot, especially by the West German press. Seen as a 'state' author with exclusive privileges, that included visits to the West, she was not expected to articulate any negative experiences of the GDR in her work. She was criticised for adopting an *ex post facto* critical stance towards the former GDR, at a time when her critics deemed it to be 'safe' for her to do so. In fact, Wolf was viewed as an opportunist, who had suddenly changed her colours and convictions to acclimatise herself to the new political dispensation. The Wolf debate did not end, however, in 1990: in 1993, Stasi files of her personal involvement with the Stasi were found, and new attacks on her followed. One could view the debate surrounding Wolf as two-tiered: first, after the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall in 1990, and, secondly, after the Stasi docketts were found in 1993.

In 1990, two critical articles - Ulrich Greiner in the *Zeit* and Frank Schirmacher in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* - were published, igniting the stake to which Wolf was bound as the media's witch. Schirmacher's article was followed by one written by Jurgen Serke in the *Welt*. Critics like these hate campaigners regarded *Was bleibt* as '*Gesinnungskitsch*'. Fortunately, most of the so-called GDR 'intellectuals', including Volker Braun and Stephan Heym adopted a stance opposing the Wolf witch-hunt. Volker Braun accurately dissects the debate to the bone and calls it a '*grosse Treibjagd*' (as cited from Huysen: 1991, p7). Walter Jens associates the political skirmishes with the '*Spruchkammerverfahren*' (ibid) of the *Denazifizierungs*-period after the Second World War. Stephan Heym (ibid), having himself been an exile in the USA during *das dritte Reich*, compares the criticism of Wolf with the strategies of the anti-communist '*Meinungsterror*' in the USA after the Second World War. Wolf Biermann, Günter Grass, and Volker Hage speak about Wolf's spirit of self-criticism in her work. Hage says: '*Was man auch wissen kann: daß die Schriftsteller in ihren Texten oft um vieles klüger als im Leben sind – in ihren literarischen Texten nämlich*' (as quoted in Consentino: 1992, p1). Biermann's observation about the *Literaturstreit* encapsulates all the criticism about Wolf: '*Es geht um Christa Wolf, genauer: Es geht um nicht um Christa Wolf...*' (as quoted in Antz: 1991, p9).

The second Christa Wolf debate is even more hateful than the first. In 1993, Stasi docketts of her involvement are published. Wolf was an '*inoffizielle Mitarbeiterin (IM)*' of the Stasi between March 1959 and October 1962. She functioned under the codename *Margarete*; her task was to report about the cultural scene in Halle. Needless to say, the 1993 attack on Wolf left her disillusioned and she decided to retreat to the USA. Friends claim that she even considered suicide for the first time in her life. That same year, Wolf and her husband, Gerhard, went into symbolic exile in

Santa Monica, California for nine months on a bursary granted by the Getty Centre. These nine months proved to be a symbolic pregnancy for Wolf, who ultimately gave birth to *Medea*, who, in turn, resonates with Wolf's own *Ortlosigkeit* and *Hetzkampagne* against herself and her work. There is a noticeable change in her work between 1990 and 1996. *Medea* ends with what could be compared to an existential message: like Medea, there is no place on earth for her to fit in. There are striking parallels between the Berlin of *Was bleibt* and the Corinth of *Medea*: '(...) *in einer verlorenen Stadt leben, einer unerlösten, erbarmungslosen Stadt, versenkt auf den Grund von Nichtswürdigkeit (...) Aus einem Ort war die Stadt zu einem Nicht-Ort geworden, ohne Geschichte, ohne Vision, ohne Zauber, verdorben durch Gier und Gewalt*' (WB, p39). In one of the rare interviews Wolf consented to give during her time in California, she denies that *Was bleibt* is a novel about herself as victim:

Opferakte – ein Wort, das ich nicht akzeptieren würde (...) Ich akzeptiere sie jedenfalls nicht für mich, weil ich nicht finde, daß ich ein Opfer bin (...) Ich sah mich in der Rolle derer, die schreibt, die etwas tut, die sich auf unterschiedliche Weise mit den Widersprüchen ihrer Gesellschaft auseinandersetzt, sich behauptet (as cited in Consentino: 1992, p2).

Like Medea, the narrator in *Was bleibt* finds no redemption: '*Das mea culpa überlassen wir mal den Katholiken. Wie auch das pater noster. Lossprechungen sind nicht in Sicht*' (WB, p12). *Medea* echoes Wolf's sense of non-redeemable self; of *Gerichtstag halten über sich*.

(2) DIE SCHWARZE ZAUBERIN: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF MEDEA. STIMMEN.

Manchmal hilft es ja, hunderte von Kilometern weit wegzufahren, oder hunderte von Jahren zurückzugehen, in eine Vergangenheit, die wir nur durch Sagen und Mythen kennen, um zu sehen, was man da findet – ohne sich darüber zu täuschen, daß man sein Reisegepäck immer bei sich haben, nie loswerden wird: sich selbst.

Christa Wolf

Wolf's mention of both '*Reisegepäck*' and the '*nie Loswerden*' of the self forms the basis of the question: is *Medea* mainly autobiographical? Does the novel present some of the author's emotional baggage? Chapter 4 looks at the autobiographical possibilities hidden by the Medea myth. In order to understand Wolf's re-writing of certain parts of the myth and to compare the deconstruction with the original variants, the hermeneutic interpretation is divided into four sub-discussions: (a) Medea's escape from Colchis; (b) the dismemberment of Absyrtos; (c) Glauke's

poisoned wedding dress; (d) and the *Medea fiat*, the murder of her children. The hermeneutic discussion is preceded by a short overview of the treatment of the Medea myth by classical playwrights.

2.1 MAD MEN AND MEDEAS

Medea's role within Feminist literary reception and woman's literature cannot be ignored because of the crucial archetype she presents. One of the aims of Feminist criticism is to expose and deconstruct female archetypes like Medea who were constructed within the male literature of 3000 years. In the realm of the patriarchy, Medea represents the Witch, the black Sorceress, and the archetype of the Negative Mother. These negative archetypes may be attributed to the misogynist conception of Medea committing the most despicable crime of all: killing her own children to take revenge on Jason. Medea was bound to burn on the patriarchal stake for the next 3000 years, together with Medusa, another mythological woman seen as equally gruesome.

Where are the origins of the calculated child murderess to be found? To whose ancient doorstep should one tread? To Euripides (480-406BC), the Greek dramatist. His version of the Medea myth remains the most (in)famous reading through to modern times. He designed the Medea in the tradition of the Attic tragedy. The première of *Medea*, for which Euripides received the third prize in an annual competition, took place in Athens in 431 BC. The secret of his success was the stitching-together of the loose pre-historic threads or the variants of the Medea myth that were somewhat confusing and divergent. The tightly woven-together end-product is clear, grounded, and readily understandable. The emphasis is on the barbaric nature of Medea's crimes: '*Kein Weib in Hellas hätte dies jemals vermocht*' (Euripides, V.1313); '*Du eine Löwin, nicht ein Weib, von wildrer Art*' (V.1316, Horvath: Kapitel 1: Euripides, p6).

Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) emphasises other, no less negative aspects of Medea in his dramatic trilogy called *Das goldene Vließ*. He writes within the *Aufklärungsära*: '(...) *eine geschichtsphilosophische Tragödie des Humanitätsideals*' (Drews & Bachmaier: 1988 as cited from Horvath, Kapitel 2: Grillparzer, p8). Here, the psychological aspects of the Medea/Jason relationship are foregrounded: '*Er möchte nicht nur die Motivierung und den psychologischen Hintergrund des Kindermordes darstellen, ihn interessiert auch die Entwicklung ihrer Liebesverbindung und die Gründe des Konflikts zwischen Medea und Jason* (...) (Horvath, Kapitel 1, p1). Grillparzer uses *Das goldene Vließ* as a binding source and symbol and an ultimate *idée fixe* in the trilogy.

The inherent difference between Euripides and Grillparzer is the following: Euripides's Medea commits these heinous crimes because of ancient predestiny or fate. Grillparzer, however, is of the opinion that, while fate does play some part, it is Medea's personal circumstances that lead to her crimes. The female, as well as the feminist reception of both Euripides and Grillparzer, would be that neither of these dramatists find any redeeming qualities in Medea. She remains the image of horror and the embodiment of male fear of the female, emphasising the archetypal female *Wahnsinn* and the pathology associated with women.

Lucius Anneus Seneca (4BC-65AD) structures the Medea myth in the tradition of an inverted *Hymenaeus* or bridal song: an ancient choir comments on the plot and therefore serves as a narrative strategy in the drama. Medea is represented as a black witch who functions as a priestess within the occult dimension of the triple goddess, Hecate. The *leitmotiv* of Seneca's version is vengeance; Jason is presented as Medea's tragic victim: '[b]ei Seneca erscheint die Zügellosigkeit als Schuld. Medea, zur unmenschlich rasenden Mänade (...) umgeformt, steht für das Irrationale, und das heißt für das Inhumane schlechthin' (Von Einsiedel: 1974, p6128). It has been presumed that Seneca might have characterised his Medea so as to please the imperial court of Nero; some scholars assume that Seneca based his Medea on Locusta Modell, Nero's infamous mixer of poisons.

Other male dramatists who contributed to the various images of Medea throughout the centuries are: Ovid, Neophron, Ennius and Attius. From the seventeenth century onwards, the negative depictions of Medea continue in the works of Corneille (1635), Charpentier (1693), Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter (1775), Luigi Cherubini (1797), and Grillparzer (1818-1820). Twentieth century works include: Hans Henry Jahn (1926), Jean Anouilh (1946), Robinson Jeffers (1947), and Heiner Müller's *Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten* (1982).

With *Medea. Stimmen*, Christa Wolf creates a new female tradition of re-depicting the Medea myth. Structurally, Wolf's choice of genre reflects her need for a different perspective: apart from Ovid, almost all the Medea adaptations were written in the drama genre. The subtitle of Wolf's novel, *Stimmen*, not only reinforces the multi-dimensional narrative perspective but also embodies various viewpoints and truths about the Medea character. The novel does away with the one-dimensionality of the past, Wolf creates a Medea with human foibles, personal paradoxes, and *Brüchigkeiten*: 'Sie interessiert mich brennend...Sie interessiert mich gerade mit ihren Brüchen. Ich frage nach Verhaltensweisen, die historisch produktiver sein könnten als die gewöhnlichen' (Wolf: 1996, as quoted in Kammann: 1996, p52). Wolf creates an *Erzählgewebe*: 'Erst spät hörte ich dann diese Stimmen und sah, daß sich mir dadurch eine Möglichkeit eröffnete, ein Erzählgewebe herzustellen [...] in dem auch Medea von verschiedenen Seiten

gesehen werden kann, in ihrer Widersprüchlichkeit. So kann ich es vermeiden, sie als ungebrochene Heroine darzustellen' (ibid). Wolf works intertextually within the narrative to compare and contrast her Medea with past Medea texts. Each chapter or *Stimme* has a corresponding motto, placing Wolf in a literary tradition from Euripides to Ingeborg Bachmann: 'Das ist ein Versuch, souverän mit Aussagen umzugehen, es ist eine Reverenz an die alten wie die neuen Autoren, auch ein Hinweis auf die lange Reihe der Vorläufer und Vorläuferinnen und darauf, daß man selbst ein Glied in einer Kette ist' (Wolf: 1996, as quoted in Kammann: 1996, p53).

Lastly, in order to understand the structure of the *Stimmen*, one notes that Wolf has structured her *Medea* as eleven monologues and six *Stimmen*. Medea's character is defined – and so varies – within the context of each particular monologue. In contrast, Cassandra is reflective about the past, present, and future. The hermeneutic discussion looks at the way Medea is reported by different narrators. In this way, an overall view of Medea can be established by comparing these views to ancient perceptions of Medea.

2.2 (a) FRAU IN BEWEGUNG: ESCAPE FROM COLCHIS

*Ich bin mit Jason gegangen, weil ich in diesem verlorenen,
verdorbenen Kolchis nicht bleiben konnte.*

Es war eine Flucht.

Medea

In the pre-historic myth, Medea leaves Colchis because of her passion for Jason. Consequently, she is regarded as a traitor by her father, Aietes: she helps Jason to deceive the feared dragon, the same dragon that, some say, Cadmus faced at Thebes. Another version suggests that this is the dragon that protected *das goldene Vließ*. The golden fleece was originally given to Aietes as a token of gratitude by Phrixus, the king of Iolcus. The fleece was hung in an oak tree and guarded by the dragon, or, according to some variants, a snake that never slumbers. Yet another version claims that the fleece was to be found in the temple of Ares, the god of war. The reason Jason had to win back the golden fleece was that he could be the ruler of Iolcus only after bringing back the fleece.

In *Medea. Stimmen*, Medea's reasons for leaving Colchis differ dramatically from the ancient variants of the myth. Her primary reason is that she finds out that her brother, Absyrtos, has been murdered on Aietes's instructions by *eine Gruppe fanatischer Weiber* (M.S, p93). The reason for this murder is that Aietes fears that his power would be taken away, especially by the women of

Colchis. Legend has it that Colchis was once ruled by women: *'Es ist überliefert, daß in früheren Zeiten Frauen in Kolchis Königinnen waren, alte Bräuche wieder aufzufrischen, erinnern uns einige der Uralten daran, daß einst in Kolchis ein König nur sieben Jahre regieren durfte, und dann höchstens einmal sieben Jahre...'* (M.S, p92). However, Aietes outmanoeuvres everybody by finding even an older custom and lets Absyrtos rule for a day after which he is killed and Aietes becomes king again because he is his son's closest male relative: *'überraschte er sie [die Kolcher] mit einer weitschweifigen Erzählung des alten Brauchs, nach dem ein König nur zweimal sieben Jahre herrschen durfte [...] Er werde für einen Tag seine Würde niederlegen und an diesem Tag werde sein Sohn und künftiger Nachfolger, Absyrtos, König in Kolchis sein'* (ibid). After her brother's murder, Medea is horrified with all custom, legend, and tradition, especially with the brutality these customs bring out in people: *'Und seitdem ist mir ein Schauer geblieben vor diesen alten Zeiten und vor allem den Kräften, die sie in uns freisetzen und derer wir dann nicht mehr Herr werden können'* (M.S, p93-94).

Wolf's use of the dismemberment metaphor is multi-layered, showing the parallels between the gruesome murder of Absyrtos and Iphinoe's death, also on her father's instruction. Secondly, the metaphor also serves to illuminate the fragments of the past and its dismemberment that constitutes an important theme touched on in the introduction to *Medea*: *'...daß wir nicht nach unserem Belieben mit den Bruchstücken der Vergangenheit verfahren können, sie zusammensetzen oder auseinanderzureißen, wie es uns gerade paßt. Dadurch, daß ich das nicht verhinderte, daß ich es noch beförderte, habe ich zu deinem Tod beigetragen'* (ibid). Chapter 4 of the novel thus could be seen as Medea's *Beichte*: she did nothing to stop the killing of her brother. Consequently, she decides to leave Colchis with Jason but not because of her passion for him: *'Dabei hätte mir klar sein müssen, daß auch er sich nur einen einzigen Grund dafür denken könnte, daß ich ihm gegen den eigenen Vater half. Ich mußte ihm, Jason, unrettbar verfallen sein'* (M.S, p24).

The murders of Iphinoe and Absyrtos bring about the theme of *Opfer* and burial. One of the reasons why Medea is generally regarded as barbaric originates in the burial rituals for men and women in Colchis. Jason is profoundly disturbed about the way male corpses are hung in the trees: *'[...] daß bei den Kolchern nur die Frauen begraben werden; männliche Leichen würden in den Bäumen aufgehängt, wo die Vögel sie bis aufs Skelett säubern könnten, dann würden diese Skelette, nach Familien getrennt, in Felsenhöhlen aufbewahrt, es sei eine säuberliche und ehrfürchtige Methode...'* (M.S, p57). Medea and Jason do not see eye to eye on burials and the afterlife. The Colchians do not see anything wrong in the dismemberment of corpses by birds; they are more nature-bound than most cultures who bury their dead intact: *'Mich [Jason] störte [...] daran [...] daß Vögel eine menschliche Leiche zerhacken und fressen [...] der Tote... müsse*

körperlich unversehrt in seinem Grab beerdigt oder in der Felsenhöhle eingemauert werden, um seinen Weg durch die Unterwelt anzutreten und im Jenseits ankommen zu können' (ibd). This disagreement also leads to the misunderstanding between the two cultures of Colchis and Corinth: the Colchians prefer to keep to themselves but the Corinthians regard them as barbarians with peculiar habits and customs. Jason believes that a person has only one life; Medea, in contrast, believes in the possibility of the soul returning in a reincarnated form. Therefore, the body itself is seen only as a shell wherein the soul resides: *'Sie hielt dagegen, in den Toten sei die Seele nicht mehr, unbeschädigt sei sie entwichen und werde von den Kolchern an bestimmten dafür vorgesehenen Plätzen verehrt, und zur Wiedergeburt in einem anderen Körper füge die Göttin die zerstückelten Leiber der Toten zusammen...'* (ibd). Similarly, Jason believes that there is only one exclusive way to bury the dead: *'[...] daß es nur eine richtige Art gibt, seine Toten zu ehren, und viele falsche. Ich weiß übrigens nicht, warum sie mich dann fragte, ob es bei uns in den Ländern der untergehenden Sonne Menschenopfer gebe'* (M.S, p57-58).

Medea's observation about *Opfer* introduces one of the novel's important themes: Colchis is regarded as a barbaric country where humans are still sacrificed, although so-called civilisations like Corinth have their secret *Opfer* too: *'Keine Menschenopfer, glaubst du das immer noch? Ach, mein Armer...'* (M.S, p58). The *Sieger/Creon/Aietes* and *Opfer/Iphinoe/Absyrtos* theme introduces section (b): *'Auf dieser Scheibe, die wir Erde nennen, gibt es nichts anderes mehr [...] als Sieger und Opfer'* (M.S, p104).

2.2 (b) DOOR INTO THE DARK: ABSYRTOS AND IPHINOE

*Wir hätten Kolchis retten wollen.
Und ihr, dieses Mädchen Iphinoe und du,
Absyrtos, ihr seid die Opfer...
Medea.*

The murders of Absyrtos and Iphinoe both contribute to Medea's *Verbannung* from Corinth. Both serve a useful purpose for the Corinthians: the witch-hunt of Medea. Her discovery of Iphinoe's remains leads Akamas to turn against her. Akamas starts the whispering campaign of her having killed her brother. Consequently, people like Glauke also start to hate Medea.

The ancient variations of the Medea myth suggest that she kills Absyrtos and dismembers him. When Medea and the *Argonauts* flee on the *Argo*, Aietes follows them to get back the golden fleece. It is said that Medea throws the dismembered limbs and body parts into the water to

distract Aietes. Every time a limb is thrown into the sea, Aietes has to stop in order to gather it up and consequently falls behind.

Wolf's Medea, however, does not kill her brother. In contrast to the myth, she gathers Absyrtos's body parts and takes them with her on the *Argo* to bury them in the ocean. As noted in section (a), Aietes makes sure that Absyrtos is killed so as to stay in power. But not everybody realises this truth, and even the Argonauts begin to fear Medea after seeing her tossing limbs into the sea: *'Auch meinen Argonauten ist dieses Bild in die Glieder gefahren: eine Frau, die unter wilden Schreien die Knochen eines Toten, die sie bei sich trug, gegen den Wind ins Meer wirft'* (M.S, p96). The Argonauts plead with Jason to extradite Medea to Aietes, but he refuses. This is something that Medea is unused to; standing under the protection of a man is uncommon for a female in Colchis: *'Ich weiß, die Argonauten versuchten Jason zu bereden, mich dem Vater auszuliefern...Ich stünde unter seinem Schutz. Es war mir neu, unter dem Schutz eines Mannes zu stehen...'* (M.S, p97).

The Argonauts, however, are not satisfied until Medea is purified at least in the eyes of the gods for the 'murder'. Because the *Argo* happens to be in the vicinity of Medea's aunt, Circe, they stop at her island for a while. The Argonauts, having heard a rumour that Circe transforms men into pigs, refuse to land and remain on board the *Argo*. Circe was banned from Colchis because her group of women dared to question the authorities; a witch-hunt similar to that against Medea was launched, and Circe and her group of women were charged with false crimes. Understandably, Medea feels that she is Circe's successor: Medea herself follows the same example because she would not be silent about the crimes of the Corinthian authority:

sie gab mir das Gefühl, daß sie meine Vortäufnerin, ich ihre Nachfolgerin war, denn auch sie war vertrieben worden, als sie mit ihren Frauen gegen den König und seinen Hofstaat auftrat, sie hetzten die Leute gegen Kirke auf, lasteten ihr Verbrechen an, die sie selbst begangen hatten, und brachten es fertig, ihr den Ruf einer bösen Zauberin anzuhängen [...] (M.S, p99).

The female message of the novel is partly embodied in Circe's view of the male world. Like Cassandra, Circe regards most men as big children. Her standpoint originates not from her being a man-hater but from personal experience with the violence and bigotry of the patriarchy: *'Sie suchen eine Frau, die ihnen sagt, daß sie an nichts Schuld sind; daß die Götter, die sie zufällig anbeten, sie in ihre Wahrnehmungen hineintreiben. Daß die Spur von Blut, die sie hinter sich herziehen, zu ihrem von den Göttern bestimmten Mannsein gehört. Große schreckliche Kinder'* (M.S, p100). Circe does, in fact, turn some men into pigs, but only in the hope that they would

come to self-insight: '[...] das, habe sie gedacht, könne ihnen vielleicht zu einem Funken Selbsterkenntnis verhelfen' (M.S, p101).

'Die hier, Absyrtos, sind Meister im Lügen, auch im Sich-selbst-Belügen [...]' (M.S, p101-102). After fleeing to Corinth to escape Colchis, Medea discovers that there is a dark secret to be found in Corinth as well. One evening, during a royal banquet, Medea wanders off in the palace, finding pieces of a human skeleton hidden in a secret passage behind a curtain made of skin. Medea questions Merope, who, after the death of her older daughter, Iphinoe, has never spoken again: *'Er hat sie aus dem Weg haben wollen, Iphinoe. Er hatte Angst, wir würden sie an seine Stelle setzen. Und das wollten wir auch. Wir wollten Korinth retten'* (M.S, p103). After Medea has discovered the crime on which Corinth is built, she cannot stop thinking about Iphinoe's tiny bones, and associates her with Absyrtos, calling them brother and sister: *'[...] und kann seitdem an nichts anderes denken als an diesen schmalen kindlichen Totenschädel, diese feinknochigen Schulterblätter, diese zerbrechliche Wirbelsäule [...]'* (M.S, p23).

Through Medea's discovery of these heinous crimes, her perspective on the gods changes; she stops believing:

Stück für Stück, Bein um Bein, da hörte ich auf zu glauben. Wie sollten wir in neuer Gestalt auf dieser Erde zurückkommen können. Warum sollten die über das Feld verstreuten Glieder eines toten Mannes dieses Feld fruchtbar machen. Warum sollten die Götter, die andauernd Beweise von Dankbarkeit und Unterwerfung von uns verlangen, uns sterben lassen, um uns dann wieder auf die Erde zurückzuschicken....Zum erstmal fand ich Trost darin, daß ich nicht immer leben muß. Da konnte ich diesen aus Angst geborenen Glauben loslassen [...] (M.S, p95).

Akamas, First Astronomer at the royal court of Creon, knows the exact circumstances under which Iphinoe was murdered. At first, Akamas likes Medea and respects her more than other women for her intelligence and forthrightness. She also knows as much about astronomy as he does, because, in Colchis, astronomy was a field studied mainly by women. However, after Medea's discovery of Iphinoe's bones, Akamas turns against her, mainly because of Agamedea and Presbon, two former Colchians who informed him about her discovery. Although Akamas does not like Agamedea, he uses her to achieve his goal of defaming Medea and driving her out of the city. He explains the background to Creon's fear of losing power: Merope inherited the *Herrschaft* of Corinth from the matrilineal line and therefore had a rightful chance of coming to power. She also had a more powerful vote than he did. Creon feared a so-called *Weiberherrschaft* and thought that his being king would be in the best interests of Corinth.

However, there was a price to be paid for Creon's rise to power: Iphinoe's death. Merope is also a victim of Creon's megalomania: after her daughter's murder, she becomes dysfunctional as a person and retreats into the shadow world of the palace where she is kept out of sight most of the time, appearing only on rare occasions such as banquets. The bigotry and corruption of Corinth are shown in the lies about Iphinoe's death: the Corinthians are told that Iphinoe has been kidnapped by another kingdom and that she is to be married to the young prince of that kingdom. Soon, court singers are singing about the fairytale romance of Iphinoe and the prince. The Corinthians believe what they want to believe.

Another victim of Creon is Iphinoe's *Amme*, who was present when they killed Iphinoe: *'Die Amme ist natürlich geisteskrank geworden [...] eines Tages fand man ihren zerschmetterten Körper unterhalb der Klippen. Sie habe den Verlust ihres Brustkindes nicht verwinden können, wurde vom Palast ausgestreut'* (M.S, p120). The *Amme's* suicide suited the court well because nobody now remained who could give away their secret. Ironically, all Corinthians, especially the *Ältesten*, denied that human sacrifice had ever existed in Corinth: *'Nicht einmal die Ältesten in Korinth haben sich an Menschenopfer erinnern können, wohl wahr, sagte der oberste Priester, und zu rechtfertigen sei es nur weil es uns andere, schlimmere Opfer erspare'* (ibid).

2.2 (c) THE UNRAVISHED BRIDE: GLAUKE AND MEDEA

Medea habe Glauke ein vergiftetes Kleid geschickt, ein grausames Abschiedsgeschenk, das ihr, der armen Glauke, als sie es überzog, die Haut verbrannt habe, so daß sie sich, besinnungslos vor Schmerz, Kühlung suchend in den Brunnen gestürzt habe.

Medea Stimmen

In the myth, Medea murders Glauke to avenge her love for Jason who intends to marry Glauke. Just before the wedding, Medea sends Glauke a fatal present: a wedding dress. This dress is poisoned; when Glauke tries it on, the dress burns her to such an extent that she dies of her wounds.

Wolf's depiction of the relationship between Glauke and Medea is far more complex than the myth suggests. In the beginning, Medea serves as a substitute mother for Glauke, because her own mother, Merope, retreats into the labyrinthine world of the palace, not even speaking to her only surviving daughter, Glauke. Medea wants Glauke to remember the traumatic experience that she has repressed all these years. The trauma that Glauke experienced as a child is the brutal slaughter of her sister, Iphinoe. Medea not only brings hope to Glauke but also helps her to build

up some sense of self-esteem. Glauke even manages to develop a friendship with Lyssa's daughter, Arinna; friendship is something she has never experienced before.

