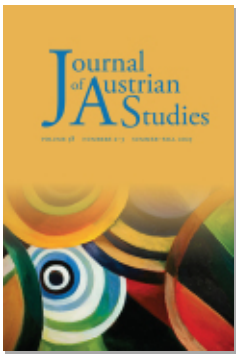
Directing Elfriede Jelinek's Theater Texts: Co-authorial Complicity and Ethical Entanglements in Jossi Wieler's *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* and Nicolas Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*



Morgan Koerner

Journal of Austrian Studies, Volume 58, Numbers 2-3, Summer-Fall 2025, pp. 1-33 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/oas.2025.a969040

Directing Elfriede Jelinek's Theater Texts

Co-authorial Complicity and Ethical Entanglements in Jossi Wieler's Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel) *and Nicolas Stemann's* Die Schutzbefohlenen

Morgan Koerner

> Jedenfalls soll eine Art Denken, also ein Fragen, das nicht auf seine Beantwortung besteht, daraus entstehen, aus dem, was ich da auf die Bretter werfe, in einer Art Entrümpelungsaktion meines Gehirns.
>
> —Elfriede Jelinek, "In Mediengewittern"

> Der Text tut weh.
>
> —Jossi Wieler, quoted in "Jelineks *Rechnitz* bewegt Pulikum in Israel"

> Ich zumindest muss nach drei Seiten Jelinek-Lektüre schreiend aus dem Fenster springen. Dieser Schrei ist dann die Inszenierung.
>
> —Nicolas Stemann

Twenty years after she received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004, Elfriede Jelinek's texts for the theater continue to pose an impertinent challenge to readers and directors alike. They revolve around pervasive moral issues, including sexism and violence against women, war and cultural imperialism, xenophobia and racism, the Nazi past of Germany and especially Austria, and Austria's complicity in the Holocaust. Yet they refuse to offer a fixed moral standpoint outside of the discourses they critique (Husser 254), and they overflow with linguistic excesses that undermine readers/viewers in search of answers or a stable locus of meaning. Jelinek's plays from the past two decades are massive, disorienting, associative texts, written essentially in prose except for the (increasingly uncommon) stage directions and the occasional

JOURNAL OF AUSTRIAN STUDIES, VOL. 58, NOS. 2–3

yet rarely clear indications of who is speaking. They lack distinct characters, shift pronouns and speaking positions from sentence to sentence, and incorporate endless citations into never-ending blocks of text that follow Jelinek's "master trope" of paranomasia, the deployment of excessive wordplay and puns (Aeberhard 69). Jelinek's theater texts address moral questions but do so in an ironic, bewildering, and "agonistic" fashion that frustrates the desire for clarity and casts the reader/viewer back onto themself (cf. Jürs-Munby, "Agon, Conflict, and Dissent"; Husser). From this aesthetic process emerges a kind of thinking that eschews cerebral distance and instead immerses the reader affectively into an unstable discourse that at every turn produces questions, not answers.[1]

Readers, however, are rarely the first to respond to Jelinek's theater texts; that dubious privilege belongs to the directors and theater ensembles that premiere her plays, usually before they appear in print. Since the late 1990s, Jelinek has explicitly encouraged the co-authorship of directors, dramaturges, and theater ensembles in the production of her theater texts.[2] Her insistence on the director as co-creator has been a boon for the German-language theater scene, as an ever-growing number of directors have made their name or solidified their stardom with critically acclaimed Jelinek productions: since the 1990s, twelve Jelinek productions have been invited to the annual *Berliner Theatertreffen*, and twenty-two different Jelinek plays have been invited to the *Mülheimer Theatertage*. But whereas critics often hail the creative genius of Jelinek's directors and scholars discuss how they do or do not translate Jelinek's aesthetic strategies to the stage, less attention has been given to Jelinek's directors and dramaturges and their ensembles as initial readers of Jelinek's theater texts, whose choices and interventions stage the very dilemmas that they engender. To paraphrase her own metaphors, Jelinek's "Menschenwurfgeräte," her theater texts, do not throw figures onto the stage on their own; rather, her texts demand active mediators, directors and actors who throw themselves and are thrown, with and against the text, onto the stage.[3] This process not only demands a collective interpretation of and reaction to the text but also incorporates a somatic, affective element that is a crucial aspect of Jelinek's writing for the theater. In the end, to paraphrase Jelinek, the bodies of the actors and readers do, and endure, the work: "Ich kann sie leider nicht schonen" (Jelinek, "Die Leere öffnen" 203).

The following article considers two specific examples of the creative tension between Jelinek's collaborators (particularly directors and actors) and

her theater texts: Jossi Wieler's critically acclaimed 2008 staging of *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*, which addresses the murder of 180 Jewish-Hungarian forced laborers in Rechnitz, Austria, at the end of World War II and is the most explicit treatment of the Holocaust in Jelinek's theatrical oeuvre, and Nicolas Stemann's 2014 staging of Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*, a theater text about refugees and asylum seekers that is unique among Jelinek's works about xenophobia in that it mediates the imagined voices of asylum seekers more than those of the xenophobic natives. As has become the norm with Jelinek's plays, *Rechnitz* and *Die Schutzbefohlenen* demand the directorial team's co-authorship and simultaneously place an ethical burden upon them: how do they react to and mediate Jelinek's irreverent, irony-soaked reproduction of clichés, comic riffs, and seemingly unstageable outpouring of language? And how do the directorial team's decisions position them vis-à-vis the problems satirized in the text? In what follows, I explore these questions in an analysis of Jossi Wieler's *Rechnitz* and Nicolas Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. Before that, however, I discuss Jelinek's postdramatic theater aesthetic more generally in order to delineate, with the help of Fatima Naqvi's notion of Jelinek's "postdramatic stress disorder," the ethical imposition it places on the reader/viewer. I discuss the state of scholarship on theater productions of Jelinek's works and make the case for Wieler and Stemann's staging as divergent but equally instructive examples of how Jelinek's theater texts both engender creative innovation and entangle directors in the ethical questions that they raise. The third and fourth segments are dedicated to close readings of Wieler's *Rechnitz* and Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. In the conclusion, I discuss how Jelinek's writing engenders resistance to and simultaneously ensnares and implicates readers and theater practitioners alike in the discourses that it critiques and demasks.

