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German National Identity in Elfried Jelinek's "Wolken.Heim"

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GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ELFRIEDE JELINEK’S WOLKEN.HEIM.

By

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To my family.
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ABSTRACT

Elfriede Jelinek’s play Wolken.Heim, explores German identity. Through her use of the “montage” technique she arranges quotes from German thinkers—among others, Hölderlin, Hegel, Fichte, Kleist, Heidegger, and the “Rote Armee Faktion” (“RAF”)—in such a way that one can see commonalities, contradictions and interesting points made by these authors about German identity as it progresses through eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century German thought. Jelinek’s selection, placement and slight alterations of the quotes speak to the type of theatre that she desires—a world in which the actor’s physical presence and the import of the lines that he speaks meld into a unified whole. In the case of Wolken.Heim, as both text and play, this unification is only possible through the imagination of the reader and audience member. The following paper explores her theory of unifying one’s body with language, and the various ways in which the theory manifests itself in her writing of Wolken.Heim.
INTRODUCTION

*Wolken Heim.* presents a complex discourse on German identity. In order to provide a thorough analysis of the play, requires approaching the text as a whole and the text as a montage.

Analyzing the text as a self-contained work of art includes a discussion of the extent imagery. This approach includes noting patterns and interpreting symbolism.

An analysis of the text in light of the passages that Jelinek montages into it (i.e. as a montage) necessitates a great number of additional discussions. One must identify the montaged elements, noting their source and any repetition or textual similarities throughout the text. Once one has located all of the montaged elements in the text, one can include a discussion of the context within which the elements originally appear. For instance, since passages from Heidegger’s rectoral address, “Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität,” appear in the text, one can discuss the historical context of the address and perhaps draw broader connections between the play and the larger discussion of German literary history that it provoked. If the montaged passage appears in a work that was published during the Napoleonic wars, what impact or relation does the passage have to the time in which it was published? Also, in what way or ways does the passage relate to similar concepts that received literary expression during the time of the passage’s composition and publication? A thorough analysis of the work as a montage would also include a discussion of any changes that Jelinek made to the montaged passages’ original form. One would also discuss the montaged passages’ placement within the text. Does the fact that the historically consecutive passages of Hegel and Fichte appear successively in the text indicate that Jelinek desires to show a progression in the historical representation of German identity? Thematically, what is the significance of placing Hölderlin’s poems *Gesang des Deutschen, Der Frieden, *and *Wie wenn am Feiertage* in consecutive order within Section Fifteen of the play—a section that explicitly deals with going to war? As a final point of discussion, one can talk about how the play might change the way in which one views the sources of the montaged passages.

In addition to the thorough, two-fold analysis of the text, one can include in the discussion perspectives on literary theory and performance theory that relate to
**Wolken.Heim.**, a discussion of various productions, the play’s reception in the various countries of its staging, and its historical, aesthetic and thematic position in Austrian, and/or German-speaking, theatre and literature. Does **Wolken.Heim.** belong to (or has it triggered) any perceivable and defensible tradition of Austrian or German-speaking literature? How does Jelinek’s text montage relate to historically anterior montaged pieces of literature? Do other literary works discuss German identity in the same, or a similar, way that **Wolken.Heim.** does?

The following essay does not comprise a “thorough” analysis as defined by the recommended approaches. My thesis encompasses a discussion of the text as the text relates to its montaged elements, and brief discussions of the allusions in the title, the significance of the missing *dramatis personae*, Jelinek’s application of the montage technique, literary theory that relates to **Wolken.Heim.**, and Elfriede Jelinek’s theory surrounding the author’s relationship to her actor(s) and her text. For an additional, broader picture of the play, I refer the reader to my bibliography. It contains citations for several insightful analyses of **Wolken.Heim.**, most notably Evelyn Annuss’ *Elfriede Jelinek: Theater des Nachlebens*, Georg Stanitzeck’s essay “Kuckuck,” Margarete Kohlenbach’s essay, “Montage und Mimikry: zu Elfriede Jelinek’s *Wolken.Heim.*,” and Matthias Konzett’s *The Rhetoric of National Dissent in Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke and Elfriede Jelinek*. 
CHAPTER 1
Individuals and Society: The Progression of Elfriede Jelinek’s Aesthetic in Die Lieberhaberinnen, Lust, and Wolken.Heim.

Elfriede Jelinek was born on October 20, 1946 in the Styrian town, Mürzzuschlag. Her father was of Czech-Jewish origin and a chemist. Having worked in strategically important chemical production operations during World War II, he escaped Nazi persecution. Jelinek’s mother came from an affluent Vienna family. Vienna was the backdrop of Jelinek’s upbringing. In her early childhood, Jelinek was instructed in piano, organ and recorder and went attended the Vienna Conservatory, studying composition. After graduating from the Albertsgymnasium in 1964, she went on to study theatre and art history at the University of Vienna. In 1971, she passed the organist diploma examination at the Vienna Conservatory.


Her oeuvre comprises subject material that provokes reactions from, and appeals to, specific audiences. Feminists agree that Jelinek portrays her female characters as hopelessly subjugated to a ruthless patriarchal society. Theatre critics admire the innovative stagings of her plays, her use of language, and the plays’ counter-traditional content. Despite the interest of specific, intellectual audiences, her works remain largely on the rims of popularity. Her works’ marginal status is partly due to the fact that many cannot tolerate the content of her works; many find the works pessimistic or sexually deviant. Another reason for her marginal position of popularity is, not everyone can
make sense of the unconventional manner in which she portrays her controversial content.

In any case, one cannot accuse Jelinek of provoking reactions accidentally. She constructs her works close in accordance to the aesthetic intentions that she wants to realize. Her primary intention is to show the problematic relationship between individual identity and society. In her Die Liebhaberinnen and Lust, she portrays female identity as hopelessly controlled by a malevolent, male-run society. Her characters are subservient to society’s predominantly patriarchal will. Jelinek believes that female identity is in reality determined by the male norms, which structure society. In a 1988 interview with Gabriele Presber she states, people live in a “männliche[m] Wert- und Normensystem, dem die Frau unterliegt, und zwar so weit unterliegt, dass [die Frau] eben immer anders sein muss und . . . dass man gar nicht weiß, was die Frau ist . . . bei allem, was man tut als Frau, die den Normen der Männer ausgeliefert ist . . .” (114). In Jelinek’s mind, society embodies a system that deindividualizes the woman to the point that individual identity for the female is no longer perceivable. Thus, Jelinek creates worlds in her writing that are geared towards the woman’s downfall. To show in the most acute fashion how such worlds run their courses on their female targets, Jelinek pares down her female characters to, what she calls, their “skeleton,” instilling them with little or no psychological individuality and little, if any, free will. In his essay, “Der böse Blick der Elfi Friede Jelinek,” Rudolf Burger calls this paring-down process “dehumanization,” and states that the end result of Jelinek’s women is an “unvermittelte Einheit von biologischer Bedürftigkeit und sozialer Determination” (22). Burger calls Die Liebhaberinnen, published in 1975,

reiner Geschlechterkampf innerhalb der ökonomischen Matrix eines provinziellen Industriekapitalismus…als verzweifelte Anstrengung zweier Arbeiterinnen, dem proletarischen Milieu…durch Heirat zu entkommen. Zielobjekte sind zwei Männer…Der ganze Text besteht in nichts anderem als in der minituösen Beschreibung der Tricks und Listen zur Erreichung dieses Ziels… (22)

As a result of the false dreams that society foists upon the female protagonists as they live life, Paula and Brigitte overlook their inner happiness and become hopelessly lost in their external obsession to attract a male partner. As Burger writes, the characters are led by
their desire to find a male partner, who, they believe, will lead them to their happiness. The fact that finding a partner leads the protagonists to hopeless despair instead, suggests that society in Jelinek’s novels does not necessarily project the solution but could in fact be the problem.

A great difference exists between Jelinek’s portrayal of society in Die Liebhaberinnen and the world in which Gerti, the female protagonist, lives in Lust (1989). Jelinek portrays the characters and society in Die Liebhaberinnen as two existential entities. In terms of society’s interaction with Brigitte and Paula, Jelinek portrays, in a neutral, third-person omniscient, narrative tone, society and Brigitte and Paula interacting with each other. This “Realismus aus grossem Abstand” (Löffler) shows that Jelinek’s interest lies in society’s effects on individual identity, not vice versa. Jelinek states, “Viemehr interessieren mich Figuren als Produkte ihrer gesellschaftlichen Erfahrungen als irgendwelche Leute mit einem ganz ausserordentlichen Schicksal” (Schmölzer 88). The difference in Lust lies in the fact that the separation line between the individuality of the protagonist and that of the society portrayed in the novel becomes blurred. Jelinek continues to portray society as a patriarchal system that aims to subjugate women. However, the absence of a third-person omniscient narrator in Lust dismantles the clear separation between the characters’ identity and the world that the characters inhabit. Jelinek portrays the world in the same language that she believes leads to the downfall of Gerti. Jelinek describes the woman’s story in a mimicked style of “die Sprache der Pornographie” (Löffler 83)—a male form of speech that inherently derogates women by objectifying them. No longer does the omniscient narrator portray the subjugation; on top of the society that is geared towards Gerti’s downfall, through her mimicked style of “die Sprache der Pornographie,” the narrator becomes the subjugator. Gerti is locked more hopelessly than Paula and Brigitte in the oppressive, male-dominated society that Jelinek believes is so damaging to a woman’s individuality.

Jelinek’s tendency to strip down both character identity and the societies, which her characters inhabit, to their cause-and-effect fundaments shows an approach to writing that emphasizes technical precision. Jelinek takes meticulous care to create her worlds and characters according and subservient to her specific aesthetic and didactic intentions. Jelinek remarks in a 1988 interview, “Ich konstuiere sehr stark und kann sehr genau
sagen, warum ich etwas schreibe, was ich für politische Ziele damit verfolge und was ich didaktisch damit erreichen will” (Presber 109). The results in Die Liebhaberinnen and Lust are narrational constructs that mirror the real-life mechanisms of male oppression that she targets. Jelinek’s characters are semi-autonomous creations that simultaneously behave like programmable machines. Jelinek remarks in an interview, “das [sind] keine Menschen, sondern Typenträger oder Protoypen” (Schmölzer 88). In the 1987 interview with Donna Hoffmeister, titled “Access Routes into Postmodernism,” approaching the 1988 premiere of her play Wolken.Heim., Jelinek reiterates that “meine Figuren [sind] keine Menschen. Sie sind nur Schablonen, Bedeutungsträger, nur Repräsentanten” (115).

In writing her theatrical pieces, Jelinek asserts an equivalent amount of control over shaping her characters’ identities and the worlds that the characters inhabit. Traditionally, a theatrical text comprises three elements: a setting or settings, a character or multiple characters, and lines. In Wolken.Heim. (1990), Jelinek omits setting and dramatis personae. All that remain are lines. The omission of characters and a setting is the result of Jelinek’s asserting tight control over the implementation of her asthetic goal. Her asthetic goal derives from her desire to test the definition of “theatre.” In the 1993 interview with Wolfgang Reiter, Jelinek indicates that the characters of her desired theatre stem from one theatrical element—lines. She states, “Solange [die Figuren] sprechen, sind sie da, und wenn sie nicht sprechen, sind sie fuer mich verschwunden” (24). Any discernible identity, on stage or in the text, derives from the lines that she, the playwright, writes, not from existential constructs like a dramatis persona or a setting. Die Liebhaberinnen and Lust represent a progression of Jelinek’s idea that external, societal conditions determine individual identity. Out of the three works by Jelinek mentioned already, Wolken.Heim. represents the peak of this progression. Character identity and its determinant, society, are no longer distanced from the observer by a narrator. The text becomes the character and the setting, thereby tightening the relationship between character identity and the author.

Although Jelinek includes dramatis personae and scene descriptions in many of her other plays, in Wolken.Heim., the words embody simultaneously the setting and the character, which is a collective, signified as “Wir.” Stage directions and character descriptions reflect the author’s individual intentions of how one should stage and
interpret a play. A text absent of these intrinsic, theatrical devices offers no implicit direction. If Jelinek’s intention in writing is to show characters locked within an oppressive society that wrests the individuality from its individual characters, then the text of Wolken.Heim, reflects that intention to the greatest degree. By abolishing a formal setting and character distinction, Jelinek shows in Wolken.Heim, the oppressive society and the (collective) character unified into one entity, the text.

What is the holistic message of the text? In his essay, “Kuckuck,” literary critic Georg Stanitzeck states that Wolken.Heim, “geht um Deutschland, das heisst zumindest um die gegenwärtige laufenden Reden zum Thema” (11). The text comprises almost exclusively passages by Hegel, Heidegger, Hölderlin, Kleist and Fichte. Generally, the text reflects the identity-stifling society that Jelinek believes has come into being in today’s world. Thematically, in that the words of which Jelinek has chosen to compose her text all come from native German-speaking authors, the text represents, like Stanitzeck asserts, a contemporary discourse on German identity. Like Brigitte, Paula and Gerti, in Wolken.Heim, the character—the collective German identity—derives from the world within which it resides. For Brigitte and Paula that construct is an existential society that exists independently from them. For Gerti that is the eyeglass through which the reader observes her downfall—the so-called “Sprache der Pornographie.” For the collective identity of Wir, the world within which he resides and his identity are unified. Since the conglomeration of text and character in Wolken.Heim, deals with German identity, the unification of Wir’s identity and his habitat make Wir the subject of his own discourse. He is essentially one being, reflected by the language in which Jelinek depicts him. If Jelinek had listed him as a character in the play—in the traditional way that a playwright includes dramatis personae—and called him “Wir,” there would already be distance between him and the reader, and him and the playwright through the extra construct of dramatis persona. By omitting that, Jelinek makes the discourse, and thereby the point of the play, Wir.
CHAPTER 2
Approaches and Considerations for an Analysis of Wolken.Heim.