Lyssa is Medea's best friend who followed her from Colchis to Corinth. In contrast with Medea, she embodies the lighter side of being in the novel: '[...] die Gelassenheit, die von ihr ausging. Sie gehört zu den Frauen, die die Erde wieder anstoßen würden, falls sie einmal stehenbleiben sollte, sie hält das Leben der Menschen, die ihr anvertraut sind, fest in die Händen, man kann jeden beneiden, der in ihrer Obhut aufwachsen darf' (M.S., p163). Leukon remarks the following about Lyssa's view of Corinth's Niedergang: '[...] wo sie denn die Ursache sehe für unseren Niedergang. Sie fand, die Antwort liege auf der Hand. In eurer Selbstüberhebung, sagte sie. Ihr überhebt euch über alles und alle, das verstellt euch den Blick für das, was wirklich ist, auch dafür, wie wir wirklich seid. Sie hatte recht, und ihr Satz klingt bis heute in mir nach' (M.S., p164).

Turon, another Colchian, is most vividly described by Glauke who provides a significant character portrayal and characterisation of Turon, who plays an important part in the build-up to Medea's exile and the final banishment from Corinth after blaming his *Entmannung* on her. Glauke finds Turon disgusting and putrid: '[...] daß es mir vor den feuchten knochigen Händen des Turon graust, [...] und daß der Geruch nach fauligem Schweiß, der aus seinen Achselhöhlen strömt, mich ekelt, kein anderer Mensch, den ich kenne, riecht so [...]' (M.S, p128). Even so, Glauke still tolerates his advances because she loathes herself so much: 'es ist ja meine früheste Gewißheit, daß ich häßlich bin [...]' (ibid). She sees herself as an *Unglücksmenschen*: '[...] es macht mich krank, das hat sie mich gelehrt, daß es mich krank macht, wenn ich in mir wieder und wieder die Bilder aufrufe, die mich als Unglücksmenschen zeigen [...]' (ibid). As result of her self-hatred, Glauke starts trusting Medea, who helps her to see a less ugly side of herself; from the beginning, she believes that Medea's compliments are not just empty flattery. Medea opens Glauke up to her own *Schmerz*, something that Glauke could never face before:

[...] das ist meine Schwäche, denen zu glauben, die mir schmeicheln, obwohl es nicht eigentlich Schmeichelei war, es war etwas anderes, es war raffiniert, es ging tiefer, es rührte an den geheimsten Punkt in meinem Innern, an den tiefsten Schmerz, den ich bis dahin nur vor der Gottheit ausbreiten konnte (M.S, p 129).

Symbolically and literally, Medea lifts Glauke from her dark depression and out of her pathologies; she even asks Arinna to dress her in *bunte Kleider*: '[...] warum, sagte sie, willst du dein ganzes Leben unter diesen schwarzen Tüchern ersticken, sie zog mir die schwarzen Kleider aus [...] aber das war eben ihre schwarze Magie....' (ibid). The misconception of Medea's being a witch is confused by Glauke's memories of Medea's healing sessions: '[...] sie beruhigte mich

durch ihre Worte, nein es war mehr als Beruhigung, es war eines ihrer Zauberkunststücke [...] (M.S, p134). Medea also teaches Glauke not to ignore her *Schattenexistenz*: *'Sie hat mir einreden wollen, ich müsse sie nicht leugnen, die Schatten, die so oft über meine hellsten Tage fielen [...]*' (M.S, p134). Glauke describes how Medea would calm her and let her talk about her horrid repressed memories: *'strich mir über die Stirn und redete leise von dem Kind, das ich einmal gewesen sei und das mit jener Stelle auf dem Hof eine unerträgliche Erinnerung verbinde, die ich hätte vergessen müssen, um weiterleben zu können [...]*' (M.S, p135).

Christa Wolf skillfully utilises Glauke's skin disease to refer back to the poisoned wedding dress of the original myth, inverting the skin-motif from tragedy to a positive metaphor for Glauke's psychological progress, as the snake sloughs off its skin after a long winter. Throughout the novel, the snake is used as a positive symbol:

die neue Haut, die zum Vorschein kam, du häutest dich, Glauke [...] wie eine Schlange. Sie sprach von Wiedergeburt. Es waren Tage voller Hoffnung, bis sie mich im Stich ließ, wie meine Mutter mich einst im Stich gelassen hat; es war das, was sie niemals hätte tun dürfen. Ich hasse sie (M.S, p139).

The inherent reason Glauke hates Medea becomes apparent: as her mother had once abandoned her, so she believes that Medea has abandoned her too. This abandonment has traumatic resonances that put her back into the shadow world of her psyche; she regresses into her old psychological state.

Lastly, Wolf deconstructs the myth of the 'jealous Medea'. Glauke herself meets Oistros, a *Grabmäler*, who had fled from Crete during an earthquake. He shares a work 'studio' with a fellow Cretan, Arethusa, a stone cutter. Like Medea, Oistros lives close to nature and keeps himself to himself. Oistros and Medea become lovers; Glauke is delighted to have a chance with Jason: *'Aber kann eine wie ich ein Geschenk der Götter zurückweisen, muß ich nicht die Brosamen auflesen, die mir vom fremden Tisch zufallen, sie schmecken bitter, aber doch auch süß [...]*' (M.S, p142). Because Glauke is in love with Jason, and Medea herself has found love with Oistros, Medea has no motive for revenge. In fact, Medea sends Glauke a beautiful and colourful wedding dress to show her consent to the wedding. Glauke commits suicide by deceiving the guards and plunging into an abandoned well. Although Glauke is not killed by the gift Medea sends her before the wedding, she does not understand the blessing contained in the message of the gift and misinterprets it as evil.

Of course, after all the lies she has been fed by people like Turon, Glauke no longer believes in herself or Medea; she feels betrayed to such an extent that she does not even want to utter Medea's name:

ich muß den Namen dieser Frau aus meiner Erinnerung tilgen, ich muß mir die ganze Person aus dem Kopf schlagen, sie mir aus dem Herzen reißen [...] wie es mir passieren konnte, daß ich ihr mein Herz öffnete [...] Turon hat wohl recht, sie Verräterin zu nennen, sie der schwarze Magie zu bezichtigen [...] (ibd).

Thus Glauke opens her mind and heart to Medea's healing techniques and so experiences *Schmerz*. But after Medea's perceived 'betrayal', Glauke regards the healing process as witchcraft and black magic. She believes that everybody who comes in contact with Medea is eventually consumed by her evil sorcery, just as a victim is consumed by an earthquake: *'In meiner Umgebung hat ein anderes Erdbeben stattgefunden, eine Erschütterung, die nicht die Häuser zerstört hat, aber Menschen verschwinden ließ. Alle Menschen, die mit dieser unheilvollen Person in Verbindung standen, sind wie vom Erdboden verschluckt [...]' (M.S, p 141)*. At the end of Chapter 6 of the novel, Turon asks Glauke whether she really believes that they live in a *Mördergrube* rather than that Medea is the culprit of Corinth. Ironically, he asks: *'Daß unser schönes Korinth, das diese Fremden niemals verstehen können, eine Art Schlachthaus ist?' (M.S, p144)*. His question is answered: Corinth again becomes a slaughterhouse when Medea's children are stoned to death.

2.2 (d) SLAUGHTER IN HERA'S TEMPLE: THE KILLING OF MEDEA'S CHILDREN

Die Kinder! Ist die Antwort. Ihre verfluchten Kinder. Wir haben Korinth von dieser Seuche befreit. Und wie? Fragt der Bursche mit Verschwöreremiene. Gesteinigt! brüllen viele. Wie sie es verdienten.

Medea.Stimmen

The old variants of the Medea myth suggest that Medea takes her children to Hera's temple and kills them there. Thereafter she ascends into heaven in a dragon chariot. She murders her children in cold blood to take revenge on Jason for leaving her to marry Glauke.

In Wolf's re-writing of this particular part of the myth, Medea leaves her children in Hera's temple and asks the goddess to protect them in the hope that the Corinthians would respect the temple and not commit murder in a holy place. After leaving her children, she flees to the mountains with

other Colchian women, because she has been banished from Corinth and is locked out beyond the city gates.

The Corinthians fabricate all kinds of untrue legends and myths around Medea to hide their own brutality: '[...] daß die Göttin selbst, Artemis, die Flüchtenden in ihrem Schlangenwagen der Erde enthoben und sie in sichere Gefilde entführt habe' (M.S, p209).

'Maßlos ist sie am Ende gewesen, so, wie die Korinther sie brauchten, eine Furie' (M.S, p208): Leukon, the Second Astronomer to the court, reflects on Medea's banishment: 'Wie sie die ganze Zeit, als man sie als Sündenbock durch die Stadt führte, einen schrecklichen Gesang ausstieß [...]' (M.S, p209). Leukon focuses especially on the *Sündenbock* theme of the novel. Medea is branded a witch and a sorceress and is consequently compelled to take the blame for all the cruelty and the obscene secrets of Corinth, simply because she was not afraid of telling the truth: '[...] beim Südtor aus der Stadt hinausgestoßen wurde, nachdem man sie, wie bei einem Sündenbock üblich, durch die Straßen meiner Stadt Korinth geführt hatte [...] Neid, weil sie, das unschuldige Opfer, frei war von innerem Zwiespalt' (M.S, p206). Medea's *Freisein* of inner conflict is at the centre of the difference between her and Cassandra. Medea follows her instinct and heart, believing and acting accordingly; Cassandra does not know her true self until a short time before her death. She is characterised as a woman whose soul is the battlefield of two opponents, showing her inner conflict. The opposite is true of Medea. The Corinthians are especially angered by Medea's lack of fear of them and her refusal to lie to placate them: '[...] was gibt einem Menschen, was gab dieser Frau das Recht, uns vor Entscheidungen zu stellen, denen wir nicht gewachsen sind, die uns aber zerreißen und uns als Unterlegene, als Versagende, als Schuldige zurücklassen' (M.S, p207). The Corinthians justify their *Vertreibung* of Medea by believing that they are pleasing the gods by banishing an evil-spirited witch from the city: 'Jedermann kann nun sehen, daß wir den Willen der Götter richtig gedeutet haben, als wir die Zauberin aus der Stadt trieben' (ibid). Wolf comments indirectly on the abuse of religion and how humanity misuses its gods to suit its own needs and to justify its crimes. They also stone Jason and Medea's children to death for political reasons, simply because they might want to claim the throne of Corinth, being the sons of Jason: 'Sie wollen nicht, daß die Söhne der Medea irgendwann einmal als Anwärter auf den Thron von Korinth in Frage kamen' (M.S, p200).

'Vor allen Leuten war ich jetzt der betrogene Mann und nicht sie die verlassene Frau, wie es in der Ordnung gewesen wäre' (M.S, p199): the gender-biased reaction that the Corinthians show towards Jason and Medea reflects the repression of women in Corinth. Medea is shown to be the jealous avenger while Jason remains the heroic *Drachentöter*. The hatred of women increases after Turon's *Entmannung* and manifests itself in physical violence perpetrated against Colchian

women. The women, in turn, do not protest as it is not part of Corinthian culture for women to stand up to their husbands. They even denounce Medea publicly to protect themselves from the vengeance of the Corinthian men:

Sie faßten ihre Frauen hart an, manche sollen sie geschlagen haben, und die Korintherinnen verbargen sie sich in den Häusern oder liefen mit gesenkten Köpfen durch die Straßen, als hätten sie, jede von ihnen, den armen Turon geschändet, sie [...] begrüßen lauthals die strenge Bestrafung der Schuldigen und fordern für Medea die Höchststrafe [...] (M.S, p196).

The males in Corinth bond together after Turon's *Entmannung*: *'Wir alle, wir Männer in Korinth, haben diesen Schmerz mitgeföhlt. Ganz sicher wurde in den Nächten bis zur Bestrafung der Kolcherinnen und der Verurteilung der Medea kein Kind gezeugt, kein Mann war zeugungsfähig'* (M.S, p195). Wolf asks the question: Whether the driving force behind the passion for killing others could be one's own misery? *'Überhaupt frage ich mich [Jason], ob die Lust, andere Leben zu zerstören, nicht daher kommt, daß man am eigenen Leben so wenig Lust und Freude hat'* (M.S, p197). The male fear and hatred of women becomes clear in Jason's own view of the disempowerment of the female: *'Wir sollen die Weiber nehmen. Wir sollen ihren Widerstand brechen...'* (M.S, p201). Wolf shows that, even in pre-historic times, the patriarchy condemned women and made them voiceless creatures: *'[...] dann werden die Männer von Korinth obenauf und die Frauen noch mehr geduckt sein'* (M.S, p196).

Turon's emasculation becomes the last nail in Medea's coffin. One evening, the Colchian women have a dance rite/festival in the woods to celebrate the spring solstice: *'Ein vertrautes Geräusch, eine Musik, ein Rhythmus, die mir ins Blut gingen und mich zu der Gruppe der kolchischen Frauen führten, die auf der stadtabgewandten Seite des Berges an schwer zugänglicher Stelle unser Frühlingsfest feierten, das Fest der Demeter'* (M.S, p188). During the celebration, the women hear somebody felling a tree. Because the women regard the woods as their sacred place to perform their dance to the goddess, they are infuriated by such a deed of desecration and go to look for the perpetrator. Medea tries to stop them, but to no avail: *'[...] die Frauen zischten mich an, hielten mir den Mund [...] sie haßten mich, ich haßte sie [...] hörte das Geheul der Weiber, meiner Kolcherinnen, hörte die tierischen Schreie eines Mannes [...] Turon [...] sie schnitten ihm sein Geschlecht ab'* (M.S, p189). The remaining Colchians hide in their ghetto, knowing that the punishment will come to them: *'Jetzt herrscht Grabesstille im Viertel der Kolcher'* (ibid). Medea tries to help Turon by using some of the plant extracts she always carries around in her *Beutel* and indeed saves his life. However, Medea's face is the first Turon sees when he comes to consciousness and, because Medea has already been branded as Corinth's *Sündenbock*, it becomes all too easy for everyone to accept that she is the perpetrator of the

emasculation: *'Ich hätte die Weiber angeführt, die dem Turon Gewalt antaten [...]'* (M.S, p191). Medea's only consolation is that some Colchian women have fled to the mountains and are saved from the severe punishment awaiting them: *'Ein Trost, daß einige Frauen und Mädchen sich zu Arinna in die Berge flüchten konnten'* (M.S, p190).

Having completed the discussion of the original Medea myth and Wolf's reconstruction of it, the discussion now moves on to a more detailed consideration of the plot, even though some aspects have already been dealt with in the previous four sections. The discussion centres on the motives for Medea's banishment from Corinth and those constituting the driving force behind her fleeing to the mountains.

2.3 THE ORIGINS OF MALICE: MEDEA'S DESCENT INTO NOTHINGNESS

'Die Stadt ist auf eine Untat gegründet [...] Wer dieses Geheimnis preisgibt, ist verloren' (M.S, p23): after Medea's discovery of Iphinoe's remains, her enemies initiate a conspiracy against her to drive her out of Corinth. Medea's worst enemies are Agamedea, a Colchian and one of Medea's former pupils; Presbon, also a Colchian, and Akamas, Creon's First Astronomer. Both Agamedea and Presbon are opportunists and want to win the appreciation and acceptance of the Corinthians. Renowned for his arrogance, Presbon organises the Temple Games of Corinth. Consequently, he has prestige, mixing with the VIPs of Corinth while enjoying being in the spotlight. Presbon's need to be in the limelight all the time may be seen as a compensation for his embarrassment about his humble origins: his parents were simple people without any status in Colchis. Therefore he despises everybody who knows about his background, especially Medea: *'Wie er alle haßt, die ihn in seiner Schande gesehen haben und über die Verrenkungen spotteten, die er sich abverlangt, um aufzusteigen'* (M.S, p32). Medea calls him: *'Presbon in seiner unbezähmbaren Ichsucht'* (M.S, p31). Agamedea regards him as lying, mostly to himself, while having delusions of grandeur:

Presbon ist ein Mensch mit der Begabung, sich selbst zu belügen [...] Er kann sich selbst nur fühlen, wenn ihn eine große Menge bewundert, der er ihre Feste ausrichtet, egal, ob er an ihre Götter glaubt [...] Medea, denkt er, verachtet ihn dafür. In Wirklichkeit ist es schlimmer: Er ist ihr gleichgültig. Das muß ihm ein unleidlicher Stachel im Fleisch sein... (M.S, p71).

Medea's indifference to Presbon is one of his motivations for participating in the hate campaign against her. Agamedea uses people like Turon and Presbon only to help her to achieve her goal of

revenge against Medea: *'Turon hat mir den Weg ins Königshaus geöffnet, Presbon zeigt mir den Weg, mich an Medea zu rächen'* (M.S, p82-83).

Agamedea, however, hates Medea the most. At first, she adores Medea. As a child, the only thing she wanted was to be one of Medea's apprentices. When Agamedea is ten, her mother dies and she is chosen to be one of Medea's pupils. Everything she learns about healing, Medea teaches her: *'Du wirst eine gute Heilerin, Agamedea [...] Wenn du es lernst, dich zurückzunehmen. Ich heile nicht [...] und du auch nicht [...] etwas heilt mit unserer Hilfe. Was wir tun können, ist, dafür zu sorgen, daß dieses Etwas sich frei entfalten kann, in uns und im Kranken'* (M.S, p68). However, there is a fundamental difference between Agamedea and Medea: *'Medea in ihrer Verblendung setzt ja auf die Stärken der Menschen, ich setze auf ihre Schwäche'* (M.S, p74). Medea is the first person to value Agamedea and to notice her qualities. Like Glauke, Agamedea hates her appearance and it is only Medea that values their physical qualities:

meine große Nase, die ich nie im Profil zeige, die ungeschlachten Hände und Füße, die ich schon als Mädchen zu verstecken suchte. Erst Medea, der ich zu meiner Beschämung eine Zeitlang mein Inneres geöffnet habe, versuchte mir Schönheiten anzureden: meine schön geformten Augenbrauen, mein dichtes Haar, meine Brüste [...] (M.S, p73).

Like Presbon, Agamedea turns her back on her Colchian past and longs to fit in with the important Corinthians: *'[...] meine guten Kolcher verachten mich, seit ich seltener in ihrer kleinen Kolonie erscheine und mich immer häufiger in Begleitung einflußreicher Korinther sehen lasse [...]*' (M.S, p74). One of the most influential people she mixes with is Akamas. Neither likes the other, but they need each other to bring about the downfall of their common enemy, Medea. Agamedea describes Akamas as a very sly, secretive man, who cannot stand being challenged by anyone:

Er ist ja ein merkwürdig aus ungleichen Teilen zusammengesetzter Mann. Er lebt versteckt in sorgfältig zusammengebastelten Gedänkengebäuden, die er für die Wirklichkeit hält, die aber keinen anderen Zweck haben, als ihm sein leicht wankendes Selbstbewußtsein zu stützen. Widerspruch hält er nicht aus, hochmütig gießt er versteckten und offenen Hohn über kleinere Geister aus, also über jedermann; da er allen überlegen sein muß (M.S, p 76).

Akamas, another of Medea's enemies, does not have a great deal of *Menschenkenntnis* and feels threatened by anybody who questions his authority: *'[...] daß er wenig Menschenkenntnis hat und darauf angewiesen ist, in einem Gerüst von Grundsätzen zu leben, das niemand in Frage*

stellen darf, sonst fühlt er sich auf unerträgliche Weise bedroht' (M.S, p 77). Akamas finds Medea sometimes too much of a challenge: *'Daß er es satt hatte, auf ihre Unfehlbarkeit mit gleicher Unfehlbarkeit antworten zu müssen, um sich in ihrer Gegenwart nicht unterlegen zu fühlen'* (ibid). Agameda believes that Akamas's hatred for Medea has its origins in his liking for her: *'[...] daß der Teil seiner Seele, den er am meisten liebt, immer noch an Medea hängt [...]'* (M.S, p79). Medea gives him the opportunity to prove himself by treating somebody of 'barbaric' origin as an equal, something he would never have considered doing before: *'Sie ermöglicht ihm, sich selbst zu beweisen, daß er auch zu einer Barbarin gerecht, vorurteilsfrei und sogar freundlich sein kann'* (ibid).

Agameda's characterisation of Medea is an example of the *Stimmen* that Christa Wolf builds into the structure of her novel. This characterisation is important in showing Medea's involuted dimensions. Agameda, for example, is looking for Medea's Achilles heel as she cannot believe that anybody is faultless, reinforcing the point made earlier that she concentrates only on the weaknesses of individuals:

Da sagte ich, wenn ein Mensch sich so vollkommen und untadelig gebe wie Medea, dann müsse es doch irgendwo eine faule Stelle geben. Dann habe sie doch etwas zu verbergen. Dann wolle sie doch, indem sie andern ein schlechtes Gewissen mache, vermeiden, daß jemand hinter diesen schönen Schleier blickte, den sie uns gezogen habe (M.S, p78).

Agameda's hatred for Medea originates partly from her view that her teacher, Medea, is somehow untouchable and protected. In contrast, Agameda has never had such an experience and consequently feels jealous: *'Ich konnte mich auf Medeas Einbildung verlassen, daß sie unantastbar sei. Sie lief wie in einer Schutzhaut herum. Ich dagegen war seit meiner frühen Kindheit ohne Schutz, allen Verletzungen ausgesetzt [...]'* (M.S, p81). However, the real source for Agameda's hate of Medea finds its origin in Medea's strictness with Agameda; because she was the daughter of Medea's friend, she did not want to show any favoritism: *'[...] sagte sie mir einmal beiläufig, ich hätte doch sicher verstanden, daß sie mich strenger habe behandeln müssen als alle anderen, damit man ihr nicht nachsagen könne, sie ziehe die Tochter ihrer Freundin vor. Da fing ich an, sie zu hassen'* (M.S, p82). Agameda's hatred is so personal that it makes her a very tough, sly opponent. It is Agameda who tells Akamas about Medea's journey into the secret corridor of the palace, as well as the story that she killed Absyrtos. Agameda and Presbon start a subsequent whispering campaign about Absyrtos's killing and, in less than two days, the whole of Corinth knows the story: *'Wir waren neugierig, wie schnell das Gerücht sich verbreiten würde. Nach zwei Tagen wußten alle Kolcher davon [...]'* (M.S, p85).

Lyssa is the first to tell Medea about the vicious rumour. It is inconceivable to Medea why Agamedea could hate her so much: *'Haß macht blind. Warum haßt sie mich. Warum werde ich gehaßt'* (M.S, p89). The witch-hunt perpetrated by Akamas, Agamedea, and Presbon reminds Medea of the way her own father treated her and his vicious rumour-mongering: *'Ich weiß, wie die Kolcher mich nach meiner Flucht genannt haben müssen, dafür hat schon der Vater gesorgt: Verräterin'* (M.S, p25-26). Medea realises that, once again, she has been branded as a traitor and a witch, so she will probably have to flee again. She also starts drawing parallels between Aietes and Creon: both have a craving for power. Corinth turns out not to be the utopia she had hoped for when she left Colchis: *'Nun habe ich die gleiche Anmaßung und Furcht, die unser Vater Aietes zuletzt zeigte, im Gesicht des Königs Kreon von Korinth gesehen'* (M.S, p86). The Corinthians already have a negative image of Medea and her popularity as a *Heilerin* vanishes: *'[...] nicht all diese Jahre als halb gefürchtete, halb verachtete Barbarin'* (M.S, p104). Akamas plays on the wild and barbaric image people have of Medea: *'[...] und worüber man sich die Mäuler zerriß als über die Frau, die bald die schöne Wilde hieß'* (M.S, p107). He is pleased that Medea's popularity is decreasing and that people have already begun going to the astronomers he has trained: *'Nun wird es ja sowieso bald vorbei sein mit dem heimlichen Ruhm der Medea als Heilerin. Wer wird noch zu einer Frau gehen, die ihren Bruder ermordet hat'* (M.S, p110).

Akamas had always been jealous of Medea's exceptional healing power: *'Es wurde Mode in Korinth, sich an sie [Medea] zu wenden und nicht an die Astrologen oder an die Ärzte aus der Schule des Akamas'* (M.S, p61). After the drought, Akamas's view of Medea changes, as does that of the Corinthians. She makes them eat wild plants and horsemeat. Because eating horses is a sacrilege to the Corinthians, they come to hate Medea for forcing them to eat them to survive. They blame Medea for putting an evil spell on them: *'Seitdem gilt sie als böse Frau, denn, sagte Akamas, die Leute wollen sich lieber für verhext halten, als sich selbst zu glauben, daß sie Unkraut fraßen und die Eingeweide unberührbarer Tiere verschlangen [...]'* Medea sagt, wer die Leute zwingt, an ihr Heiliges zu rühren, mache sie sich zum Feind' (M.S, p45). After the drought, Akamas collaborates with Agamedea and Presbon to defame Medea: *'Akamas wird sie gegen die Beschuldigung, ihren Bruder getötet zu haben, nicht in Schutz nehmen. Seit dieser Hunger- und Pferdegeschichte sieht er sie als eine Bedrohung für sich an'* (ibid).

Wolf's *Medea* foregrounds the *böses Bild der Frau* as seen in the misogynist views of Akamas, Jason, and Creon as well as the rest of Corinth. Both the kingdoms of Colchis and Corinth see the female principle as a severe threat to their male power. Medea provokes male fear of the female. The early matriarchies of Colchis and Corinth have been destroyed. Creon also feels threatened by Medea's presence because she is the complete antithesis of the docile Corinthian

women: *'Die Frau ist zu schlau [...] und zu vorlaut. Vor allem war sie ihm unheimlich'* (M.S, p113). He despises her femaleness: *'Sie war zu sehr Weib [...] das färbte auch ihr Denken'* (ibid). Yet Medea still does not realise the hatred that she has opened up in people like Akamas: *'Sie hat von mir verlangt, ich solle öffentlich sagen, was ich wisse: daß sie nicht die Mörderin ihres Bruders sei. Sie hatte immer noch nicht verstanden, daß eine Gerölllawine in Gang gesetzt war, die jedermann unter sich begraben würde, der sie noch aufhalten wollte'* (M.S, p121). Akamas also realises the danger Medea has got herself into, even though she does not yet realise it herself. The price she has to pay for her honesty is very high: *'Und ich begriff, daß es Medea zugefallen ist, die verschüttete Wahrheit aufzudecken, die unser Zusammenleben bestimmt, und daß wir das nicht ertragen werden'* (M.S, p160). Eventually, it becomes impossible for Medea to resist the hate campaign: *'Medea ist verloren'* (M.S, p150). Leukon suspects that somebody, probably Akamas, must have planted the seed of hate in the Corinthians *'Ach, sagte ich höhnisch, diese Leute sind ganz alleine auf die Idee gekommen, sich zusammenzurotten, der Frau aufzulauern und sie mit Schimpf und Schande durch die Straße zu jagen [...]* (M.S, p159). Meanwhile, Medea is almost oblivious to the malice of which the Corinthians are capable: *'[...] daß sie keine Ahnung haben, wozu die Korinther fähig sind, wenn sie sich bedroht sehen [...] Medea trinkt, lächelt, schweigt'* (M.S, p152).