"Postdramatic Stress" and Co-Authorial Complicity

Perhaps counterintuitively, Jelinek's postdramatic theater aesthetic does not encourage icy, cerebral distance; instead, it elicits affective reactions that generate what Fatima Naqvi describes as a "postdramatic stress disorder" in the reader/viewer. The emotional import of Jelinek's texts, however, differs from the character identification and catharsis we might expect from dramatic theater and cinema. Jelinek's words, which "attack, nauseate, asphyxiate, and even militate against the suspecting reader," provoke a host of emotional responses, including disgust, irritation, anger, boredom, confusion, and

laughter, in the reader/viewer (Naqvi 75). Due to the "cognitive dissonance" generated by Jelinek's theater texts, the reader/viewer occupies perpetually unstable ground and struggles to locate a position outside of the myths and machinations of power that the texts deconstruct (92). To read Jelinek's theater texts is thus to be confronted with one's own complicity in the discourses they critique (76). This instability and confusion heighten the importance of the authorial figure Jelinek (92). Precisely because her highly citational, intertextual plays lack characters, plot, and dialogue, readers, critics, and scholars alike commonly refer to Jelinek the author as a stable locus for the texts' meaning and moral impetus. The authorial construct "Jelinek" becomes a "lightning rod for the viewer's and reader's frustrations" and a locus for their understanding that eases some of the painful cognitive dissonance that the texts cause (92). Jelinek's theater texts thereby result in a meta-drama of sorts for the reader/viewer: because her theater texts eschew character psychology and embrace nonlinear linguistic riffing, Jelinek the author becomes a character for readers, who rely on her biography or satirical intent.[4] This reading strategy arguably relieves the stress caused by the reader's own role as the true central character in the drama of their own uncomfortable encounter with the text.

Jelinek's ambivalent use of laughter and humor generates further cognitive dissonance and discomfort. As Felber notes in her analysis of Jelinek's *Wut*, laughter as a response to Jelinek's writing "bricht stockend hervor, löst mitunter Scham, stets jedoch Irritation aus. Es ist ein Lachen, das sich dem aristotelischen Verständnis, demzufolge das Komische keinesfalls wehtun darf, radikal entzieht" (*Traveling Gestures* 286). In literary studies, Jelinek's comic strategies have often been channeled into a discussion of satirical intent and thus a study of aggressive humor and critique (see Banoun; Pye 267–306). But as her theater texts have increasingly abandoned any semblance of plot and character, the performative elements of Jelinek's comic writing have become more extreme and her playful linguistic creation of an "überbordende Kopräsenz von Unsinn und Sinn" has become more difficult to ignore (Haß 366). As her English translator, Gitta Honegger, has stated, her theater texts resemble "jazz-like riffs on punning, and gliding, tumbling chains of signifiers" ("Staging Memory" 287). Many of the puns, as Schenkermayr has argued, point to the absurdity of societal clichés and can be seen as a deconstructive unmasking: "Die Kalauer bei Jelinek sind also nicht beliebige Spielereien mit der Sprache, sondern weisen als Interventionen in die gesellschaftspolitischen Realitäten

mit satirischer Absicht 'in eine Bestimmte Richtung'" ("Auf die Sprache einprügeln, bis sie die Wahrheit preisgibt" 235). Further, Jelinek's comic strategies and wordplay serve as an antidote to the "toxischen verdinglichten Sprechen" of the discourses they thematize (Haß 369). But in Jelinek's theater texts since the late 1990s, the paranomasia is often so extreme that it also appears to be an end in itself; as a reader, it is difficult not to enjoy the wordplay for its own sake, as an expression of the materiality and performativity of language. Dürbeck concedes this aspect of Jelinek's writing for the theater when she discusses how her ideology critique dovetails with an emphasis on "Ästhetik und Performanz" that has been highlighted by her directors ("Ideologiekritik im postdramatischen Theater" 107). Indeed, since her beginnings as a writer, Jelinek has mixed an ethos of satire with a more postmodern embrace of excessive and pleasurable play with citations from popular culture (Meyer 20) and an emphasis on the continued playfulness of the reader and director.[5] On the one hand, therefore, Jelinek's ludic writing style undermines attempts to frame her oeuvre as aggressive satire in the traditional sense. But on the other hand, because of her deadly serious subject matter and incessant oscillation between comic and tragic modes (cf. Felber, *Traveling Gestures*), the excessive play and humor in Jelinek can also be understood as an ethical trap for the reader and viewer that leads directly back into the postdramatic stress described by Naqvi. Ethically speaking, despite all invocations of the pleasures of deconstruction, the volume of Jelinek's wordplay and linguistic gags raises a problem for the reader/viewer and only temporarily allows anything resembling safe or comfortable laughter before it transforms into "ein Lachen, das dem Publikum buchstäblich im Halse stecken bleibt" (Pelka 123). Any pleasure in Jelinek's comic wordplay is accompanied by doubt and further moral questions; the push and pull between painful moral earnestness and ludic pleasure lies at the center of Jelinek's writing for the theater.

Over the past thirty years, Jelinek's directors have explicitly become active performative co- and counter-authors of her theater texts. As Dürbeck highlights, Frank Castorf's raucous and irreverent 1994 staging of *Raststätte oder sie machens alle* at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg, in which he multiplied her use of grotesque strategies and ironized perceptions of Jelinek the author as a finger-wagging moralist, sparked a new relationship between Jelinek and her play's directors ("'Machen Sie, was Sie wollen'" 109). After the Castorf production, Jelinek began to emphasize her directors as co-authors in a more explicit way by adding ironic commentaries in her stage directions that ceded complete

directorial control or by forgoing stage directions altogether. She thus "throws down the gauntlet to directors" and keeps "her distance from the production process" while "simultaneously daring directors to live up to the challenges of her texts" (Jürs-Munby, "The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre" 10).

Scholars have focused largely on the extent to which her directors succeed or don't succeed in translating her critique and her strategies to the stage. Ingrid Hentschel, writing in 2020 about Jelinek's use of comic strategies, underscores this approach: "Soweit ich die Szene der Jelinek-Aufführungen überblicken kann, bemühen sich die Inszenierungen der textuellen Ununterscheidbarkeit von Ernst und Quatsch, von Stereotypen und Theorien, Alltags-, Kunst- und Mediengebrabbel zu entsprechen" (428–29). But Karen Jürs-Munby frames the discussion differently by bringing up the notion of resistance in the performance: "Rather than asking whether the performance is faithful to (the letter of) the text, it might be more productive to analyse what kind of a relationship between text and performance is developed here and how the experience of the 'performance text' corresponds to the resistant nature of the text itself" ("Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre" 52). Jürs-Munby expands on this notion of resistance in an article on Schleef's staging of *Ein Sportstück*, noting that "there is an argument to be made that on the level of communication with the audience, Jelinek attempts to revive 'agonistics' as a form of democratic dissent and debate initiated by the theatre" ("Agon, Conflict, and Dissent" 11). The emphasis on democratic dissent and debate, however, initially happens at the level of the directors, dramaturges, and ensembles, who first respond to the "postdramatic stress" and negativity of the texts and who are forced by Jelinek's postdramatic open aesthetics to make aesthetic decisions of their own, including ones that resist or work against the grain of the text. While resisting and working against the grain of the dramatic text of course has a long tradition in German *Regietheater*, Jelinek's theater texts make director's theater an "ästhetische Notwendigkeit" (Dürbeck, "'Machen Sie, was Sie wollen'" 107).