Wolken.Heim, and Literary Theory

Wolken.Heim, represents a dynamic, simultaneously synchronic and diachronic discourse. In order to explain the nature of a simultaneously synchronic and diachronic discourse, it must be said that both usages of “synchrony” and “diachrony” are taken from the discussion on structuralism, structural linguistics and deconstruction in the introduction to Critical Theory Since 1965. The terms refer to approaches in structural linguistics (also known as “structuralism”). Structuralism encompasses a linguistic viewpoint that fundamentally establishes itself on the assumption that language can be reduced to a binary system of signified (concept) and signifier (“sound image”)\(^1\). In the sense that it embodies both the discussion (Jelinek’s piecing together of the passages by Hegel, Hölderlin, Fichte, et al.) and the object of its discussion (the passages themselves), Wolken.Heim, embodies an aesthetic application of structuralist philosophy.

Regarding the definitions of “synchronic” and “diachronic,” Hazard Adams writes in the introduction of Critical Theory Since 1965, the synchronic approach to structural linguistics “is concerned with logical and psychological relations in an atemporal field” (8). A diachronic approach to structural linguistics, according to Adams, “emphasizes differences that relate successive terms in time and history” (7). These approaches can be applied to an analysis of Wolken.Heim. The passages in the text are historically linked to each other in that Hölderlin’s passages historically originated before Fichte’s passages, and Heidegger’s Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität originated before the RAF’s letters. One can analyze Wolken.Heim, in terms of its passages’ historical interrelatedness (i.e. diachronically) or as a self-contained work of art (i.e. synchronically). In this way, one can view the text as a museum of sorts, in that the statements by German authors are being displayed for the observer to view and evaluate in their historical context or outside of their historical context.\(^2\)
**Wolken.Heim** and “Montage”

At the end of *Wolken.Heim*, the author’s note reads, “Die verwendeten Texte sind unter anderem von: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger, Fichte, Kleist und aus den Briefen der RAF von 1973 – 1977” (158). In terms of literary techniques, “verwendet,” in *Wolken.Heim*’s case, means “montaged.” The montage technique entails the selection of quotes from other sources and their assimilation into an artist’s work as an inextricable aspect of the work itself. In his essay “Zitat und Montage in neuerer Literatur und Kunst,” literary critic Volker Klotz calls montage, “die Tätigkeit, vorgefertigte Material zu einem Ganzen zusammenzusetzen” (259). This definition rings true with the practice that Jelinek employs in creating *Wolken.Heim*. She takes quotations from over twenty poems by Hölderlin, sections of Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, Fichte’s *Reden an die deutsche Nation* and the subject material from literary critic Leonhard Schmeiser’s essay “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens.” She alters or cites the excerpts directly from their source, and she assimilates them into a text, giving it the original title, *Wolken.Heim*, itself a referent to ideas portrayed in Greek playwright Aristophanes’ plays, *Birds* and *Clouds*.

A text montage provokes the critic to analyze the montage in two ways: in its synchronic context and in its diachronic context. Naturally, a text montage challenges the critic to study the piece in terms of the author’s technical and qualitative achievement. This approach is inherently diachronic, because its predicates examination of the work on its differences from other works, in terms of its position in literary history. A text montage also exists as an essentially inorganic yet nevertheless legitimately original literary work; it exists in its own right, apart from the historical context of the montaged passages. Therefore, it can be analyzed as such.

In “Zitat und Montage in neuerer Literatur und Kunst,” Klotz differentiates “montage” from what he calls “organic” texts. Principally, montage, according to Klotz, insists on “technique,” whereas an organic text emphasizes “nature” (260). A montaged piece of art contains fragments that the author takes from original sources and assimilates into an original assemblage. In the new, montaged, art piece the fragments refer to both the sources from which they originate while simultaneously illustrating the nature of their new residence within the text into which they have been montaged. In the fact that the
In his essay “Kuckuck,” Stanitzeck rightly calls Jelinek’s note at the end of Wolken.Heim, “eine Aufforderung zum Studium, zur Autopsier, zur Verifikation” (47). Analyzing Wolken.Heim, and the context from which all of the fragments that Jelinek montages into it originate, predicates itself on a meticulous dissection of, like Klotz writes, “wo ein [einmontierter] Teil aufhört und ein anderer beginnt; wie [die einmontierten Fragmente] aneinander befestigt sind; wie sie einzeln und wie sie miteinander funktionieren” (Klotz 260). A complete analysis of Wolken.Heim, does not stop with the text. In order to encompass the work’s entire thematic breadth, a complete analysis must continue with an evaluation of the ramifications that Jelinek’s application of montage brings about in the corpus of German literature. Clearly, Wolken.Heim, changes the relationship between the text and audience. Its referents turn the casual spectator or reader into an engaged detective who, if committed to fully understanding Wolken.Heim, must: first, locate the origins of the montaged portions; second, identify the alterations that Jelinek has made to the original form of the portions; third, examine how the alterations change the meaning of both a reading of the montaged quotations in Wolken.Heim, and a reading of their original form in their sources. An additional task awaits the viewer or reader: he must ask himself how reading the altered version skews the way in which he will view the version from which it originates. Finally, one must notice that Wolken.Heim, has linked itself inextricably to the works from which it draws its subject material and physical text, creating a unity, across time and space, of hermeneutical interchange between itself and the texts from which Jelinek montages her passages—Hölderlin’s more than twenty poems, Hegel’s Über die Philosophie der Geschichte, Fichte’s Reden an die deutsche Nation, Kleist’s quoted plays, the selected passages from the RAF letters, Heidegger’s “Selbstbehauptung der deutschen
Universität” and Leonhard Schmeiser’s “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens.” As a result of her application of montage, Jelinek simultaneously refreshes, problematizes, and offers new ways to view, German identity.
The title of *Wolken.Heim.* contains the first montaged referents. Disagreement among critics exists over whether “Wolken.Heim.” refers jointly to Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and *Birds*, or only singularly to *Birds*. One fact helps narrow the multiplicity of possible meaning. *Wolken.Heim.* appears in both the original 1990 and 2004 publications with two periods, one after “Wolken,” the other after “Heim.” Literary critic Georg Stanitzeck perceives only the first period as significant. Stanitzeck directs the focus of the majority of his essay, “Kuckuck,” towards the first period, mentioning the second period only at the end, as if an afterthought. In any case, his discussion of the first period introduces a broader discussion of the title. The first period, he argues, alludes to the word “*Kuckuck*” in the German translation of the Greek word *nephelokykkygia* (“Wolkenkuckucksheim”; in English, “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land”). “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land” appears in Aristophanes’ *Birds*, the dramatic comedy in which two Athenian citizens, Euepides and Peisetairus, led by their crow and jackdaw from Greece in search of utopia, successfully convince the leader of the birds to vie against the gods for man’s veneration by establishing a city-state between the heavens and the earth to intercept man’s sacrificial smoke, from whose substance the gods receive their nourishment. According to Stanitzeck, his version of the title—“*Wolken*” and “*Heim*” joined together by a period in between—refers to the god-defying, utopian city-state, “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land.” The first period, he argues, equals the Germanic soul, which lies latently underground, awaiting its rebirth. The fact that *Wolken.Heim.* premiered one year prior to Germany’s reunification allows for a convincing argument that the title represents the metaphorical utopia in the middle of which the German soul resides. However, the fact that “Wolken.Heim.” indeed does not contain only one period, but, rather, two, must bring the critic to realize a number of other significant layers of meaning that the title’s two periods enable.

Stanitzeck states correctly that “[das Stück] geht um Deutschland” (11). For Stanitzeck, the subject material of “Germany” means not only any quotes noted specifically in the text, but also any thematically related material. For the first word of
the title, “Wolken,” Stanitzek writes that Jelinek evokes Nietzsche in Jenseits von Gut und Böse: “Und wie ein jegliches Ding sein Gleichnis liebt, so liebt der Deutsche die Wolken...: das Ungewisse, Unausgestaltete, Sich-Verschiebende, Wachsende jeder Art fühlte er als ‘tief’” (14). In the second word of the title “Heim” (which Stanitzek recognizes without a period) Stanitzek writes that Jelinek could be evoking the German’s love “zum Haus.” Stanitzek: “…in diesem Fall [steht] das Wort selbst auf so klassische Weise für deutsche Orte, Anwesen und Wohnungen ein…” (14). Finally, Stanitzek writes that Elfriede Jelinek intends the first period to be a pun on “Punkt.” He writes, “…Elfriede Jelinek zitiert, um Deutschland als die Beziehung von Wolken und Heim auf den Punkt zu bringen” (15). These views can all be correct. Wolken, Heim, embodies a general discourse on the formulation of German national identity, from its roots in the eighteenth-century to the 1987 publication of Schmeiser’s “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens,” so with all textually qualifiable interpretations must come thematically related ideas too.

One view that the recognition of the two periods in the title prompts is that the two words, “Wolken” and “Heim,” read as a joint referent to both the meaning of the play and the theoretical framework surrounding its staging and literary categorization. The two words can refer to either or both of Aristophanes’ Clouds and Birds. One can interpret the first period as the looming German soul and the second period—a point of termination—as the marker, which outlines the breadth of the discussion. However, the words themselves function as a literary construct that physically “houses” the German soul. The title implies a representation of the physical domain—in the context of Birds, the city-state—between the earth and the gods within which the German soul resides.

Translated into English from the Greek word nephelokykkygia, the utopian city-state in Birds, “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land,” comes into being as a result of false reasoning by Peisetairus. As a result of this false reasoning that the birds are worthier than the gods of man’s veneration, he persuades the Leader to accept his opinion.

After Tereus convinces the Leader of Peisetairus and Euelpides’ altruistic interest in founding “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land,” Peisetairus steps before the Leader to persuade him personally of the plan’s sound justification. Abetted by several literary stories that Peisetairus passes off as fact, Peisetairus provides to the Leader an essentially historical
justification for the birds’ superiority over the gods that actually has its foundation in existent symbology, fable, myth and the practices of former kings. His reasoning proceeds as follows:

PEISETAIRUS. You see, it fills me with sadness to think
that you birds were once monarchs…
LEADER. Us, monarchs? Of what?
PEISETAIRUS. Of everything that is: of me,
even Zeus, with an ancestry
that stretches back to a time before
Cronus and the Titans and even Mother Earth…
LEADER. Oh! Oh! I never heard of that.
PEISETAIRUS. That’s because you’re inquisitive
and illiterate,
and haven’t read your Aesop, who
in a fable tells us
how long before any other
bird, the lark
existed, even before the Earth,
but when her father
sickened and died, there being no earth
in which to inter
the body, it lay for four days
exposed and stark…
until at last
she buried him in her own head…
It follows then
that the birds were born before
Mother Earth
and before the gods, they are
heirs of royalty. (358)
The Leader agrees with his justification, decides to follow Peisetaurus and Euelpides’ suggestion, and establishes the city-state in the air to starve out the gods. One must recognize that Peisetaurus justifies the birds’ dominion over man by referential reasoning; Peisetaurus references the practices of bygone human monarchs to support his position that the birds are the rightful aegis of mankind. He says, “What’s more the cuckoo once was king over the whole of Egypt and Phoenicia and it became the thing when the cuckoo called ‘Cuckoo’ for the inhabitants to begin cutting their plots of barley and wheat…Very impressive was the empire of the birds, so much so that in a town where an Agamemnon or a Menelaus was the sovereign, on his scepter would be perched a bird” (361). The process, by which the birds establish their utopia, therefore, includes invoking the intellectual support of concrete, historical events to strengthen the fictional case for the birds’ seniority over the gods. The spurious reasoning is the design by which Peisetaurus convinces the birds, and the former kings’ practices of placing birds in the positions of symbolic power, to which Peisetaurus links his own creative art of reasoning, are the facts that lead to the transforming of a desire into reality via the conversion of lie to convincing, and thus “truthful” and justifiable, fact. Ironically, the utopia, “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land,” is founded on factual, historical observations. In the same way, through her associations to literature, Jelinek creates a “structure”—the title—within which her text, like a cuckoo bird, resides, as spurious and arbitrarily justified as the “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land” that forces the gods into submission in Aristophanes’ Birds.

The two periods in “Wolken.Heim,” represent simultaneously a utopian vision of Germany and the idea of cuckoo birds roosting in other birds’ nests. One must read the title of the play as “Wolken—(pause)—Heim—(pause),” and can think of reposing cuckoos, physically signified by the periods, ensconced within a usurped sanctuary that the words “Wolken” and “Heim” together constitute. Including the second period in Stanizteck’s interpretation nevertheless links the Germanic soul with the image of the parasitic cuckoo bird, whose natural procreative behavior includes invading and occupying other birds’ nests to lay her eggs. With this metaphor in mind, a discussion of Wolken.Heim can include a discussion of the wartime history of Germanic culture. Additionally, a reading of the title with both “kuckucks” textually and sonically latent but present in the thoughts of the reader evokes the metaphor of a muted cuckoo clock. The
cuckoo clock arguably represents the flagship of touristy German kitsch and one of the most ubiquitous symbols for “German-ness” in today’s global consumer culture. The inclusion of the cuckoo clock into the associative stratum of the title makes the title appear a physical structure. That “Wolken.Heim.” attributes “German-ness” according to today’s global collective consumer view to its associative framework, the reference also represents a postmodern slight at present-day consumer culture. Another of the most predominant associations that present-day consumer culture links to Germany consists in Germany’s historical role as an invader of its neighbors’ territories. Having ignited World War II, contributed significantly to the devastation in World War I, invading and seeking to dominate its neighbors’ territory, Germany can be seen as the nest-defiler of contemporary western civilization. Germany is often portrayed as the bearer of collective shame that lurks latently below the surface of collective German consciousness. The silent, nestled-in cuckoo-bird may represent, therefore, Germanic culture awaiting its rebirth. The rebirth—either as dominant culture or equivalent in the eyes of its neighbors—relies on an analysis of the text.
CHAPTER 4
The Missing Dramatis Personae of Wolken.Heim.