The Corinthians blame Medea for the earthquake in Corinth: *'[...] die Leute auf den Gedanken brachte, das Erdbeben könne durch Medeas böse Kunst über Korinth heraufbeschwören worden sein'* (M.S, p162). The plague that follows the earthquake they also ascribe to Medea. Although she has warned them on many occasions to burn the corpses, in refusing to do so Corinth attracts thousands of rats, causing pestilence throughout the city: *'Aber viele Korinther behaupten, sie ziehe die Krankheit hinter sich her. Sie sei es gewesen, die der Stadt die Pest gebracht habe'* (M.S, p165). Arethusia, the stone cutter, lover to both *der Alte* and Leukon, is killed by the plague. A group of prisoners escapes and robs the rich tombs and graves. Subsequently, the Corinthians want to sacrifice prisoners to placate the gods and to satisfy their thirst for revenge. Medea opposes this sacrifice and tries to persuade the Corinthians not to slay anyone. *'[...] die Menge sucht nach Opfern, um ihren Rachedurst zu stillen'* (M.S, p184). Agamedea despises Medea not for responding to hate with hate like everybody else: *'Agamedea meint, es sei eine Form von Hochmut, auf Haß nicht mit Haß zu antworten und sich so über die Gefühle der gewöhnlichen Menschen zu erheben, die Haß genauso brauchen wie Liebe [...]* (M.S, p182). Medea realises that she would have to make a compromise and begs the Corinthians to sacrifice only one of the prisoners:

Die Ahnen hätten der Göttin Menschen zum Opfer gebracht, das habe der sehr wohl gefallen, und warum solle man nun nicht zu den alten Bräuchen zurückkehren [...] ich

sagte leise: Nehmt nur einen. Nur einen, brüllte er, warum denn das. Ich sagte, ihre Vorfahren hätten auch nur einen ausgewählten Menschen der Göttin zum Opfer gebracht, alles andere sei Frevel, Mord im Tempel aber werde schwer bestraft (M.S, p186).

In this passage, Wolf describes humankind's primitive instinct to kill, as it has persisted from pre-historic times to the present day. Even Corinth, that prides itself on being civilised, acts in an uncivilised manner, showing itself to be no better than Colchis, a country Corinth regards as barbaric. Medea feels that she will always bear the guilt of that sacrifice made on the day of the Artemis festival: *'Das Blut, Menschenblut, lief in die Opferrinne. Den habe ich auf dem Gewissen. Etwas nie wieder Gutzumachendes war geschehen, und ich hatte meine Hände im Spiel. Die anderen hatte ich gerettet, das galt mir nichts'* (ibid). She realises that she has fled to a country that sets the same cruel example as Colchis, that both countries are equally savage. She is left with no choice: *'Warum bin ich aus Kolchis geflohen. Es war mir unerträglich erschienen, vor die Wahl zwischen zwei Übeln gestellt zu sein. Ich Törin. Jetzt hatte ich nur noch zwischen zwei Verbrechen wählen können'* (ibid).

Finally, it is important to foreground women's position in both Colchis and Corinth. Medea, a Colchian, is described as being 'wild' in her behaviour, because she follows her own head and does not rely on the protection of a man: *'Ich bin keine junge Frau mehr, aber wild noch immer, das sagen die Korinther, für die ist eine Frau wild, wenn sie auf ihrem Kopf besteht. Die Frauen der Korinther kommen mir vor wie sorgfältig gezähmte Haustiere [...]* (M.S, p18). There is a substantial inherent difference between the females of Colchis and those of Corinth: women in Corinth speak ventriloquially only through their husbands. The men in Corinth never show emotion such as crying: *'[...] Immer muß die Frau dafür zahlen, wenn sie in Korinth einen Mann schwach sieht'* (M.S, p27). In contrast, male culture in Colchis allows men to show emotion readily:

[...] ob denn die Männer in Kolchis anders gewesen seien als die in Korinth [...] hatten die Männer in Kolchis ihren Gefühlen freien Lauf gelassen [...] ihr [Lyssas] Vater zum Beispiel habe öffentlich und bitterlich geweint, als ihr Bruder verunglückt war, geheult und geschrien habe er, während man doch in Korinth bei einer Beerdigung keinen Mann weinen sehe. Das mußten die Frauen für die Männer mit erledigen (M.S, p29).

Medea tells Leukon that he is afraid of experiencing *Schmerz* and that is the first time he has ever thought about emotion. Only after Arethusa's death does he experience intense sorrow. The female Colchians are regarded by Corinth as daring and daunting: *'Herausfordernd [...]* Die

meisten Kolcherinnen gehen so [...] Aber man kann doch die Frauen der Korinther auch verstehen, wenn sie sich beschwerten: Wieso sollten Fremde, Flüchtlinge, in ihrer eigenen Stadt selbstbewußter gehen dürfen als sie selbst [...] (M.S, p45). The singers in Corinth sing about only male heroes like Jason; even though he has become a legend, they would certainly not recognise him in person: 'Sie sitzen abends an den Lagerfeuern und singen von Jason dem Drachentöter, manchmal komme ich vorbei, es schert sie nicht, ich glaube, sie wissen nicht einmal, daß ich es bin, den sie besingen' (M.S, p52).

Some of the Corinthian females do want to learn the art of giving birth naturally from the women of Colchis, but, in the palace, only conventional methods are used:

Es nimmt mich nicht wunder, daß manche unserer Frauen, auch die hochgestellten, sich von den Kolcherinnen ihre Art zu gebären beibringen ließen, aber in den Palast lassen unsere hochgelehrten Ärzte der Kolcherinnen Heilkunst nicht eindringen. Und sie haben recht damit, die Heilweisen der Kolcherinnen passen nicht zu uns (M.S, p110).

Akamas regards females from Colchis as arrogant: 'auch die anderen Kolcherinnen geben mir zu denken, sie machen hier die niederen Arbeiten und tragen den Kopf hoch wie die Frauen unserer höchsten Beamten [...]' (M.S, p155).

'Einmal hörte Medea mit mir den Liedern zu. Am Ende sagte sie: Sie haben aus jedem von uns den gemacht, den sie brauchen. Aus dir den Heroen, und aus mir die böse Frau. So haben sie uns auseinandergetrieben' (M.S, p52). Wolf unveils the real reason for the split between Medea and Jason: she would perpetually be engraved in the memories of future generations as the evil sorceress who betrayed Aietes, who killed Absyrtos, who murdered Glauke brutally, and who slew her own children in cold blood. Jason, on the other hand, is depicted as the victim of Medea's rage and thirst for revenge. Through all eternity, Medea will be seen as a raging fury. This passage links with the prologue of the novel and is the last observation of the section: Medea as witch.

Achronie ist nicht das gleichgültige Nebeneinander, sondern eher ein Ineinander der Epochen nach dem Modell eines Stativs, eine Flucht sich verjüngender Strukturen. Man kann sie auseinanderziehen wie eine Ziehharmonika, dann ist es sehr weit von einem Ende zum anderen, man kann sie aber auch ineinander stülpen wie die russischen Puppen, dann sind die Wände der Zeiten einander ganz nah. Die Leute aus den anderen Jahrhunderten hören unser Grammophon plärren, und wir sehen durch die Zeitwände hindurch, wie sie die Hände heben zum lecker bereiteten Mahle (Elisabeth Lenk).

This motto from Elisabeth Lenk which serves as the epigraph to Wolf's *Medea* interlocks thematically with Wolf's standpoint about history and time. Lenk's idea of *Achronie* encapsulates the following metaphors: *Achronie* is not the random and ignorant follow-up of epochs but can be dismantled like a *Ziehharmonika* or can fit one inside the other like Russian dolls. She suggests that, through these metaphors, the epochs of antiquity and modernity share much closer parallels.

'*Kindsmörderin? Zum erstenmal dieser Zweifel*' (M.S, p9). In the prologue to *Medea*, Wolf as modern witness invokes doubt about the validity of the Medea myth: Perhaps she is not the child murderess she was thought, and depicted, to be? This doubt focuses the lens closer to Medea and Wolf's efforts to absolve her from evil: '*Ein spöttisches Achselzucken, ein Wegwenden, sie braucht unseren Zweifel nicht mehr, nicht unser Bemühen, ihr gerecht zu werden*' (ibd). Exploring Lenk's metaphor, Wolf suggests that Medea will continue to meet people from the modern epoch because they are all on the same path to which they condemned her originally: '*Wir haben sie auf den Weg geschickt, aus der Tiefe der Zeit kommt sie uns entgegen*' (ibd). On confronting Medea, one meets oneself, somewhere between the prehistoric and modern epochs. This is inevitable, even if the modern person cannot identify with prehistoric times: '*[...] wir lassen uns zurückfallen, vorbei an den Zeitaltern, die, so scheint es, nicht so deutlich zu uns sprechen wie das ihre. Irgendwann müssen wir uns begegnen*' (ibd). Wolf creates a very potent metaphor for modern humankind's voyeurism of ancient times:

Wir besitzen den Schlüssel, der alle Epochen aufschließt, manchmal benutzen wir ihn schamlos, werfen einen eiligen Blick durch den Türspalt, erpicht auf schnellfertige Urteile, doch sollte es auch möglich sein, uns schrittweise zu nähern, mit Scheu vor dem Tabu, gewillt, den Toten ihr Geheimnis nicht ohne Not zu entreißen. Das Eingeständnis unserer Not, damit müssen wir anfangen (ibd).

The striking resemblance between reflecting about Medea and the quest for Christa T. is prevalent in the prologue to *Medea*. Neither Christa T. nor Medea needs the *wir*, or the living. It is the *wir* who are in need of characters like Medea and Christa T. Boundaries between the known and what is considered to be taboo must be crossed circumspectly. New questions will have to be asked instead of the perennial questions that bind a figure like Medea to the stake, that forces her to retreat once again in the shadow world: '*Die Jahrtausende schmelzen unter starkem Druck. Soll also der Druck bleiben. Müßige Frage. Falsche Fragen verunsichern die Gestalt, die sich aus dem Dunkel der Verkennung lösen will. Wir müssen sie warnen. Unsere Verkennung bildet ein geschlossenes System, nichts kann sie widerlegen*' (M.S, p10). Wolf continues her theme of

Selbsterkenntnis, Zu-sich-selber-Kommen, that is so difficult for humankind to do: 'Oder müssen wir uns in das Innerste unserer Verkennung und Selbsterkennung hineinwagen, einfach gehen, miteinander, das Geräusch der einstürzenden Wände im Ohr' (ibid). The search for Medea becomes the search for oneself, Wolf describes the search in terms of walls of ignorance collapsing. Lastly, she concludes the prologue with the image of Medea and sorrow, her wildness and the epochs coming together agonisingly: 'Neben uns, so hoffen wir, die Gestalt mit dem magischen Namen, in der die Zeiten sich treffen, schmerzhafter Vorgang. In der unsere Zeit uns trifft. Die wilde Frau' (ibid).

Some of the terminology Lenk uses needs brief comment, In the Medea that is liberated from patriarchal baggage: 'trifft uns unsere Zeit'. The fact that she is now depicted from a new female perspective exposes the brutality of modern brutality. Consequently, modern readers are compelled to confront the deformation of their own times. In *Medea*, Corinth symbolises this deformation. 'Die wilde Frau' should not be construed negatively but rather as a natural embodiment of women that reveals the as-yet unalienated person. This wildness also pertains to the Furies, but again in the positive sense characterised by the ancient Greek *Erinyes*, who were guardian spirits of the ancient *Mutterrecht*. Only later did the word 'Fury' acquire the negative meaning of the 'raging or raving woman'. This raging or raving image of woman is precisely how Western literature came to construe the Medea figure: 'Maßlos ist sie am Ende gewesen, so, wie die Korinther sie brauchten, eine Furie' (M.S, p208). In Wolf's novel, it is the woman who is the one who thinks and acts in a radical-critical manner, and who is uncompromising in her task of uprooting evil. However, in so doing, she faces the possibility of destroying herself. It is through the wild woman that the modern reader is compelled to alter their inauthentic image; this confrontation with the self is a very important function of Wolfian female writing.

Medea was persecuted and ultimately destroyed for 2000 years because she compels the modern reader (and the patriarchal world) to confront themselves. The modern world (and the patriarchy) remains unwilling to accept the challenge of this confrontation as seen by Glauke's reaction: '[...] hat sie gesagt und gelacht, auf die Weise, die nur sie an sich hat und die, da hat Turon ganz recht, ziemlich dreist ist, so kann sie in ihren wilden Bergen lachen, sagt er, bitteschön, aber wieso sollen wir uns dieses anmaßende Lachen gefallen lassen [...]' (M.S, p129). Glauke continues:

[...] sondern ich frage mich, ob sie eigentlich weiß, daß sich die Leute, wenn sie einen Raum betritt, sofort anders benehmen als vorher, daß auch mein Vater, der König, sich in ihrer Gegenwart niemals einen solch zügellosen, ja: zügellosen Zornesausbruch gestattet

hätte, selbst er hält, wenn sie dabei ist, seine wahren Gefühle zurück, weil sie ihm plötzlich peinlich sind, ich habe das schnell bemerkt' (M.S, pp130-131).

Leukon says: *'[...] in jenen Minuten erst habe ich mein Korinth kennengelernt. Und ich begriff, daß es Medea zugefallen ist, die verschüttete Wahrheit aufzudecken, die unser Zusammenleben bestimmt, und daß wir das nicht ertragen werden (M.S, p161).*

(3) JETZT HÖREN WIR STIMMEN: MEDEA AND FEMINISMS

*... daß das, was wir durch die männliche Überlieferung erfahren haben,
nicht zwingend 'die Wahrheit' sein muß. Denn wir sehen nur,
was wir wissen und wissen wollen, und meist tief im Unterbewußten,
was wir gebrauchen können, was uns nützt.*

Christa Wolf

From the hermeneutic discussion, Wolf's deconstructive literary strategies can be seen clearly in the plot and, even more so, in the prologue. Medea is redeemed from her crimes, but at a price. She has nowhere to go: *'Wohin mit mir. Ist eine Welt zu denken, eine Zeit, in die ich passen würde. Niemand da, den ich fragen könnte. Das ist die Antwort' (M.S, p218).*

Because of the novel's deconstructive qualities, it is understandable, therefore, that many Feminist critics would regard *Medea. Stimmen* as a deliberate feminist reconstruction on Wolf's part of the negative Medea image. Wolf portrays Medea as a woman whose name means *die gut Rat Rat Wissende*, emphasising Medea's healing properties rather than her sorcery. In deconstructing Medea's witch image, Wolf re-presents her in her original matriarchal image as prehistoric goddess, priestess, and healer. However, Wolf's main purpose in the novel is not to re-write the Medea myth to serve exclusive feminist needs. For example, not all the male characters are depicted as brute misogynists (Oistros, Leukon, *Der Alte*) and not all the female characters are seen as innocent victims. Agameda, for example, is an opportunist, who wants to destroy Medea. In Medea herself, Wolf creates a character who is sometimes paradoxical and *brüchig*.

French Feminist critics, Cixous and Irigaray in particular, would disagree with Wolf's version of the Medea myth. Irigaray has compiled a theory called *Womanspeak/Le parler femme*. According to this theory, *Le parler femme* emerges freely and spontaneously when 'women speak together', (Moi: 1985, p144) but disappears as soon as the woman-only group is invaded by a male

presence. Irigaray thus regards the women-only groups as an indispensable phenomenon in the liberation of women. Moi is critical of this idea of female superiority:

The paradox of her [Irigaray's] position is that while she strongly defends the idea of 'woman' as multiple, decentred and undefinable, her unsophisticated approach to patriarchal power forces her to analyse 'woman' (in the singular) throughout as if 'she' were indeed a simple, unchanging unity, always confronting the same kind of monolithic patriarchal oppression' (Moi: 1985, p147).

The idea of woman as an unchanging individual is not congruent with the Medea that Wolf presents. As noted earlier, Medea represents a woman with a sometimes contradictory and paradoxical nature that modern women can identify with:

"Medea ist eine göttliche, unsterbliche und mächtige Gestalt und mit der ursprünglichen Großen Mutter verbunden. Als Herrin des Lebens und Todes stellt sie 'die Wahrheit des weiblichen Urwesens, das im Tier- und Menschenreich das gleiche ist, das Tieren und Menschen unbedenklich das Leben schenkt und es zur Strafe ebenso unbedenklich zurücknimmt' dar" (Calabrese: 1997, p75).

Irmela von der Lühe, however, does not regard *Medea* as Wolf's clean break with the male aesthetic. She sees Wolf carrying forth the Schillerian aesthetic in her novel's composition:

Wenn ich also über 'Medea' im Lichte der Schillerschen Ästhetik zu sprechen versuchte, so ist es weniger die Nähe von Motiven oder der Gleichklang von Gedanken, es ist vorzugsweise ein Traditionszusammenhang gemeint, durch den das Moderne [Wolf] und Neue als produktive Auseinandersetzung mit dem Alten [Schiller] erscheint [...] (Von der Lühe: 2000, p2).

Apart from the Schillerian influence that Von der Lühe ascribes to *Medea*, she speculates on Wolf's use of pre-Homeric sources older than the Euripides's *Medea* drama: '[...] kann sich Christa Wolf auf ältere, vorhomerische Überlieferungen berufen' (Von der Lühe, p5). Her main standpoint, however, remains that Wolf's *Medea* shows signs of the use of *Aufklärung* principles and the *Humanitätsideal*: 'Christa Wolfs 'Medea', die sich erklärterweise aus verschütteten, durch den Prozeß der Zivilisation zerstörten matriarchalen Werten und Visionen herschreibt, erscheint als Allegorie aufgeklärter Humanität, als Reinkarnation des Ideals menschlicher Ganzheit' (ibid). Von der Lühe describes *Medea* as the embodiment of harmony: "Sie verkörpert und plädiert explizit für eine Harmonie der Seelen- und Verstandeskräfte, die der Klassik zum bevorzugten

Gegenstand der Kunst, dem Programm der 'ästhetischen Erziehung' zum höchsten Ziel geworden war" (ibid). Von der Lühe's theory that the Wolfian Medea represents harmony and humane ideals are not what the novel primarily intends. Medea is far from the *Blaue Blume* image of women in the *Romantik* literature (mentioned in Chapter 2). The article is somewhat contradictory because, later, Von der Lühe writes of Medea's many facets and personality dimensions: *eine reine Seele* in the Schillerian tradition does not usually convey contradiction in the way that Wolf presents Medea:

Medea fasziniert und irritiert, sie löst Neugier, aber auch Neid, das heißt, sie löst Gefühlsambivalenzen in den Menschen ihrer Umgebung aus [...] Sie wirkt als Katalysatorin, sie decouvriert systembedingte, aber personengestützte Verblendungszusammenhänge. Durch sie wird Akamas mit Seiten an sich, mit Erlebnissen konfrontiert, die zu verdrängen und in sich zu verstecken Bedingung seines Erfolgs und Voraussetzung seines Nachruhms ist (Von der Lühe: p8).

The Canadian novelist and poet, Margaret Atwood, offers a discussion of *Medea* that reflects a more balanced viewpoint than Von der Lühe's: '*Medea is neither an anthropological retelling of myth in the style of Mary Renault, nor a simple-minded story of men-versus-women, of a sensuous moon-and-earth religion versus a cold and abstract sky theology*' (Atwood: 1998, p5). Being a feminist-oriented author herself, Atwood does not attempt to change the message of Wolf's novel to suit the sometimes one-sided feminist ideologies that some feminist critics pursue. Atwood has a fine idea what the themes of the novel are and how they could possibly affect the modern reader:

Medea is no two-sided allegory. Like a tunnel full of mirrors, it both reflects and echoes. The question it asks the reader, through many voices and in many different ways, is: what would you be willing to believe, to accept, to conceal, to do, to save your own skin, or to simply stay close to power? Who would you be willing to sacrifice? (Atwood, p7).

Horvãth calls Christa Wolf's *Medea* the *Medea altera* and quotes Euripides to show the discrepancies between the two versions: '*auch erschuf Natur/Uns Frauen in den edlen Künsten ungeschickt,/In allem Bösen aber höchst erfinderisch*' (V.409ff, as quoted by Horvãth/Wolf, p2). He goes on to delineate the negative characteristics women have had to combat for centuries: '*Die Medea wurde so dargestellt, dass sie der damaligen Vorstellung von einer Frau entsprach: zu höchst emotional, weniger rational denn intuitiv, leidenschaftlich und Leiden schaffend, eifersüchtig, egozentrisch, intrigant, ihren Kopf haben wollend, keinen Kompromiß annehmend, uneinsichtig, rachgierig, skrupellos; Medea stand für alle Frauen*' (ibid). Horvãth explains Wolf's

re-writing of the Medea myth in a very precise way, one that is close to Wolf's intention with the novel:

Christa Wolf will das tradierte Bild, das sie von den herrschenden Männern zu unrecht überliefert glaubt, wie gesagt revidieren, neukonstruieren (wobei sie mehr Gewicht auf den historischen und psychologischen, als auf den mythischen Aspekt legt) und ihm einen aktuellen Bezug geben, wobei aber auch zeitlose und immer gültige Erkenntnisse vermittelt werden (ibid).

Horvâth's idea of the Wolfian Medea revision links with the prologue of the novel; the changing of old perceptions of humankind: *'Sie revidiert, historisiert, psychologisiert und demontiert unser überkommenes Medea-Bild'* (Horvâth, p3).

Part of Horvâth's argument echoes Von der Lühe's connection between *Medea* and the *Humanitätsideal*, but the discrepancy between the two critics is that Horvâth does mention Medea's foibles: *'Sie wird als aufgeklärt, modern denkend, rational, hellichtig, den Menschen Philantrop in den Mittelpunkt stellend, ihre Schwäche (Stolz und Hochmut) kennend dargestellt'* (Horvâth, p6). However, Medea does not necessarily reflect the above qualities: she is not *'modern denkend'* per se. Many passages in the novel describe Medea as healing in a traditional way that contradicts the medicinal treatment of the astronomers at the palace. Medea is also the embodiment of the prehistoric matrilinear tradition of Colchis: she finds it foreign to be under the protection of a man, she speaks for herself, unlike the 'modern' and 'civilised' women of Corinth. In many ways, Medea is not a rational individual - Jason talks about a woman who openly expresses her joy and anger in public - who wanders off into the corridors of Creon's palace, and who is generally indifferent to etiquette and rules.

Horvâth's idea of the *Medea-Sündenbock* reflects Wolf's intention of showing that people have not changed in 2500 years, and that both Medea and herself have been made culprits in their individual changing times: *'Hier wird paradigmatisch und exemplarisch die [...] Verhaltensweise des Menschen beschrieben, der, die Wahrheit nicht wissen wollend, zuerst sich selbst zu betrügen[...] versucht, dann aber einen Sündenbock suchen muß'* (Horvâth, p9).

Antz goes a step further by writing specifically about Wolf's female characters. *Medea* links specifically with Cixousian and Irigarayan French feminist theories that assert not only that women speak with their bodies but also the concept of *jouissance*: *'Frauen sind bei Christa Wolf nicht Opfer Männlicher Lust oder Treulosigkeit, sondern aktive Subjekte ihres eigenen Begehrens'* (Antz: 1996, as quoted by Horvâth, p5).

Wolf's rewriting of the Medea myth implies important reflections for modern society as well as herself: '[...] retuschiert [Wolf] feministische Topoi und problematisiert ihre intellektuelle Situation wie auch die öffentliche Diskussion über ihre Person im wiedervereinigten Deutschland: Nicht nur sie als Künstlerin stellt den Mythos um Medea dar, auch der Mythos und das Schicksal Medeas wirft Licht auf die Autorin selbst [...]' (ibid). Lastly, Horváth writes about Wolf's female vision of Medea that ultimately reinforces her concept of *Weibliches Schreiben*:

Christa Wolf will mit ihrer Revision den Mythos aus weiblicher Sicht sehen, ohne die mit der Zeit hinzugefügten Verfälschungen der männlichen Geschichtsschreibung [...] Doch der wichtigste Grund, warum sie immer wieder ihre Stoffe aus dem antiken Mythos nimmt, ist, um diese und seine Figuren zu entmythologisieren und ihn im Gegensatz zu historisieren (ibid).

Georgina Paul emphasises the feminist challenge of changing the Medea myth. The feminist rewriting includes a considerable number of German female authors: '*Neuerdings kommen Autorinnen hinzu, zweifellos angezogen von der Herausforderung, die diese Figur an die feministische Erörterung einer weiblichen Subjektposition in der Geschichte des Abendlandes stellt [...]*' (Paul: 1997, p227). Paul regards Wolf as drawing on elements of the *Aufklärung* as well as resources from modern literature to create her Medea. These two eras are utilised in the context of woman's writing:

Insofern steht Wolf in einer die abendländische Moderne geradezu charakterisierenden Traditionen der Desillusionierung und Enttäuschung angesichts des Aufklärungsprojektes. Die Rettung sucht sie, auch hierin durchaus ein Kind der Moderne, beim Weiblichen: deshalb der Gang zurück zu dem als historische Nahtstelle wahrgenommen Augenblick, da der Ausschluß der Frau aus dem Kreis der kulturell Tätigen und Handelnden und ihre Verwandlung ins Objekt vollzogen worden sei, wovon das Verschwinden Kassandras und Medeas aus der Geschichte nach Wolfs Umdeutung Zeugnis ablegt (Paul: 1997, p230-231).

Ulrich Klingmann explains Medea's attitude towards the world and society in the framework of the emancipatory *Aufklärung*. Although his standpoint is not entirely without merit, Medea's character goes well beyond the constraints of the *Aufklärung*: '*Bei Christa Wolf ist die Einstellung Medeas zu Welt und Gesellschaft dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie in aufklärerisch-emanzipatorischem Sinne die Strukturen und die Gründe für alle Geschehnisse zu erkennen und verstehen sucht*' (Klingmann: 1997, p124).

Inge Stephan writes about the images of Medea that still prevail in modern times: she will always be regarded as the antithesis of the civilised world, despite Wolf's efforts to de-mythologise these negative images: *'Trotzdem bleibt sie auch in ihrer Sicht eine 'Fremde in entfremdeten Umständen', eine 'Wilde, Unangepaßte', ein 'Pfahl im Fleisch der Gezähmten'* (Stephan: 1997, p1). These images may account for some of the negative criticism Wolf received for the novel: *'[...] ist Christa Wolfs Neuentwurf der Figur auf harsche Kritik gestoßen'* (Stephan: 1997, p2), as well as in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of 7.2.1995, and the *Tagesspiegel* of 7.2.1995, for example. The date – 1995 – is indeed correct, although at that time, the novel had not yet been published. However, Wolf had already given a lecture in the framework of the *Antiken-Zyklus*: *'Im März 1995 hat Christa Wolf im Rahmen des 'Antiken-Zyklus' eine erste öffentliche, vielbeachtete Lesung aus ihrem zu der Zeit noch unveröffentlichten Roman 'Medea oder die Verkennung' in Berlin im Hebbel-Theater veranstaltet'* (Stephan, p1). The main criticism of the book clearly shows the inability of male-dominated modern society to think about Medea in anything but ancient terms: *'Ist eine Medea ohne Mord überhaupt denkbar?'* (ibid).