The work of two of Jelinek's celebrated longtime directors, Jossi Wieler and Nicolas Stemann, exemplify how the aesthetic necessity of directorial intervention can promote productive, co-authorial collisions with Jelinek's texts. Wieler, who has staged six of Jelinek's texts for the theater, directed the first widely celebrated performance of a Jelinek play in 1993 with his production of Jelinek's first truly postdramatic theater text, *Wolken. Heim.*, at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg. In the production, Wieler "deliberately went against the against the grain of Jelinek's declared rejection of psychological theatre and

came up with a quasi-naturalistic setting and quasi-psychological acting style in his staging" (Jürs-Munby, "Agon, Conflict, and Dissent" 9). His later productions continued this trend and led Jelinek to note the following in a text dedicated to Wieler in 2006:

> Jossi Wieler macht alles, denn er kann Menschen machen, was mir leider verwehrt ist, ich weiß nicht, von welcher Instanz. Er kann eine Bühnenperson von der andren abgrenzen, ohne daß er das, was sie ausmacht, definieren müßte (ich verweigere dieses Definieren aber auch, wir verweigern einander gegenseitig vieles, damit etwas entstehen kann!), nur: Wenn er es verweigert, entstehen bei ihm trotzdem Menschen. ("Die Leere öffnen")

Jelinek highlights here the productive refusal with which Wieler has responded to her postdramatic theater texts by creating characters and specifying contexts in which her amalgam of citations and shifting voices then appear, and she submits that it is this very resistance to her texts that creates the performance.

Although his approach is very different, Nicolas Stemann's spectacular and multimedial postdramatic productions of Jelinek's texts—at present ten and counting—also engage in a productive strategy of refusal. Since his initial award-winning premiere of Jelinek's *Das Werk* in 2003, Stemann's Jelinek productions have often made "den eigenen Kampf des Regisseurs und der SchauspielerInnen mit dem Text zum Inszenierungsprinzip" (Jürs-Munby, "Gedanken zum Ernst der Komik in Jelinek-Inszierungen" 409). Stemann famously described his approach in an interview, cited in the epigraph of this essay: "Ich zumindest muss nach drei Seiten Jelinek-Lektüre schreiend aus dem Fenster springen. Dieser Schrei ist dann die Inszenierung" (68). In Stemann's metaphor, reading Jelinek becomes an affect-laden action that leads *away* from the text, a screaming leap out of the window, which then becomes a staging that privileges the materiality of language, as represented in the paralinguistic sign of the scream over meaning. Whereas Jossi Wieler's resistance to Jelinek's texts takes place dramaturgically, via his creation of the resemblances of dramatic characters for the performance, Stemann has made a name for himself by emphasizing the struggle and confusion involved in staging Jelinek's postdramatic theater in the performances themselves.

In what follows, I turn my attention to two specific productions by Wieler and Stemann that exemplify the ethical stakes of their aesthetic strategies

and responses to Jelinek's theater texts: Wieler's 2008 production of *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* and Nicolas Stemann's 2014 staging of *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. To highlight the challenges that each theater text poses, an introduction to the text itself precedes a discussion of each performance. For the performances, I refer to specific multi-camera video recordings, a May 2010 ORF recording of Wieler's *Rechnitz*[6] and an October 2014 Thalia Theater video of Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*.[7]

Complicity and the Discourse of *Errinungskultur*: Elfriede Jelinek's *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*

Jelinek's 2008 theater text *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* thematizes the massacre of Jewish-Hungarian forced laborers in Rechnitz, Burgenland, in the final days of World War II and the aftermath of the atrocity in the context of postwar *Erinnerungskultur*. On the night of March 24 to 25, 1945, a group of SS officers and accomplices murdered 180 forced laborers days before the Russians liberated the area.[8] The atrocity took place during a party at Rechnitz Castle hosted by the countess Margit von Batthyány, the daughter of Baron Heinrich Thyssen and a welcoming host of SS officers during the war. During the festivities on the 24th, *SS Hauptscharführer* Franz Podezin gathered fifteen of the guests at the castle armory, distributed rifles, and then led the group to a nearby site, where they murdered 180 Hungarian-Jewish laborers and then returned to the festivities. Before the Russians invaded, Margit von Batthyány fled to Switzerland with her husband, her butler, and the chief perpetrator of the murders, Podezin. Russian troops subsequently found but then covered and did not mark the mass grave, and in the 1950s the Austrian justice system tried several men for the massacre, only to see them acquitted after two key witnesses were murdered. In the meantime, Podezin fled to South Africa, probably with the financial support of Batthyány, and was never seen again. Beginning in the 1990s, attempts were made to locate the mass grave, but to date it remains undiscovered after multiple digs. Finally, in 2006, the English hobby-historian David Lichtfield published a book about the Thyssen family—*The Thyssen Art Macabre*—which contained a sensational chapter about Batthyány's role in the massacre and her relationship to Franz Podezin. The book and an accompanying article translated into German created a media controversy in Germany and Austria, and Jelinek admits in an interview that after the Lichtfield controversy, she became so captivated by

the topic that she decided to write a play about it ("'Diese falsche und verlogene Unschuldigkeit Österreichs ist wirklich immer mein Thema gewesen'" 17). Given both the specifics of the massacre and its aftermath into the twenty-first century, it is clear why Jelinek found it an irresistible topic. The events surrounding the massacre combine two themes that are prominent throughout Jelinek's entire oeuvre: the connections between violence and sex and the "orgiastic" (Jelinek, "'Diese falsche und verlogene Unschuldigkeit Österreichs ist wirklich immer mein Thema gewesen'" 17; Meister), and above all Austria's complicity in and repression of the Holocaust.

Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel) is neither a historical nor a documentary drama (cf. Vennemann) but rather a play about the mediation of the massacre by the "Nachgeborenen," those born after the Shoah (Kricsfalusi 471; Janke 234). It is, essentially, a theater text about the discourses of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and *Erinnerungskultur*, the coming-to-terms with the Holocaust and Nazi war crimes in Germany and in Austria. The allusion to Luis Buñuel's 1962 film *El angel exterminador* in Jelinek's title and opening stage directions underscores the play's discursive focus.[9] In Buñuel's film, a group of bourgeois dinner party guests are mysteriously trapped in a room in their host's mansion, abandoned by all but one of the servants and neither able to leave nor to be rescued even though the doors are open. Mirroring Buñuel's frame, the beginning stage directions of *Rechnitz* indicate a "Schloß in Österreich" with "Jagdtrophäen an den Wänden. Boten und Botinnen kommen von überall her, [. . .] bis irgendwann einmal der Raum gedrängt voll ist. Keiner verläßt diesen Raum" (55). The word *Bote* connotes servant (*Dienstbote*) and as such inverts of the frame of *El angel exterminador*, yet it also denotes "messenger" or "reporter," and it is in this capacity that the speakers pass their time in the room for the remainder of the play. In what follows, 150 pages of associative prose digressively recount descriptions of the massacre in Rechnitz and its aftermath. Although they constantly shift subject positions and often report on the Rechnitz massacre in the first person, the speakers appear to be from the present: they are all "zeitgemäß gekleidet" and they refer to current events. However, as Jelinek's stage directions tell us, "Ab und zu kommt jemand in seiner etwas derangierten, aber sehr eleganten großen Abendkleidung, aber mit Gewehr [. . .] drängt sich durch die Boten, die wegeschoben werden, und schießt ab und zu hinaus" (55). While the messengers speak, the ghosts of the perpetrators appear in their midst. The speakers thus find themselves trapped in both a space—the castle—and a discourse—their never-ending monologues—haunted by the massacre at

Rechnitz and, more generally, Austria's complicity in the Shoah. Jelinek's stage setting creates an allegorical image of the generations born after the war: an endless, ever-growing number of messengers and mediators of the past enter a discursive space and attempt to describe, report, speak, justify, deny, or come to terms with the past.

The play's loaded subject matter collides with Jelinek's aesthetic strategies and places both the reader and the director in an uncomfortable position. Although the opening stage directions offer a succinct allegorical framework, the subsequent text to be spoken by the messengers eschews both clarity and gravitas: it overflows with citations, allusions, associations, and digressions, engages in endless wordplay (even during the most horrific descriptions of the massacre), and abounds with clichés and platitudes, all of which continue in loops for 140 pages.[10] For the reader, the text proves to be overwhelming, in particular in its lack of orientation: the segment spoken by the messengers is separated into fifty paragraphs, followed by an epilogue in dialogue form, but there is otherwise little structural guidance. The individual paragraphs themselves work associatively and above all offer little to no direction outside of associative jumps from one problematic platitude to the next. The following passage, explicitly on the topic of Austria's relationship to the past, is instructive for the larger principle at work in the text:

> Sie verlangen also Zuwendung von uns! Sie verlangen, daß wir sagen, so und so war es, aber wenn das, was war, heute wäre, würden wir von uns sagen können, wir hätten, wir würden ganz bestimmt verfolgte Menschen oder ähnliches Gesindel verstecken. Und das tun wir auch. Wir würden es tun. Wir werden gewußt haben, wie sich Eltern und Großeltern verhalten hätten sollen, wir sind heute endlich zu einem eigenen Urteil fähig und müssen, endlich, endlich! als Boten nicht mehr nachplappern, was man uns vorsagt, was man uns anschafft. Wir müssen uns nicht mehr verstecken. Ich bin nicht bereit, Ihnen die Anstrengung des Selberdenkens zu ersparen! Hauptsache, ich als Bote muß nicht selber denken. Das erledigen jetzt Sie. Gut. Wo waren wir? Hier. Die Rolle des Richters steht uns nicht zu und Ihnen auch nicht. (81)

This passage demonstrates how frustrating Jelinek's language can be to the reader in search of a clear moral condemnation or an ethically safe locus of meaning. On the one hand, the shifting verb tenses highlight the hypocritical

posturing of anyone who claims that they would have acted differently in the Third Reich, while the slippage into a slur—"Gesindel"—indicates the continuation of prejudices against marginalized groups into the present. The language then shifts to what seems to be an emancipatory discourse: "wir sind heute endlich zu einem eigenen Urteil fähig und müssen, endlich, endlich! als Boten nicht mehr nachplappern, was man uns vorsagt." But this assertion, followed by the assertion "wir müssen uns nicht mehr verstecken," invokes questionable rhetoric shared by nationalists and the far right in Germany and Austria. The passage thus vacillates between a parody of retroactive progressive moralizing and nationalistic associations. Furthermore, the conclusion disappoints entirely in that it removes any moral framework: to say that no one is entitled to the role of judge while talking about the Holocaust implies a highly problematic moral relativism. This discursive slippage from one problematic platitude to the next is a hallmark of Jelinek's writing, one that challenges the readers and directors to find a solution on their own. In the case of the latter, Jelinek explicitly encourages an active response, noting in the stage directions that the director can of course stage the play "vollkommen anders" (194) and that her suggestions are "völlig unverbindlich" (195).

Tableaux of Complicity and Dramatic Absolution: Jossi Wieler's *Rechnitz*

For the premiere staging of *Rechnitz*, the director Jossi Wieler and his dramaturge, Julia Lochte, embraced Jelinek's general concept but radically reduced both the number of speakers and the length of the text. Instead of an unending proliferation of messengers, they limited their cast to three men and two women of differing ages. Dressed in evening wear, they enter what appears to be a mix between parlor room and outdated media station—wood paneling lines the walls, which also contain listening stations with retractable stools and red headphones. Above the wood paneling, a lone deer's head with antlers hangs against a white background, greenly illuminated. The space implies a salon (possibly in a "Jagdschloss") while also indicating a "zu Umschulungszwecken umfunktionierte[n] Raum" (Lochte 416). Accompanied by a catchy tune,[11] the five actors enter the stage and walk toward the audience, waving and smiling like politicians. At the front of the stage, they walk in place and continue to wave to the audience. Their speeches, smiles, winks, and knowing glances are rarely directed at each other but rather at the audience, which serves as the

interlocutor throughout the performance. The 110-minute performance presents roughly one third of the original text and organizes it around different tableaux created by the five actors. Wieler thereby translates the uncomfortable experience of reading Jelinek's play into a conversational situation: the audience is trapped in the haunted discursive space with the actors, who treat them as friends and accomplices.

