SPACE AND PLACE IN REVISIONIST NARRATIVES: GEORG JOHANNESEN'S

KASSANDRA AND CHRISTA WOLF'S *KASSANDRA*

by

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A THESIS

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The revisionist narrative is a sub-genre of postmodernist literature, in which established narratives are re-written from a perspective for which they did not account. This term goes beyond "historiographic metafiction" to include fictional narratives, because both historical and fictional narratives can illustrate many possible representations for the event in question. The treatment of space and place are central points at which revisionist narratives expose dominant power systems during the author's own era and offer new possibilities of reality to the readers. Georg Johannesen's play *Kassandra* and Christa Wolf's novel *Kassandra* change the perspective of landscape in Homer's *The Iliad* to reveal underlying power structures and to emphasize the rejection of absolute truths; these power structures in ancient Troy then point to parallel power structures in the contemporary societies of the authors. In this manner, landscape within

revisionist narratives is essential for exposing the malleability of perspective in history and fiction.

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For my moms.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Revisionism is a term that has no clear ideological bent, but its use in history and literature demonstrates an extreme split between its connotations in the two areas of study. In history, revisionism has largely been used in reference to ideologically conservative rewritings of narratives that concern events deemed historical truths in the belief systems of particular cultures (Hutcheon, *Politics* 47). This revisionism is chiefly connected to deniers of the Holocaust and different nations' practices of altering or censoring historical texts in order to control their citizens (Lipstadt 31; Markwick 222). In contrast to the negative historical use of the term, revisionism in literary studies has been utilized mainly in order to oppose traditional cultural views and give voice to marginalized groups, dealing with concepts such as race, class and gender, specifically within feminist literature (Mileur 5; Mudge 245; Shawcross 18). I believe that the literary term revisionism needs to be expanded to include narratives traditionally considered to be history, because both types of narratives illustrate one out of many possible representations for the event in question. My term revisionism points to the process of taking established narratives and re-writing them from an unconventional perspective for which the traditional narrative did not account, which then opens up the readers to the possibility of different ways of thinking about their world. Such a term includes historical

as well as literary texts, because both types of text are representations of something that we can never experience as an absolute truth.

As revisionist narratives deal heavily with the notion of representation and re-representation in every facet of society, from historical and artistic space to occurrences in everyday life, this term finds many parallels in postmodernist theory. The endless possibility of new interpretations of a single object, idea, or event, without reference to an underlying concept of reality, sets the postmodernist theory apart from its predecessors, in literature as well as history. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many historians admitted that some historical narratives may be partial or incorrect, and "sympathies may warp the truth" (Shotwell 9). However, for these historians, especially those in the positivist tradition, the term history was still connected to the pursuit of an absolute "scientific truth" (Shotwell 10 – 11; Tosh 109). Leopold von Ranke's famous phrase expresses such: historians should strive to portray history *wie es gewesen ist* (Eaglestone 23). Debates about historical fact have included a view of history as truth as recently as the 1950s, as L.B. Namier demonstrates:

> The function of the historian is akin to that of the painter and not of the photographic camera; to discover and set forth, to single out and stress that which is of the nature of the thing, and not to reproduce indiscriminately all that meets the eye. (Namier 8)

Even though Namier does acknowledge that historians select which historical facts to emphasize and which to leave out, according to personal motivations, he still reinforces the idea that these historical facts reference an absolute truth about a time period. History's connection to the pursuit (if not attainment) of scientific truth and the "nature of

the thing" sustained a cultural separation between historical and literary texts, thus maintaining two categories of narrative. With the advent of such a theoretical model as postmodernism, historians began to question the linguistic aspect of historical record and the extent of its bearing on the real world, past and present (Tosh 109).

In postmodernist theory, the cultural categories of truth and make-believe, scientific history and fictional literature, are called into question, and the experience of an idea, object, or event is open to a multitude of unique representations that do not follow the established "truth" spread by the dominant or mainstream thinking in a particular society. This idea of exposing the power structures of the dominant group is also present in revisionist narratives such as German writer Christa Wolf's novel *Kassandra* (1983) and Norwegian writer Georg Johannesen's play *Kassandra* (1967). By taking an established idea, object, or event, and showing a different way to view them, revisionist narratives allow more possibilities in interpretation. Without revisionism, the established view is the only view presented to the reader, or to society. An important aspect of revisionist narratives such as these works is that they expose other views that do not fit into the dominant structure.

Examining the established social codes attached to representations of physical places and lived-in spaces, as defined by Michel de Certeau, is an essential part of the revisionist process. Scholars such as J. Hillis Miller correctly identify the topography of a narrative as the point of endless representation and complex interpretation (Miller, "Philosophy" 36), and revisionist narratives utilize this by drawing upon the wealth of cultural knowledge from a traditional narrative to then expose the reader or audience member to new representations of that established narrative. The representation of

culturally-deemed historical and fictional spaces and places found in Wolf's novel *Kassandra* and Johannesen's play *Kassandra* demonstrate that the concept of shaping and re-shaping the experience of an event through a multitude of representations is a crucial aspect of revisionism. This in turn illustrates the principles of postmodernist narratives. Revisionist narratives play with traditional narratives by synthesizing many different facets of both literary and historical postmodern theory, because these narratives break down the traditional border between historical and literary narratives:

> What the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past ("exertions of the shaping, ordering imagination"). In other words, the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past "events" into present historical "facts." This is not a "dishonest refuge from the truth" but an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 89)

Hutcheon demonstrates that postmodernist theory's focus on representation blurs the lines between cultural concepts of history and fiction. While the cultural perceptions of these two types of narratives will continue to separate them, revisionist narratives illustrate through the combination of culturally-deemed historical and fictional events that both narratives express a different version of a "reality" that is never so fixed or rigid. These realities, whether viewed as fact or fiction, inform the readers' cultural experiences of an event or place. Additionally, by exposing the underlying power structures inherent in traditional representations of events, revisionist narratives then open up to the reader or

audience member a myriad of possible representations and perspectives through which to view the social conventions in their culture.

Before examining revisionism within the realm of postmodernist narratives, it is beneficial to look at how representation functions in everyday life and art. The most important feature of representation is that there is no escaping it. Representation is how people understand the world around them, in literature and in real life (Mitchell 21). This is due to the disconnect between the faculty to conceive and the faculty to present; the idea that we conceive in our minds cannot be expressed in its original form to others, because the idea goes through filters such as speech, writing, or other artistic expressions (Lyotard 376). Speech and writing are representations themselves; they are systems of symbols that we use in order to express ourselves in a manner that others will understand. For example, when I write the letter "D," followed by "O" and "G," others in my society know that this represents the idea of a dog, but it has nothing to do with the original concept of a dog. Similarly in art, I can use dabs of paint to create something that is reminiscent of a dog but not actually a dog, and still more people would understand that it was a representation of a dog. This opens up the means of communication between people.

While representation aids communication, it also leaves much room for interpretation that is beyond the scope of the maker of the representation. There is a given set of guidelines in a society that allows people to convey ideas with representations that are deemed acceptable by the society, but these guidelines are not fixed completely. These guidelines, or "codes," give the representation a context, without which the representation would have no reference:

The word "tree" represents a certain class of objects only in the context of a language, just as a note or a musical phrase has meaning only in relation to a larger piece and familiar systems of tonality. These "systems" (tonality, language, representational schemes in painting) may be called "codes," by which I simply mean a body of rules for combining and deciphering representational signs. When something stands for something to somebody, it does so by virtue of a kind of social agreement…the decision to let A stand for B may (and usually does) open up a whole new realm of possibilities for representation: B becomes a likely candidate to stand for C, and so on. (Mitchell 13)

As W.J.T. Mitchell points out, the social agreement is usually unspoken; herein lies the possibility for different interpretations. Since these social "codes" present us with guidelines, not fixed rules, an idea or object can have a multitude of representations that make up our conception of that idea or object. Representation is the ever-present intermediary between a person's conception of an idea or object and another's perception of that idea or object. This also means that representations can never be divorced completely from political questions, because the conception of the maker and the perception of the receiver are colored by their personal ideologies (Mitchell 15). The fact that signifiers work by exclusion in order to complete the relationship with the signified also adds political complications to representation:

It is not just language that tends to make space for some things while excluding others. It is that words and meaning actually work because of a process of exclusion. Take "chair" for example. We know the meaning of

chair by learning what is *not* chair. In other words, we exclude all the other close matches that aren't quite chairs: stools, chaise longues, love seats, and so on. We create the template for chair by a process of exclusion. This means that from its inception, the meaning of *chair* depends on all those excluded things that are *non-chair*. (Wilchins 36)

This demonstrates that the social codes that representations use in order to grant meaning generally work in favor of the hegemonic power in a given society, because the representation must work within the boundaries of common codes. This means that language favors that which is the same or similar, and what is "unique, unrepeatable, and private tends to go unnamed" (Wilchins 35). This has special implications for written expression, because the texts that remain after an era has passed are the only voices that we hear from that time and place.

As representations are inherently political, so are the literary movements that employ them to artistic effect. Literary realism, which begin in the nineteenth century with such authors as George Eliot, Honoré de Balzac, and Gustave Flaubert, focused on depicting the "truth," according to the "correct" images and "correct" narratives that the dominant power structure selected and distributed (Lyotard 373). This literary movement claimed that there was a true version of events and a fixed meaning to all objects and ideas. This privileges language, because it mistakes language for "the Real," and there is no room for that which is as of yet unnamed (Wilchins 37). Both modernist and postmodernist theories cast doubt on this notion; they focus on the gap between conception and perception, where representation lies, and both question the idea of reality in the face of so many representations. The difference is that, while modernism upholds

the belief that there is a true meaning and reality that we have not yet found, postmodernist theorists have given up the search for a better reality or any "truth" at all: "The point is not exactly that the world is meaningless, but that any meaning that exists is of our own creation" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 42). One cannot escape representation and perceive any true, original reality, so how can there be a true reality at all? The narratives that we create to understand our world, be it through history, literature, or everyday conversation, are simply representations of previous representations of previous representations with no original truth. The concept of truth in the past or present is non-existent (Hutcheon, *Politics* 65).