The montage, Wolken.Heim., which comprises the collective body, Wir, results from Jelinek’s dominating will to tighten the distance between herself (the author) and her fictional characters.

In her essay “Stücke für das Theater: Überlegungen zu Elfriede Jelineks Methode der Destruktion,” Dagmar von Hoff writes, “Jelinek…schreibt Theatertexte, die keine zentrale Interpretation, die das Herz ihrer Texte träfe, zulassen” (112). The decentralizing effect of Jelinek’s writing runs contrary to traditional writing, which generally produces texts with a central interpretational focus. Contrary to the traditional practice of a writer proceeding from the assumption that her characters are psychologically unique, Jelinek lays bare the circumstances and mechanisms that drive her characters, “wie ein Skelett einer Leiche, die man seziert” (Lachinger 40), stripping away traditional preconceptions and pretense about what constitutes identity.

Jelinek’s process of “dehumanizing” her characters refers to her creating anatomically functional but spiritually and morally deficient human archetypes. The history of Jelinek’s representational philosophy in both theatrical and prose texts to present humans essentially devoid of humanity goes back to an interview with Hilde Schmölzer in 1982 and can be traced through to interviews with Renate Lachinger in 1987 and Wolfgang Reiter in 1993. Interestingly, from 1982 to the fall 2005 production of Babel, her newest theatrical piece, at the Wiener Akademietheater, her philosophy remains generally constant while her application becomes increasingly more concise. She lays out her initial philosophy in the Schmölzer interview, in which she calls her characters “überdimensionale Sprachmaschinen.”

The implications of “überdimensionale Sprachmaschinen,” for the purposes of analyzing Wolken.Heim., are manifold. “Überdimensional” asserts that her characters exist beyond spatial categorization. “Sprachmaschinen” suggests, first of all, that her characters derive their identity from delivering words, and, secondly, that her characters’ actions and words result from Jelinek’s carefully planned, aesthetic prescriptions, with
which she has programmed them in order that they perform in her works the instructions
that she has given them in the writing process.

Körper zwecklos.,” which appears alongside Wolken. Heim, in the 1997 paperback
edition of New Plays by Elfriede Jelinek, contain two periods in identical positions. The
periods point to varying levels of signification about Wolken. Heim.

In the title, “Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.,” the periods highlight the significant
items of discussion that Jelinek brings forth in the body—the relationship and necessity
of an actor to the meaning of a play. The discussion relates directly to Wolken. Heim.; it
operates as an explanatory framework within which one can understand Jelinek’s
decision to omit a dramatis persona, another example of Jelinek’s practicing her
dominating will on her characters (and, by extension, the actors who play her characters).

According to Jelinek in “Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.,” the main problem inherent
in producing theatre lies in the relationship between actor and text. The danger, Jelinek
writes, lies in the actor’s appearance on-stage. It poses a danger “nicht nur den einzelnen,
sondern alle miteinander in den Beziehungen, die sie zueinander herausgebildet haben.”
The actor’s appearance “macht jeden einzelnen zu etwas anderem,…indem [der
Schauspieler] einfach so heraussteigt aus seinem Leben” (7). Essentially describing the
audience’s natural alienation from the actor himself and the character that he projects—
essentially being in the play someone the actor is not—Jelinek calls the key culprit in this
trickery against the audience the actor’s decision to “wear” his speech, like a
“Königsmantel.” When he is acting, he puts the “Mantel” on; when he’s not, he hangs it
on the coat rack. Creating a character and believing that that character is in any way any
different than the actor himself, Jelinek describes as “das Allerschlimmste,” the “theatre”
that she seeks to avoid (8). What she desires is “dass die Sprache kein Kleid ist, sondern
unter dem Kleid bleibt.”

The idea of keeping language within its frame grounds itself in the actor’s
subservience to the playwright’s will. As the creator of the text, Jelinek initially decides
what the actor speaks; she begets all spoken and stage-able material. Despite her clear
authority, Jelinek nevertheless perceives, maybe with humor, a power-struggle between
her actors and herself. She writes that the actors can “outnumber” and “knock her out,”
in their ability to be many and yet one. According to Jelinek, the struggle comes into play inherently, via the actor’s ability to multi-facet himself and the writer’s natural singularity. To control the actor, Jelinek writes, “muss ich [ihn]…disparat machen,” by “confusing” him and “foisting” upon him “ein fremdes Sagen” (9). She regains her dominant position by essentially applying the montage technique in her writing—using her “lieben Zitate, die ich alle herbeigerufen habe , damit ich mehr werden und ausgeglichener punkten kann.” In writing, Jelinek wants to be many like the actor: “Ich will natürlich zu mehreren und grösser sein als ich bin” (9). She forces the actor to recognize what she sees as her dominant position by montaging quotes from other authors into his spoken lines. The key is that the actor loses his so-called power over Jelinek via the audience. (Hearing the montaged quotes will direct an informed audience member’s mind into thinking about the text’s origination and its import in its new frame, rather focusing on the actor’s artistry in portraying his “character.” Jelinek “schneidet ihm das Gestell”—that is, his “Königsmantel”—“ab,” and the actor, in the mind of the audience and thus in fact, becomes the text itself.) Therefore, the text is more important, in Jelinek’s mind, than an actor’s character projection.

Once the actor recognizes that he, as Jelinek puts it, “nicht nur nach Fleisch auss[ieht], sondern Fleisch auch [ist], aufgehängt in der Räucherkammer, im Schacht einer anderen Dimension,” and absorbs the language that he speaks into his body so that not only does his voice reflects the emotion within the language but his body also “lives” within it, the actor has achieved the equilibrium among the existential elements of his lines, his performance and his audience. Jelinek insists the actor’s recognizing his body’s subservience to the language that he speaks is so critical to the “theatre” which she desires. Jelinek writes, “Und dann merken sie, dass sie selber ihre eigene Botschaft sind…Die Schauspieler SIND das Sprechen, sie sprechen nicht.” Achieving unity between the two disparate elements of text and actor inherently eliminates the layer of character projection that actors can add to a production when they have a “character” to play. The dramatis persona engenders the license to project psychological uniqueness. However in Wolken.Heim., Jelinek nullifies the interpretative privilege and institutes a direct, physical bondage between the actor and his lines.
“Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.” explains the ethereality of the meaning of Wolken.Heim. In the essay, Jelinek demonstrates that she considers the meaning of Wolken.Heim dependent upon the actor “being” the text: “Die Schauspieler SIND das Sprechen, sie sprechen nicht” (9). To elucidate the type of theatre that she does not desire, she evokes a court-room scene in which a hand demonstrates by trying on a glove that the glove does not fit him. Jelinek writes,

…obwohl der Handschuh schreit und schreit, dass er diese Hand bereits kennt…Doch er hat sie nicht geschaffen…Das will ich wohl glauben, aber gewiss ist, dass die Hand den Handschuh gemacht hat, indem sie ihn mit Leben erfüllte, nur um Leben dann wieder auszulöschen, so leicht wie man eben einen Handschuh auszieht, ganz nach Belieben. Auf dem Theater – danke ebenfalls (10).

Thus, according to Jelinek, the actor makes the text come alive, but, traditionally, he wears it like a “Kleid.” Only when the actor recognizes his Überdimensional-ity—that his person exceeds space and time—does he become the lines, which he speaks, and achieve the type of character-less theatre that Jelinek desires.

The quotes that Jelinek montages into her text do not focus her message; to the contrary, they diffuse the message. Just as the quotes make “disparate” (“Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.”) the actors who speak them, the quotes send the text’s import into a visual, atemporal world, full of imagery and hermeneutical interchange between the quotes in their new context and the quotes in their original context. Jelinek writes that “auf dem Theater kann jeder sich selbst begegnen und doch achtlos an sich vorübergehen, weil er sich dabei noch immer nicht fest genug getroffen hat” (10). The play’s message can be ethereal or meaningful, depending on the importance that the audience member attributes to the text.

The titles contain significant referents to each other, too. “Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.” takes the same parallel structure as “Wolken.Heim.” with periods after the two significant components of each title. One can infer, then, that the essay serves an expository function to the play.

In Clouds, the Clouds represent a chorus of insubstantial goddesses who, Socrates explains to Strepsiades, equal the true mediators of knowledge. Socrates and his pupils,
who all reside together in their self-founded school, the “Thinkpot,” have decided to abandon their illogical belief in the gods and only trust the divine perception of the Clouds, this chorus of supposed goddesses, who enlighten and refine Socrates’ and his pupils’ intellect with education in their supreme knowledge of rhetoric and logic. Shortly after Strepsiades agrees to learn the Clouds’ new-fangled way of thinking, the Clouds reveal that they have been masquerading as goddesses and that their purpose lies not in elevating mortals’ intellect but in teaching them a lesson in humility. In this change of events, the play seems to question whether there are any true mediators of knowledge.

The Clouds do not just serve the function of imparting the question of who really is the true mediator of knowledge; they also serve to symbolize ethereality. In the insinuation in the play that the Clouds are only divine by Strepsiades’ perception, one can take the Clouds as symbolic of man’s habit to attribute meaning to an object that is inherently beyond his understanding. Examining the physical behavior of clouds, which are nebulous and shape-changing, one can opine that clouds can signify something or nothing, depending upon the relative importance that the observer attributes to the images that the clouds evoke. Whether clouds signify something or nothing depends solely upon the observer’s admission.

The essay title’s association with “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land” from Birds also implies Wolkenkuckucksheim’s ethereal meaning. In essence, “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land” symbolizes a utopian vision and simultaneously an existential empire in its own right. The bird kingdom was built upon Peisetairus’ false reasoning but is nevertheless a physical construct in the sky. “Historically,” Peisetairus’ false reasoning implies, “as demonstrated by events of these previous monarchs and according to these fables and myths, the birds are the rightful recipient of man’s honor. Therefore, this kingdom should be built.” And it indeed is, but it is, paradoxically, at the same time a utopia.

In the case of the parallel relationship between “Heim,” and “Körper zwecklos,” it has already been established that the word “Heim” signifies a metaphorical shelter, something that inherently evokes a feeling of physical safety. “Wolkenkuckucksheim” in Birds equals the city-state that provides the birds sanctuary against the angry gods. The words, “Cloud,” “Cuckoo,” and “Land” form a conglomeration with “Land” signifying the physical domain that confines the birds’ kingdom. However, because this land is a
utopian vision—i.e. ephemeral—the “Land” can either be significant of insignificant. Since “Körper zwecklos.” essentially means that a physical body placed on-stage to transmit the information represented in the words of a play is “purposeless,” and it has the same relative position as “Heim.” in the second half of “Wolken.Heim.,” then one can gather that another primary aim in Jelinek’s essay is to explain her decision to paradoxically call Wolken.Heim, a play in spite of its lack of a dramatis persona.
CHAPTER 5
Emerging from German Earth: Awaiting the Incomprehensible Rebirth in Wolken.Heim.

The central topic of the discourse of Wolken.Heim. is German identity. Because Leonhard Schmeiser’s essay, “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens,” serves an explanatory function to Wolken.Heim., a thorough understanding of the play and all the associations that it encompasses begins with a thorough understanding of the essay. Schmeiser believes that German identity is inextricably linked to the idea of “German earth” (“deutscher Boden”). He traces the idea of German earth back to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. The thematical schema surrounding the essay begins with the question: what is German earth? The second item of discussion is the German Romantic mystique surrounding German earth. Thirdly, Schmeiser draws a line of separation between the earth and everything else, laying down the physical identity of German earth—i.e. its constitution. The fourth section of the essay outlines the landscape of German earth. As the final point of the essay, Schmeiser equates the literary rebirth of the mythological German undead—who are represented in German literature, according to Schmeiser, as reposing in German earth awaiting the moment of Germany’s greatest need—to Germany’s actual rebirth. What does the rebirth actually signify? It signifies the achievement of perfect unity between the physical and spiritual elements of Germany’s identity to embody an entity more perfect than language can describe.

Schmeiser touches on this idea in his essay. German earth consists in three representational facets, according to his five-part discussion. German earth represents the ultimate reservoir of German collective memory, comprising “Oberfläche” and “Tiefe”⁴, it equals the physical, German national landscape⁵; and, thirdly, it consists in a unity of memory and the physical object being remembered—for example, a unity in the memory of the Holy Roman Emperor Barbarossa and the body of Barbarossa himself.