The tableaux that structure Wieler's production emphasize the audience's complicity. The different ages of the actors—two appear to be in their thirties and the others in their late fifties or sixties,[13] combined with their variations of evening attire, situate them as a reflection of the theatergoing audience. But the tableaux soon place their reflection of the audience in a problematic light: thirty-six minutes into the performance, the actors remove their clothing and reveal different undergarments. In several subsequent scenes, the actors fondle one another as they describe, speculate about, and report on the night of the massacre, all while continuing to stare at and seek eye contact with the audience. The tableaux of erotic postures establish a connection between the hedonistic context of the mass murder at Rechnitz and the implicit pleasures of sensationally discussing Nazi war crimes and rumors as they are portrayed in the tabloid press. Further, the actors' erotic (and auto-erotic) poses and gestures visually underscore the text's deconstruction of "Sündenstolz," the pride and pleasure taken in admitting and denouncing the sins of one's past (130–31). Following Jelinek's text, the staging implies that *Erinnerungskultur* has become a self-gratifying gesture, and the constellation between actors and audience renders the latter complicit in the same behavior.

Through tableaux of consumption, Wieler's production continues to link the actors' speech with self-gratification but begins to distance the audience from questions of complicity by making clear the play's critique. Throughout the performance, the actors repeatedly consume food and drink while speaking to the audience: they eat pizza, they drink schnapps, they crack open and nibble on boiled eggs, they devour chicken wings, and they gobble up chocolate cake. The segment involving broiled chicken begins when an actor opens a door and a mountain of fur coats topples onto the stage. In the pile of coats are bags containing chicken wings. The actors, currently in their undergarments, put on the fur coats, sit down, and eat while they recite lines that vacillate between depictions of the massacre and discussions of the ongoing search for the mass grave and the reactions of the "Nachgeborenen." Passages such as the following are accompanied by a cacophony of smacking lips that includes the

speakers: "Die Erde war ziemlich hart, ob Groß oder Klein, alles mußte rein, oder muß alles raus beim Ausverkauf?, na, irgendwann muß es natürlich wieder raus, sonst werden die doch gefunden, die Toten. 180 Stück, das ist keine Kleinigkeit, die alle umzubetten, das können wir uns später überlegen, jetzt erst mal rein mit ihnen" (136). The revolting combination of the loud eating and the imagined descriptions of the massacre and its cover-up underscores the tastelessly nonchalant language of the passage. Moreover, the fur coats invoke images associated with the Holocaust, the masses of clothing expropriated from victims in Auschwitz. The actors not only flagrantly consume food while speaking about the massacre, they also wear clothing that situates their complicity symbolically. At other points, the symbolism becomes even more explicit: when they begin to eat pizza, the audience obtains a brief glimpse of the pizza boxes, which contain a *Reichsadler* with an SS-like "ZZ" on the word *Pizza*. And the staging's third -to-last scene, involving chocolate cake, takes place in front of a tile wall reminiscent of a shower. While the actors recite lines about the massacre, they eat brown cake and slowly wipe brown smears onto themselves and onto the walls. At the conclusion of this sequence, they lay their cakes down at the front of the stage, as an offering to the audience. Here again the staging emphasizes the audience's complicity. They are invited to partake of the cake and thus of the problematic discourse that they have witnessed and tolerated. Wieler's staging, however, differs from Jelinek's text in that it signals more clearly that the messengers' statements are not to be trusted. The performance activates the affective dimensions of Jelinek's linguistic satire and makes its satirical impetus clearer.

The penultimate scene in Wieler's production provides a linguistic anchor of meaning for the viewer, namely the pathos-filled voice of a Jelinek figure. Although the text contains many sardonic self-references to an author figure,[14] the dramaturge Julia Lochte chooses for the penultimate scene the one segment of the text in which the voice of a Jelinek-like author emerges with little irony (190–91). After the cake-eating segment, four of the actors change back into evening wear while the actor Katja Bürkle, the younger of the two women in the production, recites a long monologue containing the following segment:

> Über die Vergangenheit können keine Zeugnisse ausgestellt werden, wenn es den dazugehörigen Schüler gar nicht gibt oder wenn der Schüler sich ungehörig benommen hat. Dieses Zeugnis ist in Österreichs Gestein, ich meine sein Gestern, als Tadel geschrieben, sogar

> eingraviert, damit es nicht wieder einmal eine Witterung aufnehmen kann, um sich in die Büsche zu schlagen, falls mal ein stärkeres Land auftaucht und es fressen will, mein Österreich, mein Vaterland, was hast du mit meinem Papi gemacht, du Arschloch? Ich akzeptiere das jetzt aber voll. Was bleibt mir auch anderes übrig? Es hat lange gedauert, aber ich kann es jetzt irgendwie akzeptieren. Ich bin zwar immer, wenn ich durch dieses Land gehe, müde und noch sehnsüchtiger als davor, aber da es das Land so lange gab und dann nicht mehr gab und es auch mich bald nicht mehr geben wird, da mir dieses Land überhaupt nichts gibt, kann ich auch nicht einfach so drüber hinweggehen. (190)

On the one hand, this passage continues the combination of paronomasic riffing and demasking of discourse we have seen elsewhere in the text: The line about the missing student and the lines about Austria not briefly existing allude to the discourse of victimization used in Austrian politics to deny the country's complicity in the Holocaust. Yet further on, it invokes the personal narrative of the author Jelinek, whose Jewish father ("mein Papi") survived during the Nazi regime as a chemist while many of his relatives were murdered (Degner 4–5). Bürkle presents the text with a pathos and an earnestness unprecedented in the performance, and knowledge of the director's biography only adds further resonance: Jossi Wieler is from a middle-class Jewish Swiss family that emigrated to Israel in the 1970s (Kurzenberger 11–12). The penultimate scene seizes on this moment of pathos and thus provides a stabilizing locus of meaning and relief for the audience, who receive the words, however desperate and hopeless, of an identifiable author-type figure with credible Jewish heritage as a powerful conclusion.