Wolf has a reply to these critical statements that is true of both prehistoric society and modern civilisation; in other passages, she calls this 'blindness' the *blinder Fleck*: *'Denn wir sehen nur, was wir wissen und wissen wollen, und, meist tief im Unbewußten, was wir gebrauchen können, was uns nützt'* (Wolf: 1997, p12). Medea, like Cassandra, becomes a source of deep reflection for the author. After thorough research of pre-Euripidean resources, she simply does not accept the *Kindsmörderin* image of Medea: *'Das konnte ich nicht glauben. Eine Heilerin, Zauberkundige, die aus sehr alten Schichten des Mythos hervorgegangen sein mußte, aus Zeiten, da Kinder das höchste Gut eines Stammes waren und Mütter, eben wegen ihrer Fähigkeit, den Stamm fortzupflanzen, hoch geachtet – die sollte ihre Kinder umbringen?'* (Wolf: 1997, p15). Chiarloni is another critic who prefers to focus on Medea's original image as healer and bearer of good advice when she writes: *'Keine Kindsmörderin also, sondern eine starke und großmütige Frau, Erbin lang tradierten Wissens von Körper und Erde'* (Chiarloni: 1997, p112).

Wolf attributes the false dimensions ascribed to Medea to male fear of the female principle: *'Diese durch männliche Bedürfnisse und Werte immer stärker definierte Kultur, die übrigens eine Angst vor dem Weiblichen, vor der Frau entwickelte, brauchte das Bild der wilden, bösen, von ungezähmten Trieben beherrschten Frau [...]'* (Wolf: 1997, p 16). She goes on to name a few other categories in which Medea is imprisoned as a result of male fear: *'Die Frau muß verleumdet, demütigt, demontiert, gejagt, vernichtet werden [...]'* (ibid). Apart from male angst, the most notable reasons for deprecating the Medea-character are: *'[...] Unkenntnis, [...] Abwehr, Schuldgefühle, Entlastungsbedürfnis'* (Wolf: 1992, p22).

Heide Göttner-Abendroth's reply to a letter Christa Wolf wrote to her affirms Wolf's idea that Medea did not commit the heinous crimes classical writers attributed to her. Göttner-Abendroth agrees that Medea 'wird bewußt und durchsichtig zur 'schrecklichen Mutter/Schwester', zur Dämonin und 'Hexe' gemacht' (Göttner-Abendroth: 1992, p30). According to Göttner-Abendroth, Idya, Medea's mother, is far more important to Medea than Aietes, thus reinforcing Wolf's idea of the Colchian matriarchal principles and Hecate/goddess religion: '[...] ist Medeas Mutter daher für sie viel wichtiger als der Vater [...], denn die Mutter heißt die 'Wissende', weil sie eine Priesterin der Hekate ist [...] Hekate verweist dabei auf den chthonischen Charakter des Kultes, auf Tod und Wiedergeburt und die Kraft [...]' (Göttner-Abendroth: 1992, p31). Göttner-Abendroth demonstrates the two different cultural dimensions and languages of Medea and Jason that separated them inevitably:

Zwei Kulturen, zwei Sprachen: Medea versteht ihn [Jason] in den Symbolen ihrer eigenen Kultur [...] Das hatte er – in der Sprache ihrer Kultur – ja begehrt! Aber Jason ist unfähig, diese Sprache von Magie und Heiliger Hochzeit wahrzunehmen, denn er hat 'sachfremde' Motive – diese kreisen alle um Macht und rationalen Erwerb derselben (Göttner-Abendroth: 1992, p32).

Wolf's *Tagebuchnotizen* (Los Angeles; 28.10.1992) of Medea during her 'exile' months in America show not only her preoccupation with the character behind the many false masks of the mythical female, but also draw attention to a possible autobiographical link between Wolf herself and Medea: both caught in a similar situation between two worlds (in Wolf's case, East and West): 'Medea, übrigens, wird wohl daran zugrunde gehen müssen, daß sie auf keiner Seite mehr ganz stehen konnte. Daß sie zwischen die Fronten geriet. Daß sie auch oft selber nicht mehr sicher war. Was sie am häufigsten denkt, manchmal sagt: Ich weiß nicht' (Wolf: 28 October 1992, p38). The *Zeuginthematik* of *Kassandra* is continued in Wolf's notes on the *Medea* manuscript. Again autobiographical references in these notes link Wolf and Medea: '[...] ehe ich sie kannte, Medea, sie kommt, ich erlebe noch einmal das Wunder einer Erscheinung, unerhofft, unverdient [...] sie benutzen zu können, als Zeugin, Entlastungszeugin [...]' (Wolf: 1993, p40). Wolf continues her own *Zeugnis* and asks herself whether the Medea character would be patient with her as author because she (Medea) has been brutalised by so many writers over the centuries. It becomes clear that Wolf develops a very close relationship with her protagonist. Medea almost haunts her, speaks to her, becomes a female friend, a fellow *Zeugin* who has to report the true story of Medea:

Ich sehe, es handelt sich um keine zugängliche Person, ich ahnte, daß sie Zeugnis von mir abverlangte, [...] ob sie auf mich wartet, Medea, ob sie Geduld mit mir haben wird oder sich einfach wieder auflöst, ins Nichts zurückgeht und die Stücke der verschiedenen Dichter, die sie, angefangen beim großen Euripides, der die Erfindung verantwortet, als Kindsmörderin teils verurteilen, teils bewundern, teils zu verstehen suchen (Wolf: 1993, p41).

Wolf touches on another theme: *Schmerz*. Again, it is possible to conclude from the following note that she identifies with Medea's sorrow to the extent that her sorrow becomes Wolf's own. Wolf wants to break free from the *Sündenbockbild* of herself in 1990 and 1993 in much the same way that Medea wants to untie herself from the age-old stake. It is important to note how Wolf's style in her notes compares with the later manuscript and even her diaries; the notes are fragmented, written in almost a stream of consciousness, thus allowing Wolf the freedom of poetic license. The notes remind one of a process of osmosis between Wolf and Medea:

Nichts kann schwerer für sie gewesen sein, denke ich, als sich von diesem Bild zu befreien, das sich, DAS IST DER GRÖSSTE SCHMERZ in sie einzufressen begann DANN BIN ICH VERLOREN und wie muß ihr zumute gewesen sein, als ihr aus Jasons Augen zuerst Entfremdung dann Mißtrauen dann Grauen entgegensprang' (Wolf: 1993, p42).

These fragments show Wolf's growing understanding of the increasing alienation not only between Medea and Jason but also between Medea and the world around her. Wolf's observations show signs of estrangement and detachment from the world she once knew.

However, although Wolf sees Medea as an alienated individual, she also finds evidence - from different epochs and Medea's *Wertesysteme* - of her being a strong, independent woman like the author herself, with the ability to survive difficult times: *'und immer findet man in der 'untersten', frühesten Schicht eine starke, selbständige Frau'* (Wolf: 1993, p47). Another similarity that Wolf and Medea share is their non-acceptance of *Opfer*. Wolf knows, however, that there will never be a place without victims and sacrifices of some sort. Wolf's hatred of sacrifice is clearly articulated in *Was bleibt* whereas Medea's break with *Opfer* comes only after the death of Absyrtos: *'[...] daß Medea, wie ich sie damals sah, überhaupt keine Art von Opfer mehr ertragen kann und daher zwischen allen Parteien steht, ein Denken und Empfinden in sich heranwachsen fühlt, für das es keinen Ort gibt, damals und heute nicht'* (ibid).

Wolf's interview with Petra Kammann contains the idea of *Weibliches Schreiben*. Although Wolf is not strictly feminist-oriented, women characters do form the basis for her work: *'Immer dann werden Sie bei mir eine Frau im Zentrum eines Prosatextes finden, wenn die Konflikte, die sich bearbeitet, sich an Frauen am schärfsten zeigen'* (Kammann: 1996, p49). However, Wolf does not believe in projecting 'good' or 'bad' characters as literary categories in her works. Not all male characters are portrayed negatively as some Feminist-oriented writers tend to do: *'Und 'gut' und 'schlechte', 'positiv' und 'negativ' sind für mich keine literarischen Kategorien [...] gut finden die Herrschenden in Korinth die sich unterwerfende Frau. Medea hat andere, nicht destruktive Wertmaßstäbe, andere starke Gefühle. Sie soll 'umgebaut' werden, sonst ist sie nicht brauchbar. Ein aktuelles Ansinnen...'* (Kammann: 1996, p50). Wolf creates the character Oistros, a man sensitive to female culture because he originates from Crete, whose Minoan culture is predominantly matrilinear: *'Aber mir ist es doch nicht darum gegangen, Frauen 'sympathisch' und Männer 'unsympathisch' darzustellen [...] Oistros übrigens kommt nicht zufällig aus Kreta, wo die minoische Kunst bewegende Zeugnisse der frühen matriarchalen Kultur bewahrt hat'* (ibid). Although Wolf writes about the matriarchal utopia in *Kassandra* and *Medea*, she uses the female world only as a symbol of peace and harmony in times when women were social outcasts. Wolf herself does not want the return of a matriarchy in modern civilisation:

Um Gottes Willen – nein. Wahrscheinlich hat es ein vollkommen ausgebildetes Matriarchat als 'Frauenherrschaft' nie gegeben, und ein zurück in so frühe undifferenziertere Verhältnisse gibt es sowieso nicht. Es muß also immer selbstverständlicher werden, daß der männliche und der weibliche Blick gemeinsam erst ein vollständiges Bild der Welt vermitteln, und daß Männer und Frauen sie auf ihre je eigene Weise gleichgestellt gestalten (Kammann/Wolf: 1996, p52).

Wolf admits that she does not create ideal images in her work but rather assembles collages of female and male images. Thus Wolf's work reflects a female-oriented image but not a feminist ideology that excludes men: *'Ich werde mich hüten, Idealbilder von irgendetwas zu entwerfen [...] Ich brauche ein Ensemble, aus Männern und aus Frauen bestehend'* (ibid). The Medea that Wolf creates is no more a role model than Christa T. According to Wolf, Medea is not meant to be an ideal image for women: *'Vielleicht verkörpert sie eine von vielen Möglichkeiten. Wenn ich an die Frauen denke, die ich kenne, wäre sie bestimmt nicht für jede ein Ideal'* (Kammann/Wolf: 1996, p55). The possibility of Wolf incorporating autobiography into the novel becomes more certain; she does identify with Medea and her rootlessness: *'Ich habe nachempfinden können, wie man sich fühlen muß, wenn man wurzellos ist'* (ibid).

Wolf proposes a Medea who is a free individual – free even from the gods and goddesses she once believed in, although not necessarily free from hate. Wolf's Medea is thus an ideal image of the freedom of the individual in the tradition of the *Aufklärung*: *'Sie ist frei vom Glauben an die Götter. Das ist die Aussage: Ich bin ganz frei, ihr könnt mich abtasten mit euren Organen. Ihr werdet keine Hoffnung, keinen Glauben an mir finden. Von Zorn und Haß ist sie nicht frei!'* (Wolf: 23 Feb.1997, p59). Wolf creates an image within the modern literary tradition: a non-heroic character with whom the modern reader can more readily identify. Medea emblematises the fear men have had of women for centuries. According to Wolf, this male fear still persists to the present day: *'warum diese Angst, und wohin führt diese Angst? Sie führte in alte Zeiten und sie führt auch heute noch zuweilen zur Vernichtung der Frauen, einer Frau, die sich als 'wilde' Frau zu erkennen gibt'* (ibid). Calabrese echoes this male fear of women by quoting Euripides:

Es müßten sich die Sterblichen auf anderm Wege/die Kinder zeugen, es dürfte keine Frau geben!/Dann brauchten auch die Menschen keine Not zu leiden [Verse 573-575]. Diese Worte zeigen zweifellos die dunkle Angst vor der weiblichen Andersartigkeit, den Neid auf die Fähigkeit des weiblichen Leibes zu gebären und den Wunsch nach seiner Kontrolle - Grundlagen des Patriarchats -, die in der Gestalt der Medea die vollkommene Darstellung finden (Calabrese: 1997, p79).

Because males feared the female's ability to bring children into the world, amongst other things, the matriarchy and the female principle were suppressed by the patriarchy: *'Mit der neuen Ordnung ist die Totalität der weiblichen Macht gebrochen worden: die Mütterlichkeit wird der väterlichen Herrschaft unterzogen und von einer der olympischen Gottheiten, Hera, übernommen. Die entmachtete und verstümmelte Große Mutter nimmt dunkle und drohende Aspekte an'* (ibid).

The female essence of *Medea* (and the Earth Mother principle) is summed up by Wolf:

Das ist das, was mich immer beschäftigt: eine starke Frau, eine Frau, die diese produktive Wildheit in sich hat, was macht sie damit? Läßt sie sich zähmen, wie weit, wieviel Kompromisse geht sie ein, muß sie eingehen? Und wo ist dann der Rand der männlichen Welt, über den sie hinausgeschoben wird? (Wolf: 1997, p59).

Authentische Subjektivität remains a prevailing concept that Wolf integrates into her prose as part of her underlying philosophy. Although her roots are in the Humanist Socialist school, she finds the 'ratio' of the *Aufklärung* an outcomes result of male exclusivity. For Wolf, emotions are important in rational thought and *vice versa*:

[...] die Aufklärung hat ihre Schwäche darin gehabt, daß sie eine große Erfindung einer kleinen Gruppe von Männern war, eine Erfindung, die unglaublich wichtig war und geblieben ist. Ich gehöre zu den Letzten, die das verachten würden. Aber die Entwicklung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert hat gezeigt, daß es nur mit Ratio in dem engen Sinne nicht geht. Und daß wir versuchen müssen, fühlend zu denken und denkend zu fühlen. (Wolf: 23. Feb. 1997, p60).

Wolf does indeed associate Medea with humanitarian qualities as part of her multi-dimensional character, especially with her healing properties: *'Und ich habe mir Medea vorgestellt, zwar einerseits als die wilde Frau, aber andererseits auch als eine Frau, die schon ihrer Zeit voraus war in bezug auf Ideale von Humanität [...] Sie hat viele verschiedene Seiten, die natürlich auf verschiedene Weise abgerufen werden können'* (Wolf: 1997, p62). As before, Wolf's views about Medea's *Verbannung* reflect her own exile after 1990 and 1993. She admits that certain feelings of hatred cannot be overcome. In this regard, her disposition towards an ideal world has changed since her Socialist Realist days: she is much more realistic about raw human emotion. One could conclude that, with the concept of hatred, Wolf refers to the *Untaten* of both the Nazi and Communist epochs as well as the hate campaign against her after 1989 in the Federal Republic, symbolised in the paradigm of prehistoric violence in Medea's time. Medea's curse at the end of the novel when she is banished from the city might be proof of *Untaten* that one can only curse and despise:

Es gibt Haß, der nicht zu überwinden ist. Es gibt Untaten, denen man nur mit Haß begegnen kann und auch soll [...] Und das gehört gerade dazu, wenn eine Frau am Schluß nichts anders weiß und kann als fluchen, dann ist das vielleicht ein Zeichen dafür, daß es Dinge gibt, die so grauenhaft sind, daß man die, die sie tun, nur verfluchen kann (Wolf: 1997, p63).

Calabrese echoes Wolf's view of the 'ratio' part of the *Aufklärung* when she argues that Medea represents *Leidenschaft* rather than 'logos': *'Wie man ihr ständig vorwirft, ist Medea keine Griechin, weil ihr das Maß fehlt und sie sich der Leidenschaft, der Sinnlichkeit, der Eifersucht hingibt; weil sie ein anderes, mit dem Leib und der Natur verbundenes Wissen innehat, das mit dem Logos unvereinbar ist'* (Calabrese: 1997, p76). Although Wolf did not intend to create an ideal Medea, her *Medea* does embody a certain female tenacity and a slow awakening from the cocoon into which woman has been spun, and held captive, for centuries. This awakening of the female spirit constitutes a symbolic spring solstice for modern women: *'Für die Frauen, die mühsam damit angefangen haben, ihre eigenen Werte zu finden, versinnbildlicht Medea den*

Diskurs der Mütterlichkeit, der dunklen Verbindung des Lebens mit dem Tod' (Calabrese: 1997, p82).

Brunn regards *Medea* as a mix between principles of the *Aufklärung* and a deconstructed woman-friendly myth: *'Mich fasziniert diese schöne und interessante literarische Form der Kombination von Aufklärung mit dem Versuch, einen neuen, einen frauenfreundlicheren Mythos zu schaffen [...] daß auch eine Heldin wie Medea ihre Schwächen hat und sie ja auch erkennt'* (Brunn: 1997, p104). However, Brunn does not interpret Wolf's deconstruction of the Medea myth as necessarily radically feminist, although it is woman-oriented: *'Nun sehen ja manche gerade in dieser Umkehrung ein zu plattes feministisches Erklärungsstück. Die guten Motive lägen doch immer bei Frauen. Während die Männer als Frauen ausnutzende, machtgierige, sich bei den Frauen Entlastung suchende Figuren dargestellt würden'* (Brunn: 1997, p105). Brunn makes use of a potent metaphor to describe Wolf's specific literary form that she creates in *Medea*: *'Ich sehe in dieser literarischen Form eher ein Spiel, in dem mit bestimmten Bildern und Facetten ein neues Gebäude – vielleicht ein Kartenhaus – gebaut wird'* (Brunn: p107).

(4) CONCLUSION: A WOLF IN THE WILDERNESS

Anita Raja's insight about writing encapsulates Chapter 4 rather well and echoes the title of the research: the dark path where talent (in Wolf's case, her writing) leads: *'Schreiben heißt, den blinden Fleck jedes Suchens und jeder Fragestellung zu den dunklen Seiten der Lebenserfahrung zu erreichen'* (Raja: 1997, p124).

The message of *Medea* is interwoven with Christa Wolf's own dark path of talent. In the end, *Medea* is compelled to follow a desolate dark existence with other female Colchians in the unforgiving mountains outside Corinth. Wolf undergoes a similar dark existence in the more forgiving environment outside Germany during her so-called American exile. She too was condemned for excavating society's *dunkler Fleck* embedded in the archaeological sites of *Medea*.

Medea is Wolf's nearest literary articulation of modern Feminist issues: by deconstructing the prehistoric *Medea* figure, the author foregrounds women's issues of global relevance. Although *Medea* is neither a man-hater nor a rabid feminist, one promulgating exclusive female rights, she does represent a new prototype in Wolf's work. Never before has Wolf created such a strong-willed, wild female protagonist, not even with Christa T. or Cassandra. The reason for the discrepancy between *Medea* and the other female characters could well refer to Wolf's own human experience: there will never be a place for her in the world. After the *deutsch-deutsche*

Debatte of 1990, she too was banished into a literary wilderness. The gloomy ending of *Medea* reflects this wilderness: ' [...] keine Spur von Hoffnung, keine Spur von Furcht an mir. Nichts nichts. Die Liebe ist zerschlagen, auch der Schmerz hört auf. Ich bin frei. Wunschlos hör ich auf die Leere, die mich ganz erfüllt' (M.S, p213). This passage marks the end of every utopia, the end of every engaged *Dichtung* that always encompassed a idealistic goal. It also marks the end of characters like Anchises in *Kassandra*, who teaches people (Wolf's readers) 'wie man mit beiden Beiden auf der Erde träumt'. Even early in the novel, Medea articulates herself in an existentialist Kafkaesque way: ' [...] aber ein Teil in mir blieb totenruhig und kalt, weil etwas geschah, was geschehen musste [...] Ist es ein Trost, daß die Menschen überall herausfallen aus ihren Übereinkünften? Daß Flucht dir nicht weiterhilft? Daß das Gewissen keinen Sinn mehr ergibt, wenn du mit dem gleichen Satz, mit der gleichen Handlung verraten oder retten kannst? Es gibt keinen Grund mehr, auf den das Gewissen sich beziehen kann [...] Ich wollte mir nur klarmachen, wo ich lebe...' (M.S, p161).

Although Wolf did not intend to create a feminist rewriting of Medea, the novel does employ some feminist strategies, including the female deconstruction of the four main parts of the Medea myth. In the tradition of *Kassandra*, Wolf uses the RE-concept as one of her literary strategies of re-thinking the myth in order to untie Medea from the stake to which she has been bound since Euripides's distorted version of the myth. Wolf refuses to create a Medea who kills her own offspring. Consequently, many literary critics ask whether a Medea without murder could ever exist? A question to which Christa Wolf has her own inimitable answer: 'Mir war klar, daß sie bei mir keine Kindsmörderin sein könnte – nie hätte eine noch von patriarchalen Werten beeinflusste Frau ihre Kinder umgebracht. Dann fand ich – unterstützt durch Wissenschaftlerinnen – den Zugang zu den frühen Quellen, die meine Ahnung bestätigten. Das war ein freudiger Augenblick' (Kammann/Wolf: 1996, p51). The ending has a nihilistic tone: 'Wohin mit mir. Ist eine Welt zu denken, eine Zeit, in die ich passen würde. Niemand da, den ich fragen könnte' (M.S, p214). Finally, Medea, like Wolf, finds herself in a world devoid of others like herself: 'Es ist dahin gekommen, daß es für meine Art, auf der Welt zu sein, kein Muster mehr gibt, oder daß noch keines entstanden ist, wer weiß' (M.S, p161).

CHAPTER 5

DIE VIERTE DIMENSION DER CHRISTA WOLF

*Hätten wir das Wort, hätten wir Sprache,
wir bräuchten die Waffen nicht.*

Ingeborg Bachmann

*In dem Wahnsinn, den ich ausführlich beschreibe,
sehe ich Tod und Wiedergeburt.*

Christa Wolf

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter which binds the threads of both Christa Wolf's prose and literary views together with non-theoretical premises of Feminisms. The merits and shortcomings of feminist literary theory are looked at in relation to Wolf's own artistic articulation. It must be stressed that, in Chapter 5, only the most important merits and shortcomings can be foregrounded since the scope of the dissertation does not allow for comprehensiveness.

(1) The first half of this chapter is devoted to the various stages in Wolf's work and critical observations about some of its central themes:

- (a) *Die Dimension des Authors* foregrounds Wolf's earlier views regarding Marxist literature and its role towards the *Gesellschaft*;
- (b) The same collection of Wolf's critical works examines Wolf's evolution from Socialist Realist author and Marxist to her understanding of *Zu-sich-selber-Kommen* of individuals in society like Christa T. These works include: her understanding of the role of Marxist literature; the reader/author convention/interaction; and the Wolfian *subjektive Authentizität* (*Lesen und Schreiben*). These earlier views are compared to the later preoccupation with *Weibliches Schreiben* (*Kassandra*) as well as pre-historic mythology (*Medea*). It is also important to explore the degree to which Wolf's idea of a female *Sprache* has been molded into a much stronger female influence and understanding in her work.

(2) The second half of the chapter focuses on further important ideas of the feminist literary schools of thought, such as the French (Cixous, Moi, Irigaray), the Anglo-American (Showalter, Jacobus, Meese), and the German (Stephan, Weigel, Osinski, Bovenschen). Because the important fundamentals of feminist (non)theory(-ies) have already been dealt with in Chapter 1,

the discussion here is substantially less detailed. This section is not divided strictly into the three feminist schools and is ordered according to theme rather than school.

(3) The conclusion is devoted to the merits and shortcomings of the Feminist literary reception of Wolf's fiction and non-fiction works. The following Abbreviations are used in Chapter 5: MV (*Voraussetzungen: Medea*); D.A.1 (Band 1), D.A.2 (Band 2) (*Die Dimension des Autors*); L.S. (*Lesen und Schreiben*) and AS (*Ansprachen*).

1(A) THE WOLFIAN EVOLUTION: EARLIER LITERARY CONCEPTS

*Die Kunst ist heute wohl der einzige Ort,
zugleich beinahe das einzige Erprobungsfeld
für die Vision von ganzheitlichen menschlichen Wesen.*

Christa Wolf

Die Dimension des Autors (1990) contains a wide variety of essays written by Wolf between 1959 and 1985. Wolf touches on themes like her *Arbeit* as author, her literary obligation towards society, and the *Brüchen* of her generation (those who were young adults during and after the Second World War).

In 'Einiges über meine Arbeit als Schriftsteller' (1965), Wolf describes the longing of expressing herself through writing as well as the driving force behind the writing process: '*Diese Sehnsucht, sich zu verdoppeln, sich ausgedrückt zu sehen, an mehreren Plätzen der Welt gleichzeitig sein zu können – das ist, glaube ich, einer der mächtigsten und am wenigsten beachteten Antriebe zum Schreiben*' (Wolf: 1965, p7 D.A.1). Wolf goes on to express her beliefs pertaining to the social duties of Marxist authors like herself in relation to the *Gesellschaft*: '*Ich bin sicher, daß auch in der Prosa das Subjekt des Autors eine große Rolle spielt; aber der sozialistische Prosaschriftsteller ist, wie mir scheint, verpflichtet, sein Subjekt möglichst auszuweiten, möglichst vieles möglichst richtig zu erfassen, immer wieder neu zu versuchen, Lebensstatsachen zu verarbeiten, zu deuten*' (Wolf: 1965, p11 D.A.1). The Wolfian vision has already been pullulated in her early writings and incorporates her socialist utopian dream of a new world. In this regard, Wolf's personal vision has not changed since *Christa T.*: the theme of an anti-war/anti-technocracy existence runs through both *Kassandra* and *Medea* in which the matriarchal utopia symbolises this new world: '*Das große Thema unserer Zeit ist: Wie aus der alten eine neue Welt aufsteigt*' (Wolf: 1965, p12 D.A.1). Both *Kassandra* and *Medea* seek a new existence in a society where peace prevails without patriarchal violence and the brutality of war and sacrificial offerings. Wolf does not imply that modern society should simply return to ancient matriarchies, but symbolically poses these matriarchies as alternatives to male brutality. These matrilineal civilisations are exemplary for modern society.