In this manner, postmodernist theories are inherently political and socially critical, because examining the function of social codes within representation is political. The expectation of shared meaning is in itself political, because the expectation is embedded within a "dynamic social context that acknowledges the inevitability of the existence of power relations in any social relations" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 4). By calling into question established representations of truth in a culture or history, postmodernists challenge the power structures and authorities that created those "truths." Linda Hutcheon writes:

> Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its
>
> representations – its images and stories – are anything but neutral,
>
> however "aestheticized" they may appear to be in their parodic self-
>
> reflexivity. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 3)

Hutcheon asserts that postmodern art presents the facets of postmodernism through elements such as parody and pastiche in that the representations used directly challenge the concept of the real or true, as dictated by the dominant social group. These facets of

postmodernism demonstrate the importance of representation and interpretation in postmodern narrative theory: every text becomes devoid of reality or truth. I use the word "narrative" and not "literary," because this includes narratives that are traditionally thought to be truth or fact, such as historical narratives:

> A postmodern response to history is that it is a form of fiction or, at the very least, a narrative which has neither more nor less a claim to authoritative status than any other competing narrative. Thus any historical anchorage, authority, or legitimacy which may be claimed by a theoretical school, class or institution dissolves... Under postmodernism, language and meaning have no one meeting point, but many... This suggests that multiple meanings are possible and any single meaning is suspended.
>
> (Wain 360, 370)

In this lack of reverence for established "truths" lies the skepticism and social criticism that is built into postmodern theory. By treating traditional historical knowledge as mere representations of a social group's perception of that time period, postmodern narratives subvert the categories of literature and history to show the artificiality of any claim that the latter is truer than the former. In this manner, the barriers between historical and literary narratives break and show that their divergences are merely the different social perceptions of the two types of narrative.

That is not to say that there are no categories within the body of narratives; there are different genres of representation within literature. In the book *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale demonstrates that there are many genres of postmodern narratives, from science fiction to narratives about contemporary life to historical novels (McHale 43, 59,

73). The themes of infinite representation and re-representation, denial of objective reality, and the condition of "an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural," McHale states, are what unite these narratives under the theory of postmodernism (McHale 37).

Christa Wolf's novel *Kassandra* and Georg Johannesen's play *Kassandra* could fit into that which Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" of postmodernism, because these are narratives that expose our malleable cultural perception of so-called historical events. Specifically, Wolf's *Kassandra* has often been described as a prime example of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction in postmodern literature (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 22 – 23), because Wolf melds the two formerly rigid categories of history and literature into one narrative that tells the story of those without a voice in the traditionally accepted historical or legendary narrative, this being the story of the women in *The Iliad*:

> Historiographic metafiction represents not just a world of fiction, however self-consciously presented as a constructed one, but also a world of public experience. The difference between this and the realist logic of reference is that here that public world is rendered specifically as discourse. How do we know the past today? Through its discourses, through its texts…On one level, then, postmodern fiction merely makes overt the processes of narrative representation – of the real or the fictive and of their interrelations. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 33 – 34)

While historiographic metafiction and historical fiction both concern history in literature, their differences lie in their treatment of history itself. Historical fiction presents a microcosm that generalizes with a protagonist that is a type, a synthesis of universal human traits. Historical fiction works with history as a shaping force in the narrative and

in human destiny (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 113). While defining historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon cites *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (another novel by Wolf), stating that in it the lines are blurred between past and present, and the literary mixes with reality (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 109). Historiographic metafiction uses this mix of time and literary space to show that narratives and history are not closed but rather still changing into new experiences. Both Wolf and Johannesen change the perspective of various places and spaces in *The Iliad* in order to undermine the cultural truths ascribed to the Greeks' original narrative.

Revisionism is closely connected to Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction," but my concept of revisionism allows for a broader scope of what is culturally considered historical to include other narratives that are caught between the categories of history and fiction, such as traditional legends and epics, because these too have become cemented in culture as a sort of "cultural truth." There is very little information other than Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* from which people can obtain knowledge about the Trojan War, and yet this event has maintained importance in history as well as literature. From the Middle Ages to the present, explorers have used Homer's poems to try to locate the city of Troy (Wood 36; Allen 37). Heinrich Schliemann, a wealthy retired businessman and amateur archaeologist, gave the public so-called credible proof that Homer's poems were based in truth by claiming that he had found the site of Troy and "Priam's Treasure" in 1868; Schliemann publicized his excavations in Hisarlik as proof "that *The Iliad* was based on facts" (Allen 152). Scholars from the 19th century until as recently as the past decade have used Schliemann's claims as well as accounts in Homer's poems to demonstrate that the story of the Trojan War has a place in history (Benjamin 101; Bryce 33; Ranke 120).

Beyond the realm of scholars, the layperson's experience of the Trojan War has

remained in the public sphere through popular culture (for example, the 2004 film *Troy*,

starring Brad Pitt as Achilles) and institutional education in grade schools. A survey of

several high school history textbooks, whose publishing dates range from 1964 to 1999,

demonstrates that, while the books acknowledge the legendary aspect of the Trojan War,

information about the event still remains rooted in the realm of history, or fact. In the

introductory pages of the most recent history textbook, history books are portrayed as

"more accurately" depicting what life was like "in a culture 5,000 years ago," as proven

by the use of written sources, modern science, and "digging up history" (Beck xxxvi).[1]

Such an introduction, as well as the textbook exercises that focus on memorizing facts,

set up the student to read the information about the Trojan War in the textbook as facts

and connected to the "science" of history. An examination of the information about the

Trojan War demonstrates further that the statements ascribed by the Greeks' narrative are

to be taken as truth. The most recent textbook begins the section about the Trojan War

with "About 1200 B.C. the Mycenaean kings fought a ten-year war against Troy, an

independent trading city located in Anatolia" (Beck 113). The section then briefly

discusses the connection to legend but then ends with references to Schliemann and

historians who proved that the Trojan War probably did occur. In the teacher's edition of

a textbook published in 1990, teachers are encouraged to emphasize the details of the

Trojan War through *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (Perry 75). Such an emphasis on Homer's

poems as the source of historical knowledge, as well as the prevalence of these stories in

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[1] The introduction to this history textbook does not explain to what the history books that the students now read are compared, simply that the current history books are "more accurate."

popular culture, show that the public's experience of the Trojan War relies heavily on the Greeks' narrow representation of the event. In this manner, one text has become responsible for the majority of the public's knowledge of the Trojan War, and *The Iliad* may be seen as a sort of cultural truth for the Western world.

Revisionist narratives in postmodernism such as Wolf's novel *Kassandra* and Johannesen's play *Kassandra* demonstrate McHale's "worlds in the plural" by presenting a different representation of *The Iliad's* traditional narrative. This in turn exposes the artificiality of historical record, which can only be created by representations. The revisionist narrative is unique in its ability to tap into a reader or audience member's cultural knowledge of a place (gained through culturally historical or fictional texts) to extend the scope of the narrative beyond the text the author has written. The revisionism connects postmodernist theories on history and literature to show the artificiality of the latter. History is not a representation of the past but rather a representation of our present perception of the past (Jameson 399); in this manner, the revisionist narrative brings together social criticism of the past and the present for the readers.

Although the figurative space of an object in one's mind applies to this concept of compound representations, thinking about actual *place* and *space* in a written narrative, as McHale's word choice suggests, is important in all narratives. Michel de Certeau asserts that written narratives are led by the spatial trajectories that are formed by the series of movements between places and spaces in the story:

> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indications ("It's to the right," "Take a left"), the beginning of a

story the rest of which is written by footsteps, to the daily "news"

("Guess who I met at the bakery?"), television news reports ("Teheran:

Khomeini is becoming increasingly isolated…"), legends (Cinderellas

living in hovels), and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign

lands or more or less distant times in the past). (Certeau 115 – 116)

In this manner, a written narrative is produced through the topography of the

landscape that it traverses. This can be applied to the layers of representation in

postmodern narratives through de Certeau's definitions of *space* and *place*. He defines a

place as the physical location, the stabile geometric locus that is relatively fixed. Space,

on the other hand, is a "practiced place" that humanity creates: "Thus the street

geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (Certeau

117). By this definition, postmodern narratives play with the representation of a place in

relation to one's cultural experiences of that place as a space. McHale's use of the term

"landscape" in his description of the postmodern condition is not accidental. In fact he

uses several spatial metaphors to describe facets of postmodernism in his book

Postmodernist Fiction, for space and place in revisionist narratives and postmodern

theory are important elements. The series of representations that make up the experience

of an object or idea could be seen as different interpretations of the space that the object

or idea occupies in our minds. Places are also important in revisionism, as revisionist

narratives re-shape the traditional place to include new locations that did not exist in the

previously established narrative. This makes the landscape of a narrative quite complex,

as it shows that one's perception of an object in a narrative is a result of compounded

representations that go beyond the scope of the narrative into one's cultural and

personal experience of the space in which the object resides.