Wieler and Lochte's dramaturgical decisions reveal an affinity to Jelinek's assault on the reader but also a desire to provide more guidance than Jelinek's text itself. Their ending to the play clearly demonstrates these competing interests. During the aforementioned monologue, the cast is again dressed in evening wear similar to their costumes at the start of the play. The ensemble then forms a line before the audience like at the beginning of the play, with the exception that they are now standing in front of the tile shower paneling smeared by brown cake. The actor Hildegard Schmahl then recites a brief passage stating, in an ironic celebratory tone, that the murderers and the countess have escaped and are living well. This passage, which comes from final lines

before Jelinek's epilogue to *Rechnitz*, move the performance from the pathos of the preceding scene back to the original friendly (and ironic) tone of address. The final moments signal a return to the original constellation: the music from the beginning resumes, and the actors slowly wave and smile at the audience as they retreat behind the tile panel doors that make up the walls of the stage. The closing return to the original framework of complicity, however, is far shorter and seems an afterthought compared with the preceding monologue, and it also omits the grotesque and disorienting nine-page epilogue from the play that draws heavily on citations from a real chatroom interaction between the "cannibal of Rotenburg," Armin Meiwes, and his victim (Kovacs, "Nimm hin und iß mein Fleisch'" 304–8). The directorial team seems to be of two minds, wanting simultaneously to capture the emphasis on audience complicity and to carve moral clarity and pathos out of a text that, as a whole, rejects both. In this struggle, the latter desire outweighs the former: Wieler and his team soften the provocation of *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* when they make its critique explicit and offer the author as a main character and center of pathos and intent behind the text.

Complicity and Mediating the Voice(lessness) of Asylum Seekers: Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*

First published on Jelinek's website in June 2013, *Die Schutzbefohlenen* was written as an immediate response to an ongoing protest of circa one hundred refugees in Vienna, primarily asylum seekers from Pakistan and Afghanistan who had fled political violence. Covered prominently in the Austrian media, the protests drew both actions of solidarity and counter-protests and catalyzed public debate about asylum and immigration in Austria, in particular the myriad obstacles the Austrian state creates for asylum seekers. The text also refers to two other prominent immigration cases in which the Austrian government removed obstacles to migrants, namely the swift naturalization of the opera singer Anna Netrebo in 2006 and of Boris Yeltsin's daughter, Tatyana Borisovna Yumasheva. The news about the latter case broke in in April of 2013, while the protests were still ongoing.[15] Jelinek had initially written the text quickly, with an eye toward its immediate performance in a production by Nicolas Stemann at the May 2013 *Wiener Festwochen* (Honegger, "Greifvogel" 510), but it ultimately did not fit into Stemann's plans. After the October 2013 catastrophe near the Italian island of Lampedusa resulting in the

drowning of more than six hundred refugees, Jelinek revised the text on her website (Felber, "*Die Schutzbefohlenen*" 258). What had begun as an immediate response to the protests in Vienna and Austrian asylum policy gradually refocused on Europe's response to migration, a topic that Jelinek addressed in yet another revision in early 2014 and then via additional appendix texts to *Die Schutzbefohlenen* (cf. Lücke, *Zur Ästhetik von Aktualität und Serialität in den Addenda-Stücken Elfriede Jelineks zu Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns, Über Tiere, Kein Licht, Die Schutzbefohlenen* 241–300).

Die Schutzbefohlenen continues the formal provocation of Jelinek's theater texts while it indicts the Austrian/European/Western reader for their indifference to, and complicity in, the suffering of stateless asylum seekers. Formally, the text contains even less guidance to directors than *Rechnitz*, with no stage directions at all and eighty-nine pages of prose text written from the perspective of a "wir" and sometimes an "ich." As in *Rechnitz* and Jelinek's other theater texts since the late 1990s, the speaking positions are constantly shifting. The "dadurch entstehende Stimmenkonglomerat" resists character attribution and identification in the Aristotelean sense (Felber, "*Die Schutzbefohlenen*" 259), and the text rejects any intratextual hierarchy that might provide orientation for the reader (Felber and Kovacs 12). Nevertheless, *Die Schutzbefohlenen* differs from other theater texts by Jelinek in its use of a choral we that, however undefined and shifting, has an overarching reference point: the voices of asylum seekers. The play's title, along with Jelinek's citation of Aeschylus' *The Supplicants* (in German, *Die Schutzflehenden*) at the end of the work, frames the voices: while in Aeschylus the Greek daughters of Danaus have fled a forced marriage and begin the play in a choral plea to a king for protection, *Die Schutzbefohlenen* begins and ends as a lament and a direct address of an unidentified choral we to an unnamed formal you. For parts of the text, the "wir" and "ich" voices appear to correspond to refugees and asylum seekers, and only after the initial paragraphs do voices emerge that align with and satirize an Austrian or European "we," as Jelinek had done in previous theater texts about xenophobia (*Stecken, Stabl and Stangl*, 1996, and *Das Lebewohl*, 2000, for example).

For a considerable part of the text, Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* presents its Austrian and European reader/audience not with voices that mirror their own but rather the aesthetically mediated and stylized voices of a stateless other that address and indict the reader/audience directly. From the beginning, the text frames this direct address as an impossible task: "Wir rufen flehend in dieser Sprache, die wir nicht kennen und können, die Sie aber beherrschen wie sich

selbst, außer Sie stehen an einer Bahnsteigkante und sehen uns, bitte bemühen Sie sich ein wenig, zu erfahren, was Sie niemals wissen können, bitte!" (11). This sentence, which concludes the opening text block of *Die Schutzbefohlenen*, demonstrates the associative and deconstructive wordplay that characterizes Jelinek's writing: mention of the addressee's control of their language turns into an aside about how the addressee can't control their xenophobic reactions when seeing refugees in public. Elsewhere throughout the text, further wordplay indicts the open hostility or indifference of Austrian/European society to the plight of refugees and the hypocritical discrepancies between official Austrian values and ideals and the treatment of asylum seekers. The direct address and questions posed by the choral we, along with the critique of Western ideals, confront the reader with the question of their own complicity in systems of exclusion and lack of action (Wilkinson 99). At the same time, however, the above passage underscores Kyung-Ho Cha's argument that Jelinek's refugee voices are narrating their inability to narrate (364): the speakers are pleading in a language that they are unable to speak for the addressees to make an effort to experience what they can never know. This acknowledgment is repeated at different points in the text and concludes the final lines: "Wir sind gar nicht da. Wir sind gekommen. Aber wir sind gar nicht da" (92). The question of authorial identity and representation adds a further layer to the negative thesis about the impossibility of narration and visibility of the refugee voices, because the imperative to "make an effort to experience what you can never know" from the play's opening paragraph applies to the authorial instance creating the voices as well. As Jelinek concedes in an interview with her English translator, Gitta Honneger, the choral refugee "we" in *Die Schutzbefohlenen* "is a role that I am presumptuous enough to take on by turning myself into one of those refugees, something I am at not at all entitled to, I live comfortably in prosperity and peace, I practically throw myself at them" (517). Despite the text's resistance of character attribution and identification in the Aristotelian sense (Felber, "*Die Schutzbefohlenen*" 259), the choral we's alignment with the voices of asylum seekers adds a further moral component to the usual challenges of staging a theater text by Jelinek. There is a paradox at work in the text, which on the one hand focuses on the plight of refugees and the inhumanity of Austrian and European immigration policies but on the other insists that refugees will not be heard or become visible, a negative provocation that seems supported by the fact that a white Austrian author with no right to speak for them is stepping in as an aestheticizing ventriloquist.