The final facet may be the hardest to reconcile intellectually, because memory defines itself in the absence of the experience or object being remembered. A memory cannot be the object it remembers and simultaneously the memory itself, unless the concept itself is meant to exist in a dimension beyond human comprehension. Schmeiser
believes this incomprehensible, or at least mythical, quality is intrinsic to German identity and exists in a tension between the recognizable—the glimpsible, tactual—part of German landscape. Schmeiser writes, “Dem Heimischen des Bodens ist entgegengesetzt das Unheimliche des Tiefgründigen, des Unergründlichen” (42). German identity consists in collective memory and an ethereal blend of spirit and palpability.

Jelinek connects Schmeiser’s three-fold concept of German earth with her concept of actor-character identity, which she spells out in her essay, “Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.” In the essay, she writes (and I repeat from Chapter Four),

Die Herausforderung besteht vielmehr darin, dass [die Schauspieler], wie fleischfarbene Schinken, die nicht nur nach Fleisch aussehen, sondern Fleisch auch sind, aufgehängt in der Räucherkammer, im Schacht einer anderen Dimension, die nicht Wirklichkeit, aber auch nicht Theater ist, uns etwas bestellen sollen…Und dann merken sie, dass sie selber ihre eigene Botschaft sind. (8-9)

Touching on the idea of “überdimensionale Sprachmaschinen” that she expresses in the 1982 interview with Hilde Schmölzer, Jelinek expresses in the passage that her desired form of theatre hinges upon the ability of the actor to transcend the construct of reality and the convention of art and, “im Schacht einer anderen Dimension aufgehängt,” become “[seine] eigene Botschaft.” She wants him to enter an “überdimensionale” realm of complete unity between his body and the text. When having achieved this unity, like Schmeiser’s (not entirely incomprehensible) concept of German identity—consisting in collective consciousness, physical presence and spiritual transcendentism—the actor remains physically within the “shell” of his body (fulfilling the physicality requirement). His entering into another dimension is predicated on a spiritual transition from personal identity to the frame of the text. The transition follows from the actor’s acknowledging his body but transcending his psychological self-concept and making the text his immediate identity. Jelinek makes this transition easy in WolkenHeim. The play comprises text from many authors and primarily, in fact, not by Jelinek. When the actor steps within the text, of Fichte or Hegel for example, the informed audience member recognizes the source of the text and cognitively “transports” the actor, who embodies the text, into his frame of understanding the text of Fichte or Hegel. Like the leap of faith that the reader has to take in order to imagine Schmeiser’s three-fold concept of German
identity, the actor achieves unity among the physical and spiritual components of his identity and the text through the mind of the audience member.

The 1988 production of *Wolken.Heim*, reaches beyond the traditional manner of staging a play and itself embodies the inexplicable transcendentalistic product of stepping beyond theatrical convention and producing an aesthetic work in a literary category of its own. In the production, the German earth does not just reside within the text that the five actors speak, but is also represented symbolically and physically by various constructs outside of the auditorium, where the performance takes place. In the 1988 *Theater heute* article, “Unser Wald unser Scheiterhaufen,” Heinz Klunker reports on the several symbolically transcendentalist components of the production. The subheading of his review reads “50 Jahre nach ‘Reichskristallnacht’: Bonns Schauspiel setzt das Thema ‘Wir Deutschen.’” The article heading reports that the premiere actually took place fifty years after National Socialists stormed synagogues and Jewish shops, vandalizing some and burning others to the ground. Klunker continues noting the symbolism: “Das Fabrik-Ambiente im rechtsrheinischen Beuel,” (a district of Bonn), “das Intendant Peter Eschberg zum bevorzugten Ort seiner Schauspiel-Ambitionen gemacht hat, wurde zum Bonner Spielzeitauffakt nun gespenstische Realität der Kunst-Macher, schon bevor man die eigentliche[n] Spielstätte betritt.” The artists involved in staging the play display German earth at the entrance of the theatre. The slogan, “Wir Deutschen,” hangs above the theatre portal. The theatre portal leads into, according to Klunker, “eine enge Allee…Pfähle sind eingerammt, die Lampen streuen kalt-bläuliches Licht.” Verses from Brentano echo from small speakers hidden in the artificial trees lining the walkway. Once inside the auditorium, as Klunker describes, the stage appears “dunkel-hermetisch, an Boden und Wänden riesige Fraktur-Fetzen aus dem Kleistschen Marionettentheater-Essay.” It appears that the cast, too, symbolically adheres to Jelinek’s standard of “Überdimensionalität.” Ulrich Schreiber writes in his review “Die Heimsuchung der *Elfriede Jelinek*” that each of the actors stand on stage within a hanging frame and are “sometimes” illuminated when reciting their lines.

The production of *Wolken.Heim* does not end with its frame, the text. In the case of the play as a text, the frame is language, but the play’s staging in Bonn, the former provisional capital of West Germany, indicates that the world that Jelinek intends
Wolken.Heim, to symbolically encompass also includes the physical world of Germany. At the same time, the German historical symbolism invoked by the Bonner Schauspielhaus in their production demonstrates the insufficiency of artistic expression to present an ultimate discourse on German identity. Although Jelinek means to create a comprehensive discourse on German identity by montaging the passages from several mainstream German thinkers into her play, no amount of text or symbolism in a production fully encompasses the breadth and depth of themes tied to the discussion of German identity. Wolken.Heim, textually stretches across several seminal works in German literature to encompass a significant number of ideas on German identity.

Additionally, Jelinek’s discourse includes not only Leonhard Schmeiser’s three-fold concept of German identity, but, in the premiere production, also symbolism of German industrialization (with the “Fabrik-Ambiente” of the premiere location in the Beuel district of Cologne). The avant-garde experiment of stretching theatre’s boundaries to the point that the production includes not only textually germane discussion topics but also thematically related concepts demonstrates the usefulness of Wolken.Heim, as a conversation piece on German identity.

Itself a representative of the history that it seeks to dissect, Wolken.Heim, alters the readers’ and theatergoers’ perceptions of the passages which Jelinek montages into it. For Germans not thoroughly familiar with the writings of Kleist, Hölderlin, Heidegger, or Fichte, the play exposes them in twenty-two pages to many of the central thoughts of the authors’ discussions on German identity. The readers and viewers become simultaneously educated and provoked to learn more about the subject. At the same time, for Germans who do possess a familiarity with the authors’ statements that Jelinek montages into the text, they receive a new way of looking at German identity. Seeing a plethora of issues, all germane to the subject of German identity, arranged together in a compact, twenty-two-page, piece of art, makes the discussion of German identity easier to grasp.

The discussion presented in Wolken.Heim, begins with the main character of the play, who symbolizes a collective identity, called “Wir.” Wir is tied closely to Schmeiser’s idea of “Erd-Entrückten.” In the corpus of German literary art, Schmeiser distinguishes the German earth as the place within which the German “Erd-
entrueckten”—i.e. “jene, die auf der Erde nicht zur Ruhe kommen, als Begrabene gegenwaertig bleiben” (38)—reside, awaiting their rebirth. He summarizes the resting place for these German undead as follows:

Der Boden…ist nicht Geburtsstätte und nicht Ende, zu dem das Leben zurückkehrt, sondern Übergang, Gedächtnis, das bewahrt und das, wenn die Zeit gekommen ist, an den Tag entlässt als ursprüngliche Wiedergeburt, die das Ende der Zeiten und somit des Gedächtnisses markiert.

To elucidate the three-fold concept of German earth, Schmeiser gives an example in German literature, in which the ground is portrayed as simultaneously the access point and diffusion point of German memory. He writes that, for Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, in the Grimm fairytale “Das eigensinnige Kind,” the child’s hand that, having broken through the ground, interminably waves from the grave is “Allegorie ‚deutschen geschichtlichen Elends’” (“German historical misery”). In that the hand comes to rest, Schmeiser writes, “vermuten [Negt und Kluge] verfälschende Märchenkonvention und bezeichnen das Ende der Geschichte als ‚unzulänglich’ und ‚wohl misslungen.’”

According to these statements, the authors implicitly opine that the story’s inherent literary merit consists in the unwillingness of the child’s body to come to rest. The fact that the child eventually comes to rest reflects a failure in the story’s central function to sufficiently represent “German historical misery.” According to Schmeiser, “Deutsche Geschichte…verläuft entlang von Zeichen der Oberfläche, die auf Tiefe verweisen und deren Tiefe zu deuten bleibt.” “Das eigensinnige Kind” embodies Schmeiser’s sense of German history in that the waving hand of the child—the “Zeichen der Oberfläche”—harkens back to the “Tiefe”—the child’s body—which lies buried underground awaiting its eternal rest. Schmeiser also implies that the story itself embodies the undead quality of German history. The story is living history. It tells of an undead child, and, in its continued circulation, physically exists as an undead piece of German literary history. Thus, in the linkage between its physical and spiritual essences, it physically remains a piece of German identity.

In applying Kluge and Negt’s expression “German historical misery” to the “deutscher Boden,” Schmeiser demonstrates how a body of German “earth” (what the story represents) enables “the surface” (i.e. the story) to make contact with “the depths”
(i.e. German identity). Jelinek mirrors Schmeiser’s model by offering her text as another undead relic to textually and thematically make contact with Schmeiser’s essay, which in turn thematically connects “Das eigensinnige Kind” to the entire discourse of German identity outlined in Wolken.Heim. In Section Eight, Jelinek writes, “Auf der Erde kommen wir nicht zur Ruh, noch als Begrabene bleiben wir gegenwärtig…Der Boden ist unser Übergang, hinüber ans Ende der Zeiten. Das Ende der Geschichte ist uns misslungen. Sie kommt immer wieder auf uns zu, rasend auf ihren Schienen. Warum stirbt sie nicht? Was haben wir getan?...Warum wächst ihr die Hand aus dem Grab? Und zeigt auf uns? Wir wollen vergessen werden. Nur bei uns sind wir zuhause” (144). Jelinek adds Schmeiser’s “Erd-Entrückten” mythology into her portrayal of the collective Wir by textually linking her play with Schmeiser’s essay. This linkage expands the world of her textual associations to include the physical text of Schmeiser’s essay.

As a text montage, Wolken.Heim, associates, in addition to Schmeiser’s work, several other bodies of literature with its discourse on German identity. Most frequently in the text montage appear passages from Hölderlin’s lyric. Texts from Hegel, Fichte and Kleist make the second-most frequent appearances, while Heidegger and passages from the letters of the Seventies German terrorist group “Rote Armee Faktion” (“RAF”), as well as passages and ideas from Italian Renaissance religious reformer Girolamo Savanarola, former president of the Austrian republic Theodor Körner, and literary critic Walter Benjamin, appear least frequently. Although the majority of montaged authors focus the discourse of Wolken.Heim, on Romantic German nationalism (which authors in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century like Fichte, Hegel and Kleist define), the presence of passages from Heidegger’s rectoral address, “Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität,” held in 1933, and letters by the RAF, written between 1973 and 1977, extend the discourse on German identity to include twentieth-century perspectives, too. In light of Wolken.Heim’s 1988 premiere year, the most contemporary perspective montaged into the text comes from literary critic Leonhard Schmeiser’s essay “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens,” which was published in 1987.

The montage is divided into twenty-three sections and two overarching thematically different subjects. The two subjects encompass respectively Sections One through Nine and Ten through Twenty-Three. The first subject deals largely with the
adumbration of the physical domain of Wir. In Sections One through Nine, Wir explains where he, the German soul, resides and where he does not and what his identity encompasses and what it does not. The second subject deals largely with the rebirth of the German soul, which the textual character of the play, Wir, equates to war.

Apart from Section One, which wholly comprises original material, all sections contain foreign quotes from Hölderlin, Hegel, Fichte, Kleist, Heidegger, the RAF, and others. As a discourse on German identity, several sub-themes pertinent to the discussion of identity include: birth, rebirth, nature, childhood, rearing, time, history, the end of time, spirit, downfall, “us” vs. “them,” and reverie. The most important pronoun in the entire text is Wir (to which, in order to curb confusion, I will henceforth refer in the third-person singular masculine). The pronoun is the point of reference for the identity of the discourse. It signifies a collective identity—a plausible contradiction in that “we” can signify simultaneously a group (i.e. one) and a conglomerative whole (i.e. many).

In the first subject, Wir uses descriptions of landscape to approximate his location and nature. Nature imagery gives the reader a projection of the essence and borders of Wir’s dominion. Wir’s dominion encompasses German earth. Wir lays down the nature of this earth. For example, Wir maintains an ambivalent and in some passages adversarial relationship to the air, clouds, water, and light. Wir resides definitely in the matter and offshoots of solid ground—i.e. dirt, rock, and all that comprises the biological category flora—whereas all of the other elements remain remotely akin and sometimes adversarial to him.

Contrary to the way in which he describes earth, Wir describes light in certain passages as a threatening element that he seeks to skirt, in others as a symbol of deliverance and salvation. In Section Six, according to Wir, “Hinaufgerissen hat [das Leben] uns in den Schnee, uns junge Helden, Wange an Wange, müehlos tönend von unsrem Gesang. Und jetzt sind wir wieder zuhaus, unser Wirken fördert eine stillere Sonne” (141). In this passage, Wir describes his previous and current life in terms of the sunlight’s intensity. “Sonne” signifies the activity of his life. A more active life, like his previous one as a collective group of “junge Helden,” meant stronger, harsher, rays of sunlight. Now, a stiller sun means more rest, now that he is ensconced in “the Depths.” Considering that the less intense light reflects Wir’s present, preferred state of being—i.e.
beyond the sun’s harsh rays, underground—one can see light as a physical aspect of the world where Wir does not, and does not want to, reside.