J. Hillis Miller explains this further, explicitly supporting de Certeau's assertion

that stories (specifically for Miller, novels) are spatially driven:

> …there is no landscape without its story. One thing novels do is to tell
>
> such stories. These stories are not so much placed against the background
>
> of the scene as generated by it…a novel is a figurative mapping. (Miller,
>
> "Philosophy" 18 – 19)

Miller asserts that the landscape in a novel and the "real" landscape that it references are

both part of a series of knowledge about that *space*[2] (Miller, "Philosophy" 19). The

narrative is furthering the figurative mapping of the given place and space. Miller argues

that there is no space without the inhabitance of the place, and the inhabitants shape and

re-shape that space through cultural mapping, formed to fit their needs. Miller's

definition of mental mapping supports the postmodern concept of representation and re-

representation in narratives, because it is through description, allusion, and naming (all

aspects of representation) that narratives change the perception of a given space or place

(Miller, "Philosophy" 36). His use of quotes for the word "real" further shows that his

theory of mental mapping in narratives builds a complex series of representations where

any original source of that space or place is absent. Referring to Borges's tale of the map

taking over the actual territory of a kingdom, Jean Baudrillard explains that spaces and

places in modern life no longer have an original truth or meaning:

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[2] This is using de Certeau's definition of *space*, which Miller does not reference. From henceforth I will be
using the terms *space* and *place* as de Certeau defines them.

> Simulation is no longer of a territory, a referential being or a substance.
> It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a
> hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it.
> Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory – *precession of
> simulacra* – it is the map that engenders the territory…It is the real, and
> not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which
> are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. *The desert of the real
> itself.* (Baudrillard 381 – 382)

Baudrillard's assertion connects to the question of truth vs. make-believe and history vs.
literature in Western society. Our view of a place or space are, as Miller states, a complex
layering of representations that makes up the knot of experience for that space, and we
can no more say where the experience first started than say where it will end. In this
manner, we are forced to accept the artificiality and social construction that makes up that
filter between conception and perception. The narratives that inform our view of a place
or space show that this experience is a layering of simulacra without an absolute truth or
meaning to form as a foundation.

The realm of space and place is where revisionist narratives are essential to
postmodern texts. Revisionist narratives highlight the process of shaping and re-shaping
spaces and places to fit the author's cultural, ideological, or aesthetic agenda by taking an
established truth about a space or place and playing with its sense of reality and fixed
meaning. As previously stated, representations rely on the larger system of
representations in a given society; this can work to subvert as well as support the
traditional view of a lived-in space or physical place. For example, the Old English epic

poem *Beowulf* is one of Western culture's canonical literary works that nearly everyone must read in high school or at university. In the poem, the hero Beowulf must fight two monsters and one dragon, the latter of which mortally wounds Beowulf, but he receives a hero's funeral and remains a model of courage. The spaces in which Beowulf proves his heroism, however, are called into question by John Gardner's revisionist narrative *Grendel* (1971), which tells the story of Grendel, the first monster Beowulf kills in *Beowulf*. In this narrative, Gardner changes the perspective on Beowulf's "heroic" space, illustrating his character as simply violent, bloodthirsty, and sadistic, as well as describing the traditional places of *Beowulf* (i.e. the hall, the monster's den, etc.) with a tone opposite to the original narrative. The representations Gardner creates undermine the representations of Beowulf created by the cultural dominant. Revisionist narratives have the ability to juxtapose established, historical representations of space with conflicting interpretations of that landscape to highlight the complex knot that is the mental mapping of a space. While not every revisionist narrative subverts representations sustained by the social dominant system, they are an essential part of subversion within postmodern literature.

In their revisionist *Kassandra* narratives, Wolf and Johannesen mix legend, history, and fiction by playing with the places, spaces, and characters of Homer's *The Iliad* in order to examine perceptions of the past and present, as well as the cultural practices of their own eras. The story of *The Iliad* is itself a narrative that was shaped and re-shaped through oral tradition until it was written down and fixed into the epic that is one of the definitive canonical works of Western literature, as well as a source for historical evidence about the Trojan War. Due to the very formation of the text, it is

impossible to tell what of *The Iliad*'s narrative is based on actual events and what came from the imagination of the Greeks. This makes this narrative a good example of revisionism, because the revision highlights our inability to ever know what actually took place, what is truth and what is fiction. A revisionist narrative rejects the notion of objective reality and absolute truth. The very basis of the original narrative is a complex knot of representations of a supposedly historical event, and yet this work has become the major experience of the battle of Troy that many people have.

There exist to date only a few published scholarly works on Johannesen's play, mainly centering around cultural themes in the play and the accusations of blasphemy *Kassandra* evoked (Berg 79). However, there is a large amount of scholarship published about Wolf's novel, and this scholarship has mainly concerned *Kassandra* as a postmodernist historiographic novel and Wolf's use of *The Iliad* to expose underlying patriarchal power structures in the past and the present (Beebee and Weber 264; Fox 472; Hoffmeister 4). The revisionist narrative provides a synthesis of postmodern theories of art and history to show that history too is a part of the literary art form. The past cannot be the actual referent of historical narratives and therefore always relates to the social constructions and conventions of its present time period (Zagorin 13). Exposing these social conventions opens up the possibility of that which is yet unnamed or undiscovered to become a part of the reader or audience member's reality. Scholars of Johannesen's *Kassandra* and Wolf's *Kassandra* examine the intertextuality and postmodernist elements of their works, but they largely ignore the use of place and space in the two *Kassandras*. My analysis expands upon the scholarship by introducing the importance of spatial elements to revisionist narratives in both Wolf's novel and Johannesen's play. The

treatment of space and place are central points at which revisionist narratives within the realm of postmodernism expose the dominant power system during the author's own era and offer new possibilities of reality to the readers. Wolf exposes the present-day dominant patriarchal power system, showing how women have no place within that system. Wolf's perspective on the spaces of Troy, along with the juxtaposition of places from the *Iliad* and places Wolf has added, depict the emerging dominant authoritative system as brutal, cold, and calculating in its destruction of the non-dominant. Johannesen illustrates the present-day power systems of capitalism and Christianity; with the layering of places (through stage setting) and spaces (through actors) from the past and present, he shows these dominant systems to be violent and disconnected from humanity. Both authors change the perspective of the places and spaces in *The Iliad* to expose the underlying power structure and to emphasize the rejection of absolute truths; these power structures in ancient Troy then point to a parallel power structure in the contemporary societies of the authors. In this manner, the spaces and places within revisionist narratives are an essential part of exposing the malleability of perspective in both history and literature.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTA WOLF'S *KASSANDRA*

As Wilchins exposes words to be designations of exclusion, traditional history books represent some perspectives of history to the exclusion of others. The portrayal of the legendary and historical figure Kassandra that Christa Wolf gives in her novel *Kassandra*, written in 1983 while Wolf lived under the oppressive regime of the German Democratic Republic, greatly undermines the received notions about the Greeks in relation to the Trojans, as well as the notions about men in relation to women, during the fall of Troy. Wolf instead posits that this event marked the beginning of the patriarchy and the loss of a voice for women in Western cultures. Through the voice of Kassandra, Wolf works to expose the artificiality of history by challenging the established, "true" representations of Troy, achieving this largely through the exploration of the places and spaces of Troy. Her juxtaposition of the caves on the slopes of Mt. Ida and the palace of Troy plays with the sense of reality and meaning that the readers obtain in their amassed experience of the fall of Troy, because the juxtapositions of place show the plurality of worlds that existed in Troy. As is also the case with Johannesen's *Kassandra*, the social conventions that Wolf calls into question in her interpretation of Troy are applicable to present-day conditions, creating a commentary on Wolf's contemporary society as well as on the society of ancient Greece that is in keeping with the element of subversion in postmodernism. Wolf's depiction of the emerging dominant authoritative structure shows

that this structure promotes a certain ideal masculinity that is intent on its destruction

of the non-dominant, whose qualities are described as feminine. The brutality and

business-like manner of the dominant system opposes the feminine in this new structure

by linking the feminine with weakness and overblown emotion. This is a theme that is

pertinent to Wolf's present day, and the parallels show that Western society's

interpretation of the events of Troy speak to the present-day social perceptions of gender

relations within the patriarchal system. By using a literary narrative to show how closely

perceptions of history lie to perceptions of the present day, Wolf demonstrates the

connection between many facets of postmodernist literary and historical theory within

revisionist narratives.

Wolf's novel is an especially useful example of revisionist narrative in

postmodernism, because she accompanies her novel with four lectures that explain

Wolf's theoretical approach to discovering Kassandra's voice and story before she

demonstrates her ideas in the novel. In this manner, the reader has access to both Wolf's

postmodernist theories of history and the literary manifestation of her theories. These

four lectures also further emphasize the importance of exploring place and space in the

revisionist narrative, for much of their content centers around Wolf's experience of

places in Germany and Greece. In the first lecture, titled "Ein Reisebericht über das

zufällige Auftauchen und die allmähliche Verfertigung einer Gestalt," Wolf begins by

demonstrating the alienation she experiences in the capital of her own country, waiting

for her flight to Athens:

> …unauffindbar, nicht registrierte Schattengestalten ohne Gepäck, fuhren
>
> wir durch die Straßen von Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR; fremd, seltsam

berührt, unerkennbar gingen wir durch eine unerkennbare Stadt....