Self-Reflexive Interventions and Ethical Entanglements: Nicolas Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*

Nicolas Stemann's 2014 world premiere[16] of *Die Schutzbefohlenen* responds to Jelinek's literary provocation by including refugee actors on stage together with six professional actors from the Thalia Theater and self-reflexively exploring the theater's (in)ability to mediate the experience of asylum seekers. For the *Thalia Theater* premiere, Stemann's team recruited a group of asylum seekers in the Hamburg area, many of them from Eritrea and Somalia.[17] When the audience enters the theater, refugee actors are already on stage, sitting and standing, while a camera team records and projects live interviews with them onto a screen at the back of the stage. Center stage right is a station with a piano and keyboard that is occupied by a musician for the entire performance; center stage left stands a workstation where an assistant responsible for sound and video is visible throughout. At the back of the stage hangs a large digital sign indicating the number 23,158, an ominous sum that rises during the performance. Beneath the sign is a long row of red seats facing the stage and the audience. Upon entering the theater, the audience immediately encounters a contrast between the presence of real refugees on stage who tell their stories, along with the ominous number that seems to refer to an unnamed statistical reality, and the metatheatrical framework, as presented in the technological workstation, the on-stage camera crew and music station, and the visible spectator seats facing the audience at the back of the stage (cf. Remshardt).

The contrast between the actual voices of refugees and the medium of the theater continues in the official opening moments of the performance. The twenty Black and Brown refugee actors gather at the center of the stage and march forward, while chanting in English: "We are here! We will fight! Freedom of movement is everybody's right!" The play thus begins with a political assertion, performed by actual refugees, that counteracts the final lines of Jelinek's play ("Wir sind gar nicht da"). However, as the group marches forward and stops stage front, they receive no overhead lighting, while behind them, directly in front of the seats and the digital sign, three white male actors linger, visibly lit from above, in front of microphone stands. Audience members familiar with Stemann's Jelinek productions will recognize them immediately as Felix Knopp, Daniel Lommatzsch, and Sebastian Rudolph. After the chant ends, a red "open" sign on stage left below the digital number lights up, the lights come up on the refugee actors at the front of the stage, and the three

white actors behind them calmly begin reciting the text: "Wir leben. Wir leben. Hauptsache, wir leben, und viel mehr ist es auch nicht als leben nach verlassen der heiligen Heimat" (9). The refugee actors stare directly at the audience while the three professional actors recite the opening passage, only to exit the stage after the following lines:

> wem dürfen wir ihn bitte überreichen, diesen Stapel, wir haben zwei Tonnen Papier beschrieben, man hat uns natürlich dabei geholfen, bittend halten wir es nun hoch, das Papier, nein, Papiere haben wir nicht, nur Papier, wem dürfen wir es übergeben? Ihnen? Bitte, hier haben Sie es, aber wenn Sie nichts damit anfangen, müssen wir das alles noch einmal kopieren, noch einmal ausdrucken, das ist Ihnen doch klar? (9)

This passage and moment in the performance highlights the competing aesthetic interests advanced by Stemann. On the one hand, the presence and gaze of the refugee actors at the front of the stage, who later in the production explain that they are asylum seekers in Hamburg, underscore the text's critique of the bureaucratic hurdles created for asylum seekers and its indictment of the audience via direct questions and pleas. On the other hand, the three white male actors reciting the lines are holding stacks of paper that they gesture toward as they speak. Continuing a metatheatrical strategy that Stemann had first used in his production of *Das Werk* (2003) and later for the entire production in *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns* (2010), the professional actors carry their Jelinek script, in the form of a stack of papers, throughout the performance. The opening scene provides space for refugee voices and links their gaze upon the audience to the lines from Jelinek's text, yet it simultaneously contrasts their fight for freedom of movement with the professional ensemble's struggle to perform Jelinek's text. The opening sequence departs from previous Stemann productions of Jelinek's text in that it responds morally to the text by including actual refugee voices that *Die Schutzbefohlenen* claims will remain invisible and unheard,[18] yet at the same time, it continues Stemann's previous "Inszenierungsprinzip" of staging the clash between actors and text (Jürs-Munby, "Gedanken zum Ernst der Komik in Jelinek-Inszierungen" 409).

Throughout its dramaturgical structure, Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohenen* ironically reflects on the white positionality of the director and the failure of the privileged German ensemble to embody the voices of refugees. After the

Black and Brown refugee chorus exits, the following thirty minutes highlight the discrepancy between the identity of the actors and the topic: three white men with microphones attempt to perform the opening paragraphs of Jelinek's text (11–17, almost verbatim) with a range of paralinguistic and proxemic signs, in a staging reminiscent of Claus Peymann's 1966 premiere of Peter Handke's *Publikumsbeschimpfung*. The casting decision is clearly intentional—Stemann reportedly referred to the three actors as the DWHs (drei weiße Heteros) in the script (Voss 170) and they speak the opening three blocks of text in *Die Schutzbefohlenen* where the voices are most clearly that of a refugee chorus. Their attempts to declaim the text are structured into three- to five-minute increments that explore different postdramatic recitation strategies but are punctuated by gestures of capitulation that signal an awareness of the inadequacy of their approach. After each brief segment, the actors appear to attempt to leave the stage, and twice they are interrupted by a two-second playback of a refugee voice from one of the interviews at the start of the performance, during which time the lights go out and the speakers start to retreat, only to return and begin again. This dramaturgy of repeated failure culminates in a final interruption when the actors transition into an associative, self-reflexive, and offensive scene: after passages in which the voices look for a god or a higher power to pray to for help, the actor Felix Knopp puts on a ridiculous beard and recites the concluding lines of the paragraph into a bullhorn in mimicry of the *adhan*, the Islamic call to prayer: "Kein Grund, auf einmal im Karree zu springen vor Wut. Der Karren steckt jetzt im Dreck, was sollen wir machen?" While Knopp sings the text into a bullhorn, the other two actors and the sound technician perform gestures of prayer toward a Brown baroque Christ figure hanging at the back of the stage. Here the performance doubles the associations in the text, in which the speakers note that their attempts to find another god to pray to might cause anger in the public square ("Karree"), but they have no choice to because their car ("Karren"), a metaphor here for their asylum case, is stuck in the "mud" of impenetrable Austrian bureaucracy. At this point in the production, the staging seems to be signaling that the three white actors are also at a complete impasse as to what to perform, which has led them to present a ridiculous and offensive attempt to reproduce clichés of Muslim identity.