In Section Two, Jelinek portrays light as adversarial to Wir by alluding to the plot of Aristophanes’ Clouds. On page 138 Wir states, “Wir sind allein, aber schön bei uns. Des Vaters Strahl, der reine, versengt uns nicht und tieferschüttert, die Leiden des Stärkeren mitleidend, bleibt in den hochherstürzenden Stürmen des Gottes, wenn er uns naht wenn er uns naht.” (Wir uses “versengen” to describe what “des Vaters Strahl” does not do because it remains “in den hochherstürzenden Stürmen des Gottes,” in order to portray the light that comes from the mysterious “father” unequivocally as harmful.) To examine the allusion to Aristophanes’ play, the whole passage in Wolken.heim. reads as follows:


The “father” is the father, Strepsiades, from Clouds, and the “Erdensöhne” represent Strepsiades’ horse-loving son, Phidippides. In the Wolken.heim. passage, “Des Vaters Strahl” reflects Strepsiades’ wrath, which comes in the form of a torch that Strepsiades uses to burn down the squalid academy that instilled his son, Phidippides, with the confidence to attack him. The phrase “…die Erdensöhne kommen zu uns ins öde Haus…” reflects Phidippides’ entrance into the academy; “das öde Haus” symbolizes the squalid “Thinkpot.” Given the statement “die Erdensöhne kommen zu uns ins öde Haus” and its connection to the story of Clouds, Wir’s identity assumes another facet. He represents the clouds, the students of the academy, and the Good and Bad Reason which the academy houses. (Generally speaking, “Vater” also connotes an omnipresent and wrathful God, but in light of the thematic connection of the title “Wolken.heim.” with Clouds and Birds, it would be oversight not to suspect references to the plays in the text itself.)
Although his representation of it changes, Wir maintains an ambivalent relationship towards light. On one hand, light is antagonistic and adversarial. On the other hand, light, in some passages, signifies deliverance and salvation vis-a-vis an intelligent being. In Section Two, Wir proclaims, “Regt sich ein Sturm, wird das Jahr kalt, dann geht das Licht über unser Haupt, wir sind bei uns” (137). In Section Three, Wir declares himself “Gerettet. Das Licht scheint auch den Toten, aber wir machen uns breit drunter, liebliche Gärten” (138). This passage shows that Wir expects salvation to come from a light appearing in the heavens, which contradicts Wir’s earlier view of light, in which he sees it as adversarial.

As light symbolizes for Wir, ambivalently, adversary and deliverance, Wir’s perception of the origination point of light—“der Himmel”—is underlined with wondrous expectation and groveling supppliance. In Section Seven, following the proclamation, “Hiermit tritt dann das Germanische Reich, das vierte Moment der Weltgeschichte ein” (142), Wir says, “Zufrieden reifen wir in unserer Glut und blicken geschäftig zum Himmel, was kommt” (142). The arrival of the Germanic kingdom in Wir’s mind equals the arrival of a spiritual, messianic, being from the heavens, who will bring with him the rebirth that Wir expectantly awaits.

Wir’s descriptions of the heavens and the air, like those of light, also serve to outline the boundaries of Wir’s domain. In the following quote, Wir portrays himself simultaneously as an airbound entity and as buried in the earth: “…wir…sind zuhause, wo wir hinwandeln zwischen Himmel und Erd und unter den Völkern das erste” (138). In addition to describing Wir’s presence in (but intrinsically separate from) the air, the part “…unter den Völkern das erste” parallels the first line of Section Three. Wir states in the line, “Das Licht scheint auch den Toten, aber wir machen uns breit drunter, liebliche Gärten.” Both quotes describe Wir as below the “dead peoples.” Wir refers to himself as a “Volk” numerous times throughout Wolken.Heim., like in the following passage: “All diese ursprüngliche Menschen wie wir, ein Urvolk, das Volk schlechtweg” (145).

According to Schmeiser’s explanation of the Danish doctor Steno’s 1669 “Schichtengesetz,” “jede Schicht sei älter als die nächsthöhere und jünger als die nächsttiefere” (41). Given that so much of the subject material of Wolken.Heim. extends from Schmeiser’s “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens,” it can be assumed that Wir is below the
“peoples” and also below the dead (“Tote”) because Wir is an even more basic, or primordial, “Volk” than those above him. The passage that describes Wir “wandering between heaven and earth” also illustrates more clearly the natural mediatory field—buried in the ground underneath the dead people but also wandering between the heavens and the earth—within which Wir resides. (One also must not forget the connection to ephemeral city-state “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land,” in Aristophanes’ Birds that the birds establish between heaven and earth to starve out the gods.)

Wind is described in several passages, both as threatening to Wir and, like the light, as a tool of an intelligent, omnipotent but wrathful entity beyond Wir’s understanding. The obvious example of the threat that wind poses to Wir and his resolve to withstand the threat lies in Section Three, “Droht uns der Nordwind auch, wir fallen nicht von den Ästen ins Laub” (138). In another passage, Wir equates the threat of the wind to the felling of a healthy tree. The passage (in Section Eight) shows a more violent clash between the wind and German earth. The passage shows not only that wind is threatening for Wir but also, according to Wir’s words, “God” is operating the destructive wind: “Denn die abgestorbene Eiche steht dem Sturm, doch die gesunde stürzt er nieder, weil er in ihre Krone greifen kann” (144 – 145). Wir continues, “Nicht jeden Schlag ertragen soll der Mensch, und welchen Gott fasst, denk ich, der darf sinken” (145).

Significant as it is that this quote presents the first time when Wir identifies himself as “ich,” Wir’s parallels between the “gesunde [Eiche]” that “[der Wind] nieder[stürzt]” and “der Mensch,…welchen Gott fasst,” as well as “[der] Sturm” that the “abgestorbene Eiche” withstands because the wind cannot “dig into her crown,” shows superstition in Wir’s belief system that nature is controlled by an omnipotent intelligence. The interconnectedness between God and nature is displayed most openly in the quote in Section Two, “Des Vaters Strahl…bleibt in den hochherstürzenden Stürmen des Gottes, wenn er uns naht, wenn er uns naht” (138).

Like his relationship towards air and light, Wir maintains an ambivalent relationship to water, too. Wir is simultaneously one and yet separate from the element. In the First Section two descriptions illustrate Wir’s relationship towards those he calls “Menschen wie wir,” “Figuren,” and “Fremde” (137). In the first passage Wir says, “Die Figuren, Fremde wie wir, Reisende, strömen in die Busbahnhöfe, um sich zu verteilen,
von Ort zu Ort, und wir kommen über sie wie der Regen, der zeitig in der Früh die Schuhe durchnässt.” In this passage, Wir equates himself to rain, implying that, although he is separate from the “Fremde” he is connected through his liquid contact with them.

In the second passage, which directly follows the previous passage, “Oder eines Tages an einer Wegkreuzung, wo wir uns stauen, Menschenfluten,” Wir portrays the “Menschen” as both separate and identical to himself, but also like a “flood” (i.e. water) of people. As exhibited by an earlier passage (one of the only passages by Jelinek) in Section One, “Ein schönes Gefühl, in der Nacht, über unsere Autobahnbrücken zu fahren, und unten strahlt es aus den Lokalen: noch mehr Menschen wie wir!,” Wir is simultaneously an anonymous entity and specifically the “Menschen” to which he refers. Wir’s analogies to “Regen” and “Menschenfluten” make Wir appear earthbound and connected yet fluid and ephemeral. Fluidity is an intrinsic characteristic of the German spirit, according to Georg Stanitzek in his analysis, “Kuckuck”: “Deutscher Geist ist flüssig,” he writes (50).

The second main subject of the discourse, which Sections Nine through Twenty-Three mostly encompass, rebirth, begins to crop up in Section One. Section One defines the nature of the discourse and the direction that the discourse will lead. A key image for this section is “Heilige, die im Dunkel leuchten.” Wir believes himself to be beyond the gaze of civilization’s eye, on the outer rims—present, yet unnoticed.

Voyeuristic imagery abounds, as well as images of isolation and alienation. Wir remarks, “Ein schönes Gefühl, in der Nacht über unsere Autobahnbrücken zu fahren.” Wir notices the light emanating from “Lokalen.” Wir remains on the outside—“Da glauben wir immer, wir wären ganz ausserhalb.” The first action-image of the play is when Wir declares, “Und dann stehen wir plötzlich in der Mitte.” This is a psychological projection of Wir’s feeling of isolation, but more importantly it projects the image of a collective body believing it is on the outside and all of a sudden (“Und dann…”) it, in fact, is in the direct gaze of everything that is not him. Although Wir does not acknowledge a rebirth yet, this statement projects an image of moving towards change.

Images of movement abound in Passage One, too. Wir watches “strangers like us” flowing into “bus stations,” in a state of constant movement. Wir equates itself to “Regen” when observing the people moving through the bus stations and says, “wir
kommen über sie, wie der Regen, der zeitig in der Früh die Schuhe durchnässt.” Once again, the image of movement—shoes moving across dewy earth, alone in the fact that it is early in the morning, and yet one still moving through the grass. The image of movement is once again invoked; Wir refers to himself as “gute, markierte Wege” for “den anderen Wanderern.” The final sentence evokes a feeling of arrival, of being finally at home: “Jetzt sind wir zuhaus und erheben uns ruhig.”

Section Two is rife with nature imagery. Wir sees an oncoming storm as the sign for his deliverance by a higher power: “Regt sich ein Sturm…dann geht das Licht über unser Haupt…” The theme of complacently remaining together with oneself is introduced: “Schön by sich sein.” The first quotation comes from Hölderlin, in Die Liebe, line 5: “Wo lebt Leben sonst?” It acts as a response to any criticism from “others” about Wir’s statement that it is “Schön bei sich [zu] sein.” Hölderlin’s lyric continues to appear: “Wie wenn am Feiertage, das Feld zu sehn, ein Landmann geht, des Morgens, wenn aus heisser Nacht die kühlenden Blitze fielen die ganze Zeit und fern noch tönet der Donner.” In Section Two, nature is combined thematically with imagery of gods from Schmeiser’s essay and the German Romantic idea of an omnipresent god: “…und es trinken himmlisches Feuer jetzt die Erdensöhne…” (138).

In Section Three “zuhaus” becomes a mantra of sorts. Wir repeats it five times, whereas in the previous two sections Wir says it one time each. Nature imagery is present in Section Three. The state of being in the middle is also present: “In uns haben wir unsre Mitte und sind zuhaus.” Interestingly, the first quote from Hegel appears, referring to the “Bei-sich-sein” theme that Wir discusses in Section Two. The original quote, as it appears in Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, reads,

Die Materie ist insofern schwer, als sie nach einem Mittelpunkte treibt; sie ist wesentlich zusammengesetzt, sie besteht aussereinander, sie sucht ihre Einheit und sucht also sich selbst aufzuheben, sucht ihr Gegenteil. Wenn sie dieses erreichte, so wäre sie keine Materie mehr, sondern sie wäre untergegangen; sie strebt nach Idealität, denn in der Einheit ist sie ideell. Der Geist im Gegenteil ist eben das, in sich den Mittelpunkt zu haben; er hat sie nicht die Einheit ausser sich, sondern er hat sie gefunden; er ist in sich selbst und bei sich selbst. Die Materie hat ihre Substanz ausser ihr; der Geist ist das Bei-sich-selbst-Sein. (30)
In the passage, Wir represents Hegel’s idea of “Geist.” He refers to his position as “bei sich” and “in der Mitte,” the idea of which he discusses in Section One. In all of the passages that mention “Bei-sich-sein” and “in der Mitte,” Wir verbalizes his spiritual similarity to Hegel’s idea of “Geist.” Wir resides in the earth and is like the earth, but what he actually is, is Hegel’s idea of “Geist.” A quotation from Hölderlin’s poem Wie wenn am Feiertage appears close to the end of the third part. Wir says, “…wir aber sind zuhaus, wo wir hinwandeln zwischen Himmel und Erde und unter den Völkern das erste.” The idea of moving through the “Zwischenreich” harkens back to Hegel’s idea of the spirit. Wir is physically stuck between the heavens and the earth—that is, the middle—of “Materie.” He is not “Materie” himself; he resides within its “Mitte.”

Hegel’s idea of spirit reflects itself in the text’s theme of dead and undead. The dead and undead is introduced in Section Three: “Das Licht scheint auf den Toten, aber wir machen uns breit drunter, liebliche Gärten”; “Zuhaus sein, von dort die andern sehn mit ihren stumpfen Stirnen, begraben im Boden wie Gold, Untote, wir aber sind zuhaus…” According to the Danish doctor Steno’s “Schichtengesetz,” Wir, who lies, as undead, in the ground in a deeper location than the “Völker,” is more primordial than the peoples located above him. This position in the earth symbolically instills Wir with a more essential, more “native” character than the other “Völker.” Talk of the spirit being within Wir confirms the view that Wir is the reservoir within which the German spirit resides. He could in fact be the German spirit: “Des gemeinsamen Geistes Gedanken sind, still endend in unsrer Seele.”