Despite the role of fantasy, Wolf still emphasises the importance of reality in 'Tagebuch – Arbeitsmittel und Gedächtnis' (1964). She cites Becher's journals to show her relationship with reality in and of her work: "Wie sagt doch Becher? Es sei '...höchste Stufe schöpferischer Phantasie, die Dinge so zu sehen, wie sie sind'" (Wolf: 1964, p20, D.A.1). However, she also acknowledges the difficulty confronting contemporary literature: whether one be true to revolutionary principles or just use poetic justice: 'Das wäre der Problemkreis. Mit Stichworten, Notizen versucht man ihm [dem revolutionären Prinzip] näherzukommen. Dabei steht immer die Frage vor Augen: Wie aber soll man heute schreiben?' (Wolf: 1964, p22 D.A.1) Integral to her work in 'Gegenwart und Zukunft' (1970) is the reflection about xenophobia that was particularly prevalent in the Third Reich: 'Damals wußten wir nicht, daß der Haß gegen andere Völker sehr häufig einem eigenen tiefen Minderwertigkeitsgefühl entspringt, einer dumpfen Ahnung eigener Unfähigkeit, vernünftig und friedlich miteinander zu leben' (Wolf: 1970, p36 D.A.1) Consequently, Wolf believes that her own generation in particular should write self-critically because they witnessed the horrors of the Second World War: 'Vielleicht wird unser Beitrag zur Literatur darin bestehen müssen, daß wir den Mut finden, unseren eigenen Lebensstoff schonungslos und wahrheitsgetreu zu erzählen' (Wolf: 1970, p37 D.A.1). Part of this self-criticism lies in recognising her generation's contribution to the *Brüche* of contemporary society:

Die Brüche, die meine Generation in ihren äußeren und inneren Biographie erfahren hat, können, so glaube ich, für die Brüche und die Zerrissenheit dieses Zeitalters stehen. Dies könnte ein Schreibender auch als Glücksfall begreifen – falls er nicht als Person zu viele seiner schöpferischen Energien darauf verwenden muß, diese Zerreißprobe ohne ernste Deformation zu durchleben (Wolf: 1979, p64. 'Auskunft', D.A.1)

Because Wolf herself witnessed some of the horrors of the war, she adopts a strong Socialist Humanist stance, stressing the humane side of literature. Accordingly, literature should promote humanitarian causes in society: 'Literatur in unserer Zeit, wenn sie überhaupt einen Sinn haben soll und sich selbst ernst nimmt, muß mithelfen, den Gebrauch, den wir von den selbstgeschaffenen Geräten und Instrumenten machen, zu humanisieren' (ibid).

Thus it may be said that Wolf explores prose as a 'humanist' genre, a multi-layered medium in which a myriad of complex societal issues, including xenophobia, are dealt with:

Für mich möchte ich die Prosa als das angemessenste Genre ansehen, eine Gattung, deren Möglichkeiten noch nicht ausgeschöpft sind und die in der Lage ist, die Vielschichtigkeit und Kompliziertheit unserer Zeit in interessantesten Raffungen wiederzugeben. Eine Gattung, in der man Verhaltensweisen vorführen und zugleich über sie nachdenken kann, in der Synthese und

Analyse methodisch möglich sind. Eine Gattung, die den Autor als Person ganz fordert, ohne ihn zur Identifikation zu zwingen. Gute Prosa ist ein aufregendes Erlebnis (Wolf: 1970, p38 D.A.1).

'Biblioteka universalis' (1978) contains exactly these themes which Christa Wolf regards as *'ein aufregendes Erlebnis: 'Literatur: Wunder aus einem Widerspruch, aus entgegengesetzten Kräften und Erfindungen, flüchtigem Geist, bleiernen Lettern'* (Wolf: 1978, p61 D.A.1). The following expressions of life form the essential thematic premises of her prose: *'Schneller, immer schneller scheint die Welt sich zu teilen, mehr als ein Riß durch ein jedes Leben. Schmerz, Angst, Schuld, die Qual der Ausstoßung, Selbstopfer und Menschenopfer – wir kennen alles'* (Wolf: 1978, p63 D.A.1). She takes cognisance of the undeniable sorrow involved in the writing process. This process leads frequently to a foreign dark path of a myriad of decisions that comprises her desire to write: *'Mir scheint, daß der anstrengende, schmerzhafteste Versuch, nicht zu Vereinbares miteinander zu vereinbaren, seit langem schon, und bis heute, eine Wurzel für den Zwang zum Schreiben ist'* (Wolf: 1979, p65. 'Auskunft: D.A.1). Paradox too serves as inspiration: *'So entsteht – entstand – bei mir Bindung, als ein widersprüchlicher Prozeß; so – aus Übereinstimmung und Reibung, aus Hoffnung und Konflikt – entstanden die Bücher, die ich bisher geschrieben habe'* (ibid).

Apart from Wolf's more general humanist approach, she is more specifically intent on exploring the role of the *schreibende Frau* that she has already expressed in her earlier critical and non-fictional writings. This concept evolves and changes somewhat over the years, especially after *Kassandra*, as will be seen later in the chapter: *'Von der besonderen Art von Spannungen, welche ein Frau, die schreibt, auch bei uns erfährt, will ich nicht sprechen. Ich habe die Möglichkeit, die Widersprüche unserer Gesellschaft als Frau von Grund auf zu erleben immer als Glücksfall angesehen'* (ibid).

As a woman author herself, Wolf articulates her reasons for writing. 'Warum schreiben Sie?' (1985) embodies some of her most important thinking at the time:

Ich schreibe, herauszufinden, warum ich schreiben muß. – Tatsächlich wird Schreiben für mich immer mehr der Schlüssel zu dem Tor, hinter dem die unerschöpflichen Bereiche meines Unbewußten verwahrt sind, der Weg zu dem Depot des Verbotenen, von früh an Ausgesonderten, nicht Zugelassenen und Verdrängten; zu den Quellen des Traums, der Imagination und der Subjektivität (Wolf: 1985, p75 D.A.1).

Wolf experiences the act of writing as a sanctuary to become whole by exploring other facets of herself: *Heute ist die Kunst wohl der einzige Ort, zugleich das einzige Erprobungsfeld für die Vision von ganzheitlichen menschlichen Wesen. Insofern ist Schreiben für mich eine Art Selbstversuch.*

Ich, für mein Leben, brauche die Verbindung mit einer anderen Dimension in mir, um nicht das Gefühl von Da-Sein zu verlieren. Und darum schreibe ich (Wolf: 1985, p76 D.A.1).

One of these facets Wolf wants to explore through writing is the revival of the spiritual dimensions of the creative process. These dimensions link with an observation (quoted earlier in Chapter 4) in which she says that writing is a therapeutic process: *'Das geistige Abenteuer des Schreibens besteht für mich darin, jene Kräfte in mir wiederzufinden und womöglich zu entfesseln, die im Lauf meines Lebens unter diesen unseren historischen Umständen als unnütz – kurz, als subjektivistisch verdächtigt, mit einem Verdikt belegt, zurückgedrängt, narkotisiert, gefesselt und lahmgelegt wurden'* (Wolf: 1985, p75 D.A.1).

The therapeutic facet of writing thus improves Wolf's spiritual robustness thus enabling her to recognise problematic relationships in prose such as the difference between reality and non-reality ('Beispiele ohne Nutzenanwendung. Stockholmer Rede') (1978).

'Literatur in Verkleidung?' Ist das nicht der berühmte 'weiße Schimmel'? Ist Verkleidung, zumindest Einkleidung nicht das Wesen von Literatur, insofern sie nicht Realität erster Ordnung, sondern von dieser abgeleitet ist? Wäre dann nicht dieses Thema ein allzu weitgespannter Schirm, unter den alle Probleme sich drängen ließen, die Literaturen heutzutage interessieren, beunruhigen, betreffen? Oder sollte eine neue Realität neue Arten von Verkleidung der Literatur erfordern? (Wolf: 1978, p504 D.A.2).

Wolf regards reality as an alienated concept upon which the author should reflect:

Müßten wir nicht neu nachdenken, mit welcher Art von Schlüssel man Menschen heutzutage ihre tief verschlüsselte – 'entfremdete' – Realität aufschließen kann? Sollte Literatur der Selbstmaskerade so vieler Menschen ihrerseits zu begegnen suchen, indem sie sich immer weiter maskiert, unkenntlich macht, in Kostüme flüchtet, mit Bildern, Gleichnissen, Mythen arbeitet? (Wolf: 1978, p509-510 D.A.2).

In an interview with Joachim Walther (1972), Wolf not only describes the *Selbstmaskerade* of literature but also characteristics of what an author ought to possess to succeed. For Wolf, it is important to take an interest in people and, above all else, to be inquisitive about every aspect and dimension of life:

Ausdauer, Unabhängigkeit von Stimmungen, Fleiß, Gründlichkeit. Es kommt dazu: ein sehr starkes, sich immer erneuerndes, nie erlahmendes Interesse an Leuten, an gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen, an Entwicklungen innerhalb einer Gesellschaft. Ein großes Maß an Neugier.

Starke Sensibilität. Und eine verhältnismäßige niedrige Schmerzschwelle (Wolf: 1972, p751-752 D.A.2).

Part of Wolf's *Interesse* in life is *Umgang* with the past. The past is especially prevalent in *Nachdenken über Christa T.*: this *Leitthema* skillfully links the past (the life and times of Christa T.) with the present (from which the narrator reflects on the past). Wolf is not so much interested in what happens in a novel (*Darstellung/plot*) but rather why those particular events occurred (*Deutung*). As part of the *Deutung*, Wolf frequently foregrounds the psychological make-up of her characters, as in the case of Christa T. herself. Wolf's novels can be viewed as jigsaw puzzles that have to be assembled and completed before one can understand why events took place in the first place or the reason behind the behavioural patterns of characters: *'Es geht immer darum, Vergangenheit aufzuarbeiten; Prozesse, deren äußeren Ablauf man kennt, so daß Spannung nicht darin liegt, was passiert, sondern wie es passiert und warum es so gehandelt wird'* (Wolf: 1972, p757 D.A.2). Part of the *Deutungsprozess* is dealing with *Angst* and *Krankheit*, especially that fear that automatically accompanies the act of writing: *'Denn natürlich hat man beim Schreiben auch Angst vor dem, was herauskommen wird. Niemand setzt freiwillig Angst frei'* (Wolf: 1972, p761 D.A.2).

Because writing can equal therapy, Wolf refuses to shirk from the articulation of all kinds of *Krankheit*: *'Denn ich glaube nicht, daß das Aussprechen von krankmachenden Sachverhalten zerstört, sondern daß es heilt'* (Wolf: 1972, p762 D.A.2). Consequently, Wolf is convinced that the purpose of modern prose is not to parade a false reality before the reader but rather convey the truth behind the fiction: *'Mir kommt es so vor, als ob in der modernen Prosa der Autor verpflichtet ist, den Leser teilhaben zu lassen an der Entstehung der Fiktion und ihm nicht die Fiktion als zweite Wirklichkeit vor die Wirklichkeit zu stellen'* (Wolf: 1972, p768 D.A.2). Wolf's works are the products of her belief in exposing the open wounds festering underneath the gauze in order to allow them heal and turn into scabs that are not as fragile and raw as wounds: *'Dann setzt natürlich der Streit darüber ein, ob man das soll; ob man die wunden Punkte ruhen lassen soll, damit sie besser heilen, oder ob sie im Gegenteil schmerzen sollen, um in der Gesellschaft Kräfte zu mobilisieren, die dem Heilungsprozeß zu Hilfe kommen'* (Wolf: 1972, p770 D.A.2).

Part of the healing process of writing requires greater involvement with the community than merely the abstract three-dimensionality of fictional characters. Wolf wants to add the fourth dimension, namely, the reality in which the fiction is embedded: *'Es würde etwas Flächiges entstehen, wenn man sich beschränken würde auf die drei Ebenen der erfundenen Personen in einer erfundenen Handlung. Die Tiefe – gemeint ist eigentlich: poetische Wirksamkeit – einer Arbeit entsteht dadurch, daß der Autor seine Zeit und sein Engagement als vierte Dimension dazugibt'* (Wolf: 1972, p771 D.A.2).

To be able to integrate that Fourth Dimension, Wolf explains how *Unruhe* forms an important starting-point for the writing process (In 'Subjektive Authentizität. Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann':1973): *'Ich kann nur über etwas schreiben, was mich beunruhigt'* (Wolf: 1973, p747 D.A.2). This *Unruhe* links with her need to portray and explore *Krankheit* and *Schmerz* in her novels. These themes are very subjective and are already distant from her earlier work that found its ideological paradigm, content and form within Socialist Realism. By creating the term, 'subjektive Authentizität', Wolf automatically rejects that part of Socialist Realism which states that literature should be founded in objectivity and that any form of subjectivity is based on capitalism, Western ideology, and bourgeoisie ideas.

Wolf rejects another Socialist Realist premise: that of self-censorship or censorship of any kind. This theme especially pertains to *Kassandra* and the Priam regime:

Der Mechanismus der Selbstzensur, der dem der Zensur folgt, ist gefährlicher als dieser: er verinnerlicht Forderungen, die das Entstehen von Literatur verhindern können, und verwickelt manchen Autor in ein unfruchtbares und aussichtsloses Gerangel mit einander ausschließenden Geboten: daß er realistisch schreiben soll (Wolf: 1973, p774 D.A.2).

Part of rejecting *Selbstzensur* is to find oneself. Wolf stresses the *Selbstverwirklichung* of women: 'Arbeitsbedingungen. Interview mit Richard A. Zipser' (1978) mainly deals with Wolf's ideas about the female in/and society. She admits that she automatically writes about women, not to be perversely emancipated, but because she experiences the world around her as a woman. The emancipation of the female in society does not constitute the focal point of her literary interest in women, however, but rather the *Selbstverwirklichung* of the female individual. Wolf takes for granted the socio-political liberation of GDR women, including their equality in the work place, and therefore does not need to make them her main focus:

'Die Frau in der Gesellschaft' ist für mich kein 'Thema' unter anderen; ich schreibe fast immer über Frauen, doch nicht in jenem begrenzten Sinn von 'Emanzipation'. Nicht die sogenannte Gleichberechtigung der Frau interessiert mich – daß sie dem Mann ökonomisch und rechtlich gleichgestellt ist, ist ihr durch unsere Gesetze garantiert -, sondern ihre Selbstverwirklichung in einer ganz bestimmten historischen Situation: da nämlich ihr Selbstbewußtsein, ihr Lebensanspruch die Möglichkeiten, welche die Gesellschaft ihr anbieten kann, übersteigt (Wolf: 1978, p859 D.A.2).

As the character of Christa T. reveals, Wolf regards the worth of the female not in materialistic terms but rather in personal strength and self-belief. Wolf encourages female questioning of certain traditional norms of male society such as *Leistungsfähigkeit*:

Mich faszinieren die Frauen, die ihren historischen Augenblick erkennen und wahrnehmen, so schwer es für sie sein mag. Ein neues Zeit- und Lebensgefühl formulieren sie eher als die meisten Männer: Nicht, was sie haben, interessiert sie, sondern wer sie sind; sie können tun, was die Männer tun; nun fragen sie sich, ob sie es überhaupt wollen; sie befragen die Zwänge der Leistungsgesellschaft, sie, gereift in Auseinandersetzungen mit realen und belangvollen Erfahrungen, signalisieren einen radikalen Anspruch: von allen ihren Sinnen und Fähigkeiten Gebrauch machen zu können (Wolf: 1978, pp859-860).

Subsequently, Wolf uses the following phrases to explain the role that literature plays in the *Selbstfindung* of the (female) individual: *produktive Sehnsucht* and *Selbstwerdung*:

Literatur soll tun, was andere Medien nicht können: also nicht Soziologie betreiben, oder Informationen geben, oder Ideologie verbreiten, sondern ein Welt- und Lebensgefühl artikulieren, das den Leser in seiner Subjektwerdung, in seiner Selbstfindung unterstützt, ihn in seiner produktiven Sehnsucht bestärkt und das mit ausbilden hilft, was wir mit einem guten altmodischen Wort 'Persönlichkeit' nennen (Wolf: 1978,p864).

This *Sehnsucht* articulates itself frequently in the search for a utopian world, for example, in 'Ich bin schon für eine gewisse Maßlosigkeit. Gespräch mit Wilfried F. Schoeller' (1979). Wolf's relationship with utopian ideals has become stronger over the years, ironically because her concept of reality has established itself thoroughly in her own life. Consequently, she is able to include utopia as a *Leitthema* in her prose: '*Grundsätzlich: mein Verhältnis zur Utopie – nicht das meiner Figuren – wird eher stärker und bewußter, weil die Realität sich verfestigt, etabliert hat*' (Wolf: 1979, p867 D.A.2). Writing becomes the vehicle to transport the interrelated Humanist themes of *Hoffnung* and *Utopie*: '*Jedenfalls sehe ich mich einer verfestigten Wirklichkeit gegenübergestellt, und ich sehe gerade im Schreiben eine Möglichkeit, Utopie überhaupt einzuführen, Elemente von Hoffnung, um dieses altmodische Wort ruhig zu gebrauchen*' (ibid). Wolf, however, questions the transformational power of writing in *Kassandra*, which conveys the Angst of modern literature since the age of Expressionism and Existentialism. Because of the ever-changing modern technocratic world, Wolf asks whether the foregrounding of a utopia remains relevant to any degree: '*Ich bin manchmal versucht zu behaupten, Literatur bewirke gar nichts, widersetze mich aber dann selbst dieser irreführenden Fragestellung, denn die Literatur als Ganzes bewirkt scheinbar nichts, aber wenn sie nicht wäre, möchte ich zum Beispiel überhaupt nicht leben*' (Wolf: 1979, p870 D.A.2). It is important to stress the role of utopia in Wolf's work because she cannot conceive of a literature without it. For her, literature is almost a 'utopian' safe which stores perpetual treasures with which one could spoil oneself at any given time: '*Dann ist die Literatur vielleicht eine Art von Tresor, in dem man etwas aufhebt, wovon man sich später wieder bedienen*

kann, wenn man will. Aber Literatur ist immer öffentlich, immer aktiv und in meinem Verständnis nie ein Rückzugsgebiet' (ibid).

In writing *Kassandra* ('Ursprünge des Erzählens. Gespräch mit Jacqueline Grenz. 1983), Wolf extends her literary metaphors (such as the 'safe' metaphor): she talks about creating a *Gewebe* or a *Muster* and, to this extent, does not view the myth of *Kassandra* as a closed ending, even though she had no option but to stay true to *Kassandra's* slaughter at the end. The same remains true of *Medea*. In an interview during which she discusses the novel, Wolf mentions an 'Erzählgewebe'. Both *Kassandra* and *Medea* display her literary growth: she did not return to the linear structure of the Socialist Realist novel: 'Die Form des Gewebes, des gleichzeitigen Zeigens von vielen Fäden, die zusammen ein Muster ergeben, ist erzählend nicht zu bewältigen, erzählt wird immer hintereinander, nacheinander' (Wolf: 1983, p913 D.A.2). Thus, as a woman writer in the GDR, Wolf breaks through the barrier of taboos established by Socialism. As early as *Christa T.*, taboos such as individualism versus the collective experience are brought to the surface. With *Kassandra*, Wolf openly talks about the inevitable exposure of societal taboos through the 'making' of literature: 'Aber zumindest in den beiden deutschen Staaten – ich nehme allerdings an: auch woanders – kann man in diesem Jahrhundert keine Literatur machen, ohne Tabus zu verletzen' (Wolf: 1983, p921 D.A.2). The author does not spare herself: she also exposes her own taboos and finally rids herself of *Selbstzensur*. Consequently, Wolfian characters are mostly self-reflexive and self-critical, reflecting her own quest of the critical self: 'Ich möchte eigene Kränkungen, Verletzungen, innere Tabus, Konflikte mir selbst bewußt machen' (ibid). On this point, Wolf is non-compromising, even when attacked by a particularly vitriolic reading public (as happened after the publication of *Christa T.* and, even more so, with *Was bleibt*). She adheres to her views because literature demands her unfailing dedication as an author. If Wolf had failed to portray the reality as it was, she would have betrayed herself: 'Ehe die heftige Reaktion von außen erfolgte, hatte ich meine eigenen heftigen Reaktionen auszuhalten. Denn ich bin ja gespalten – wie mein Publikum' (ibid).

Part of Wolf's literary reality is her refusal to belong to any –ism, such as feminist Biologism. This is one of the schools of feminist thought to which Wolf does not adhere. She believes that those feminists who believe that the female gender is superior simply because of biology create a *Weiblichkeitswahn*, that equals *Männlichkeitswahn*: 'Vom Biologismus bin ich weit entfernt. Ich habe mich bemüht, innerhalb der Frühgeschichte über die man recht wenig gesichertes Wissen hat, historisch vorzugehen; ich bin sehr weit von einer Idealisierung 'der Frauen' oder 'des Weiblichen' entfernt' (Wolf: 1983, p925 D.A.2). Although Wolf distances herself from any school of feminist thought, she, as a female Marxist, rejects all kinds of *Unterdrückung*, including sexism: 'Aber abgesehen davon, daß ich selber eine Frau bin, stelle ich mich als Marxistin schlicht auf die Seite der Unterdrückten, und ich lasse mir auch nicht einreden, daß Unterdrückung gut ist oder nützlich sein kann – auch nicht die Unterdrückung der Frauen durch die Männer' (ibid). Wolf regards *Weiblichkeitswahn* as resonating with aspects of a militant sect

with a blind following or discipleship similar to the brutality of the patriarchy: *'Sie verkörpert eine sektiererische Tendenz, die mir widerstrebt, wie alles, was auf reine Abgrenzung und Feindseligkeit einem Andersgearteten gegenüber hinausläuft...'* (ibid). However, Wolf finds 'Weibliches Schreiben' increasingly important: *'Für die letzten Jahre ist mir wichtig geworden die Traditionslinie weiblichen Schreibens'* (Wolf: 1983, p936 D.A.2).

Wolf believes that one of the reasons why the early matriarchies were destroyed by the patriarchy is the replacement of the *Mutterrecht* by the *Vaterrecht*. Anything connected with the Mother or the Goddess was destroyed while women were made slaves in their own domestic environment: *"Der Umsturz des Mutterrechts war die weltgeschichtliche Niederlage des weiblichen Geschlechts. Der Mann ergriff das Steuer auch im Hause, die Frau wurde entwürdigt, geknechtet, Sklavin seiner Lust und bloßes Werkzeug der Kinderzeugung"* (Engels, as cited by Wolf: 1984. 'Krankheit und Liebesentzug. Fragen an die psychosomatische Medizin'). *Männlichkeitswahn* finds its driving force in the fear of the female. In response, thousands of women during the Middle Ages were branded as witches, tortured, drowned or, most infamously, burnt at the stake with the whole town as witness: *'Aber kennt man auch die Begründung, welche zwei maßgebende Inquisitoren im berühmten 'Hexenkammer' niederlegten? Die Frauen, eigentlich 'unvollkommene Tiere', heißt es da, seien der 'fleischlichen Begierde' vollkommen ausgeliefert'* (Wolf: 1984, p736 D.A).

Thus, one of Wolf's prime strategies in writing is rooted in self-research and self-dissection that reject *Selbstzensur*:

Immer mehr wurde ich mir darüber klar, daß mein Hauptantrieb für Schreiben Selbsterforschung ist: immer dann, wenn ich über mein Verhältnis zu meiner Zeit, zu ihren Strömungen, Institutionen, zu Zeitgenossen, zu mir selbst schreibend etwas herausfand, was ich vorher nicht gewußt hatte oder jedenfalls nicht hatte aussprechen können – immer dann stellte sich jener besondere Zustand der Erregung, jenes Gefühl von Authentizität ein, um dessentwillen ich eigentlich schreibe (Wolf: 1983, p932 D.A.2).

In her work, Wolf never loses her own sense of obligation towards the community. Even when she was evolving from a Socialist Realist author to an independent female writer creating her own themes, Wolf never forgot the reader in the Author/Reader relational convention. She writes for a real audience, not just a target group or an implied or ideal reader: *'Für wen schreiben Sie eigentlich? Dann sage ich: für Leser. Das heißt, für Menschen, die Literatur als ein Instrument zur Erweiterung ihrer Erfahrung, ihrer Erkenntnisse brauchen'* (Wolf: 1983, p938 D.A.2).

1(b) LESEN UND SCHREIBEN: 'ICH WILL VERSUCHEN, GENAU ZU SEIN'

As has already been stated, Wolf regards the depiction of truth in literature as indispensable. ('Die zumutbare Wahrheit. Prosa der Ingeborg Bachmann': 1966). Understandably therefore, she identifies with Ingeborg Bachmann's concept of truthfulness in writing. Wolf believes that modern literature should convey truth to the reader and should depict things the way they are: *'Wahrhaben, was ist – wahrmachen was sein soll. Mehr hat Dichtung sich nie zum Ziel setzen können'* (Wolf: 1966, p121 L.S.). In addition, Wolf regards literature as a metaphorical battleground on which the author fights for the authenticity of words: *'Man steht vor einem Kampfplatz. Sieht die Kräfte sich sammeln. Lyrik, Prosa, Essay schlagen die gleiche Richtung ein: aus dem Fraglosen ins Fragwürdige; aus dem Gewöhnlichen ins Ungewohnte; aus dem Unverbindlichen in die Verbindlichkeit, auch Verbundenheit; aus dem Ungenauen in die Authentizität'* (Wolf: 1966, p122 L.S.).

For her, the articulation of *Unruhe* (especially the individual restlessness in Becher's journals) is a most powerful weapon for an author: *'Das Bedürfnis, sie [die Unruhe] zu artikulieren, ist mächtig, auf die Dauer mächtiger als die Versuchung, es nicht zur Kenntnis zu nehmen'* (Wolf: 1968, p181 'Lesen und Schreiben: Beobachtung' L.S.). Although *Unruhe* has served as one of Wolf's recurrent themes throughout her writings and her career, later novels such as *Kassandra* and *Was bleibt* deal with new themes such as the search for a new (female) language: *'Das Bedürfnis, auf eine neue Art auf eine neue Art zu schreiben, folgt, wenn auch mit Abstand, einer neuen Art, in der Welt zu sein'* (ibid). Wolf wants to trace the route of the restless individual in order to find an *Ort* where the person can find purpose, *Selbstfindung*: *"Unsagbar verödet ist eine menschliche Existenz, die sich selbst, vergleichend, nicht als Gleichnis nehmen, sich keinen Ort finden kann in dem beispiellosen Zug der Menschheit aus dem Dickicht in die ersehnte Ordnung – nennen wir sie, mit einem altväterischen Wort, 'Gesittung'"* (Wolf: 1968, p192 L.S.). Wolf's main philosophy in *Lesen und Schreiben* is the probing of the human soul, the search for an *Ort*, the discovery of the Self, and, by implication, even to start again on a clean slate:

Tabula rasa. Ich bin am Ende. Mit den Wurzeln ausgerissen, ausgelöscht in mir eines der großen Abenteuer, die wir haben können: vergleichend, prüfend, sich abgrenzend allmählich sich selbst sehen zu lernen. Sich messen an den deutlichsten Gestalten alter Zeiten. Nichts davon. Verblaßt das Zeitgefühl, da es nicht wirklich geweckt wurde. Die eigenen Konturen, anstatt deutlicher zu werden, lösen sich auf; das Bewußtsein, anstatt sich zu klären, verschwimmt (Wolf: 1968, p195).

How Wolf would use this *tabula rasa* in the writing process is explained in her well-known 'Selbstinterview' (1968) which focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on *Nachdenken über Christa T.*

She uses a startling metaphor to convey her break from the sterile confines of Socialist Realism: *'In dem Strom meiner Gedanken schwimmen wie Inselchen die konkreten Episoden – das ist die Struktur der Erzählung'* (Wolf: 1968, p76 L.S.). While writing *Christa T.*, Wolf was deeply inspired by Johannes R. Becher's diaries. His philosophy can be regarded as one of Wolf's main literary and personal influences. In 'Selbstinterview', Wolf has yet formulate the *blinder Fleck* but, at this point, she does subscribe to the idea that the main purpose of literature is to expose the individual's alienation by going on an inner journey to discover the self:

Es ist ein großer Gedanke, daß der Mensch nicht zur Ruhe kommt, ehe er zu sich selber gefunden hat. Die tiefe Wurzel der Übereinstimmung zwischen echter Literatur und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft sehe ich eben darin: Beide haben das Ziel, dem Menschen zu seiner Selbstverwirklichung zu verhelfen. Die Literatur nimmt sich, wie unsere Gesellschaft, gerade der Unruhigen an. Menschen darzustellen, denen diese Unruhe fremd ist: Selbstzufriedene, Platte, allzu Anpassungsfähige - das erscheint mir langweiliger und unergiebig (Wolf: 1968, p77-78).