(Wolf, *Voraussetzungen* 13)

While Wolf has lived near and in Berlin since 1962, she still describes the city as unrecognizable and foreign. Her choice of words in this passage begins the discussion of alienation that Wolf sustains in *Kassandra*. While it is more conventional to describe her sense of feeling foreign and cut off from the "Geist des Ortes" in Athens, as she does later in the lecture (Wolf, *Voraussetzungen* 27), her introduction to her homeland creates a contrast that creates doubt for the reader already, because Wolf's home does not evoke the traditional feelings of familiarity. Wolf adds layers to this experience of home by speaking directly to the modern city:

> Ich verstehe: Ihr, der heutigen Stadt Bedürfnis und das Bedürfnis der steinernen Mädchen, die in gelassen-stolzer Haltung mehr als zweitausend Jahre lang den Baldachin über dem Grab des Schlangenkönigs und Athengründers Kekrops trugen, waren nicht miteinander zu vereinbaren. Koren, die Mädchen, einst die Fruchbarkeitsgöttin Persephone mit ihrer Tochter, später zu Balkenträgerinnen herabgekommen, jetzt unfruchtbar ins Aus gestellt...Soll ich versuchen, den „Sinn" zu benennen, für den sie stehn, der aber ein Unsinn ist? Die Barbarei der Neuzeit. Die Frage, die mich aufstört: Gab es, gibt es eine Alternative zu dieser Barbarei? (Wolf, *Voraussetzungen* 30)

Wolf's use of quotation marks around the word *Sinn* (and earlier in the lecture, her same treatment of the word *Wahrheit*) demonstrates the questioning of reality and meaning that marks on of the main principles of postmodernism. Her description of the transformation

of the statues from an important, "living" space to infertile supporting beams begins her postmodern exploration of both the social convention of patriarchy and the places and spaces of *The Iliad* in contrast to her barbaric modern time. These statues, which once had an important position in the space and experience of ancient Greece, now only mark the reduction to place, a structural entity without humanity. Wolf uses this combination of subverting traditional places and spaces and showing the figures' relation to these places and spaces to create Kassandra's character in the novel. Kassandra reflects Wolf's own doubts about the status of meaning and reality. The novel itself begins with an image of worn-down statues that illustrates a change in perception of history, just as Wolf's imagery achieved in her lecture: "Hier war es. Da stand sie. Diese steinernen Löwen, jetzt kopflos, haben sie angeblickt. Diese Festung, einst und uneinnehmbar, ein Steinhaufen jetzt, war das letzte, was sie sah...." (Wolf, *Kassandra* 5). The narrator's initial description of a specific place introduces the importance of place and space to the text. As with the statues of the handmaidens, the stone lions and fortress have transformed from their space in humanity (i.e. part of the oral narrative and everyday life) to lifeless geometric shapes, mere objects of place. The importance they once held is now gone, and their shapes have lost the meaning that once was attached to them. This introduction to Kassandra's story depicts the doubt that surrounds the concepts of meaning and truth for Kassandra throughout the novel, as the narrator gives way to Kassandra's own voice.

Kassandra directly addresses this place where the stone lions reside as the narrator does, but where the narrator simply describes a place, Kassandra evokes the space that was once created through the habitation of the place and the myth that now stands where that space was:

Warum haben die gefangenen aus Mykenae ihr Löwentor noch

gewaltiger beschrieben, als es mir erscheint? Warum schilderten sie die

Zyklopenmauern ungeheurer, als sie sind, ihr Volk gewalttätiger und

rachsüchtiger, als es ist? Gern und ausschweifend haben sie mir von ihrer

Heimat erzählt, wie alle Gefangenen. (Wolf, *Kassandra* 16 – 17)

The representation of Mykenae in Kassandra's memory and the representation of

Mykenae that its people invoke are at odds, and this introduces how Wolf uses Kassandra

in order to expose the possibility of these plural realities that exist for one place. The

people of Mykenae depict themselves as more violent and vengeful than Kassandra

perceived them; this is the reality as influenced by the new patriarchal society, a society

that upholds such traits. However, Kassandra's experience of this place before the new

society was created contrasts with this new "reality." Herein commences the theme of

truth and meaning as a farce in *Kassandra*.

Wolf not only subverts the traditional narrative of *The Iliad* by inserting the

possibility of different representations (Paris's motives other than love and Eumelos's

campaign of misinformation) within that established narrative, but she also does this

inherently by providing the perspective of the narrative through the eyes of the losers: the

Trojans. In this way, Wolf changes the reader's experience of the Trojan War to include

layers of experience from the Trojans' side. The passage in which Kassandra

accompanies Briseis to the Greeks' war camp expresses a space that is completely

different from the legendary or received place the Greeks inhabit. In this novel, the

Greeks are bestial, violent, and dim-witted. While the Trojans at first have a semblance of

respect towards women, the Greeks simply gape at Kassandra and Briseis. They are

easily cowed by talk of magic, and they know nothing more than war (Wolf, *Kassandra* 96 – 100). While Achilles is traditionally the hero, in *Kassandra* his name is "Achilles the brute," and he acts with savagery toward men and women alike (Wolf, *Kassandra* 100).

Wolf uses the depiction of the heroes from *The Iliad* as the savage enemies to highlight the notion that "truth" is relative. Wolf undermines the truths as established by *The Iliad* in order to show the monstrous violence that lay behind them. This in turn serves to reject the idea of an absolute truth. At the same time, Wolf also shows the weaknesses in *The Iliad's* main Trojan characters. Hektor's name in *Kassandra* is "Hektor dunkle Wolke," indicating his dim-wittedness, and Kassandra describes him as sluggish and the opposite of a warrior until he finally gets into shape at the end of the war (Wolf, *Kassandra* 110). Wolf's reversal of these heroes' traits opens up new possibilities of interpretation and representation for the reader, and her similar treatment of the Trojan men exposes the patriarchal system on both sides of the war. Wolf's perspective of the Greek warriors varies greatly from that perspective depicted by the Greeks in *The Iliad*. In this manner, she challenges the truth and reality about the Trojan war that the Greeks established in *The Iliad*, and she suggests a difference of reality between the cultural dominant (in this case, the Greek warriors) and the oppressed minority that the women in *Kassandra* represent.

These doubts about the terms *Sinn* and *Wahrheit* drive much of Kassandra's narrative in *Kassandra*, because she narrates what she perceives as a destructive shift to patriarchy that the war between the Trojans and the Greeks marks. Wolf demonstrates that Kassandra's role in the events of the Trojan War causes Kassandra to doubt reality

and truth, because she is caught in the transition from the old society that valued women to the new society that silences them. Kassandra witnesses the established traditions she thought would always sustain crumble before the new movement of patriarchy that sacrifices humanity for the sake of appearances and valor. By demonstrating the complete upheaval of Kassandra's reality and the new "reality" that is not based in truth, Wolf creates the possibility of McHale's worlds or realities in the plural for her reader. This then not only complicates the knot of experiences that make up the reader's knowledge of the Trojan War but also bolsters the postmodern theory that the conventional, established reality of the past and the present are simply one representation out of a multitude of possible representations. In this manner, Wolf's novel combines postmodern historical and literary principles.

Wolf depicts these two conflicting worlds by two places within Troy: the caves on the slopes of Mt. Ida and the palace in the heart of Troy. The caves mark a space in which women have always led and will always lead. The palace is a place that shows the shift from one space where women had value to a new and different space where women have no value and no voice. Wolf propels the narrative trajectory from these centers in Troy, and their individual trajectories demonstrate the clashing of different realities in *Kassandra*.

The images Wolf ties to the caves of Mt. Ida depict the place as dark, womb-like, and full of life. The reader's introduction to the caves is Kassandra's first experience there as well. Wolf presents imagery that supports a social order that while it is already oppositional to the palace's space, does not yet exhibit the extreme contrast that occurs when the palace is bureaucratically overtaken by Eumelos. Wolf describes a luscious fold

of vegetation in the ground that leads to groves of young fig and oak trees; the entire

area is teeming with fertility and life, where women dance freely and with emotion. Wolf

then juxtaposes this image with Kassandra's experience of the palace the next morning:

"wie immer, die glatten Gesichter" (Wolf, *Kassandra* 25). The reserved faces Kassandra

describes introduce the constraints that already reside in the space of the palace; she is

already aware of two worlds within her own experience.

The comparisons between the caves and the palace continue, demonstrating

further the plurality of representation that exists within one city. While Kassandra

describes the silent space of the caves that "ging, nicht bedrohlich, nur eben fremd," she

soon remarks that the palace is also silent (Wolf, *Kassandra* 56). This silence, however,

comes from a negative space: "Hekabe, ihren Zorn unterdrückend, schwieg. Parthena die

Amme, ihre Angst offen zeigend, schwieg. Ich lernte, indem ich die Arten zu schweigen

beobachtete" (Wolf, *Kassandra* 58). In contrast to the peaceful silence of the caves, the

silence in the palace already comes from constrictive fear and anger, even before

Eumelos ushers in the patriarchal way of living.

The two depictions of women (those in the caves and those in the palace) already

give the reader new experiences to add to their previous layers of experience of the

Trojan War, because these new experiences uncover the women's perspective. While in

The Iliad, most of the women's characters were minor and all were depicted through the

perspective of men, *Kassandra* offers another representation that leaves room for many

interpretations of the Trojan War. The space that Wolf creates in the caves is important to

this new representation, for it depicts a space that does not exist in *The Iliad*. For this

reason is it important that Kassandra have the space in the caves, because it is there that she begins to uncover different "truths" about the palace:

> 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 brauchte sie den Palast nicht, so als lebte sie von ihm abgewandt, also auch von mir. Man kannte mich, grüßte mich gleichmütig, ich aber grüßte eine Spur zu eilfertig zurück. Demütigend war es mir, dorthin um Auskünfte zu gehn, die der Palast mir verweigerte.
>
> (Wolf, *Kassandra* 59)

In this moment, Kassandra demonstrates her alienation from both the women's space in the caves and her own home in the palace. Kassandra has only known the reality of the royal space of the palace, and the caves are foreign to her. However, the caves offer something she is missing in the representation of her world that the palace presents to her. This alienation from both worlds reflects Wolf's own feelings of alienation from her home of Berlin and the foreign land of Greece that she later expresses in *Voraussetzungen*; in this manner, she ties Kassandra's experience from over two thousand years ago to her experience and the experience of the reader in the late twentieth century. By showing the holes and gaps in the reality the palace presents Kassandra, Wolf leads the readers to think about the dominant power's representation of reality and the veracity of "truth" in their own life. Wolf demonstrates the landscape of worlds in the plural of which McHale writes and enhances the complex knot of experience that Miller describes while beginning to blur the line between history and literature (cultural truths and cultural make-believe) for the reader.