The theme of being by one’s self is repeated in Section Four. Wir legitimizes his “native” status with the statement, “Wir sind bei uns. Nach festem Gesetze, wie einst, aus heiligem Chaos gezeugt…” At the same time, the passage makes Wir appear to be undertaking a reunification process—a process of returning back to his middle. The entire quote reads, “Nach festem Gesetze…fühlt neu die Begeisterung sich, die Allerschaffene wieder.” This new feeling of enthusiasm “snatches ‘Wir’ up.” Wir states, “nichtig fallen wir wieder zurück in Gefängniswände, doch hier sind wir.” Wir outlines his residence once again in terms of “Haus.” However, in the passage, he makes direct reference to language, in the same way that Jelinek refers to the actor’s traditional relationship to language. Jelinek states in “Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos.” that the actors
traditionally wear their speeches like “Königsmanteln.” The lines are the “coat” resting on top of the actor’s body. The actor removes the “coat” and assumes his individual manner of speech after he finishes playing his psychological construct, the “character.” In the essay, Jelinek states that she desires the actors to become their lines. The passage in *Wolken. Heim.*, “unser Haus, gefüllt mit unserer Sprache, die auf uns ruht wie die Natur, die uns wiegt” (139), indicates the dilemma inherent in the identity that Jelinek desires for her actors and fictional characters, like Wir. The actor cannot be himself and yet another character at the same time without the help of the audience. Likewise, Wir cannot be the “house” filled with language without the reader cognitively making the transition. The unity that Jelinek desires between actor and text and character and the language that he represents occurs in the mind of the reader. This idea is echoed in the following passage in *Wolken. Heim* and indicates one of Jelinek’s first pieces of original writing in the play: “Sprache und Leben, und sinnlos das übrige.” Here, Jelinek summarizes her idea from the “Körper egal.” part of her essay on theatrics. The only confirmable existential elements of an actor’s identity are his life and the language within which his life is framed. (This is founded on the assumption that all experience is framed in language. One cannot confirm his physical existence because one relates all experience through language.) The “sinnlose” part, which Jelinek implies in her original piece of writing in *Wolken. Heim.*, is the world in which the audience resides. If one regards Jelinek’s characters as living organisms residing in another dimension, the “sinnlose” part in the world of the text of *Wolken. Heim* is the audience, because they exist beyond the world of the text, in another dimension from the characters.

The “sinnlose” part necessary in transforming oneself into an “überdimensionale” unity between corpus and language finds expression in the text. Wir describes a rising up that follows his rebirth: “Wir stehen auf, weil alles Warten und Gedulden doch vergebens war” (139). Given the connection between Jelinek’s text and Schmeiser’s essay, which translates the German nation’s rebirth to all-out battle, one might expect Wir’s rising up to be followed by images of violence and war. Instead, Wir declares “Wir stehen auf…und wir wie Pappeln blühen.” Here, Jelinek demonstrates that Wir’s national rebirth does not necessarily mean battle, as Schmeiser asserts in his essay. The rebirth means, rather, that Wir achieves pure physical expression. Pure physical expression
refers to identity’s impossible transition from its framing through language to purely physical existence outside of a linguistic framework. *Wir* wants to transcend the frame of his “earth,” but he is still locked within the frame of language. The blooming poplars symbolize his desire to become more than what he is framed to be.

The desire is reiterated in *Wir*’s act of self-assertion. *Wir* asserts himself several times in Section Four. The phrases, “Wir sind wir,” “Wir aber wir aber wir aber,” “Wir Lieben!” and “Wir!” follow his reference to undergoing the impossible transition from linguistic to physical expression. *Wir* speaks of his rebirth, of no longer residing within the framework of language and now existing beyond the realm of human understanding.

As stated before, *Wolken.Heim* is a diachronic system that, according to Schmeiser, “bezeichnet Wesen und zugleich Differenz…zu sich selbst.” In Section Four, a conceptual pattern becomes apparent. *Wir* first asserts himself; this includes his physical as well as spiritual identity. Up to this point, he has expressed the components in terms of quotes from Hölderlin and Hegel. Following the self-assertion stage, *Wir* distinguishes himself from everything else. Section Four introduces this stage in the recurring theme of “*wir*” vs. “die anderen.” *Wir* resides in all of the land and spiritual matter that belongs to him. This corpus of residence is German earth. In contrast, “die anderen” embodies all that is not *Wir* and his residence. *Wir* expresses his difference from “die anderen” by launching threats at them. *Wir* states, “Wir blicken hinüber, den Nachbarn nicht fürchtend, wir treten ihm aufs Haupt” (139–140). He dreams of occupying “the neighbor’s” land and expresses his lack of fear of repercussions from the “neighbor.”

*Wir* makes himself more confident in his dreams of conquering the “neighbor’s” land by comparing himself condescendingly to other “peoples.” *Wir* states, “Die Neger, sehn wir sie an, sind als eine aus ihrer uninteressierten und interesselosen Unbefangenheit nicht heraustretende Kindernation zu fassen. Sie werden verkauft und lassen sich verkaufen, ohne alle Reflexion darüber…Das Höhere, welches sie empfinden, halten sie nicht fest, dasselbe geht ihnen nur flüchtig durch den Kopf” (141). This is obviously a reference to the practice of Africans, during the heyday of the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, selling their tribesmen into slavery. In the passage, *Wir* differentiates himself from “die anderen”—“die Neger”—by denying that their group
of people possesses moral grounding that would make them recognize the wrongdoing in selling or allowing themselves to be sold into slavery.

Wir makes a racist distinction between himself and “die anderen” once again, in Section Seven: “Wir sind hier schon! Und finden ausserdem im Osten die slawische Nation, die sind wir nicht!” (143). These references to both “die Neger” and “die slawische Nation” root themselves in Hegel’s statements in Über die Philosophie der Geschichte, in which he compares the German nation to other groups of people, differentiating them in spiritual terms. In spite of the passages’ historical significance within the text, the passages also serve in their own right to illustrate Wir’s process of laying down his identity by: first, discussing all that he is, then by discussing all that he is not. “Die anderen” falls under the latter category of discussion.

This model is not without contradiction. Contradiction presents itself in Wir’s differentiation between his collective character and the individualistic character of “die Orientalen.” The quote in Wolken.heim reads as follows: “Die Orientalen wissen es nicht. Sie wissen nur, dass Einer frei ist, aber ebendrum ist solche Freiheit nur Willkür, Wildheit, Dumpfheit und Leidenschaft, und die Milde ein Zufall” (139). Originating in Hegel’s Über die Philosophie der Geschichte, this passage serves to differentiate Wir’s collectivism from the individualistic perspective to which, according to Hegel, the “Orientalen” subscribe. The contradiction is apparent in the following point. In order to recognize a difference as general as collectivism as opposed to individualism in someone, one must grasp first the quality that they believe is “different.” In order to grasp the quality, one must recognize its rational components that give it its particular quality. In order to recognize its rational components, one must be akin to the manner of thinking that would enable him to recognize the components. In order to grasp a difference one must be akin to that which is “different.” Thus, what one perceives as “different” is simply an aspect of oneself that becomes only momentarily pronounced. In the same way as anyone would be pretending to notice differences among people, Hegel falsely defines the German people only as a collective and defines “die Orientalen” only as individualists. Hegel must understand both concepts in order to differentiate them from each other. Therefore, in the passage, the rational reality of Hegel’s supposed comparison is that he really distinguishes two facets of the same concept—people. In
other words, both qualities are inherently extant in the German people just as they are in “die Orientalen.” In Hegel’s portrayal of the German people and, by extension, Wir’s portrayal of himself, the collectivist side is the only facet that Hegel verbally acknowledges while he ignores the individualistic side. Wir’s downcast attention to the other side of his identity indicates the contradiction in the (hypocritical) form of German identity portrayed in Wolken.Heim. The truth about German identity is that (in the words of Volker Klotz from “Montage und Collage in avantgardistischer Literatur und Kunst”) it “grenzt sich nicht ab mit seinem Rahmen.” “German identity” reflects a subject so diverse, it exceeds arbitrary categorizations and dissolves the very words that seek to entrap it.

The oppositional relationship between “wir” and “die anderen,” as well as the first mention of violence, comes up again in Section Five: “Wir blicken hinüber, den Nachbarn nicht fürchtend.” The comment is rounded off by a violent threat of what Wir will do if “die anderen” threatens his existence—“…wir treten ihm aufs Haupt” (140). This phrase is only the beginning of a series of violent images that will follow in the second thematic category.

At the beginning of Section Eight, Wir repeats the phrase, “Wir sind bei uns” (144). The difference between this time and the previous instances, in which he proclaims the same thing, is, now, he makes an obvious psychic connection with the earth—he says, “Wir sind bei uns, erdentrückt.” Although “erdentrückt” does not have a direct translation, one can piece the meaning together. “Entrückt” means “engrossed” or “lost in a reverie.” Therefore, “erdentrückt” (a compound with “Erde”) can be translated as “engrossed in a reverie, which is the earth.” Since “entrückt” derives from the verb “rücken,” which means “to shove,” and the preposition “ent-” connotes the meaning “shove from [something],” “erdentrückt” could also mean being shoved, or banished, from the German earth.

The word “Erdentrückten,” according to literary critic Leonhard Schmeiser, has a strong Germanic history, which he traces in “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens.” In the case of material which Jelinek montages into Wolken.Heim, she adopts Schmeiser’s “Erd-Entrückten” and “Boden”-concepts for the thematic basis of her play. In the first
sentence of his essay, Schmeiser lays down the thematic framework of these concepts, writing:

Den grieschichen genejs, den autochthones, Erdgeborenen, stehen die deutschen Erd-Entrückten gegenüber, die auf ihre Wiedergeburt warten, jene, die auf der Erde nicht zur Ruhe kommen, als Begrabeene gegenwärtig bleiben: Barbarossa, Karl der Grosse oder auch der Fünfte, Wotan, Siegfried, Frau Venus, Frau Holda, Wedekind und andere. Der Boden, in dem sie weilen, ist nicht Geburtsstätte und nicht Ende, zu dem das Leben zurückkehrt, sondern Übergang, Gedächtnis, das bewahrt und das, wenn die Zeit gekommen ist, an den Tag entlässt als ursprüngliche Wiedergeburt, die das Ende der Zeiten und somit des Gedächtnisses markiert. (38)

The obvious literal reference in Section Eight to Schmeiser’s passage, “Der Boden ist der Übergang, hinüber ins Ende der Zeiten,” (144), reveals the subject material of the play. Wir states, “Unsre Geschichte ist die der Toten, bis der Boden endgültig verstummt.” This statement is a montage of a passage from Schmeiser; he writes, “Deutsche Geschichte, meint [Alexander] Kluge…sei Geschichte der Toten, die nie eigentlich gestorben seien und nie eigentlich sterben könnten. Dasselbe Unbehagen bereitet das Verstummen des Bodens…” The earth will come to rest, when the German undead receive their rebirth. In the connection between Jelinek’s and Schmeiser’s passage, Stanitzcek’s statement in his essay, “Kuckuck”—that “Hier geht es um Deutschland”—correctly reflects the nature of the discourse (German identity). As demonstrated before, Wir embodies Hegel’s idea of “Geist,” but Wir’s identity is also infused with Schmeiser’s idea of “Erd-entrückten.” Wir is, as he describes himself in Section Three, locked within a “Zwischenreich” on earth. He is not fully a part of the earth, but not necessarily foreign to it. He is constantly in search of his unity and awaiting his rebirth.

Schmeiser’s references to the German identity in discussion vary from historical to literary and span three centuries. All references interrelate within Schmeiser’s dichotomous framework of “Oberfläche” (“Surface”) and “Tiefe” (“Depths”) (39). The Depths are personified in part by the Nibelungenhort, the residence of the industrious iron-working Nibelungen from, among other sources, Richard Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen, as well as by the mythical, underground resting place in the Kyffhäuser
mountain of the slumbering Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (nicknamed “Barbarossa”), who awaits Germany’s hour of greatest need to rise from the ground. The Surface is personified in part by Barbarossa’s monument, built near the Kyffhäuser and—equally important—by topography and geography, whose intellectual development in Germany complements the development of “Agrar-” and “Bergbau-Romantik” in German literature during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, according to Schmeiser. The connection between the “Beschäftigung mit der Erde” (39) and Germanic nationalism is illustrated, according to Schmeiser, by “die verschiedenen Bestrebungen,” in the early nineteenth century, “den Boden sich neu anzueignen” (40). Schmeiser writes, “Die Beschäftigung mit der Erde ist Suche nach Vergangenheit und Kampf um die deutsche Nation” (39). To clarify the historical connection between the German nationalism of the nineteenth century and the “Beschäftigung mit der Erde,” Schmeiser traces a number of sources. He begins by quoting Carl Ritter’s “Wissenschaft von der Erde,” published 1817:

Die von der Natur auf ihr errichteten Denkmale und ihre Hieroglyphenschrift, müssen betrachtet, beschrieben ihre Construction entziffert werden. Ihre Oberflächen, ihre Tiefen, ihre Höhen müssen gemessen, ihre Formen nach ihren wesentlichen Charakteren geordnet, und die Beobachter aller Zeiten und Völker, ja die Völker selbst müssen, in dem, was durch sie von ihnen bekannt wurde, gehört und verstanden werden...Dann träte aus jedem einzelnen Gliede, aus jeder Reihe von selbst das Resultat hervor, dessen Wahrheit in den localisierten Naturbegebenheiten und als Wiederschein in dem Leben derjenigen Völker bewahhrte, deren Daseyn und Eigenthümlichkeit mit dieser oder jener Reihe der charakteristischern Erdbildung zusammenfällt. (39-40)

Essentially, Ritter implies that the way in which the German people portray their land reflects the nature of the people themselves. Earth and people are linked in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German mind. The idea that one “must” bring the land under control by “measuring” and “ordering” it and thereby “hearing” and “understanding” the people who occupy it translates into an imperative of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vogue idea to establish a communal identity. Wir embodies a communal identity, but his nature spans not only the eighteenth and nineteenth century,
but also, with passages from Heidegger and the RAF, the twentieth century. Thus, the discourse in *Wolken.Heim* on German identity spans three centuries of German history to include all of the ideas on German identity that German writers and thinkers present in their published works.