What Wolf argues for in this phrase - *Die tiefe Wurzel der Übereinstimmung zwischen echter Literatur und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft* - remains pure Socialist Realist theory. But from the perspective of the idealistic Christa Wolf who, at the time, did not fully realise that socialism wanted restless individuals to conform to the socialist collective instead of growing into their subjective individualistic restlessness. Wolf's conclusion that *'unsere Gesellschaft gerade der Unruhigen annimmt'* is no longer valid by 1968 from her own perspective, although it may be considered valid with regard to *Der Geteilte Himmel* and *Christa T.*

Consequently, albeit in conflict with the official aesthetics of the Socialist establishment, Wolf creates non-conforming characters who fail to adapt to societal norms. She is especially interested in the shunned, the oppressed, and the *Außenseiter* of the community, finding the adaptable, the conformists, and the static individual uninteresting as literary subjects.

Part of this non-conformity comprises challenging the concept of reality and dissecting it as well as studying reality from angles other than those socialist convention demands. Wolf believes that no author should articulate reality before dissecting it thoroughly: *'Zu schreiben kann erst beginnen, wenn die Realität nicht mehr selbstverständlich ist. Realität? Die Romanschriftsteller, das ist ein gutes Zeichen, sind sich nicht einig über ihren Gegenstand, der ja wirklich nicht so leicht zu benennen ist wie der Forschungsgegenstand der Physiker'* (Wolf: 1968, p209 L.S.).

Wolf continues this dissecting process in 'Erinnerte Zukunft' (1968) by dealing mainly with concepts of Humanism and its origins. Wolf believes that Humanism is not an innate quality but something that every individual has to develop. There is no instinct telling the individual not to kill, for example. Only when one develops humanist behaviour are these primeval instincts kept within societal norms, conventions, and boundaries:

In der 'Natur der Dinge' oder in der biologischen 'Natur des Menschen' liegt der Humanismus nicht. Er wird uns nicht angeboren. Jedes Individuum muß neu erlernen, was die Gesellschaft in Jahrtausenden als höchste, mühsamste, am meisten gefährdete Leistung hervorgebracht hat, kein Instinkt verbietet ihm wie den meisten Tierarten die Tötung der Artgenossen (Wolf: 1968, p217 L.S.).

At the same time, literature should maintain contact with humankind's primordial roots: *'Prosa soll versuchen, den Kontakt der Menschen mit ihren Wurzeln zu erhalten, das Selbstbewußtsein zu festigen, das so labil geworden ist, daß in hoch technisierten Ländern viele Menschen in den Selbstmord oder in die Sackgasse der Neurosen flüchten'* (Wolf: 1968, p219 L.S.). The *Mündigwerden* of the individual lies in the contact with prehistoric times. This means that one should try not to lose the soul's emotional responses that technocracy is essentially destroying: *'So bleibt der schmale Weg der Vernunft, des Erwachsenwerdens, der Reife des menschlichen Bewußtseins, der bewußte Schritt aus der Vorgeschichte in die Geschichte'* (ibid).

THE KASSANDRA-YEARS: DER WEG ZUM LEBEN UND DER LIEBE

Humankind's link with the mythic past recurs in 'Dokumentation: Ein Gespräch mit Christa und Gerhard Wolf' (1984). In this article, she expresses her novel discovery of woman's enslavement over the period of three millennia. In writing *Kassandra*, Wolf focuses more on women's issues than ever before, and especially on the absence of the female voice:

In der Beschäftigung mit den frühen Kulturen ist ein Schock auf mich gekommen, daß Frauen seit dreitausend Jahren in unserer Kultur keine Stimme haben. Jetzt habe ich an die erste Stimme angeknüpft, die uns überliefert ist und habe versucht, die ganze männliche Überlieferung, die auf diese Stimme gelegt wurde, abzukratzen (Wolf: 1984, p100).

Re-establishing the female voice is a *Leitmotiv* in both *Kassandra* and *Medea*. Wolf wishes to invert woman's alienation caused by the patriarchy as well as its objectification of the female. In this regard, Wolf's literary aims have shifted somewhat: she now focuses her literary magnifying glass on the silent voice of the woman instead of focusing more generally on gender:

Ich frage mich, wie kann es wirklich gewesen sein unter den sozialen Bedingungen, unter denen eine solche Frau gelebt haben kann und sicherlich gelebt hat. Das war mein Prozeß der Entmythologisierung: die Entfremdungssyndrome aufzulösen, die das Patriarchat auf jede weibliche Stimme dieser Kultur gelegt hat. So konstituiere ich selbst wieder eine Figur aus meiner Erfahrung, daß in der heutigen Zivilisation jede Frau, wenn sie versucht, in den gegebenen Institutionen tätig zu werden, zum Objekt gemacht wird (ibd).

One of the ways to break female silence is to gain autonomy as a woman, which means, in turn, that females should discover their true *Bild*. Wolf believes that contemporary women neither wish to become men nor do they want to compete with males. She prefers to emphasise woman's uniqueness instead of attacking the male principle: *'Heute wollen viele Frauen wirklich anders sein als Männer und sie stellen dieser Männergesellschaft Fragen, die sehr unangenehm sind'* (Wolf: 1984, p105).

In 'Dokumentation: Christa Wolf. Ein Gespräch über Cassandra', Wolf is even more outspoken about the loss of the female voice. She homes in on misogyny that can be traced to the heroic tradition ('heros') as well as society's recurrent *Blinder Fleck*:

Die ersten Zeugnisse der Literatur unserer Zivilisation sind Heroengeschichten, Heroisierungen von blutigen Untaten. Ich will das nicht so moralisierend darstellen, aber am Anfang dieser Kultur stand ein ungeheuer blutiger Kampf (Wolf: 1984, p106).

Wolf's perspective merges with the voiceless of the time who are predominantly women like Cassandra. (As has already been noted, Wolf admitted earlier that her sympathies always lie with the voiceless and repressed):

Ich kann die Geschichte nicht anders sehen als aus der Perspektive derjenigen, die unterdrückt werden und derjenigen, die jeweils Verlierer sind. Als ich mich mit dem griechischen Mythos beschäftigte, war es mir wirklich ein Schock, wie früh Frauen in diese Verliererrolle hineingedrängt wurden, aus der sie über dreitausend Jahre nicht mehr herausgekommen sind. Man weiß nicht genau, warum das Patriarchat einen solch starken Einfluß hatte, sich vor Frauen zu fürchten und sich zu versichern, daß sie nie wieder an irgendeine Form der Macht gelangen könnten. Das hat sich tatsächlich in dieser Kultur dreitausend Jahre lang gehalten (ibd).

One of the consequences of modern civilisation's self-destructiveness is the no-win situation that war creates. Wolf believes that this destructiveness finds its roots in *Machtbesessenheit* of patriarchal society: *'Der eigentliche Grund, warum ich solch einen Stoff wie Cassandra nahm, war die Gefahr der*

möglichen Vernichtung und Selbstvernichtung unserer Kultur: wie kommen wir da raus?' (Wolf: 1984, p107). According to Wolf, the misogynist need for power is a result of fear of the possibility of not being in control: *'Die Angst davor, daß sie in Wirklichkeit viel ohnmächtiger sind, als ihre äußere Stärke es scheinen läßt. Wenn man ihnen diese Angst nehmen könnte, wenn man für diese Aggressivität, die sich angestaut hat, einen ableitenden Kanal schaffen könnte, der nicht Krieg wäre'* (ibid). This fear results in a very specific coldness and lack of love for the human soul that seeps through to all layers of society. This *Kälte* is exactly what Wolf rejects: her main themes centre on the sensitivity of the human soul and the belief in the individual experience of grief and sorrow: *'Diese furchtbare Kälte, diese Unfähigkeit zu fühlen und zu lieben, die unsere Kultur erzeugt und die nicht nur Männer betrifft, verlangt bedingt nach Ersatz, weil man sonst zugrunde geht. Ersatzleben. Ersatzliebe'* (ibid). Wolf regards this way to life and love a utopian concept that she always strives for in her work: *'Man müßte die Möglichkeit entwickeln zu empfinden, zu lieben und geliebt zu werden und nicht abgelehnt zu werden und nicht ablehnen zu müssen – ein utopischer Weg'* (ibid).

Here, Wolf admits that she does not associate herself with any –ism, not even Feminism. One of the interviewers, Dagmar Celeste, is correct in suggesting that the reason behind the influx of female protagonists in modern writing is that they have never featured before as strong characters; most of the time, they have been misrepresented by male authors and playwrights:

Der Feminismus wurde bei uns immer wieder darauf angeklagt, daß die Männer die Gegner sind. Männer waren aber nie die Gegner, nie das Hauptthema. In den feministischen Gruppen ist die Frau das Hauptthema, weil sie eben so lange kein Thema war – oder zumindest Nebenthema. Diese Gruppen existieren nicht, um den Mann niederzudrücken oder Macht zu ergreifen, sondern weil man sich aussprechen muß, bevor man weitermacht (as quoted in Wolf: 1984, p111-112).

Although Wolf does not portray women exclusively, she admits to finding women more interesting than men and, for that reason, writes more from their perspective:

Als Autorin muß ich mir leisten, über Menschen zu sprechen. Im Zentrum meiner Bücher stehen oft Frauen; ich spreche auch über Männer, aber sie sind oft durch Frauen vermittelt. Wenn ich mich einer danach fragt, sage ich immer ganz naiv, Frauen interessieren mich mehr. Das ist eine Aussage über mich, über meine Fähigkeiten, über meine Souveranität in Bezug auf die anderen männlichen Figuren (Wolf: 1984, p112-113).

However, Wolf does not idealise her female characters nor exempt them from having the blind spot, as seen in *Kassandra*. The blind spot, Wolf argues, is something that society refuses to acknowledge. The

blind spot theme appears in *Medea* too, where it exposes the people of Corinth for what they truly are, when they start their whispering campaign and witchhunt. Through such mythological writings, Wolf links the prehistoric dark spot to that of modern times. Literature should dissect the blind spot of the individual and society so as to recognise its destructive quality. Literature should lead the individual away from the particular blind spot causing his or her societal alienation to enable him or her to begin a search of the true self that can overcome the blind spot:

Jeder Mensch erfährt – wenn er sich überhaupt erfährt – daß er in jedem Stadium seines Lebens einen blinden Fleck hat. Etwas, was er nicht sieht. Das hängt mit seiner Geschichte zusammen. Und so hat auch eine Gesellschaft oder eine Zivilisation einen blinden Fleck. Genau dieser Fleck bringt die Selbsterstörung hervor. Ihn nicht nur umschreiben sondern in ihn hineinzugehen, sozusagen in den Mittelpunkt des 'hurricanes': das ist immer meiner Meinung nach Aufgabe der Literatur (ibid).

'ANSPRACHEN': RETURNING TO A FEMALE PAST

Part of Wolf's journey to understand the 'blind spot' better includes her visit to Greece ('Ein Modell von der anderen Art': 1987, in *Ansprachen*, 1988). She reflects on her response to female statuettes she saw in Athens during her trip to Greece in 1980. Her response about the women depicted in the temples and museums is intensely emotional because through them she confronts herself. This confrontation is rooted in a strange but simultaneous *Wiedererkennen* that she is unable to articulate at that stage. In retrospect, Wolf discovers that she was actually travelling back to prehistoric times, only to discover that those times were little different from her own generation: both the ancient and the modern are filled with alienation and violence, perpetrated especially against the female:

Woher aber jener Stoß, als ich vor ihr stand [Frauenstatue]. Ungewarnt, hatte ich keine Zeit, eine Abwehr aufzubauen. Meine gemischten Gefühle irritierten mich: ein Aufblitzen von Wiedererkennen. Konfrontation. Freudige Zuneigung. Fremdheit. Am seltsamsten: Eine Unterströmung von Trauer. Eine Empfindung: Die will das von dir. Wie sieht die dich denn an? Ein Blick durch die Zeiten. Durch übereinandergelagerte, ineinander verfilzte Schichten von Entfremdung (Wolf: 1987, p9 AS).

Part of the alienation that Wolf experiences during her encounter with these statuettes lies in the ancient mind/body 'split' in these mythological women. Wolf recognises her own *Zwiespalt* and *Brüchigkeit* and her vulnerability as a woman in modern society. However, the vulnerability of these women serves as a channel or bridge for Wolf to interpret creatively what they might have felt as women in prehistoric times: '*Der Bruch in ihr ist die Brücke zu mir. Angebetet, zum Idol gemacht zu*

werden, entfremdet die Frau ebenso stark von sich selbst, wie unterdrückt, geknechtet, ausgebeutet zu sein' (Wolf: 1987, p9 AS). Wolf's argument is that women were never treated as human beings, they were always depicted either as tragic figures in ancient tragedies (such as Antigone, Iphigenia, and Electra) or regarded as evil (Eve, The Whore, ravished Bride, Sorceress or Witch). Both depictions have done damage to images of women over the centuries. Wolf aims to free her women characters from these archetypes. One of her strategies would be to show her female characters freeing themselves from the victim stereotype by re-inventing themselves and by finding their true *Bild*: *'Nun erfahren wir – ob man, ob Frau – jeder in sich die Gefahr des Umkippens unserer Welt der toten Dinge in eine tote Welt, in eine Welt der Toten. Nekrophilie als Endzeitsymptom. Die Alternative: Wiedergeburt'* (Wolf: 1987, p11 AS).

CHRISTA WOLFS MEDEA: VORAUSSETZUNGEN ZU EINEM TEXT, MYTHOS UND BILD: DIE MASKE DER MEDEA

Wolf's de-mythologising in *Kassandra* and *Medea* features the RE-concept that is foregrounded by Wolf in 'Von Kassandra zu Medea' (1997). Wolf contends that the mythological Medea is confined to a certain restrictive *Raum* that depicts her in a stereotypical way. As an alternative route to breaking with mythic conventions, Wolf suggests the re-invention of certain parts of the myth, especially those depicting Medea as a sorceress and child-murderess. Wolf wants to open unexplored *Freiräume* to discover unknown sides of Medea other than the stereotypes:

Eine Gestalt ist da, die sich in einem Rahmen bewegt, an den man sich zu halten hat, in dem aber, wenn man sich nur tief genug darauf einläßt, ungeahnte Freiräume sich eröffnen: zu entdecken, heraufzuholen, zu deuten, zu erfinden. Den heutigen Blick auf die uralte Geschichte zu richten. Sich aus der Tiefe der Zeit von uralten Figuren anblicken, anrühren zu lassen (Wolf: 1997, p11 MV).

The author should 'wander off' to the time frame and setting of myth and legend, suggesting that one then becomes less obsessed with one's own emotional baggage:

Manchmal hilft es ja, hunderte von Kilometern weit wegzufahren, oder hunderte von Jahren zurückzugehen, in eine Vergangenheit, die wir nur durch Sagen und Mythen kennen, um zu sehen, was man da findet – ohne sich zu täuschen, daß man sein Reisegepäck immer bei sich haben, nie loswerden wird: Sich selbst (ibid).

Wolf agrees with Goethe when he says that one can understand one's own time only when travelling back to the *Zeitraum* of 2000 years ago. This is one of the reasons Wolf interweaves myth and post-modern literature:

Goethe meint, niemand könne seiner Zeit wirklich gerecht werden, der nicht den Zeitraum von 2000 Jahren gegenwärtig habe. Er hat zum Teil andere Fragen an die Antike gestellt, als wir Heutigen sie an die Vor-Zeit stellen: denn sowohl die Cassandra als auch die Medea sind Frauengestalten aus einer Zeit, die die Schrift noch nicht kannte, überliefert in später aufgeschriebenen Sagenkreisen, aufgenommen, vielfach umgedeutet und verändert in der großen Literatur der griechischen und römischen Klassik (Wolf: 1997, p11-12 MV).

Linking pre-history with contemporary times, Wolf illustrates how acceptable social boundaries had shifted throughout the centuries. In matriarchal times, women were mostly priestesses and oracles who performed rituals and consulted the goddesses. Gradually, the patriarchy took over: male gods and replaced the female goddess while mortal males were either turned into demi-gods or were honoured in heroic song and lyric. The female principle was reduced to a threat to the male principle that is exemplary in *Medea*:

Medea, deren Name bedeutet 'die guten Rat wissende', von der manche Quellen glauben, daß sie göttlichen Ursprungs war und im Verlauf der Degradierung der Göttinnen auf die Erde versetzt wurde, als Heilerin, Magierin – Medea erscheint mir als besonders eindrucksvolles Beispiel für die Umwertung der Werte bei der Herausbildung unserer Zivilisation aus vorzivilisierten Gesellschaften, die dahin geführt hat, daß nicht das Leben, also Entfaltung menschlicher Möglichkeiten, in ihr Zentrum gerückt ist, sondern die Faszination durch den Tod und durch tote Dinge (Wolf: 1997, p16 MV).

Wolf ponders the same idea of linking pre-historic with contemporary in her interview with Petra Kammann (25.1.1996). She regards prehistoric times as a model for modern society and believes that basic human behaviour such as violence, the lust for power, and making somebody a *Sündenbock*, has persisted through the centuries:

Kassandra und Medea sind ja eigentlich keine Figuren aus der Antike, sondern aus der Vorgeschichte, aus der Mythologie. Manchmal kann man an solchen scheinbar weit zurückliegenden Figuren die zeitgenössischen Probleme besonders deutlich herausfiltern, gerade weil es ein prähistorisches Feld ist, auf das ich mich da begeben – allerdings schon mit patriarchalisch und hierarchisch strukturierten Gesellschaftsgruppen. Da wird erkennbar, daß das Grundverhalten der Menschen in ähnlichen Situationen schon dem unseren ähnlich oder

gleich war. Insofern kann ich diese frühen Gesellschaften als Modell verwenden (Wolf: 1996, p49 MV).

Wolf believes that, in matrilineal society, jealousy between women over a man was non-existent. Consequently, Medea does not seek revenge on Glauke because she was to be bequeathed to Jason, but rather sends her the wedding dress to show her blessing of the marriage. By regarding Glauke as an alienated individual, and as part of her literary scope, Wolf is able to place alienation under the critical lens. Because women played no significant role in Corinthian society, she uses the Glauke character as symbol of female alienation: *'Frauen spielen dort [Korinth] keine bestimmende Rolle mehr, sie sind keine selbstbestimmten Menschen mehr. Zu zeigen versucht habe ich das in der Figur der Glauke, der Tochter des Königs Kreon, die von klein auf sich selbst verfremdet wurde'* (Wolf: 1996, p50 MV). She thus deconstructs the myth of the evil jealous female: *'In annähernd matriarchalen Beziehungen zwischen Frauen gibt es keine Eifersucht wegen eines Mannes. Medea gibt Glauke das Kleid großzügig, geradezu schwesterlich, ohne böse Absicht. Gerade das erträgt Glauke nicht. Die Werte, die Korinth ihr aufgedrückt hat, treiben sie in den Tod'* (Wolf: 1996, p51 MV).

Medea exemplifies Wolf's unmasking of the stereotypes of women. The mask of Medea was placed on her face without her consent, so silencing her. Over a period of 2500, male writers have sealed masks on the face of woman: the mask of Sorceress, Witch and evil Mother. It is not Wolf's intention to denounce the male but rather to reinstate the female principle without belligerence. She wants to show that alienated female individuals could be given alternatives which would enhance their self-understanding. However, as Wolf has matured as a writer, she has become not quite as optimistic about overcoming alienation as in *Geteilter Himmel*. One could say that her more sobering *Nachdenken über Christa T.* and *Medea* are manifestations of her own experience of the world of alienation, technocracy, and misunderstanding. Christa T. never overcomes her self-alienation and, even though Medea is not alienated from herself, she becomes an outcast who is grossly misunderstood and punished for crimes she did not commit. Through Medea, Wolf shows the state of a modern world which is not far from becoming an anarchy. The novel has existentialist overtones: Medea loses her faith in the gods, in herself, she becomes *heimatslos*. In this regard, Wolf's writing and philosophy have changed from the utopian *Selbstverwirklichung* of the individual as part of Socialist Realism, to the searching figure of Christa T., the criticism of war and technocracy, and the return to female myth and matriarchy in *Kassandra* and *Medea*. Wolf has become more woman-focused, discussing her shock at the discovery of the appalling treatment of women through the ages during her 1980 visit to Greece and Crete.

Before this visit, Wolf never had the need to explore the exploitation of the female because that was not an issue in the GDR. She never discussed the topic of *weibliches Schreiben* or a new female language

and defined all her creative and literary ideas within the Socialist paradigm. Yet, after her *Kassandra-Projekt*, one hardly detects her mentioning the word 'Socialist writer/writing'. In her own way, Wolf has pulled the mask from the face of Socialist Realism, albeit unconsciously. In many ways, Wolf is the first GDR woman author to break away from all restrictions put upon (female) writers by Socialism. Although she stuck to her ideas of a utopian Socialism as defined by Karl Marx and Ernst Bloch, she does realise that these ideas ultimately remained theoretical in the GDR. Tragically, the Stalinism that she fought against became the order of the day with the Stasi and the Berlin Wall and with Germans killing Germans as a result. Her own experience of the Stasi is articulated in *Was bleibt*, a text that marks the turning point in her literary career. Without a homeland, and made the *Sündenbock* by Eastern and Western German critics, Wolf had to rethink her ideology once again. In a way, Wolf herself had to fight alienation, and to adapt to new paradigms of thought. Suddenly, the country Wolf's generation had built crumbled into oblivion and all Socialist ideology was disregarded by the world in much the same way that Nazism was after World War Two.

Medea strips away all the artificial layers of ideology: there is no utopia, no place on earth for individuals like Medea and Christa Wolf. But Wolf is not entirely without hope; she believes that somehow one will find the way out of the labyrinth. And that is the essence of Wolf:

Das glückliche Ende ist zum 'happy end' verkommen, doch mir scheint, im Mythos und in der Literatur, die von ihm herkommt, ist die nicht triviale Sehnsucht von uns allen gut aufgehoben, gemeinsam einen Ausweg aus dem Labyrinth zu suchen und ihn, vielleicht, zu finden, auch wenn der Zeitgeist heute etwas anderes sagt (Wolf: 1996, p17 MV).

(2) IN THE GHETTOS OF THE FEMALE: DAUGHTERS OF KASSANDRA

*The woman I needed to call my mother
was silenced before I was born
Adrienne Rich*

*Das große Universum der männlichen
Geniewelt ist die Landschaft
des Todes
Ria Endres*

*Feminism is one attempt to redress sexism
and provide alternative explanations for gendered phenomena.
Dina Anselmi & Anne Law*

As daughters – and victims - of the patriarchy, modern women have sought the means by which they can free themselves of millennia-old male-imposed constrictions on their modes of being. In striving for that freedom, they have come to rely significantly on the RE-concept: they have re-read, de-constructed, re-constructed, re-appraised, re-thought, and re-written their own experience. Although many of these RE-conceptualisations have found tangible manifestation in a wide variety of theories and movements, it is with Feminism's literary manifestations that this section of Chapter 5 will be most concerned. In so doing, it is important to remember the caveat with which this chapter opened: the breadth of materials and the depth with which they are dealt in this dissertation inhibits comprehensiveness in every section. To this end, the section begins with a brief examination of the destructive nature of the patriarchy and women's problems of living within its confines.

2.1 THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF THE PATRIARCHAL ETHOS

Jutta Osinski argues that women authors should first overcome the 'killing aesthetic' of the patriarchy in order to conceptualise a female aesthetic (1998, p.49).

2.1.1 The destructive consequences of the patriarchy for women

The destructiveness of the patriarchy towards women has resulted in several negative outcomes for women. It is these outcomes that will now be surveyed briefly.

2.1.1.1 *Women's non-history*

Schmidt foregrounds the importance of female reflection on the non-history of women as means of understanding the impact the patriarchy has had on women in society. Part of that reflecting process involves a deconstruction of male versions of myth and a female reconstruction of myth to compensate for the absence of women in history: '*She [the woman author] will have to reflect on the absence of women in history, to make this absence felt, instead of simply filling the gap with an imaginary, fictionally rounded presence*' (Schmidt: 1990, p257). Wolf's approach is congruent with Schmidt's theory; Wolf reflects on the situation of mythological women like *Kassandra* and *Medea* in their respective societies.

However, molding women characters to suit exclusively feminist needs would result in *Weiblichkeitswahn*. Where male writers can draw on a large Western history of mythological heroes, women are obliged to create their own history, one that is different from that of the male:

Whereas in male literature, working on myth can mean working on the tradition of literary transformations of myth, a woman writer, who can draw neither on a tradition of women rewriting myths, nor on a tradition of women as historical agents, will have to develop a different approach, if she is to take account of women's specific position (Schmidt: 1990, pp256-257).

2.1.1.2 *The silence of women*

Stephan and Weigel explore the silence of women from the stance of their *verborgene Frau*, the woman who has been hidden by history: *'Das Bild - 'die verborgene Frau' – soll darauf hindeuten, daß das Wissen über Frauen und ihre Geschichte durch Verschweigen, Vergessen, durch Täuschungen und Trugbilder ebenso verstellt ist wie durch die realen Mauern, die Frauen vor der Öffentlichkeit und vor 'der Geschichte' abschirmten und heute noch trennen'* (Stephan & Weigel: 1983, p5). The search for the *verborgene Frau* is inevitably tedious because the search entails deconstruction of the male past. Female critics call the reconstruction of the past *Trauerarbeit*, a concept that Wolf uses frequently in her description of remembering the past.

Rübsamen (1983, p294) argues that *'Der Krieg ist der Vater aller Dinge'*. Consequently, women (and men too) have been, and are still being, silenced by a patriarchy founded upon technocracy and the destruction of living beings. Since the 1980s, Wolf has been actively involved in anti-nuclear projects, especially after the Chernobyl disaster. Wolf's novels speak out unequivocally against war, and, in this regard, her principles correspond to those of the feminist movement.

To overcome *Sprachlosigkeit*, (itself a Wolfian theme), Weigel describes the 'Bewegung' of female language:

In 'der Schwierigkeit, ich zu sagen' drückt sich diese Empfindung von Frauen am häufigsten aus. Das Programm 'Überwindung der Sprachlosigkeit', wenn es lediglich als Bewegung heraus aus dem Schweigen hinüber in die Sprache, als eindeutige Zielsetzung und gradliniger Weg verstanden wird, verkennt die konfliktreiche Beziehung zwischen Weiblichkeit und Sprache (1987, p.197).