The doubt in Kassandra concerning truth and meaning stems from the shift in
space within the palace that spreads out to the rest of Troy during the novel, because this
is when Eumelos's campaign of misinformation and distortion of Kassandra's truths
begin. The beginning of the patriarchal society, coinciding with the beginning of the fall
of Troy, starts with Paris's declaration that he will have Helena:

> [Menalaos] gab dem Sohn des Gastgebers höflich Bescheid, bis seine
>
> Fragen so frech wurden, daß Hekabe, ungewöhnlich zornig, dem
>
> ungezogenen Sohn den Mund verbot. Todesstill wurde der Saal. Nur Paris
>
> sprang auf, schrie: Wie! Schweigen solle er? Schon wieder? Immer noch?
>
> Sich klein machen? Unsichtbar womöglich? Oh nein. Die Zeiten sind
>
> vorbei. (Wolf, *Kassandra* 71)

This passage marks the beginning of both the women's loss of a voice and the men's
domination of the voice. In disregarding Hekabe's word and declaring that he will no
longer adhere to his mother's words, Paris sets in motion the violation of tradition that
Eumelos then strengthens with his followers who infiltrate the inner workings of the
palace. From this point on, Kassandra's description of the palace is mixed with her
description of Eumelos, invoking the image of a being that takes away her voice and her
ability to fight effectively against the new patriarchal movement:

> Denn warum schrie ich, wenn ich schrie: Wir sind verloren!, warum nicht:
>
> Troer, es gibt keine Helena! Ich weiß es, wußte es auch damals schon: Der
>
> Eumelos in mir verbot es mir. Ihn, der mich im Palast erwartete, ihn schrie
>
> ich an: Es gibt keine Helena!, aber er wußt es ja. Dem Volk hätt ich es

> sagen müssen. Das hieß: Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast. (Wolf,
>
> *Kassandra* 83)

Wolf's representation of the events in Troy demonstrate that the established "truths"
about the historical event (Paris fell in love with Helena, Helena returned the affection
and went willingly with Paris) are not the only perspective that is possible. After Paris
makes his declaration and Eumelos begins his campaign of misinformation to the public,
the palace's space is described with such business terms as "Unternehmen" and
"Produktion"; men like Kassandra's brother Troilus were no longer trusted because they
chose their lovers out of love and not business; and Eumelos's propaganda for the war
fractured the truth into different directions: Eumelos's truth and Kassandra's truth:

> Helena. Der Name traf uns wie ein Stoß. Die schöne Helena. Darunter tat
>
> es der kleiner Bruder nicht. Man hätte es wissen können. Man hatte es
>
> gewußt. Ich war Zeugin, wie im Hin und Her zwischen dem Palast und
>
> den Tempelpriestern, in Tag- und Nachtsitzungen des Rats eine Nachricht
>
> hergestellt wurde, hart, gehämmert, glatt wie eine Lanze: Paris der
>
> Troerheld habe auf Geheiß unsrer lieben Göttin Aphrodite Helena, die
>
> schönste Frau Griechenlands, den großmäuligen Griechen entführt und so
>
> die Demütigung gelöscht, die unserm mächtigen König Priamos einst
>
> durch den Raub seiner Schwester angetan worden war. (Wolf, *Kassandra*
>
> 78)

This passage connects the past and the present in several different ways for the reader.
Wolf' sustaining of the adjective "glatt" in connection to the palace demonstrates that the
previous space of the palace was already on a trajectory towards the patriarchal

movement. The difference lies in the fact that the slick, smooth, glossy character of the

palace's former silence has now added an element of menace, for the slickness of the

campaign of misinformation is now that of a lance. This representation of the events of

the Trojan War is that of the established narrative of *The Iliad*, but the framework of the

palace's propaganda that Wolf uses to surround the representation undermines the

veracity of that perspective. In *Kassandra*, Wolf presents the Trojan War in a space that

appears just as valid and plausible as the traditional space, which then calls into question

the sense of reality the readers connect to their now-layered experience of the Trojan

War.

This passage concerning the palace's campaign of propaganda and

misinformation also relates to the present day in that Eumelos's growing network of

followers reflects the *Staatssicherheit* (the Stasi) that was an imposing and oppressive

presence in the lives of East Germans during the time that Germany was divided. The

Stasi and their civilian informants (roughly one of every 120 citizens was a member

around the time *Kassandra* was published) infiltrated almost every aspect of life in East

Germany (Childs and Popplewell 85). The Stasi also controlled the public by only

allowing information that supported a positive representation of the government to be

publicized (Childs and Popplewell 82). By exposing the palace-generated representation

of the Trojan War as one constructed explicitly by palace officials (i.e. not based in any

of the characters' experiences of the actual events) Wolf makes implicit commentary on

the practices of her own government in East Germany.[3] In this manner, Wolf's revisionist

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[3] While it is true Wolf herself was targeted by the Stasi between 1969 and 1980, and she was revered later
for being a dissident of the East German government (*Newsweek* 41), she incurred public and scholarly

narrative brings the past and the present, as well as history and literature, together. The rigid cultural border between truth and fiction is gone, and the events of the past reflect the events of the present. This radical shift manifests in Kassandra's description of the physical palace itself. As the Trojans become further immersed in the patriarchal movement, the palace becomes more and more like its own entity, as Kassandra describes Polyxena's willingness to be used as a tool by the Trojan palace men in order to ensnare Achilles:

> Mit tiefem ungläubigen Unbehagen sah ich zu, wie die Zustände im
> Palast, so als würde an ihnen einer drehn, uns ihre Kehrseite zuwandten,
> eine liederliche Fratze. Wie sie, von einem andern Zentrum aus, ein andres
> Übergewicht bekamen. Und eins der Opfer, das sie unter sich begruben:
> Polyxena. (Wolf, *Kassandra* 116)

According to Kassandra, the destruction of the palace began with the shift in political space, and those silenced are the women. The palace once again embodies the characteristics of Eumelos, as well as the patriarchy that has taken over Troy and will lead to its eventual physical destruction, while the long-lasting destructive effects show in the realm of women. The connection between Eumelos and the palace strengthens towards the end of the novel:

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criticism in 1993 when she publicly admitted that she was an "informal collaborator" for the Stasi for three years, beginning in 1959. This discovery led many to declare that she had "forfeited her claim to moral leadership," and her writings were scrutinized for portraying a "false" representation of Wolf's involvement with the East German government (Gitlin). Kassandra's early participation in the palace politics she rejects could be read as a reference to Wolf's earlier complicity in the system she criticizes.

Und in der Zitadelle schien es nur einen einzigen zu geben, der auf den

schandbaren Übermut des Feindes die Antwort wußte; der Mann war

Eumelos. Er zog die Schrauben an. Er warf sein Sicherheitsnetz, das

bisher die Mitglieder des Königshauses und die Beamtenschaft gedrosselt

hatte, über ganz Troia, es betraf nun jedermann. Die Zitadelle nach

Einbruch der Dunkelheit gesperrt. Strenge Kontrollen alles dessen, was

einer bei sich führte, wann immer Eumelos dies für geboten hielt.

Sonderbefugnisse für die Kontrollorgane. (Wolf, *Kassandra* 121 – 122)

This passage speaks most directly to the practices of the Stasi in East Germany, and the

connection between Eumelos and the palace extends to include the present-day "palace"

and officials of Wolf's home. Wolf uses events in the historical narrative of Western

culture to criticize implicitly her country's government, which strangled its public with

informants, restrictions, and misinformation. While this criticism was quite dangerous to

write while living in East Germany, Wolf was an international author by the time she

published *Kassandra*, and it would have been difficult for the government to censor her

without garnering international attention. Still, placing her social criticism within the

framework of an older narrative allowed Wolf to express what she might not have been

able to, were she to simply write it out in a lecture.

By the end of the novel, the power contained within the space of the palace

spreads to all of Troy, so that all of Troy is shut off to Kassandra: "Nicht nur für den

Feind, auch für mich war Troia uneinnehmbar geworden" (Wolf, *Kassandra* 119).

Kassandra no longer has a position within Troy; the emerging patriarchal space has

dissolved the spaces she knew and absorbed the places for new use within the patriarchy.

The caves are no longer the sanctuary of before; the palace, her home, has become foreign and violent; these competing spaces illustrate that Kassandra has no position left in her world. Wolf's choice to frame the novel with the place where Kassandra dies could demonstrate a sense of futility that critics of postmodernism claim is a trait of postmodern theory. However, the last scene of the novel changes the quality of the place from the way it was portrayed in the beginning passage: "Hier ist es. Diese steinernen Löwen haben sie angeblickt. Im Wechsel des Lichts scheinen sie sich zu rühren" (Wolf, *Kassandra* 164). Wolf's use of the verb *scheinen* denotes two meanings in the last sentence. The reader could interpret the verb to mean that the lions seem to stir, to move, and there is also the suggestion that the lions are shining. The change of light could mean that, as the sun is fading, a new light shines upon the region where Kassandra once had a voice. The movement of the lions also supports this suggestion; by stirring up movement, the stone lions might begin the process of becoming a lived-in space in the de Certeauian sense once more. With these last three sentences, Wolf may indicate that the plurality of worlds may be able to shift the dominant reality yet again. By showing the different possible spaces and places depicted in *The Iliad*, Wolf sustains the postmodern theory that there is no binary opposition of right and wrong truths or realities, but rather the past, present, and future are open to a myriad of possible interpretations, perspectives, and representations. In the process, her representations of space and place expose the dominant patriarchal power system and emphasize the way in which this system silences the voices of those not represented in the power structure.