With the reader’s arrival to Section Ten comes Wir’s establishing of German identity to a close and begins the war that Schmeiser believes is such an essential component to the rebirth of the German “Erd-Entrückten.” Section Ten also marks the beginning of the second overarching subject: rebirth. It begins with Wir emerging from the earth. Wir proclaims, “Im Geblätter rauscht es und schimmert. Der Boden, in dem wir liegen, schwankt, ein furchtbarer Schlag durchdröhnt ihn. Wir kommen heraus!” (146). There are followers (“Wanderer”) who trail Wir, but only the shadowy trail of his “Andenken” do they follow, as if Wir remains so far ahead of them that he is always just beyond the “Wanderer”’s grasp. This idea is expressed in the Romantic concept of “Sehnsucht” (“yearning”), which ties into stories by the German Romantics, Novalis and Ludwig von Tieck. Schmeiser writes that Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen finds himself deep within the earth’s insides (“Erdinneren”), led on by the promise of attaining the mythical blue flower (“blaue Blume”). Likewise, Schmeiser writes, Tieck’s Christian in *Der Runenberg* is led below the earth’s surface by an indescribable beauty. The story gives the German earth the deadly quality that Jelinek portrays in *Wolken.Heim*. The beauty that leads Christian deeper into the earth doubles as the harbinger of death. About Christian’s seduction and consequent death Schmeiser writes, “[Die Geliebte] reicht dem starr sie in ihrer Herrlichkeit Bestaunenden, mit den Worten ‘Nimm dieses zu meinem Angedenken!,’ bevor sie entschwundet, eine ‘magische steinerne Tafel.’ Diese glänzt, ‘von vielen eingelegten Steinen…’ und scheint ‘eine wunderliche, unverständliche Figur,’ ein ‘geheimnisvolles Zeichen.’ Auch der Tafel entschwundet, noch bevor sie entziffert ist, aber als der Held sie widerfindet, verfällt er der Tiefe unwiderruflich” (43). A reference to the death that “Sehnsucht” ultimately brings for those who pursue the Depths presents itself in the part in which, on page 146, Wir says, “Hinter uns andre Wanderer, sie folgen unserem Andenken.” Interestingly, the section ends with Wir saying, “Hier, wo die Opfer fallen, zu uns herabfallen, hier, ihr Lieben, hier!” The passage also indicates the omnipresent relationship that Wir maintains to the Surface and
the Depths. In the beginning of the section, Wir describes himself emerging from the ground, coming to the Surface, but now he describes himself as also residing in the Depths. Therefore, it is clear that the rebirth—and thus the perfect unity, when the spirit returns to itself—has not yet occurred in Wolken.Heim, but that Wir is still in search of the unity.

Section Eleven and Section Seven demonstrate Wir’s desire to be reborn as a nation. The passages that identify the nature of this rebirth originate in Fichte’s pan-Germanic rhetoric in Reden an die deutsche Nation, Hegel’s historio-spiritual rhetoric in Über die Philosophie der Geschichte and Schmeiser’s Boden-mythology. Jelinek entrenches these ideas in nature imagery from Hölderlin passages. The Gesamtkonzept that results from all of the literary associations displays the central problem with the Germanic nationalism of Fichte and Hegel—denial. In this case, it is denial of the past. Montaging Fichte, Jelinek writes in Section Eleven, “In der Nation, die bis auf diesen Tag sich das Volk schlechtweg oder Deutsche nennt, ist in der neuen Zeit Ursprüngliches, wenigstens Ursprüngliches an den Tag gebrochen…Neues!” (146). Something primordial defines itself in its lack of an antecedent. In Fichte’s montaged quote, the idea of “Ursprünglichkeit” operates within a temporal framework. Fichte states that the nation began “an de[m] Tag”; therefore, if the “Volk,” as a nation, wants to maintain its status as the most native to its time, then all of that which came on previous days—its antecedent—has to be denied its precursorial status. If there were something that preceded the moment upon which the “Volk” declared itself the beginning, the presence of a chronological antecedent would render the “Volk”’s primordial status moot. In the same way as Fichte creates a new era for the German people by merely declaring a new era, the “Volk” of Wolken.Heim, declares itself primordial and thus ascends to the status as most original to its surroundings by denying the temporality that preceded it.

Section Seven begins the play’s leitmotif of rebirth. In positioning Hegel’s quote at the beginning of Section Seven following the phase of the six-section discourse in which Wir defines himself and his domain, Jelinek creates an announcement of Wir’s rebirth. Jelinek recognizes the spiritual rhetoric that Hegel employs to describe this rebirth as a collective spiritual event. She writes, “Hiermit tritt dann das Germanische Reich, das vierte Moment der Weltgeschichte: dieses entspräche nun in der Vergleichung
mit den Menschenaltern dem Greisenalter.” (142). Jelinek follows the quote with “Immer waren wir hier!” and then continues with another quote from Hegel: “Das natürliche Greisenalter ist Schwäche, das Greisenalter des Geistes aber ist seine vollkommene Reife, in welcher er zurückgeht zur Einheit, aber als Geist.” Here, Jelinek shows the similarity between Hegel and Fichte’s statements. Fichte and Hegel both frame the arrival of the new German era in terms of time. Fichte denies all previous ages of man in order to legitimize calling the German people “ursprünglich.” Couched in spiritual rhetoric but nevertheless equally rife with denial, Hegel elevates his discussion of the Germanic kingdom’s new era to a discourse on the spirit, saying that this “vierte Moment der Weltgeschichte” corresponds to man’s life stage of old age. The difference between the human “Greisenalter” and that of Wir’s is that Wir’s age is framed in spiritual terms. In the passage, Hegel reasons that the “Greisenalter” of the Germanic kingdom (in the play this is Wir) is actually a spiritual return to its present state, a spiritual expression of its completedness. Hegel denies temporality, like Fichte, in order to legitimize calling the Germanic kingdom the beginning and the end and thus the most complete era of all cultural eras. Jelinek applies this denial to Wir’s discourse. In both Section Seven and Eleven, however, the passages from Hegel and Fichte are connected with passages from Hölderlin and Schmeiser, which, as I demonstrate, serve the purpose of describing the physical, natural domain of Wir’s corpus.

In Section Eleven, Jelinek ensconces Fichte’s statement between passages from Hölderlin and Schmeiser. In Section Seven, she follows Hegel with Hölderlin. Since Hölderlin’s nature imagery and Schmeiser’s Boden-mythology serve to describe the physical characteristics of Wir’s domain, Jelinek creates a physical residence for Fichte and Hegel’s thoughts. In their physical encirclement, Fichte and Hegel’s rhetoric become physically entrenched juristical material that constitutionally legitimizes Wir as a fictional nation-state.

Section Twelve deals exclusively with Schmeiser’s concept of “Surface” (“Oberfläche”), which defines the memorial as a transition between the Surface and the Depths. Throughout Section Twelve Wir refers to himself as a memorial. Schmeiser mystifies the Surface by drawing on the popular legend surrounding Barbarossa. The legend states that Barbarossa (formerly the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire,
Frederick I) slumbers presently in the Kyffhäuser mountain—the location of a Barbarossa monument—and awaits Germany’s time of greatest need, at which point he will awaken, rise from the mountain, and deliver Germany from harm’s way. Schmeiser writes that generally the monument signifies, “Sehnsucht nach der Tiefe, blaue Blume, Sprache der Tiefe, Alraun; und es ist beschriebener Stein” (49). Wir describes himself as an Alraun, the mythological Germanic plant that when pulled from the ground emits an unbearable scream: “Brüder der Arbeit, die uns, wie Erz, aus dem Boden heben. Aus Nichts, ins Nichts. Und wir Alraunen schrein, wenn man uns ausreisst aus unsrem geweihten Gebirg” (147). The passage has a two-fold significance: it signifies a monument and is a monument itself. It signifies a monument in that the “geweihtes Gebirg” represents the Kyffhäuser. It is a monument itself (of literary material) in the fact that it contains three references to statements by Heinrich von Kleist. Metaphorically, the words themselves represent “beschreibener Stein.” The epigraph in “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens” (“Ich wollte, ich hätte eine Stimme aus erz, und könnte sie vom Harz herab, den Deutschen absingen,” Heinrich von Kleist), the reference to Die Hermannsschlacht (“Aus Nichts, ins Nichts,” Act V, Scene 4), and the reference to the Kyffhäuser mountain (“aus unsrem geweihten Gebirg”) are all alluded to in this passage. In the epigraph, indicated by the words “und könnte sie vom Harz herab, den Deutschen absingen,” Kleist is projecting himself standing on top of the Kyffhäuser (one of the Harz mountains) wishing to sing down to “den Deutschen,” which, he insinuates, are embodied by the myth of the slumbering Barbarossa. The reference to the Alraunen on “geweihtem Gebirg,” suggests that these plants of Germanic mythology pock-mark the mountains, as little monuments to the German soul. The total image that these allusions create is that of the four-fold concept of “beschriebener Stein,” “Sehnsucht nach der Tiefe,” “Sprache der Tiefe,” and “Alraun.”

Subject material from Heidegger’s 1933 rector speech at the University of Freiburg figures largely in Section Twelve. Like the textual monument to Kleist, the select passages from Heidegger function as physical material that defines the constitution of the national landscape of Wir. In the passage, Wir declares (speaking Heidegger), “Der Wille zum Wesen der deutschen Universität ist der Wille zur Wissenschaft als Wille zum geschichtlichen geistigen Auftrag des deutschen Volkes” (149).
Important in Section Fifteen is Fichte’s quote: “Volk und Vaterland in dieser Bedeutung, als Träger und Unterpfand der irdischen Ewigkeit, und als dasjenige, was hienieden ewig sein kann, liege weit hinaus über dem Staat im gewöhnlichen Sinn des Wortes” (149-150). The passage displays the two concepts “Volk” and “Vaterland” as separate entities. Following this passage is Wir’s statement, “Das Vaterland ist nicht der Boden. Es ist in uns.” This statement comes originally from Hölderlin’s Gesang des Deutschen. In its position, Jelinek ties it into Fichte’s statement. Now, regarding the relationship between “Vaterland,” “Volk” and Wir one understands that “Vaterland” is an aspect of Wir, possibly a spiritual quality within him. Nation becomes a spiritual element of Wir’s identity.

Section Fifteen deals largely with calls to war. Wir shouts, “Wasch die Erde, dein deutsches Land, mit deinem Blute rein!” speaking the words of former Austrian President Theodor Körner. Another passage sounds, “In der Isolation der Folter ganz nackt: Mensch und Imperialismus, was sich ausschliesst. Was rauskommt, ist diese einzige Produktivkraft, auf dies ankommt: revolutionäre Gewalt, die Fähigkeit zur Gegengewalt.” Following this quote from the RAF is a passage from Italian Renaissance religious reformer Girolamo Savanarola, “Fragst du mich im allgemeinen, wie der Kampf enden wird? Ich antworte: mit dem Sieg. Fragst du mich aber im besonderen, dann antworte ich: mit dem Tod” (150).


In Section Seventeen, Wir clarifies the nature of his constitution once again, this time through a passage from Heidegger’s “Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität.” He defines the “drei Bindungen” of the “deutsches Wesen” as “durch das Volk an das Geschick des Staates im geistigen Auftrag” (151). In this quote, Heidegger states that the
concept of the German essence (“deutsches Wesen”) is enabled through the people, ensured by the skill of the ruling body politic and bound by a contract that is founded on pluralistic ideology. Like Hegel, Heidegger frames the German identity in predominantly spiritual terms, as opposed to physical terms. Also, he turns these three separate entities into a total concept. By writing all three separate entities out, joining them together with prepositions that connote interconnectedness, Heidegger demonstrates their independence from, and simultaneous interconnectedness to, each other. According to the whole statement “die drei Bindungen” are “dem deutschen Wesen gleich ursprünglich” (151). In other words, they come into being all at the same moment. The use of the word “ursprünglich” alludes to Fichte’s statement in Section Eleven, “In der [deutschen] Nation…ist in der neuen Zeit Ursprüngliches…an de[m] Tag gebrochen” (146). It also harkens back to Hegel’s statement in Section Seven comparing the era of the Germanic kingdom to the “Greisenalter des Geistes,” “in welcher [der Geist] zurückgeht zur Einheit” (142). Although the three quotes refer to different ways of understanding “Germanness” (as a “kingdom,” as a “nation,” and as an “essence”), they all portray Germanness in terms of its unification and “primordiality” (“Ursprünglichkeit”) concept.

If one views Hegel, Fichte and Heidegger’s concepts of Germanness in terms of their successive positions within the play, one will notice that, according to their placement, Jelinek demonstrates the chronological development of the concept of “Germanness” historically—from a “kingdom,” to a “nation,” to, finally, an existential “essence.” By placing the ideas in successive order within the play—from Section Seven, Section Eleven to Section Seventeen—Jelinek represents the development of the idea of German identity in three, respective forms of understanding—from statements by Hegel,9 Fichte,10 and Heidegger.11 The presence of passages from Hölderlin reduces the possibility that this part of the discourse will only be considered in an abstract way. Instead, the Hölderlin passages give an imagined landscape to Heidegger’s existential “deutsches Wesen” concept, infusing it with a sense of imagined corporeality. To this end, Jelinek quotes Hölderlin from Der Gang aufs Land and Das Ahnenbild: “Aber kommen doch auch die segenbringenden Schwalben immer einige noch, ehe der Sommer, ins Land…Die du liebend erzogst, sieh, sie grünen dir, einige Bäume, breiten
ums Haus den Arm” (151). Finally, following the mention of “Haus,” Jelinek begins to direct the discourse back to the theme of “zuhaus sein.”