Wolf has focused on the loss of the female voice throughout her literary career. One of the causes for the individual's 'silence' or lack of words, Wolf suggests, is attributable to technocracy and scientific experiments (such as sex-change), and the consequent loss of humanism. The scientist's loss of voice in her short story, *Selbstversuch*, points to the temporary loss of identity, not only when individuals are transformed into the opposite gender, but when women can compete with men only when they become them: *'The loss of voice is symptomatic of the loss of identity during the transformation from woman to*

man, and it underscores the narrator's observation that men and women inhabit linguistic worlds' (Eigler: 2000, p405). Whether there are linguistic differences between women and men has been disputed by various scientists and linguistic specialists, although some feminist literary schools support this 'phenomenon'. Eigler, however, presents an alternative reason for the loss of voice:

The silence would then point to the lack of an adequate ethical discourse on the desirability of what is scientifically possible (e.g., regarding reproductive technologies and genetic engineering). In other words, the aphasia the experimental subject experiences in the transition from woman to man signifies the moral void in the 'no-wo/man's-land' of contemporary bio-technical advances (ibid).

The loss of one's history not only constitutes a loss of one's language but also of one's self. Heuser, like Wolf, identifies the 'emancipatory problems' of language: the lack of female articulation and the silence of women which result in the loss of the 'Ich': *'Emanzipationsprobleme sind so gesehen auch in diesem Fall Sprachprobleme. Wenn aber die Sprachlosigkeit der Frauen im Grunde Ausdruck ihrer Ichlosigkeit, ihres Nicht-Subjekt-Seins ist, dann kann die Selbstdarstellung der erste und möglicherweise unumgängliche Schritt auf dem Wege zu einer volleren weiblichen 'Identität' sein'* (Heuser: 1983, pp120-121). The historical influence of women is trapped inside a catacomb of silence so they have to start from scratch to make their own history, re-invent 'themselves' so to speak: *'Auf der Suche nach dem geschichtlichen Einfluß der Frauen läßt sich an den historischen Dokumenten vor allem die Geschichte eines Verschweigens, einer Aussparung einer Absenz studieren'* (Heuser: 1983, p134).

2.1.1.3 *The stereotyping of women*

Like Weigel and others, Cocalis and Goodman highlight the patriarchal stereotyping of women. They call the female stereotype the 'Eternal Feminine', showing the perpetuity of male stereotyping in which the female is trapped. One of the misogynist archetypes of women is the 'Other' (or the 'Second Sex' as defined by Simone de Beauvoir):

Traditional male views of women as Other, the Eternal Feminine, have formed the ideological foundation of Western patriarchal society and identified women as the natural repository of all the positive and negative attributes of the human race, the source of all hell or of any potential redeeming grace on earth (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, p1).

Osinski illustrates the stereotyping problem with an example from Gilbert and Gubar in which they refer to the binary oppositionary stereotypes of women as either 'angel' or 'monster': *'In other words, women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art. And similarly, all*

women writers must kill the angel's necessary opposite and double, the 'monster' in the house, whose Medusa-face also kills female creativity' (Gilbert & Gubar: 1979 as cited from Osinski: 1998, p48). Osinski believes that women became dark mirrors in which they could not recognise themselves, a deliberate form of alienation created by the patriarchy. Because real women could not recognise themselves in the myriad of false images intended for "implied" women, that is, women who do not exist, these images are dead constructs.

In modern society, one refers to these 'dead' images created by the media such as 'lollipop girls' (like Ally McBeal and Courtney Cox). The recent film, 'Bridget Jones's Diary', based on a novel by Helen Fielding, demonstrates this point precisely. The female protagonist, Bridget, is castigated throughout the movie for her 'verbal diarrhoea', excess weight, smoking and drinking habits. At thirty, she is regarded as a 'spinster' who cannot find a husband because she does not conform to the images of society. Renée Zellweger, the actress who portrays Bridget, had to gain at least ten pounds for the role. However, as soon as the film was finished, she lost all the weight and even more, being congratulated in various interviews for becoming fabulously skinny. 'Ordinary' women simply cannot keep up with these images, which are also perpetuated in literature: *'Die Rede vom 'killing women into art' ist bekannt geworden; alle literarischen Frauenbilder liefern danach, als männliche Projektionen, nur dunkle Spiegel, in denen reale Frauen sich nicht erkennen können – hinter denen sie sich aber vermuten'* (Osinski: 1998, p48).

Such patriarchal stereotyping is nothing new: a significant portion of its influence may be traced back to the *Aufklärung*. According to Friederike Hassauer (1988, as cited in McGowan: 1990, p263): *'Aufklärung hat keine Zukunft mehr, Weiblichkeit ist die Zukunft'*. One of the problems that German Feminist criticism deals with is the age of Humanism, or the *Aufklärung*. As explained in Chapter 2, Feminisms have rejected the ideal image of woman as the *Blaue Blume*. The feminist suspicion of the *Aufklärerische Epoche* is based on the double-bind of its 'humane' philosophy: it idolizes the female victim's tragic fate while excluding her from major participation in society at the same time. Women are depicted mostly as either docile virginal creatures or hysterical wenches (Medusa). Throughout *Voraussetzungen: Cassandra*, Wolf criticises the *Idolbild* or the victim image of Cassandra. McGowan is equally critical of the gender-skewed *Aufklärung*:

Feminists were suspicious of a humanism which, based on this tradition, excluded women precisely when it appeared to include them in a gender-neutral concept of humanity, and so they responded the more readily to the deconstruction of the Enlightenment edifice proposed by French thinkers like Derrida, Lacan, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault (McGowan: 1990, p263-264).

2.1.1.4 *Gender skewed perceptions*

In the absence of what McGowan has just referred to as 'a gender-neutral concept of humanity', gender skewedness inevitably prevails. This gender-skewed orientation has persisted for centuries and can be overcome only when women consciously decide to reject male stereotyping and the language and attitudes that accompany it. Only by analysing the constant creation of stereotypes, whether female or male (as Wolf has suggested previously in her wish to see an end to 'the battle of the sexes') will women liberate themselves from it:

Only insofar as women have been and are able to see themselves and the world without the blinding stereotypes that contribute to their exploitation, will they be able to envision a fundamentally radical and truly humanitarian utopia. We must therefore learn to recognize and analyze the images of women that are propagated by the patriarchal ideology so that we may begin to formulate alternative modes of living (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, pp1-2).

2.2 WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO PATRIARCHAL DESTRUCTIVENESS

No feminist school dealt within the scope of this research condones or associates themselves with the war-making principle or violence. Indeed, the First Wave of Feminism started after the First World War and its devastation of the human psyche, which was meticulously recorded by Virginia Woolf. The Second Wave of Feminism was engendered, in part at least, by the 1968 Youth Revolution and the international protest against the Vietnam War.

2.2.1 **The main routes of female response**

The main female responses to patriarchal destructiveness have focused on the creation of constructive alternatives.

2.2.1.1 *The creation of a feminist aesthetic*

Some critics, including Weigel, refrain from defining a female aesthetic because they regard any such definitions as an inherent part of the logocentric need to categorise and to label:

Während in Diskurs über 'weibliche Ästhetik' im letzten Jahrzehnt vielfach darauf verzichtet wurde, das Weibliche zu definieren, zu benennen, weil diese Funktionen als Bestandteile eines männlichen logozentrischen Denkens erkannt wurden, während es statt dessen umschrieben wurde mit Metaphern wie 'die Ränder des Spiegels', 'der blinde Fleck' u.a., so wurde im Laufe

dieses Diskurs das Weibliche, mit immer mehr Bedeutung besetzt, schließlich zur Metapher für all das, was der abendländischen Logik entgegengesetzt gedacht wird; für das A-Logische, das Dezentrische, das Uneindeutige und Uneinheitliche, für das Nicht-Festlegbare, oder zur Metapher für die Wahrheit, die sich nicht einnehmen läßt (Weigel: 1987, p197).

However, the distinction between female aesthetics and feminist poetics becomes more clearly discernable: the former remains broadly politically based while the latter concentrates on specifically individual female needs like the 'ich'. Still, the two categories overlap, what was formerly regarded as Lesbian literature might not be labelled as Feminist or Lesbian Separatist anymore because this stream has become less aggressive and political. These writings are now labelled 'Gay literature', a term with its own problematics. Bookstores and publishers tend to organise the work of female writers under labels such as 'Female Writing' or 'Women's literature'. Female literature has become increasingly focused on the female self rather than just its political aspects.

Drawing on the writings of Xavier Gauthier, McGowan makes the point that women should follow an alternative literary aesthetic route they have carved out by and for themselves otherwise the result will be alienation and disruption: *'Contemporary feminism has played a crucial part in the development of an alternative aesthetic, believing, as Xavier Gauthier puts it, that if women write as men do, 'they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt'* (McGowan: 1990, p264).

In pursuing this alternative route, there may well be differences between 'Frauenliteratur' and feminist literature, Jurgensen makes it clear that the two categories are not mutually exclusive, but may occur coincidentally in the work of female authors:

Some, like Christa Reinig and Karin Struck, may be identified with the feminist movement; others like Ingeborg Bachmann, Christa Wolf and Gabriele Wohmann, seem to display a somewhat greater independence. Whereas Reinig and Struck strive to express central thoughts and ideas of feminism, Bachmann, Wolf and Wohmann concentrate on imaginative interpretations of womanhood (Jurgensen: 1984, p16).

The new literary route McGowan perceives for women, and women writers in particular is likely to require a concomitant reconsideration of patriarchal language because it has been used to the detriment of women. Indeed, for some writers, activities such as writing and criticism are constituent parts of broader women's movements.

Pusch suggests that Feminisms are the constituent theory of the women's movement as Socialism constitutes the theoretical part of Communism: *'Ähnlich wie 'Sozialismus' sowohl die Lehre als auch die Bewegung des Sozialismus bezeichnet, kann 'Feminismus' sowohl die Theorie/Lehre der Frauenbewegung bezeichnen als auch die Bewegung selbst'* (Pusch: 1983, p13). She goes on to define Feminisms as the following: *'Der Feminismus ist eine Theorie, die alle Bereiche des Menschlichen betrifft und den patriarchalen Gehalt aller kulturellen Hervorbringungen des Mannes (der sich traditionell als Mensch schlechthin definiert) bloßlegt und kritisiert'* (Pusch: 1983, p14). Her definition of feminist literary theory is congruent with the broad definition of other feminists in the dissertation: the dissection, critical examination, and revision of the patriarchal domain. This broad definition might serve as an implicit 'theory' of Feminisms.

At present, however, the serious absence of theory remains. So far, no feminist critic has really expressed a meaningful theory of what exactly constitutes feminist art: *'Certainly the tension between tradition and experimentation reflects the difficulties in creating feminist art, at a time when the term itself, and what is meant by a 'feminist perspective' or 'feminist criticism' has not yet found a consensus'* (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, pp352-353).

Osinski tries to shed some light on her patriarchally-critical phrase, *'killing women into art'*, by defining two key concepts: 'female aesthetics' (a political approach: the 'personal is political') and 'feminist poetics' (literary criticism). According to Osinski, because these concepts are irreconcilable, women become confused:

Der Versuch, 'female aesthetics', eine weibliche Ästhetik, zu erfassen und 'feminist poetics', eine feministische Poetik, zu entwickeln, behob die Schwierigkeit nicht, die schon Kate Milletts feministische Frauenbilder-Kritik hatte erkennen lassen, sondern machte sie noch deutlicher: Politischer Feminismus und eine professionelle Literaturkritik mit akzeptablen Kriterien, die auch Nichtfeministen hätte überzeugen können, waren schwer zu vereinbaren. Dessen wurde sich feministische Literaturwissenschaftlerinnen Ende der 70er Jahre bewußt (Osinski, p49).

2.2.1.2 The creation of an alternative literature

Writing and the development of an alternative aesthetic have become perhaps the most powerful means by which women have sought to regain their voice so as to articulate their experiences in and of the patriarchy. Although none of the feminist literary critics have been able to establish what exactly a female literature would include, the examining of historical and individual dimensions of woman as writer might serve as a cornerstone of *Weibliches Schreiben*. Part of being a woman as author is the ability to say 'I', which is yet another major Wolfian theme: *'Das Ziel einer unverstellten Frauenliteratur*

ist dann erreicht, wenn es Frauen möglich sein wird, öffentlich 'ich' zu sagen, ohne Bezug zu nehmen auf männliche Bestimmungen ihrer Geschlechtsrolle' (Stephan & Weigel: 1983, p87).

In the meantime, despite the absence of a developed theory of female literature, it remains important for women to create a literature that speaks of the wrongs (and wrong-headedness) of war- and violence-based patriarchal society. This means, in turn, that female literature should not be obsessed with generalised feminist propaganda, but should speak instead of every woman's unique life experience. As Wolf has pointed out many times in both her fiction and literary essays, one should interrogate the pre-structured reality and create one's own *Wirklichkeit*.

Schmidt stresses the role female fiction will play in unmasking the patriarchy: *'It thus seems as if women's use of myth has come full circle in just one decade: from unmasking patriarchal traditions, through the attempt to develop new role-models or to reject models, to the use of female mythic figures to serve 'larger' political purposes'* (Schmidt: 1990, p262).

From a converse position, Belsey and Moore regard the construction of a female sub-culture as problematic, yielding a literature that results in essentialism:

The construction of a feminine subculture, a form of writing which is essentially different from men's, paradoxically shares something of the same difficulty. It too takes culture for nature. The danger here is that the emphasis on the difference tends either to have the effect of leaving things exactly as they are, with women eternally confined to a separate sphere, or to lead to a politics of separatism, which despairs of changing patriarchy and settles instead for an alternative space on the edges of it (Belsey & Moore: 1989, p10).

Jurgensen makes the distinction between 'Frauenliteratur' and feminist literature. 'Frauenliteratur' he defines as literature written by women authors who consciously write about their individual experiences: *'Eine Frau, die bewußt als Frau über sich 'selbst' schreibt (womit sie zugleich, geschlechtsbezogen, ein geteiltes Schicksal zeichnet), schafft Frauenliteratur'* (Jurgensen: 1983, p19). Feminist literature, on the other hand, is literature that 'fights' specifically for the liberation of all women. This process requires the feminist author to conform to feminist criteria. The feminist author is required to include a certain degree of feminist ideology (as is the case in any revolutionary movement with specific ideologies), including socio-political commentary, whether Lesbianism (Verena Stephan and Adrienne Rich), or Neo-Marxism and Pornography (Elfriede Jelinek). These authors are considered as belonging to the Feminist canon: *'Eine Frau, die sich als Ergebnis eines Bewußtseinsprozesses entschieden hat, kämpferisch für die sache der Frau zu wirken, leistet beim Schreiben einen Beitrag zur feministischen Literatur'* (ibid).

Offering insights from a gender-based perspective, Weigel argues that women write differently from men; consequently, they need to find an original language in which they can articulate the female experience. However, Weigel does not specify how women writers should create this unique way of writing so the concept remains somewhat vague: *'Es ginge darum, das 'spezifisch Weibliche' von Erfahrungen, Wahrnehmungen, Kenntnissen, Sehweisen etc. zu entdecken und dafür Ausdrucksformen (in der Sprache) zu finden. Hierin steckt das Postulat, daß Frauen anders schreiben'* (Weigel: 1987, p50). Nonetheless, Weigel uses the potent metaphor of the ghetto to describe the restrictive boundaries of conventional literary criticism and male literature:

Das Ästhetisch-Weibliche (...) ist Metapher für die Möglichkeit, aus den Ghettos der Definitionen und der Kategorien auszubrechen, die Konventionen, Bindungen und Legitimationen in einem ästhetischen Moment zu transzendieren, das allen Schriften, Bildern, ja aller Kunst vorausgeht und nur im Rückblick wiederum zu finden ist (Pichler: 1985, as cited from Weigel: 1987, p196).

Whether women will be able to write differently and uniquely remains to be seen, and is likely to persist as a debatable issue. Cocalis and Goodman, for example, raise some questions about that feminist literary stream which believes in the uniqueness of women writing:

How do women write? Do they, as women, write differently from men? There is indeed a strain of literary criticism that claims that women have a specifically female, universal function to fulfill in literature - that of Mother Protector. According to this view, it is and always has been the woman writer's task to complement male traditions and literary conventions (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, p337).

These authors do not agree wholeheartedly with the theory of exclusive female writing, calling it a *cul-de-sac*:

If 'female' is applicable to all women in all societies at any given point in time, is it perhaps just as misleading for us to seek a female aesthetic as it was to pursue a sex-limited literary criticism? The desire to proclaim a female mode of perception and expression strikes me as a dead end (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, p324).

However, in the pursuit of an appropriately female/feminist literature, there are pitfalls to be avoided. For instance, Jurgensen contends that the quality of a female literary work improves the further it distances itself from Feminism as an ideology. However, if this theory is proven to be true, authors should refrain from using any ideology in literary texts. Somewhere, a balance needs to be reinstated

between radical ideology and writing incorporating a particular philosophy. Women have the power to create their own likeness/image, yet if this image becomes so radical that even most women find it unacceptable, the radical branch of Feminism fails to provide the answer. In contrast with most revolutionary feminist literature, based on socio-political emancipation of women, (especially found in Anglo-American Feminist reception) Jurgensen describes 'Frauenliteratur' as essentially *Ich*-preoccupied: "*Female Literature* reveals itself as '*Ich-Literatur*', a literature, in other words, which tries to define the author both as woman and as writer – Women strive to become their own authors" (Jurgensen: 1984, p20). However, female literature is a still evolving sub-genre and literary criticism and should therefore not be strictly categorised or labelled. Although Jurgensen's distinction between 'female/women's' and 'feminist' literature is simplistic, it makes it less tedious to ponder about the essential difference between the two styles: '*Generally, it ought to be remembered that a 'female literature' is still in the making; it is a process of self-discovery at all levels. It would be wise therefore not to be too dogmatic about its qualities and characteristics*' (Jurgensen: 1984, p21).

If the creation of a new women's literature appears a complex and, at times, daunting task, the engendering of a literary criticism appropriate to it is no less so. Feminist literary criticism is described by Meese as a complex endeavour: '*Feminist criticism can be represented in the figure standing at an intersection grown complex because the paths through the territory and the obstacles on the way have been more clearly specified*' (Meese: 1986, p x). The complexity lies in the lack of a coherent theory: there is only a consistent non-theory: '*At the present, the variety of women's experiences that would have to be comprehended in a single theory cannot be reduced to simplicity without encoding in that theory the terms of its own undoing*' (ibid). However, Meese does share some of Wolf's viewpoints: that art should bring about change and challenge restrictions: '*It remains the artist's role to challenge social conventions and destroy artistic constraints in the process of making art*' (Meese: 1986, p6).

2.2.1.3 *The creation of a female language*

The creation of a female aesthetic might require a 'forelanguage' that forms a component of *l'écriture féminine* articulated by Hélène Cixous. This 'forelanguage' would draw on sources and resources other than the 'logos' of conventional semantics; it would be rooted in on primaeval motherhood - the concept of the Mother Goddess that forms the centre of matriarchal religions - or the Triple Goddess of Wiccans and Green Witchcraft. How possible such a language might be and why it has yet to be implemented by women authors remains to be seen. However, as McGowan suggests, some of Cixous's theories could result in an essentialism and biologism analogous to misogynist philosophy: '*Cixous is one of the feminist theorists (though 'theory' is inherently suspect to Cixous as a patriarchal concept) most prone to revert to essentialism and biologism, and from whom, therefore, much recent feminist theory distances itself*' (McGowan: 1990, p278).

Sigrid Weigel echoes Cixous's thinking about *l'écriture féminine* and 'forelanguage'. She believes that a woman's language (which equals the language of the 'Medusa') is complicated and could be described as a 'movement': '*Die Stimme der Medusa bzw. die Sprache der Frauen ist daher nichts einfach Gegebenes oder zu Konstruierendes, sondern eine Bewegung, der ein ständiger Perspektivenwechsel einhergeht*' (Weigel: 1987, p8).

One of the crucial uses for any female/feminist language would be the re-telling of female experiences through the deconstruction and reconstruction of myth. '*Wann Krieg beginnt, das kann man wissen, aber wann beginnt der Vorkrieg. Falls es da Regeln gäbe, müßte man sie weitersagen. In Ton, in Stein eingraben, überliefern*' (K, 1983). Wolf's description of the handing down or *Weitersagen* of mythic facts is regarded by Parkes and Williams as the essence of the (German) novel: '*This handing down is the task of this novel*' (Parkes & Williams: 1990, p17).

2.2 THE MAIN MEANS OF RESPONDING TO PATRIARCHAL DESTRUCTION

To avoid eternal anonymity in the ghettos of the patriarchy, women have adopted a variety of strategic responses to the depredations compelled upon them by the patriarchs.

2.3.1 The return to ancient healing religions

One alternative mode of living has been to turn anew to pagan religions that were originally practised by women priestesses, and less dominated by men and male-generated hierarchical organisational structures. In her books, *Die Göttin und ihr Heros* (1980) and *Die tanzende Göttin* (1982), Heide Göttner-Abendroth has described women have returned to old pagan religions like Green Witchcraft, Wicca (dealt with by the author, Starhawk) or to alternative healing approaches in order to escape male-dominated medical technocracy. One could say that the benign ways of the matriarchy are returning, perhaps not so far as to take over society, but far enough to create a healing influence on civilisation. As major subjects in women's writing, these topics are not feminist-based but rather woman-based. Women authors write more freely about women's issues and have learnt how to avoid the crusading zeal of the 1960s generation of Feminists.

2.3.2 The deconstruction of mythical materials and characters

Re-telling, discussed in Chapter 1, is a predominant feature in Feminist writing. It has already been observed that Wolf uses retelling and reconstruction to give a voice to her mythological female characters. However, the way in which Wolf perpetuates her female characters differs from their portrayal in most Feminist works: '*Suffice to say here that although the gross abuse of women is clearly*

one of the themes of 'Kassandra', no superior wisdom, insight or capacity for more humane leadership is ascribed to women in the novel' (Jenkinson: 1990, p236).

Ricarda Schmidt, a prominent German feminist literary critic, foregrounds Wolf's use of myth. She regards, like Wolf, the literary incorporation of myth as part of a loss of belief in modern 'civilisation', technocracy, logos, and ratio:

The fact that myth has met such widespread interest in recent years has generally been attributed to the social crisis of postmodern times, a crisis characterized by a loss of belief in progress, rationality, or even revolution, and by a lack of justification for social institutions, a lack of meaning (Schmidt: 1990, p253).

According to Schmidt, myth is one of the means by which women can regain their voice after being on the periphery of history for so long:

For women – who for the greatest part of history have been excluded from participation in public life and power – myths have been the additional attraction that they tell stories of extraordinary women, which may serve as an exploration of woman's mythic, historical and potential role in society (Schmidt: 1990, pp253-254).

Although simplistically put, David Jenkinson too rightly suggests that Wolf's *Kassandra* portrays the female experience in a patriarchal society:

They [The discrepancies that exist between 'Kassandra' and 'Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung'] suggest that it began in its author's mind as a novel about the experience of women in a male-dominated world facing the threat of extinction, in the form of a retelling of the story of the fall of Troy, which has been told from the point of view of the victors (Homer) and the ultimate beneficiaries (Virgil), but not from either the Trojans' or from a woman's point of view (Jenkinson: 1990, p235).

2.3.4 The re-appropriation of womanhood

Re-construction, re-reading, and rewriting play major roles in feminist reception and the re-appreciation of womanhood. Belsey and Moore, for example, regard re-thinking the past as an important aspect of feminist writing. They call this concept 'Thinking back through the Mother', a theme which Wolf herself explores in *Kassandra*. She herself becomes a daughter of *Kassandra* through her reflecting, remembering, and writing about *Kassandra's* story:

'A woman writing thinks back through her mother'; thinking back through the mother becomes at once recuperation and revision. The rediscovery of a female literary tradition need not mean a return to specifically 'female' (that is, potentially confining) domains, any more than the feminist colonising of Marxist, psycho-analytic, or poststructuralist modes of thought necessarily means a loss of that alien and critical relation which is one aspect of women's inheritance (Belsey & Moore: 1989, pp61-62).

According to these two critics, Wolf's *Kassandra* was written in the feminist paradigm, re-appropriating the female voice in history. The Parkes and Williams approach emphasises the retelling and deconstruction of (female) history: *'With Christa Wolf's 'Kassandra' – in the approving judgement of feminist-inspired literary criticism – the oppressed voice of women, usually divided and dispersed amidst the chorus of suffering that is human history, has made itself heard both eloquently and emphatically'* (Parkes & Williams: 1990, p22). They concentrate their discussion on Wolf's deconstruction of the archetypal mythical *Kassandra* and how she inverted the typical *Muster* in which the female had been portrayed: *'Precisely because the fictional figure of Kassandra is portrayed as archetypal with regard to the history of female oppression and female suffering, in Christa Wolf she must regain her voice, which must now be heard. Form must succeed where history has failed'* (Parkes & Williams: 1990, p23).

2.4 THE PREDOMINANT SUBJECTS IN THESE RESPONSES, THEIR ROUTES, AND THEIR MEANS

2.4.1 The unique female experience beyond the patriarchy

Wolf promulgates her own 'subgenre', *subjektive Authentizität*, that keeps reality, the *Genausein*, intact. At the same time, the 'subjective' side of the writing process becomes equally important, otherwise the search for the Self would become impossible because the Self is defined in subjective terms. Feminisms are vehemently opposed to women's writing being called 'subjective' while male literature is defined as 'objective'. However, many Feminists do not have an alternative to this so-called subjectivity. Deconstructing, re-constructing, and re-writing all-male concepts is, in itself, subjective because it is done only within the context of Feminisms. Cocalis and Goodman concur:

The very norms that we accept as objective reality, as the basis of mimetic art, must therefore be reassessed in the context of feminist literary analysis. It is curious that a man's narration of a woman's story from his perspective is praised for an objectivity which does not challenge the traditional stereotypes of women's 'objective reality', while a woman's narration of her own

experience, which contradicts the traditional male definitions of women's reality is dismissed as subjective (Cocalis & Goodman: 1982, p35).

Taking up Wolf's theme of the *Stimmlosigkeit der Frau/Ichverlust*, Jurgensen believes that women's literature can combat the silence of the woman. The ultimate goal of 'Frauenliteratur' is the *Vereinbarung* of the sexes, as well as the balancing of the personal and the political:

In der Literatur wie in der Klassengesellschaft allgemein geht es um die 'Stimme' der Frau. Die Frauenliteratur kann einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten zum 'Subjektwerden des Menschen' beiderlei Geschlechts. Sie betreibt somit Aufklärung im Dienst einer sozialen Humanität einer Gesellschaft, die das Individuum zu schätzen weiß. Aus dem Anderssein der Frauen soll sich eine neue einsichtige Gemeinsamkeit der Geschlechter ergeben. Diesen Prozeß sozial wie künstlerisch zu artikulieren und zu fördern, ist eine Aufgabe der Frauenliteratur (Jurgensen: 1983, p40).