CHAPTER III

GEORG JOHANNESEN'S *KASSANDRA*

Georg Johannesen's dramatic narrative *Kassandra* presents a departure from the philosophical models I have introduced in addition to the new perspective of Troy that he depicts. While de Certeau and Miller's theories are helpful in demonstrating the centrality of revisionist narratives in postmodernism, specifically in regard to space and place, they both confine themselves to the realm of prose narrative. Miller's book does evaluate texts other than novels, such as philosophical and poetic texts, but dramatic performances are ignored. Similarly, while de Certeau makes a point to include other written texts that are not considered to be novels, he nevertheless does not extend beyond the written narrative. I use the term "narrative," because my definition of revisionism within the postmodern genre includes other types of texts whose final products do not necessarily manifest themselves in the written form. Specifically, theatrical performance not only uses the elements of a written narrative to show the series of representations that form a space but also brings into play the visual aspect of places and spaces. In fact, the geometric locus of a landscape plays a larger role in theatrical performance than it could in a written narrative, because the audience is able to see the physical representation of a place before it is turned into a space by the characters in the narrative. This is quite different in a written narrative, because quite often the reader must rely on the description of a place after it is already a space.

In his essay "Space and Reference in Drama," Michael Issacharoff argues that in a written narrative, place and space are one-dimensional, created by language alone; in a performance narrative, place and space are much more complex. Space and place can be on-stage, off-stage, visible (represented visually), or invisible (described verbally), and these elements can combine in many different ways to create the complex layers of representation in a performance (Issacharoff 211). There is also the theater structure (i.e. architectural design), stage construction (i.e. stage design), and dramatic space[4] (as used by the individual dramatist); all of these combine to create a visual realm of experience that is lacking in a written narrative (Issacharoff 212). For revisionist narratives in postmodern texts, the spaces and places created by the dramatist that Issacharoff examines are the most important element of visual performance for exposing the intertwined layers of representation that create the landscape for the audience. Issacharoff asserts that dramatic space is the most intangible space in the theater and therefore the most dynamic space:

> It is synchronic, since it specifically excludes from consideration the history or sociology of previous performances; it is dynamic, since it entails an attempt to study the mechanism of space, from one scene to the next, as well as the relations linking space to other constituent elements of performance. (Issacharoff 214)

This aspect of theatrical performance is indeed dynamic and pertinent as well to revisionism in postmodern performance, because the synchronic nature of the

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[4] Issacharoff uses the term *space* for architecture, stage, and dramatic space, but this does not adhere to de Certeau's definition of *space*.

spontaneous performance illustrates the possibility of infinite representation and interpretation of a single space or place. No two performances are alike, although the dialogue may be the same, and therefore the audience has the possibility of endless experiences of the "same" event (i.e. performance). While this is not explicitly a part of the given performance, it nevertheless reinforces the postmodern condition of the plurality of worlds that McHale describes.

Representation in performance narratives is inherently complex, because they are actually a synthesis of written and visual narratives. Performance narratives usually have a theater script by which the performers learn their verbal discourse; this is auditory language. The script also includes stage directions that indicate what visual movements and representations should occur in the performance; this is non-auditory language. Both auditory and non-auditory language make up the dramatic space with which the dramatist works. As Issacharoff states,

> In the theater, mimetic space is that which is made visible to an audience and represented on stage. Diegetic space, on the other hand, is *described*,[5] that is, referred to by the characters. In other words, mimetic space is transmitted directly, while diegetic space is mediated through the discourse of the characters, and thus communicated verbally and not visually. (Issacharoff 215)

The visual representations in performance narrative enhance the narrative trajectory by containing modes of reference that are more varied and complex than that of simple

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[5] Issacharoff's italics.

verbal discourse.[6] Issacharoff argues that theater is the only art form in which the signifier, signified, and referent are all simultaneously present in time and space (Issacharoff 217). This creates a more complex experience of representation, because the audience is also contributing to the conception of the space and place by experiencing the visual representations unfettered by the mediation of performers. The fact that the signifier, signified, and referent are all simultaneously present is the perfect setting for playing with the ideas of representation. For example, a cooking pot may be a cooking pot in one scene and in the next become a hat. Revisionism specifically uses this to play with the signifier, signified, and referent of historical or traditional spaces and places, which in turn is a quality of postmodernism.

Johannesen wrote *Kassandra* in 1967, at a time when the experience of World War II was still fresh in the minds of the Norwegians who had lived through it. The Cold War was a constant presence,[7] and the questioning of traditional customs that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century was still new to the public, including the rising population of university students. University enrollment doubled between 1960 and 1965, creating the need for more universities in Norway (Derry 437). These new universities also ushered in a new kind of consciousness regarding authority and a new attitude towards the dominant power structures for the university students:

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[6] This refers to the discourse in a written narrative as well as the verbal discourse in a performance narrative.

[7] Norway was the only member of NATO with a land border to the U.S.S.R.

> At university level junior staff and students wrested some rights of
> control over curricula and discipline from the formerly all-powerful
> professors, and student co-operatives played a dominant role… (Derry
> 438)

This new social consciousness towards power can be seen in Johannesen's *Kassandra*,
with its themes of exposing the dominant power and undermining its authoritative
position. Although Johannesen, born in 1931, was not a part of this new wave of
university students, his ideas and works reflected the spirit of dissent against the
dominant power that embodied the majority of university students during the 1960s.
Johannesen had been a staunch socialist and political activist since World War II, and his
damning views on war and capitalism are quite visible in *Kassandra*. Johannesen's use of
The Iliad as a basis for this revisionist play is quite pertinent to the time period, because
The Iliad depicts the fall of the powerful city of Troy. This also shows that *Kassandra* fits
thematically into the genre of postmodern literature as well as revisionist narrative, due to
Johannesen's exposure of and challenge to dominant structures and the highly
experimental aesthetic form of his writing. Johannesen uses the story of Troy to make a
comparison between Troy and the authoritative power structures of his own time. His
problematization of both the spaces in Troy and contemporary religion, capitalism, and
politics demonstrates that his revisionist narrative accords with the postmodern
questioning of representation, the blurry history-literature border, and the commitment to
expose the underlying dominant power system. Johannesen's hybrid use of landscapes
and characters from *The Iliad*, images from World War II, and his social commentary of
contemporary international politics show that revisionist narratives have the possibility to

enhance postmodernism's examination of representation in many different ways. By layering space and place from a highly esteemed, traditional narrative, World War II, and his present-day world, Johannesen challenges the established representations of all three time periods.

Wolf preceded *Kassandra* with four lectures, published as *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra*, which showed the work that led to the writing of her novel. While Johannesen did not make public any discussion of his play at the time of its performance and publication, he did write a reflective article about *Kassandra* in 1993 that sheds light on many aspects of revisionism in his play. Johannesen begins his article with three quotes, one of which discusses *Kassandra* "i all sin grenseløse mangfoldighet" (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 220). From this quote, we see that the plurality to which McHale refers with his "plurality of worlds" is an important theme in *Kassandra*. Johannesen himself illustrates such plurality in many ways in his article. He states that *Kassandra* is a play within a play, the external play being our everyday life (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 225). In this manner, Johannesen suggests that contemporary Norwegian society itself is a play; this emphasizes the artificiality and socially constructed character of what he calls "Oslo-regimet og Oslo-befolkningens løgnsystemer og selvbedrag",[8] an artificiality that he also illustrates with his stage scenery that rejects the idea of "illusjonsteater" (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 226, 227). In this manner, we see that Johannesen already had layers of space in mind for his play in relation to his society in addition to the layers he creates within the play.

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[8] Johannesen singles out Oslo, because it is the center of political and economic power in Norway.

Johannesen uses his article about *Kassandra* to illustrate explicitly such layers in the play, demonstrating how the layers of place in stage scenery and the layers of space allow the audience members to create a complex mix of allusions. Johannesen explains that the layering of the oracle at Delfi and the "Oslo-Tivoli" brings his social criticism of the past to the present, as well as blurring the borders between fact and fiction (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 226). Johannesen illustrates the layering in many ways, stating "en bil er en stridsvogn. Trikken er en trojansk hest....Alt mulig er umulig. Og omvendt" (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 227). Here, Johannesen shows the parallels between locations in Troy, World War II, and the present while at the same time challenging the fixedness of reality. These layers of places and events include changes in perspective on each location, which demonstrates the revisionism that is essential in Johannesen's *Kassandra*. Additionally, Johannesen ends his article by emphasizing the importance of simulacra in his work: "Faksjon og fiksjon kan ikke lenger bytte plass. Oslo-Norge er blitt et *simulacrum*..." (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 237). Johannesen's *Kassandra* uses events and places culturally deemed as historical (i.e. the truth) within the realm of drama (i.e. fiction) in order to show that this binary view is artificial and socially constructed. As Baudrillard asserts, fact and fiction are no longer separate from each other.

The fact that *Kassandra* is a performance narrative complicates the representations of place and space, as a result of the addition of visual representation that purely written narratives cannot utilize. Unfortunately, because no recording of this performance is available, I am not able to examine the play in its synchronic form and must rely on the written text to analyze Johannesen's use of revisionism in his

postmodern play. *Kassandra* debuted at Det norske teatret (the Norwegian Theater) in 1967 but was quickly charged with the crime of blasphemy; while this charge was soon dropped, the play was never again performed on stage (Berg 79); additionally, the script was never published in any other country. Performative representations add a complexity to Johannesen's exploration of space and place in *Kassandra*, and I would be remiss to ignore this aspect of the text. It is for this reason that I will focus mainly on the non-auditory text in the written script (i.e. scene set-up, stage direction, and use of props) to show how Johannesen represents the different layers of space and place.