The themes of isolation and imprisonment are prominent in Section Eighteen. First, Jelinek quotes Hölderlin’s Hälfe des Lebens, writing, “Wir leben vorzugsweise in der Innerlichkeit des Gemüts und des Denkens” (152). Further in the section, Jelinek quotes the RAF. She displays its philosophical view of a wounded fighter’s position in an intensive care unit, writing, “Wohin wolln wir die Verwundeten retten? Auf die Intensivstationen – also in diesen dreckigen Kreislauf, in dem die Phasen sicher immer kürzer werden, von Infusionen, Maschinerie. Dann wieder durch den Schlauch durch den Schlauch durch den Schlauch in die jahrelange Isolation, in den Verrat . . . Gefangene, äusserste Defensive, totale Einkreisung.” This quote equates the act of being wounded in war and spending time in recovery as defeat—“totale Einkreisung.” The speaker asks, “Wohin wolln wir die Verwundeten retten?” At the end of Section Eighteen, Wir speaks of wounded who have been captured and who die in the clinic rather than from beyond a doctor’s attention: “Ein Gefangener, der in einer Klinik stirbt, ist als Kranker gestorben, ärztlich bis zum letzten Helfen – nicht im Kampf” (153). In the two quotes, Wir wants to undermine the belief that those wounded in battle should be rescued. In the first quote, he insinuates that it is better to leave wounded fighters on the battlefield, because if they are rescued they will only spend time in isolation, like prisoners. In the second quote, he states basically the same thing, but as if the wounded persons are captured and put in a clinic. Because the second passage comes after the suggestion that the wounded fighter should be left on the battlefield, one can conclude that Wir envisions “ein Gefangener, der in einer Klinik stirbt” to be a wounded fighter who has been picked up by the enemy, for he is abandoned by his army. Wir also looks disapprovingly on the decision to leave the fighter on the field alive for the enemy to rescue. He suggests that dying in the enemy’s clinic is equally senseless, because, he says, “Der Inhalt ist Kampf ist Kampf” (153). This could mean, then, that Wir supports the idea that, in war, it makes more sense to fight to the very last moment of life. If a soldier gets wounded, it is his duty to fight in the best way that he can, but to rescue him or to leave him for the enemy to find are senseless decisions in wartime. Therefore, Wir insinuates that it is best to kill those who get wounded before they are rescued. “Der
Inhalt ist Kamp.” If one is not fit to fight then one is not fit to participate in life, Wir seems to say.

Throughout the discourse of WolkenHeim, Wir awaits his rebirth. Wir’s rebirth equates to complete physical expression, a physical transformation that exists beyond the descriptive boundaries of language. The rebirth exists beyond the realm of human understanding, because experience is framed in language. The only thing that signals the attainment of this goal is some form of expression that exists beyond language. In Section Four, Wir hints at the nature of his transformation in the passage “Wir stehen auf, weil alles Warten und Gedulden doch vergebens war, und wir wie Pappeln blühen” (139). The rebirth desired is not war-like. The passage does not reflect violent imagery, but rather it depicts a violent outpouring of Wir’s spirit. Wir breaks from the Depths, through the ground, to the Surface, and, “wie Pappeln,” Wir blooms, achieving the incomprehensible unity between identity and reflection, language and the concept that the language signifies. Throughout the play Wir asserts his desire to become something more than what he is. He remains in the German earth, embodies the German spirit (as defined by Hegel) and “travels between heaven and earth,” an ephemeral mix, a city-state comprising simultaneously a corpus and a spirit. By the end of the play Wir does achieve the rebirth that he awaits. The rebirth is expressed, however, not in any words within the text, but, rather, by the physical ending of the play. Throughout Sections Ten through Twenty-Three, Wir hints at the coming of the rebirth, but the final sentence is the indicator that it will happen at the play’s end. Wir declares,


Wir constantly searches for his centre (“Mitte”) throughout the play. Once he finds it, according to Hegel, he has become “Geist” and is no longer “Materie.” That he has
found his centre is expressed in the phrase, “Aus Nichts, ins Nichts, hart zwischen Nichts und Nichts.” He transcends the model of perpetual oscillation between himself and his “Gegenteil” that Hegel proposes, and exists simultaneously “hart zwischen Nichts und Nichts.” Having achieved his unity, Wir states, “Wir sind zuhaus.” No longer does Wir feel threatened by “die anderen.” He says, “Wir sehen ihn nicht, und gesellte er sich auch zu uns.” Wir is no longer dead, but “Lebenden.” He is about to achieve physical expression by announcing his physical transformation: “Wachsen und werden zum Wald.” Just like in the phrase “und wir wie Pappeln blühen,” Wir achieves this transformation by changing into the earth that he has been among for so long. The attainment of this physical transformation happens beyond the language of the play. The reader must be the bridge, enabling the transformation through his imagination. He must recognize that this transformation takes Wir beyond a rational realm of thought and into an incomprehensible dimension, an “überdimensionale” realm of understanding.
CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated, Wolken.Heim is about German national identity. The montage shows Wir’s attaining unity between the physical and spiritual components of his identity and transcending the traditional framework of language, in which he resides, to become a more intrinsic, primordial being. Schmeiser suggests the key to achieving this unity lies in the reader’s recognition and acceptance that the nature of Wir’s unification exceeds the descriptive ability of language.

Jelinek applies this suggestion to the theory of her desired form of theatre. She believes the theatregoer need not fully understand her play rationally but grasp the “überdimensionale” idea of her aesthetic in order for Wir—the all-encompassing representative of German national identity—to achieve a perfect unity and thereby undergo his transformation into a new, yet ultimately primordial, collective, simultaneously spiritual and physical, being. Jelinek desires Wolken.Heim to challenge the reader or theatregoer to reevaluate his view on German identity and what that view encompasses. What is the nature of Germanness? According to Jelinek’s Wolken.Heim, it is a dark, almost ominous, lurking spirit that resides in the earth and travels through the elements, constantly seeking its “Mitte.” Once the German identity has found its centre, it has reached perfection. The end of Wolken.Heim purports to be the actual manifestation of German identity attaining its unity; it simultaneously indicates the nature of this process and what the end result constitutes. The end result defines itself as an event existing beyond linguistic and thematic categorization, beyond the concepts of “history” and “literature” to describe it. It is not a climax and not starting point. It is perfect unity, beyond the construct of expression.

The text presents identifiable viewpoints from various German authors—Hegel, Fichte, Heidegger, Hoelderin, Kleist, the RAF and others. Given that the text also connects to the broader discussion of Schmeiser’s essay about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German national identity, one has the license to discuss the play’s subject material in light of historical and literary contexts of Germanic culture that are thematically related to the text—themes like “deutschem geschichtlichen Elend.” Through Jelinek’s use of montage, one can discuss Wolken.Heim as a representative of German Romanticism (through her selection of Hölderlin quotes to comprise Wir’s
physical constitution), as a critique on German nationalism (through the text’s connection with Schmeiser’s “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens”), as a relic of the Austrian avant-garde theatre (through Jelinek’s employing the montage technique), and as an implementation of Structuralist theory (a simultaneously diachronic and synchronic text). However, Jelinek’s application of the montage allows the discourse of German identity to extend beyond the confines of the text itself. By linking itself through montage to the texts that it quotes, the study of Wolken.Heim rightfully becomes a study of all texts to which Wolken.Heim is verbally linked.

One of the beauties of Wolken.Heim, however, is that one need not view it in any light other than that of itself. One can analyze is simply as a work of beautiful poetic text. In this way, one would read the allusions, symbolism, imagery and quoted material out of the text and approach the piece as one approaches walking through dark forest. One need not reflect on Wolken.Heim in order to understand it. That is the way that I believe Jelinek would want the uninformed reader or theatergoer to experience the play. However, recognizing the aforementioned qualities and elements presented in Wolken.Heim, indeed (to use a pun) “deepens” the discussion of the nature of this particular representation of German identity.
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Notes

1 The term “sound image” comes from Ferdinand de Saussure in his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure*. It appears that the term is a more descriptive term for what “word” really signifies—namely, that a word imparts its concept via sonic as well as visual channels of the brain during the brain’s cognition of the word. Hazard Adams, *Critical Theory Since 1965*. (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1986) 38.


4 In Section One of “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens” Schmeiser introduces “Oberfläche” and “Tiefe” and discusses how they interact with each other in the context of German history. He writes, “Deutsche Geschichte aber verläuft entlang von Zeichen der Oberfläche, die auf Tiefe verweisen und deren Tiefe zu deuten bleibt.” Leonhard Schmeiser, *Tumult* 10 (1987) 38.


7 Section Two (Pgs. 137-138) contains passages from Hölderlin’s “Wie wenn am Feiertage” (Lines 2-4, 5-6, 54-55 and 63-66) and “Die Liebe” (5). Section Three (Pg. 138) displays passages from Hölderlin’s “Wie wenn am Feiertage” (Lines 19-20, 29-31, 35), “Menons Klage um Diotima” (29, 31); and Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Pg. 30). Section Four (Pgs. 138-139) contains passages from Hölderlin’s “Wie wenn am Feiertage” (Lines 25-27), “Menons Klage um Diotima” (67,), “An die Deutschen” (3-10, 27-29, 32-34, 41), and “Elegie” (94-95); Kleist’s *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (I, 1: 206-8); and Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Pg. 31). Section Five (Pgs. 139-141) introduces new passages from Hölderlin’s “An die Deutschen” (Lines 55-56) as well as passages from “Der Nekar” (1-2), “Der Frieden” (25-28, 33-36, 52), “Die Heimath” (1-5, 13-16); Kleist’s *Penthiselea* (Section 24); and Hegel (Pg. 35). In Section Six (Pgs. 141-142) there are passages from Hölderlin’s “Ganymed” (Lines 1-2, 5, 9-12, 16-20), and “Der Rhein” (Lines 155-157); and Hegel (Pg. 123). Section Seven (Pgs. 142-144) begins with Hegel (Pg. 140); follows with passages from Hölderlin’s “Der Einzige” (Lines 97-98) and “Patmos” (Lines 5-13); returns to Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Pg. 141); inserts
Walter Benjamin’s “Engel der Geschichte”; returns to “Patmos” (Lines 21-30); introduces a passage from Pg. 422 in Hegel; displays a passage from Familie Schroffenstein (Pgs. 147-8), and, finally, presents a passage from Hölderlin’s “Hyperions Schicksalslied” (Lines 16-17). Section Eight (Pgs. 144-145) contains slightly altered passages from Schmeiser’s “Das Gedächtnis des Bodens”; passages from Hölderlin’s “Der Rhein” (40-45, 48-60, 62-62, 69-77), and “Hyperions Schicksalslied” (22-24); and Familie Schroffenstein (Act II, Scene 2 & III, Scene 1). Section Nine (Pg. 145) displays passages from Hölderlin’s “Der Tod fürs Vaterland” (9-16, 20-24), “Zeitgeist” (1-2); and Fichte’s Reden an die deutsche Nation (Pg. 110). Elfriede Jelinek, Wolken.Heim. (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004).

8 “The ground” (“Nur uns leuchtet über festem Boden das Leben,” 142; “Wir wissen es, denn wir wurzeln im Grund,” 142); leaves (“Droht uns der Nordwind auch, wir fallen nicht von den Ästen ins Laub,” 138); “treetops” (“Das Dach der Bäume umschliesst unsre geselligen Fuesse,” 140); “valleys” (“In unserer Tälern wacht unser Herz uns auf zum Leben,” 139, 140; “Wir finden schlafend uns in diesem Tal, das einer Wiege gleich uns bettet,” 143); and “shores” (Ihr teurn Ufer, ganz gehört ihr uns….,” 140) are all examples of the nature imagery that Wir employs to describe his domain. Elfriede Jelinek, Wolken.Heim. (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004).

9 Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte was published posthumously in 1837.

10 Reden an die deutsche Nation was published in 1808.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In May 2003, James Flieder graduated from Davidson College in Davidson, NC, with a double major in German and Theatre. Upon graduation, his future plans included improving his skills in German and growing a resume of professional acting credits. After spending the summer playing a supporting role in Charlotte theatre company, Playworks’, production of “Open Season,” James moved to Linz, Austria under the aegis of a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship. While at Europagymnasium-Linz, in addition to teaching thirty hours of communicative English language instruction, he organized an acting troupe of adolescents who performed for the school and parents at the end of the school year. The nine months in Austria motivated him to pursue further study in German, as well as begin learning Spanish and French. Following Shakespeare & Company’s month-long Shakespearean acting intensive, in Lenox, MA, which James participated in July 2004, James entered graduate school at Florida State University in the Department of Modern Languages. In addition to his necessary coursework for the M.A. in German, he has done the following: presented a paper at the 31st F.S.U. Film & Literature conference titled “An Unterwelt of Trauma”; secured a research grant from the Ada-Belle Winthrop-King Foundation in order to, subsequently, conduct research for his master’s thesis for three months in Austria; interned at the Linz regional theatre in Linz, Austria; and volunteered at an orphanage in Bolivia. He has also been able to attain foundational knowledge of French grammar and a conversational fluency in Spanish. Following his graduation, he will continue learning French and Spanish and prepare for the Law School Admission Test.