As witnesses and scribes of their own experiences, women have been compelled to re-consider the central role of the writer. Magdalene Heuser, for instance, brings together societal change and writing as a feminist theory, another theme that has preoccupied Wolf throughout her own writing career:

Wichtig für das Verständnis dessen, was sich hier entwickelt, scheint mir der Hinweis auf den Zusammenhang zwischen gesellschaftlicher Veränderung, wie sie durch die Frauenbewegung in Angriff genommen worden ist, und Schreiben. Es ist der Zusammenhang zwischen Erkennen, Beschreiben und Analysieren der eigenen Situation und ihrer gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen und dem Selber-das-Wort-Ergreifen (Heuser: 1983, p120).

All dimensions of woman as a creative entity are scrutinised critically by feminist literary criticism. From *Christa T.* onwards, the female writer has been an integral part of Wolf's literary concerns, how women can find themselves through the act of telling or by being witnesses in the tradition of the *Kassandra* character:

Die Untersuchung zur Frauenliteratur befragen den historischen und individuellen Emanzipationweg der Frau als Schreibende, d.h. die Frau als Verfasserin, Autorin, Erzählerin und Heldin, und sie fragen danach, ob Frauen sich mit ihren eigenen Weiblichkeitsentwürfen aus den männlichen Frauenbildern befreit und welche Schreibweise und Erzählmuster sie dabei entwickelt haben (Stephan & Weigel: 1983, p8).

2.4.2 The gender roles of women and men

While men and women, male and female, have been stereotypically depicted and defined in terms of polarities, there remains a prevailing gender-skewedness in any male-dominated society. Ingeborg Drewitz believes that, in order to overcome a gender-skewed society, both genders must communicate and change the fundamental issues that assist in perpetuating victimisation and misogyny: '*Emanzipation kann...nicht anders als eine Aufgabe für beide Geschlechter begriffen und geleistet werden*' (as quoted by Jurgensen: 1983, p8). As is the case in any form of discrimination, those discriminated against want some sort of retribution or revenge on the perpetrators. In some instances, certain feminists' need for vengeance becomes *Weiblichkeitswahn: Doch die alten Wunden sitzen tief. Zu groß ist die Versuchung, die neu entstehende Frauenliteratur einseitig für sich in Anspruch zu nehmen*' (Jurgensen: 1983, p8).

Jurgensen writes from a 1980s perspective. Twenty years of evolving female and feminist literature has made a considerable difference their development. Feminism nowadays is almost exclusively linked with political endeavours and the social upliftment of women in straitened circumstances. The issues of the sixties and seventies have become somewhat outmoded and have been replaced by issues such as HIV/AIDS, rape (whether the woman is a sex worker or whether rape happens inside marriage), overpopulation, abortion, female circumcision; as well as the problematics of being a working mother. Marie Stopes clinics have been erected everywhere, whereas twenty years ago, women still had to fight for the right to use contraceptive measures and frequently had to endure, or succumb to, street abortions. Fertility clinics are mushrooming, natural selection takes place to avoid generic or inherited disease, women want the right to bear their partner's children after his death while embryos are being used in cloning research.

The rectification of societal gender skewedness would also benefit men because they too are essentially, if unconsciously, victims of the patriarchy. One important step in women's liberation from the patriarchy has been overlooked by the Cocalis and Goodman theory. Although their emancipatory theory is insightful insofar as women should be able to recognise stereotypes, another step prior to their 'recognising' process has been skipped: men as victims of the same system. Such is Wolf's stance in *Kassandra*. Because women have been the victims mostly of males, they become the victims of victims. Both men and women should stop this vicious cycle of victimisation. If men could understand their own victimisation through 'brainwashing' (as in war-propaganda, technocracy, and pornography, for example), they too might be able to recognise women's abuse and victimisation. While women-only groups can produce a certain number of solutions and create problem-solving strategies to curb victimisation, collaboration between both genders – powerfully symbolised in the way Ariadne enables

Theseus to escape - is essential to finding a way out of the labyrinth, otherwise patriarchal society will persist.

The rectification of societal gender skewedness self-evidently raises issues about men, women, and equality. Wolf's view on equality of women in the GDR is somewhat opposed by another standpoint: although women have had power in the workplace, the basic Stalinism that prevailed throughout the GDR's forty years of existence has been overlooked. Major political decisions that had an impact on the Volk although they were not made by them - such as shooting GDR citizens trying to escape over the Berliner Mauer - were still made by male-dominated institutions.

Zwar ist die Gleichberechtigung formal in der DDR viel weiter vorangetrieben – so sind die Frauen in den vorgestellten Erzählungen wohl nicht zufällig alle berufstätig, der Typ der Nur-Hausfrau kommt gar nicht vor – aber das grundlegende Problem, nämlich die Beziehung der Geschlechter zueinander und die patriarchalische Grundstruktur der Gesellschaft – nicht gelöst (Stephan & Weigel: 1983, p159).

2.4.3 Hope and utopian ideals

Some critics feel that women writers (perhaps critics too) should not lose sight of the significance of incorporating some utopian dimensions into their thinking and writing. Stephan and Weigel's theory has this to say about the loss of the utopian dimension and *Hoffnung*:

Die Suche nach der verborgenen Frau ist Arbeit, mühsame Spurensuche in Archiven und in der Erinnerung, beschwerliche Rekonstruktion weiblicher Geschichte aus den gefundenen Mosaiksteinen, wachsame Deutungsarbeit mit der Bereitschaft zum Mißtrauen gegenüber bereitstehenden Erklärungen und Lösungen, aber auch Trauerarbeit am Verlust trügerischer Hoffnungen und Arbeit an einer konkreten Utopie (ibid).

Nonetheless, the authors end their book with the Utopian principle, a further Wolfian theme. They believe that the present 'Frauenbewegung' needs utopian thoughts in order for it not to become too sterile: *'Utopien sind ja niemals Patentrezepte für eine bessere Zukunft, sondern bestenfalls Markierungen und Wegweiser dorthin. Gerade die Frauenbewegung heute braucht, wie jede politische Bewegung, wenn sie nicht steril werden will, utopisches Denken'* (Stephan & Weigel; 1983, p172).

'Was aber möglich ist, in der Tat, ist die Veränderung. Und die verändernde Wirkung, die von neuen Werken ausgeht, erzieht uns zu neuer Wahrnehmung, neuem Gefühl, neuem Bewußtsein (Ingeborg Bachmann: 1959/1960, as cited by Stephan & Weigel: 1983, p127): 'neue Wahrnehmung' and 'neues

Bewußtsein' are the *Leitbegriffe* in Bachmann's works. These two concepts pertain to Wolf's philosophy and to feminist literary criticism. Although, Bachmann and Wolf are closer where ideology and ideas about the female are concerned, the words - '*neue Wahrnehmung*' and '*neues Bewußtsein*' - also pertain to Feminisms. The seeking of new alternatives, the reconstruction of an old world, the development of a new consciousness for women are the main goals of the feminist approach. The major difference between Wolf and Feminisms is that their approaches, styles, and political convictions differ to such an extent that they seem to be poles apart. Wolf has criticised countries like the USA for their feminist movements, because, according to her, if there had been emancipation in the first place, there would be no need for such a movement. Feminisms (and especially the Anglo-American school) opt for a very politicised approach that focuses on socio-political issues.

As noted earlier, Wolf has never completely lost faith in the human existence and believes that, somehow, one will find the way out of the existentialist maze. Indeed, the Parkes and Williams article recognises Wolf's belief in escaping the fatal minefield of alienation and *Heimatslosigkeit*: '*Although the process of suffering is pursued instead of allowing the marks of derangement, of suffering and of oppression in themselves to become form, form itself heals the open wound*' (Parkes & Williams: 1990, p23). The one shortcoming of the article is the use of the word 'feminist' when referring to Wolf's work. One would rather prefer terms such as 'female' or 'woman-inspired' rather than 'feminist' because Wolf's main literary preoccupations are less concerned with the socio-societal equality of women and rather more with the need for women to overcome their alienation as they strive towards the emancipation of the soul.

(3) CONCLUSION: THE MERITS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM OF THE WORKS OF CHRISTA WOLF

*Literatur entsteht überhaupt
nur aus Widersprüchen,
sonst entsteht Langeweile
Christa Wolf*

Christa Wolf's oeuvre is not without its contradictions. Although she likes portraying women as her protagonists because they interest her more than men, Wolf says (in various interviews) that she does not particularly give more status to her female characters. Her life philosophy is that men and women should work together to reach some sort of consensual peace in the so-called battle of the sexes. Although these represent two conflicting views, Wolf has said that she is interested in the *Widerspruch* in individuals as well as their *Brüche*. Especially in *Medea*, Wolf has constructed an *Erzählgewebe* that

deliberately shows conflicting opinions about Medea. Wolf's work and philosophies are never based on one exclusive, and therefore limited, gender-bound perspective.

IN SEARCH OF A FEMALE UTOPIA

One of the merits of Feminisms to be found in Wolf's work is the search for a female utopia. In particular, both *Kassandra* and *Medea* foreground the loss of the matriarchy and the concomitant loss of woman's voice. Feminisms also welcome a female utopia as it distinguishes itself from the war-making patriarchy. Wolf believes that the matriarchy preceded the patriarchy which then proceeded to destroy belief in the Goddess. The healing properties of the ancient goddess religions were replaced by the 'Heros'. Subsequently, the emphasis shifted almost entirely to male gods. Wolf writes about the 'logos' and dualistic thinking of the male-centered Greece that destroyed not only all emotion and sense of *Schmerz* but, in fact, everything that makes human beings uniquely human. Matriarchal specialists, including Göttner-Abendroth, write extensively about the roots of the matriarchy, the Goddess and her religions themselves, thus returning to, and reaffirming, matrilineal principles. As can be seen in *Medea: Voraussetzungen* (1998), Wolf herself corresponded with Göttner-Abendroth in her search for more information about, and understanding of, the origins of the goddess cult and Medea's healing properties. Yet Wolf's approach to the matriarchy differs somewhat from that of feminists' philosophies: she does not believe in a simple return of the matriarchy in modern society because such a return would merely repeat the dictatorship that characterised the patriarchy: *Weiblichkeitswahn* is just as destructive as *Männlichkeitswahn*.

Some feminist schools do not believe in the existence of the pre-historic matriarchy and therefore adopt different approaches from Göttner-Abendroth. Other feminist literary critics who believe that all male-based culture, including its language and literature, should be rejected; further, some of these critics go so far as to assert that Lesbianism necessarily constitutes the essence of the female experience. These critics belong to the Lesbian Separatist stream and/or the essentialist and/or biologism-rooted feminist schools.

IMAGES OF WAR

To explore Wolf's work is to focus the critical lens on Pacifism, and, more especially, on her involvement with the 'Frauen und Frieden' project during the 1980s. Being an outspoken humanist – Wolf has said in an interview that she has always been on the side of the oppressed in the world – means opting to change a world that is fraught with the sacrifice of human beings. The framework of myth made it possible for Wolf to address the Stalinism of her time. The slaughter and extermination of

the Trojan people record Wolf's own witnessing of brutality, both of the Second World War and of the wanton killing of GDR citizens trying to escape to the Federal Republic. In *Medea*, the same idea pertains to both Colchis and Corinth. These two worlds were geographically so remote from each other, and their cultures so different, that Medea could reasonably think that she would at last find the paradise she was looking for. Her expectations are shattered when she finds out the dark secret of Corinth: the sacrifice of Iphinoe. Through her use of myth, Wolf excavates the *dunkler Fleck* of pre-historic societies then links ancient violence with modern slaughter. The point that Wolf makes is that there is little to distinguish human behaviour in mythological times from modern 'civilisation'. This is exactly Wolf's reason for the *Humanisierung* of literature, to bring about change in society through the act of witnessing and recording (through writing) reality, of naming things '*wie sie sind*'. Wolf never hesitated in confronting taboos of society; she was always trying to dissect her own taboos and *Selbstzensur*.

Like Wolf, the feminist movement treats the patriarchal principle of sacrifice and war as an issue in conflict with its ideologies. Both the First and Second waves of the feminist movement have their roots in anti-war ideology as can be seen in Virginia Woolf's work (after the First World War) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (during the Vietnam War). Feminisms protest not only against physical war but also the war waged against women through the centuries. One could regard this battle as the 'silent' war, because, once the patriarchy had taken over, women became voiceless. Historical examples of silencing the female can be found in the expulsion of the matriarchal religions by Christianity, the witch burnings of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the almost universal disenfranchisement of women that persisted until the 20th century. Even at the opening of the 21st century, that disenfranchisement persists in numerous countries, perhaps most notoriously in Afghanistan under the pathologically brutal patriarchy of the Taliban regime. A pertinent phrase delineating the historical disregard of women is to be found in the title of Gilbert and Gubar's book: *The Madwoman in the Attic* while Stephan and Weigel provide a most appropriate summing-up of the silent woman: *die verborgene Frau*.

THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

Christa Wolf does not subscribe to an early statement from the Second Wave: 'the personal is political'. The Wolfian literary consciousness may be articulated in the following way: literature should not be a mere extension of a certain ideology, philosophy, or sociology. The written word should articulate a *Welt/Lebensgefühl* that forms the basis for the individual's *Selbstfindung*. Wolf reaches a realisation of this philosophy only after her discovery of Socialist Realism's constraints. *Christa T.* was her attempt to break the conventions of such a literary ideology. Wolf's refusal to be part of any -ism demonstrates that politics are not her primary focus in literature. To this extent then, she distinguishes herself from 'feminist aesthetics' and its major preoccupation with politics.

Feminisms, on the other hand, are very much socio-politically focused, especially the Anglo-American school. Modern Feminisms have their roots in the politically-charged 1968 Youth Revolution and have been outspoken in the political arena ever since. As was shown in Jakobson's linguistic model (Chapter 1), Feminist literary theories are preoccupied with the CODE; that is to say, in their particular case, with the Gender-bound and Political dimensions. As was explained in Chapter 1, Feminists write about the political dimension of their ideologies and how they want to change the male-dominated world through active politics. The 'personal is political' constitutes the slogan primarily of hard-core feminists who believe that the two spheres cannot be separated.

THE DE-/RE-CONSTRUCTION OF A PATRIARCHY

Deconstruction is a concept inherent in the ideologies of Feminist literary criticism. However, most feminists employ a modified version of Derridian deconstructive theory; indeed, some of them were schooled specifically in his concepts. Because the core of Feminisms believes that the male world must be reconstructed, even Derrida's deconstruction finds itself deconstructed by the feminists to suit their literary needs. Other Feminist schools believe in adopting deconstruction without modification. However, as a result, they have been criticised for using a male-based theory articulated in a male-based vocabulary. Consequently, a feminist vocabulary has emerged, containing words such as 're-reading', 'modifying', 're-writing', 're-vision', and 'de-/re-construction', to mention only a few. (More vocabulary of the feminist kind has already been touched on in Chapter 1.) Feminisms consist basically of a number of ideologies concerned with modifying the gender-biased patriarchal world; they therefore constitute theories that are still developing and evolving. Although Feminist critics like Cixous and Irigaray were students of Jacques Lacan, they saw fit, as evolving feminists, to deconstruct his theories because they express ideas that sometimes border on the misogynist.

Women's history is held captive in the silent tradition. Consequently, women do not possess a literary tradition comparable to its male counterpart and, consequently, have had to mould their own. However, a female literature cannot be engendered *in vacuo*: assuming the male tradition and all its embodiments as their starting-point, feminists radically reject, oppose, and deconstruct it to create their own alternative history. Belsey and Moore, for example, call their deconstruction 'rethinking through the mother'. Feminisms could be regarded as a continuum of various ideas, theories, and ideologies resulting in a multi-dimensional, pluralistic approach. On this continuum, contradictions and paradoxes are manifold. These contradictions lie at the heart of the feminist dimension because there are so many schools and evolving theories. However, the spacious minefield of Feminisms can be charted, and its boundaries defined, by its determination to modify and deconstruct the male world and its words, deploying socio-politics, literary theories, and/or psycho-linguistics in its armoury.

Christa Wolf uses deconstruction in the context of myth. The Wolfian deconstructive approach does not directly relate to Derridian theory, however. Her main interest is to deconstruct the constituents of the original myths featuring Cassandra and Medea so as to reconstruct and retell their stories. Yet, she does not deconstruct these myths in their entirety: she still uses the 'skeleton' of the mythological variant(s). Re-telling the myth from a woman's point of view and giving her mythological characters a voice are crucial components of Wolf's re-constructive approach. She wants to portray the female neither as victim nor as *idol*. Yet deconstructing misogynist images of mythological women does not mean that Wolfian characters are idealised; they remain essentially self-critical and *brüchig*. Sometimes they are compelled to undertake long journeys before self-discovery prevails, and/or to overcome the split between two worlds (as in Cassandra's case). Wolf does not deconstruct in any feminist sense but rather in her own particular way to convey her ideas on mythological women and their relevance to their counterparts in modern society.

Myth provides a means by which both Feminisms and Wolf can address the patriarchy in a critical way that, simultaneously, employs various strategies drawn from deconstructive theory. On the continuum of multi-dimensional perspectives, these strategies vary. So, in one work, Wolf might be placed in the same position as some feminists while, in another, she might be remote from others in her deconstructive methods.

WEIBLICHES SCHREIBEN: A TUNNEL OF MIRRORS

As was noted in Chapter 1, many approaches prevail as far as understanding what constitutes feminist literature is concerned. Cixous's theory of 'l'écriture féminine' engenders a female 'forelanguage' and a literature focusing exclusively on the female. Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism entails a focus on women writers and the exhumation of women writers from the past who have been neglected and ignored. Thus, gynocritics focus on the WRITER of Jakobsen's model. Complementing Showalter's concept, Alice Jardine's Gynesis is preoccupied with feminist readers who alter the act of reading by disregarding the logos. Gynesis embodies the READER dimension of Jakobsen's linguistic model. Toril Moi writes about the Pluralism of Feminisms, regarding pluralistic approaches as being sometimes a 'minefield' of approaches with a concomitant explosiveness in its debates. While Meese focuses on 'gynocentrism', the female-gender equivalent of phallocentrism, Mary Jacobus seeks to elucidate the 'repressed messages' of women in all disciplines throughout the ages. Uneven though this multiplicity of approaches may be, it enables feminists to develop theories about female writing in a non-restrictive way and to adopt inter-disciplinary approaches to their materials while avoiding the pervasive constraints of the patriarchy. Jonathan Culler (2000: p122) has called feminism "a space of debate".

In contemplating the act of female writing - '*Was ist weibliches Schreiben?*' - Wolf does not formulate a theory or assign writing to only women authors, and she never uses the phrase, 'feminist' writing when talking about her own work. However, Wolf does believe that women should be witness to their lives and times: Cassandra is the exemplary embodiment of this *Zeugenschaft*. Indeed, Wolf regards this mythological female as perhaps the first woman 'author' in human history. Cassandra's story was originally rooted in the oral tradition, and was only later taken over by patriarchal writers. Women played a central part in keeping the Cassandra-story alive. One could regard this female story-telling sub-genre as a 'silent tradition' because the alternative version of Cassandra - the one from a woman's point of view - has been locked away throughout the centuries. The *Idaberg* cult symbolises the essential secrecy of this female tradition. The Skamander-community had no official existence and one could talk openly about Cybele and participate in the festivals of the Goddess only outside the borders of Troy. Wolf introduces the matriarchal *Idaberg* into *Kassandra* as a symbol of female traditions that had to be kept secret and away from the destructive world of the male: '*Women have always been the guardians of wisdom and humanity which makes them natural, but usually secret, rulers*' (Charlotte Wolff, p10 as quoted by Exley: 1993) The core of these female traditions is oral: Wolf regards herself as one of Cassandra's daughters, passing on the truth about her mythological forebear. This truth is Wolf's *weibliches Schreiben*. Wolfian female writing does not condemn a male literature - the 'big stream' - but sees itself as part of the flow of the female rivulet, *ein winziges Rinnsal*. Her *weibliches Schreiben* refuses to focus on taking revenge on, or competing with, male literature, and does not attempt to deconstruct or rewrite all male theory or writing. *Weibliches Schreiben* engenders the witnessing of the truth as perceived and told by the female writer - or by her counterparts, the pre-historic storytellers. Her work emphasises the female principle rather than the 'heros' of the male singers and classical writers. The same can be said about *Christa T.* Although Wolf had not written specifically about female writing at the time of the novel, *Christa T.* is, nonetheless, a female witness. The novel draws on fragmented scraps of paper, diary-entries, and old assignment papers (such as the one on Storm) written by *Christa T.* This *Hinterlassenschaft* shows how female writing may also be fragmented and *brüchig* as it speaks about the pain of being the outsider, the *Anpassungsunfähige* in 'normal society'. At the same time, the act of writing, no matter how fragmented it may be, becomes therapeutic for the individual. Writing was the means by which *Christa T.* could attempt to make some sense of the world around her and to capture in writing her paradoxical nature as she struggled with it throughout her life. One could regard the therapeutic dimension of writing to be equally true of Wolf herself; she created *Medea* after intense personal attacks were launched against her after the publication of *Was bleibt*. Writing, she has said in earlier interviews, is the centre of her existence, and, in this regard, she has not changed her outlook: she remains a *Zeugin* and a daughter of Cassandra.

WHAT REMAINS: IMAGES OF WOMEN. THE FINAL CONCLUSION

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself.

John Berger

Feminist literary theory can be seen as a funnel of female images: sometimes idealistic and utopian; sometimes matriarchal and Great Motherly; and sometimes poetic and fearless. Feminisms embody the vortex of the female psyche: distorted images of women, contradictions, paradoxes, and *Weiblichkeitswahn*. Feminists have asserted female literature and, at times, destroyed it. Feminisms constitute a theory of non-theories that reflect the hidden female in the mirror; the madwoman in the attic. At the same time, Feminist literary criticism can be self-devouring like the Uroboros, and in conflict with itself throughout eternity. In this regard, Feminisms have more shortcomings than merits when used as a paradigm for examining Christa Wolf's work. The core of the disagreement between her work and that of Feminisms is that neither Wolf nor her work conforms to any -ism. Although Gynocentrism or *Weiblichkeitswahn* cannot be attributed to all Feminisms, it is the foundation for the gender-based theories of feminist literary criticism. Feminisms are rooted in gender. Wolf's writing is opposed to Gynocentrism and is, consequently, not rooted exclusively in gender ideology.

Even the merits of feminist criticism are two-edged. Congruent with Feminisms, Wolf uses deconstruction, rewriting, and myth in her work. In this regard, then, feminist theory constitutes a merit. However, Wolf's use of deconstruction and myth differs radically from established feminist usage. Thus, Wolf may be regarded as a female or woman writer, using female protagonists to relate their experiences and *Zeugnis*. While her novels are based in the main on the female experience, they are not centred on a specific gender ideology. Wolf's work is too multi-dimensional and diverse to be classified by any such simplistic labels. Sadly, however, most feminist literary approaches/"theories" and ideologies are unable to resist the temptations of categorising and labelling. Overall, feminist critics have ignored Wolf's background and her GDR experience when dealing with her work, and, in the process, have confused her words, her work, her particular aesthetic with a generalised and therefore imprecise feminist aesthetic. Wolf wants literature to contribute to an understanding between women and men, rather than to create, or perpetuate, the split between the two genders: '*The time has come for them [women] to rule openly, but together with and not against men*' (Charlotte Wolff, p10 as quoted by Exley: 1993).

In excavating many taboos and truths from a hidden past, Christa Wolf has brought to light much of what feminists have come to regard as the truth about women. It could be argued, therefore, that her work should be read and interpreted within the paradigm of contemporary Feminisms, discussed in Chapter 1. Her concern with feminist issues notwithstanding, Wolf cannot be categorised as a mainstream feminist writer, however, because she speaks her own truth, a truth too complex to be confined within the strictures of any -ism label. This is the dark path where Christa Wolf's talent has led her: to witness and record things the way they are, despite the risks so neatly captured in Muriel Rukeyser's words (Rukeyser: 1953, as quoted by Lowe: 1991): *'What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.'*

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This list of references is divided into three sections. The first lists primary texts by Christa Wolf, listed alphabetically by title, while the second consists of critical materials devoted specifically to Wolf's work. The third section contains titles dealing with writing on feminism, feminist thought, feminist critical works, women's writing and the like. Works in the second and third sections are listed alphabetically by name while works by the same author are presented in date order. In the dissertation itself, abbreviations for several of Christa Wolf's primary works (as listed immediately below) have been used. These abbreviations are given in brackets after the respective titles.

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SUMMARY

During earlier research, it became evident Feminist Literary Criticism could offer useful insights when reading Christa Wolf's work. At the same time, such criticism revealed certain limitations which inhibit a full and accurate reading of Wolf's work. Given this situation, an exploration of the merits and shortcomings of Feminist Literary Criticism when applied to selected works of Christa Wolf became necessary. The research question has been articulated thus: What are the merits and shortcomings of Feminist Literary Criticism when applied to selected works of Christa Wolf? Because the Feminist Movement lacks dominant theory, the question arises whether Feminism can be seen as a literary theory/criticism that can serve as an appropriate means of investigating Christa Wolf's work. A corollary to the research question consequently emerged: does Feminism offer a literary theory or rather a philosophy/ideology based on a diversity of presumptions, gender included? In order to seek answers to these questions, the following dimensions are addressed:

- (a) A brief historical background and critical overview of Feminism;
- (b) An exploration of the multiplicity and diversity of the Feminist approaches and methodologies and the question of whether an integrated Feminist theory exists at present;
- (c) A further exploration of differences between the Anglo-American and French 'schools' of Feminist because such theories impact upon the study; German Feminist Criticism is also dealt with;
- (d) A consideration of debates concerning the terms **female** writing, **feminist** writing and **feminine** writing based on Feminist distinctions between female, feminist and feminine as well as the difference between gender and sex.
- (e) A consideration of Christa Wolf's creative vision of a Utopian Society and its relationship to the Feminist Movement's critical stances towards patriarchies throughout history.
- (f) A discussion of the discrepancies between female and feminist re-tellings of mythical materials as well as the manner in which Wolf deconstructs and reconstructs prehistoric myth in such a way that patriarchal misrepresentations are made evident.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The opening chapter offers a critical overview of the main premises of Feminist Criticism, drawn from major and/or contemporary sources. Part of this discussion falls on writings generated especially by German and American feminist critics who focus on the reception of Christa Wolf's work. The focal point of discussion is whether the Feminist Movement offers a literary-critical theory that can be applied meaningfully to the works of Christa Wolf.

Chapter 1 is followed by three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), each devoted to discussion of an individual text by Wolf: *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, *Kassandra* and *Medea* respectively. Methodologically, each chapter manifests a tripartite structure consisting of (a) a detailed discussion of Feminist Criticism of the specific text; (b) a hermeneutic examination of the text itself; and (c) an explication of the similarities and differences between (a) and (b) to show the merits and shortcomings of Feminist criticism of the text.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter 5, examines some of Wolf's non-fictional work with a view to delineating her perspectives on the major gender themes and motifs in her fiction while the final chapter offers a discussion of the findings. The dissertation concludes with a list of references.