 Kassandra contains twenty-one scenes in three acts, all of which have detailed notes in the written script for the set-up and stage direction during the scenes. These notes demonstrate how the performance narrative echoes de Certeau's principles of place and space, because Johannesen problematizes the spatial trajectory (a key notion for de Certeau) of the narrative before the play has even begun. The first act opens with scenery that begins the layering of place immediately:

> *Et rotet rom. Halvferdig scenebilde med preg av gammeldags tivoli. En*
>
> *tykk mann sitter midt på scenen og sover i en stygg elefantstol fra*
>
> *tredveårene. Stolen kan trilles. Den tykke mannen er omgitt av ølflasker.*
>
> *En ung gutt sitter på sufflørkassen og spiller blokkfløyte. Gutten skotter*
>
> *bort på den tykke mannen, reiser seg, bukker for publikum og går ut med*
>
> *fløyten i hånden og leksebøker under armen.*
>
> *Fire prester kommer inn. Først Mel i fotsid svart prestekjole, blind, jøy,*
>
> *tyn og melankolsk...Så Sang, en tykk liten narr, han kan ha sydvest, gresk*
>
> *hjelm, tuban, fez, flosshatt eller kasserolle på hodet...Kol kommer in etter*

Mel og Sang. Kol er handlekraftig og i stand til å dominere de

andre...Fleg kom inn samtidig som Kol, men fra motsatt side. Fleg er en

vanlig individualist, dypt engasjert i sine nevroser og fullstendig

uinteressert i omverdenen... (Johannesen, *Kassandra* 9)

The props that involve the characters on stage allow the audience to interpret the scene

before any verbal discourse directs the narrative trajectory. In this manner, Johannesen

allows the audience to use the established social codes they have to make inferences

about the characters before the characters' dialogues add to their interpretation. The four

priests' actions introduce their characteristics; the schoolbooks the boy carries show that

he is a student; and the beer bottles that surround the sleeping fat man suggest his

drunkenness. At the same time, the half-finished scenery presents an immediate

artificiality, scenery that sustains throughout the entire play. The boy's position in the

prompter's box and his direct interaction with the audience, as well as Johannesen's

suggestion that the priest Sang can wear a saucepan for headgear, also demonstrate

Johannesen's deliberate decision to expose the artificiality of the play. This exposure of

artificiality is an element of postmodernism that rejects the culturally fixed, supposedly

true representations that characterize the literary movement of realism (Wain 368). The

fourth wall is broken between the characters and the audience, and Johannesen highlights

the *play* aspect of this performance narrative. This then makes it glaringly apparent that

what the audience is experiencing is not based in reality. This beginning contrasts sharply

with the title of the play, and this sets in motion the first layering of representations. The

title suggests a play about a character from *The Iliad*, and yet the audience first

experiences a room that has no apparent connection to Troy. The audience is given a

place (as well as characters that create space) to interpret, and at the same time they are forced by the paradoxical stage elements to see the artificial construct of the narrative.

The explicit layering of place and space on-stage begins shortly after the audience is introduced to this half-finished scenery. The four priests set the layering up with their verbal discourse, which juxtaposes images of Troy with a list of places important during World War II. The connection between the destruction of World War II and Troy establishes a comparison of place that Johannesen sustains throughout the play:

> SANG: *Det er kaldt. Jeg brenner. Det er varmt. Jeg fryser. (Han slår floke.) Det var kaldt i Stalingrad. Det var kaldere i Hiroshima. Kaldere enn her. Fleg! Det var kaldere i Nagasaki enn i Bikini.*
>
> KOL: *Fleg!*
>
> FLEG (leser): *"Den berømte sydhavsøen Bikini skal i år besøkes av turister utstyrt med...*
>
> SANG: *Badedrakter.*
>
> FLEG: *Det står ikke et ord om badedrakter. Ikke her. Sitat: "Den berømte sydhavsøen Bikini skal i år besøkes av turister utstyrt med spesialdrakter da øen fremdeles er radioaktiv etter vannstoffprøvene i 1953..."*
>
> (Johannesen, *Kassandra* 10 – 11)

Johannesen undermines the traditional view of Homer's epic narrative, because he places the images of Troy next to the nuclear bomb test site, which, after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the source of heated debates about the treatment of human life during the time Johannesen wrote *Kassandra*. By setting the two place descriptions of Bikini Island and Troy so close together in the dialogue, Johannesen connects the fall of

Troy with the beginning of a deadly source of human destruction. He then adds a space

of lived experience to this abstract place of Bikini Island through the discussion of

tourists on the island by the priests Sang and Fleg. While adding humor, this flippancy

about one of the sites most closely associated with the nuclear bomb also focuses

attention upon the apathy of the present-day tourists. Johannesen has now succeeded in

adding new and different layers of emotion (needless destruction, the lack of respect for

human life, the beginning of a dangerous new element in human history) to the

audience's experience of the narrative of *The Iliad*. By evoking a place and event in the

present that many in the contemporary world have condemned as unethical, Johannesen

calls the traditional view of a historical event into question by association.

This scene has already demonstrated the wavering border between history and

literature, a notion that is an essential principle of postmodernism, by giving the audience

a different perspective on the fall of Troy. Johannesen continues to bring together

different facets of postmodernism with his emphasis on artificiality in the next scene-

change directions:

> *Et bakteppe glir opp. Sang og Kol skyver ut stolen med den tykke mannen.*
>
> *Over tivoliporten henger Fleg et stort skilt: DELFI (med gresk D). Kol tar*
>
> *et pengeskrin som Fleg har sittet på. Kol og Sang begynner å marsjere*
>
> *mot porten...* (Johannesen, *Kassandra* 11)

Johannesen's decision to have the characters do the scene-changing themselves reinforces

the absence of reality on stage; by momentarily stepping out of their characters, the actors

are at once both the performers and the performed. This creates a series of representations

that are tied to the characters in *Kassandra*, a series that becomes more complex after this

scene change when the four priests become Trojans without changing their costumes. The representations of different characters in a single performer exemplify Miller's complex knot of representations that informs the audience's experience both of the performer and the characters performed.

While the performers play an essential role in the layering of space on stage, they do not convey the striking challenge to established representation in general as well as the specific visual representation of Delphi that occurs. As this is still the first scene in the first act, the actors remain surrounded by the space of the messy, contemporary room with beer bottles strewn about and half-finished scenery. The only manner in which Johannesen expresses that the place has changed is the stark sign over the door that states plainly "DELFI." This slight scenery change that marks the beginning of this revision of *The Iliad* shows the importance of place and space in challenging the traditional narrative. The performers are still within the space of the messy room, and yet, by changing the scenery, they create another place on top of that room with the visual representation of the sign. Before the actors turn that place of Delphi into a space by beginning their verbal discourse, the audience already has accessed a multitude of representations of Delphi that go beyond the scope of the play to tap into other experiences. These representations may come from cultural knowledge, personal experience, institutional learning (i.e. from a school or university), etc. This series of representations that the audience accesses presents Delphi as a place of reverence and spirituality, primarily because this is the connotation that *The Iliad* depicts. It is therefore quite jarring to see Delphi represented without reverence, by a plain sign and bold letters. Set against the space of the messy, half-finished room, Johannesen's representation of the

place of Delphi erases reverence or spirituality. The experience of the messy room carries over to the experience of Delphi. In this manner, Johannesen challenges and subverts the power structure that created the established, "true" representation of Delphi; this in turn plays with the sense of reality and meaning of Delphi for the audience. The actions of the performers at the caves of Delphi also challenge the admiration of the space by insisting that the gods are gone; the absence of spirituality at Delphi further supports the absence of reverence for Delphi that the visual representation created.

Johannesen uses many of these signs as blunt visual representation to add layers of place and space on stage. While they do utilize written text, they are still a large part of the visual representation of place, because they are the only indication on stage that a new space or place has been added to the previous layers. The signifier is thus stripped down to a grouping of words, and the audience members must rely on their experience of the signified outside of the play to fill the gap between the stark scenery and the space or place implied. During the first act, the base representation of the messy room acquires layers of place and space through these signs, all similarly painted severely: "DELFI," "TILBAKE TIL TROJA," "TROJANSK HEST INNEHOLDER FIENDEN FORSIKTIG!" "EVIG FRED I TROJA. ADGANG FORBUDT!" and "KRISTENDOMMEN – GUDS TIVOLI." It is important to state that these signs add both place *and* space, because many of these sign throughout the entire theatrical performance not only represent a place but also set the tone for the audience before the actors begin the verbal transformation of the place into a space. For example, the sign alerting the audience to the wooden horse containing Odysseus and other Greeks introduces a representation of that event in which the fact that the horse is a trap is quite

clear. This is not simply the introduction of a place; the change from place to space is already occurring before the verbal discourse begins. Æneas, played by the character Kol, points to the sign and suggests wisely that maybe the guards should not let the horse in. However, it is Æneas whom the guards (who willingly admit that enemies are in the horse) do not want to allow access to the palace. This revision of the traditional narrative presents the fall of Troy as something that was willingly caused by the Trojans themselves, because they did not heed the signs that were explicitly and implicitly in front of their faces.

Another example of space introduced by sign is the seventh scene, in which the sign the performers post is a declaration of Christianity as God's carnival. The audience simultaneously accesses and then associates their previous experiences with the representations of the space of Christianity and the representations of the place of a carnival. In this scene, Johannesen represents Christianity as a sort of entertainment that God could either be controlling or in which God could be participating (this is an example of the many interpretations such an ambiguous postmodernist representation can have). By this scene, the audience has experienced representations that challenge the traditional views of the fall of Troy, and now Johannesen brings the re-representation challenge to the contemporary Western world by having Christianity as his focus. The social commentary, while first introduced in his treatment of the traditional narrative, *The Iliad*, is now centered on a subject that has no place in the narrative of the fall of Troy but is present in the audience's everyday life, whether directly or indirectly.

Johannesen sustains the criticism of Christianity in the later acts, using other visual representations in addition to signs in order to scrutinize culturally established

representations. For example, the tenth scene in the second act begins with the persisting half-finished scenery as seen in the first act, but the lights become ever darker until the only visible object is the sign which reads "HIMMELREKLAME" (Johannesen, *Kassandra* 40). Using such a business term as "advertisement" with a place such as heaven sustains the re-representation of Christianity by Johannesen. Johannesen ties business and commerce with heaven, a combination that long-established representations of Christianity do not support. His representation of heaven evokes representations of capitalism and retail (i.e. advertising), which are not traditionally connected to the final resting place of the saved Christian souls. In addition to commercial allusions, the theme of advertising sustains the disconnection between humanity and its space. When tied to religion, the advertising sign then alludes to a disconnect between religion and humanity. Mark Sandberg writes that the onset of modernity and industrialization caused advertising to become disconnected from the physical location: "...the advertised product might seem to have acquired a means of self-propulsion when it was no longer identified in relation to a place and the name of a shop-owner" (Sandberg 281). This is pertinent to Johannesen's play, as one of the main power structures Johannesen exposes is the capitalist system in the modern age, and the layers of place on stage illustrate a disconnection from the traditional view of these places. In this scene, the sign HIMMELREKLAME is also quite disconnected from anything that might represent a heaven on stage. In this manner, Johannesen challenges the motivations of a large power structure existing in contemporary society through several visual allusions. As the fat man (by this point in the performance narrative, he has represented both God and Satan)

appears, his verbal discourse supports and expounds upon this new representation of a disconnected heaven:

> TYKK MANN (*roper*): Til himmelen! Til himmelen! Ned med skyene! Vi stiger. Vi stiger. Vi stiger. Vi vinner. Vi vinner. Vi vinner…Sola er seks tusen grader på overflaten som på Solplassen i Japan 6. august 1945. Sola er rund. ja, helt rund. Månen er rund. Jorda er nesten rund. Der nede til høyre og til venstre har vi de amerikanske englene. De flyr så høyt de kan. De er gode. De er for, de er ikke i mot. De stiger. De stiger. De stiger. De blier friere, friere og friere. Friheten er… (Johannesen, *Kassandra* 40)

The fat man's chant is an excellent example of the myriad of layers of representation that occur within revisionist and postmodernist narratives. The chanting rhythm of the fat man's speech, combined with the theme of heaven, evokes the tone of a sermon, an aspect to which Johannesen explicitly refers in his article about *Kassandra*: "Litanier og prekenparodier ut mot publikun gir hovedskillet mellom den greske og den kristne delen av *Kassandra*" (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 226). The scene begins with two contrasting representations of cultural space and place, and the fat man's advertisement rant adds further layers of place. The images mixing in the minds of the audience are traditionally contrasting but now uncannily combined: heaven, advertising, the sun, the nuclear-bombed Japan, World War II, climbing American angels (fighter planes?), freedom. These representations evoke many different experiences for the audience, creating a complex series of representations in this one scene that forces the audience to make connections between traditionally positive and negative images in contemporary culture. Against the representation of places, spaces, and characters from *The Iliad*

occurring in previous scenes, Johannesen exposes his negative opinions of the power structures that govern the world during his time.

The combination of place representations on stage, with the addition of verbal discourse from the performers, create a platform on which Johannesen forces the audience to compare the downfall of Troy with the current situation of the world's powerful nations of his time. Each place and space he introduces in such a manner challenges the traditional respect for these historical places, and the frustrating actions of the characters serve to support the subversion. For example, the oracle's declaration that the gods are absent at Delphi occurs after the scene in which the four priests make light of the nuclear bomb tests at Bikini Island. The audience sees a connection between the absence of the gods at Delphi and the absence of any voice of reason during the nuclear bombings, which is further reinforced by the treatment of Christianity later in the first act. These signs throughout the play that represent places tied to contemporary culture, including heaven, hell, and Hiroshima, and the actions of the performers within these spaces (for example, the fat man's advertisement for heaven), sustain this subversion to include social criticism of the current situation.

Johannesen's *Kassandra* demonstrates the radical questioning of realities that postmodernist narratives contain; by challenging established "true" representations of places and spaces, he challenges the authoritative systems that sustain those representations of "reality." Postmodernist theories include social critique and playing with the idea of an absolute truth or reality. Postmodernist narratives therefore do not support the attempt to find overarching universal conditions within texts. Each narrative speaks to its own place and time period; *Kassandra* finds resonance with those who

understand the political and social situations of 1960s Europe and who contain the cultural knowledge of Western literature.

However, this is not to say that parallels cannot be found among different historical places and eras. The use of revisionism enhances postmodernist theory by questioning established "truths" from the past and power structures in the present. By using *The Iliad* as the basis for his revisionist narrative, Johannesen further supports the postmodernist idea that there is no original meaning, truth, or reality behind these series of representations. He illustrates that *The Iliad* itself is a representation that can be re-shaped, and the original meaning or true reality of the events of Troy does not exist. The borders between history and literature are therefore blurred. Representation leaves room for many interpretations, and by adding contrasting representations of both a traditional narrative and contemporary society, Johannesen is contributing further to the complex knots of experience of these narratives of which Miller writes by challenging that which is already established. Revisionism of traditional spaces and places in a narrative reinforces the postmodernist theory of representation and enhances the possibilities of examining the dominant systems within contemporary culture, as Johannesen has done with his exposure of the dominant power systems of Christianity and capitalism.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Postmodernism is normally tied in with calling into question the "messianic faith of modernism" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 11), and revisionist narratives show that questioning the systems of representation by the dominant power in other periods of historical narrative applies to modern life in such a way that non-revisionist narratives would find difficult. By taking an established narrative and challenging the "truth" thought to be inherent in its narrative, postmodernist authors like Wolf and Johannesen can more effectively demonstrate the power of representation in society and culture. Both authors chose one of the oldest Western narratives to re-write, and in doing so they started their work with the body of cultural knowledge already at their disposal. The literary and historical tradition that *The Iliad* encompasses allows Johannesen and Wolf to start with an established base, for they can assume that all Western readers/audience members have some knowledge of the story. From there, they both operate under the assumption that the concepts of the truth and reality cannot be contained within a binary, right-or-wrong categorical system. Instead, they open history up to a myriad of interpretations and perspectives with different ideological biases. Historical narratives now have the traits of literary narratives, and the border between the two binary categories is again broken through, which exposes the artificiality of the dominant power structure's established representation and allows other representations to surface.

The intertextuality of these two revisionist narratives, while related to McHale's notion of worlds in the plural, is a discussion that does not fit within the framework of this paper. However, it is a relevant topic and deserves mention, because the intertextuality demonstrates that revisionism is applicable not only for traditional historical narratives such as *The Iliad* but also for other types of texts. The last lines of Wolf's novel are reminiscent of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem "Der Panther," which explores the destabilization of the subject-object relationship. Johannesen uses citation in a more explicit manner, which he illustrates in his article about *Kassandra*:

> I *Kassandra* fins allusjoner, lån og sitater fra for eksempel Bibelen,
>
> Luther, Shakespeare, Brorson, Blake, folkeviser og amerikansk visesang.
>
> Her fins greske lån, fra Homer, Tyrtaios, Thukydid, Aristofanes,
>
> Aiskhylos og Evripides. *Kassandra* er en modernistisk sitatmosaikk.
>
> (Johannesen, "Om Kassandra" 229)

These references demonstrate that not only narratives perceived as historical can be revised but also literary narratives. Both authors go beyond culturally deemed historical events to include references from other texts such as drama, poetry, and popular songs. This in turn further supports the notion that these different historical and so-called fictional narratives have no difference in their relation to truth and reality other than the dominant structure's social construction that creates the two categories.

So is it enough just to expose the dominant structure's representation? Can postmodernist theory break out of the realm of academia and into the everyday lives of people? Is there a point to being aware of the power structures around us? Hutcheon explains the paradox:

> On the one hand, there is a sense that we can never get out from under
>
> the weight of a long tradition of visual and narrative representations and,
>
> on the other hand, we also seem to be losing faith in both the
>
> inexhaustibility and the power of those existing representations.
>
> (Hutcheon *Politics* 7)

This circular argument could indicate the inapplicability of the ideas that revisionist narratives illustrate, but this is not the case. The very motivation of Johannesen and Wolf's narratives (i.e. to criticize specific cultural conventions they see in their society) demonstrates that their works are meant to educate the public by showing alternative ways of thinking. By experiencing that the dominant perspective is not the only valid representation, individuals could get out from under the weight of tradition and discover that the social conventions they have been exposed to since birth are not as fixed or rigid as the dominant power or mainstream thinking leads them to believe. This marks the first step in changing that dominant structure to include other perspectives. Instead of having a cultural space that supports a binary position of "either/or" (either my reality or your reality) revisionism supports the idea of an inclusive space (my perception *and* your perception *and* her perception and...). Revisionist narratives can be the aesthetic tool with which postmodernist theory is brought into the everyday sphere of society.

There are many different theories that fall under the postmodernist umbrella; this is a defining trait of postmodernism (Wain 360). Revisionist narratives tie together these different theories into literary form in order to demonstrate the connection between the ideas. These narratives are an important tool for showing connections between postmodern theories on history and literature, because they emphasize the idea that the

referent of the historical narrative is not the past but rather in the social conventions and dominant power structures of the author's contemporary time period. As Linda Orr asserts, authors are influenced by historical narratives of their culture, and historians in turn are influenced by the writing of their literary contemporaries; revisionist narratives show that these two categories are both social constructions:

> Is the difference – no less important – between the two genres [of history and novel] that historians and their readers believe in their prefaces whereas in fiction we suspend disbelief? (Orr 13)

It is not a question of what we learn from these narratives, for the narrative is in our everyday life in order to help us make sense of our experience in the world (Miller, "Narrative" 70). It is rather that importance is placed upon the historical narrative simply because this narrative is supposedly "true," and revisionism demonstrates that all representations of an event are useful. Revisionist narratives look back on the "lives of the obscure" in order to discover things in our own lives (Mudge 245). The narratives in which we re-tell an established narrative express social conditions of our own contemporary period, and exposing that our perceptions are simply aggregates of social and cultural forces indicates that we can work toward changing our culture that influences us.

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