Via casting decisions and interventions into Jelinek's text, Stemann expands Jelinek's indictment of Austrian and European xenophobia and racism to include a self-reflexive critique of the whiteness of German state theater. At the very moment when Felix Knopp is engaged in his desperate and ri-

diculous ethnic drag performance, the Black actor Ernest Allen Hausmann appears center stage at the standing microphone and looks at Knopp, who seems embarrassed, removes his beard, and ceases acting. After an uncomfortable silence, Hausmann then moves to the next paragraph in the text: "Ich bin geflohn, inzwischen der letzte, der allerletzte meiner großen, lieben Familie" (19). Hausmann, who had been present with the actual refugee chorus in the beginning of the performance, punctuates the failure of the three white actors to mediate the text but also introduces a further level of critique of white German positionality. Hausmann only makes it through a few lines of text before the three white actors approach him and initiate a vaudeville-style interruption number: they ask him in comically pronounced English if he would like to perform for the Thalia Theater in a play because they are looking for refugees to tell their authentic story. In a painfully lengthy gag, Hausmann answers in German, asks them to speak German, and explains that he is a German actor from Hamburg, all while the other actors fail to understand his native German and continue to address him in English. The scene skewers still-existing equations of German identity with whiteness and concludes with Hausmann referring to the roles that the German theater typically gives to Black and Brown German actors: "Ich weiß schon, Dealer, Spüler, Gangster, Fremder . . . aber niemals Apotheker!" This extended interruption of the performance criticizes German state theater as a white space and racist institution and self-reflexively implicates the white director and ensemble members and the white audience in those structures.

In a further metatheatrical move, Stemann translates Jelinek's deconstruction of the xenophobic underpinnings of Austrian and European values into a critique of German theater's ultimate value of aesthetic freedom. In the second segment of the performance, Hausmann, the white German actor Barbara Nüsse and the Black German actor Thelma Buabeng join the three white male actors. The professional ensemble recites passages from Jelinek's text that deconstruct and critique the hypocrisy behind the idealistic values and invocations of human rights represented in a brochure for immigrants provided by the Austrian government (cf. Lücke, *Zur Ästhetik von Aktualität und Serialität in den Addenda-Stücken Elfriede Jelineks zu Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns, Über Tiere, Kein Licht, Die Schutzbefohlenen* 232–40). Stemann's staging of this segment culminates in a racist tableau and subsequent song and dance number about freedom, which begins as Hausmann, Buabeng, and Nüsse recite the following passage:

> Bei uns haben Aussehen, Diskriminierung und Rassismus keinen Platz, hat Herkunft keinen Platz, zumindest keinen, den sie wieder hergeben würde, die Herkunft gibt nichts her, die gibt nichts her, was sie mal hat. (24)

In the next line, the performance adds a shocking level of visual irony to Jelinek's text: blackface. The white actor Sebastian Rudolph puts black paint on his face, arms, and stomach while saying "der Rassismus hat keinen Platz bei uns gefunden und muß jetzt stehen, geschieht ihm recht." Then the two other white actors put on makeshift Muslim costumes (the aforementioned ridiculous beard and a headscarf), the Black actors Hausmann and Buabeng put white and yellow paint on their faces, respectively, Barbara Nüsse applies dabs of red paint to her face, and all six form a tableau "selfie" of "Die Menschenwürde."[19] Shortly thereafter, the group performs a series of musical numbers in which they present Jelinek's satirical passages about freedom, beginning with the following:

> Ich nehme mir diese Freiheit und diese auch noch, und auf einmal ist nichts mehr übrig, ich lasse mir selbst keine Freiheit mehr übrig, dumm gelaufen, nein, die andere ist schöner, die nehm ich, was die hat schon ein anderer? Unerhört! Ich nehme mir die Freiheit daneben, auch wenn schon ein anderer sein Handtuch draufgelegt hat, ich bin so frei, andere Menschen zu brauchen, nein, äh, zu gebrauchen, nein, falsch, die Freiheit gebrauche ich ja, und zwar brauche ich sie, damit ich die Freiheit andrer ächten, äh, achten, andre Menschen aber nicht, die brauche ich nicht, die Freiheit aber schon . . ." (26–27)

The above is recited to jazzy accompaniment from the pianist and finger-snapping from the actors. Knopp and Lommatsch have removed their costumes, but the others retain their face paint during the number, including Rudolph in blackface, who repeatedly attempts to participate in the number but is pushed away by Knopp and Lommatsch. Whereas the textual passages expose the violence behind individual notions of freedom, the performance ironizes the racist violence under the vestiges of artistic freedom on German stages, where blackface, redface, and other forms of ethnic drag by white actors were still commonplace (although increasingly coming under criticism) in 2014, while white German directors and critics were still attempting to de-

fend the practice under the auspices of artistic freedom.[20] Stemann's attempt to critically reflect on blackface, however, as critics have noted,[21] repeats the racist violence of the practice. Further, any use of blackface and other racist tropes, as the Black German director Julia Wissert has noted, underscore how whiteness is the presumed default of German theater: "Durch den kontinuierlichen Gebrauch rassistischer Sprache auf und hinter der Bühne affirmieren die Theater das Bild einer weißen deutschen Gesellschaft" (248). After public criticism and discussion, which came to a head at the Berlin Theatertreffen in May 2015, Stemann eventually removed the use of blackface from the performance, which was no longer present in the staging by a late November 2015 performance at the Thalia Theater (Remshardt). But at least in first year of its run, Stemann's production fell into the same trap that it attempts to ridicule, demonstrating the three white actors' assumptions about German whiteness—the deployment of the racist strategy of blackface, regardless of metacritical intent, indicates an assumption that no one in the space can be harmed by it.

When the refugee actors return to the stage for the second half of the performance, the staging vacillates between centering their voices to counter Jelinek's text and deploying them semiotically to continue the dramaturgy of metatheatrical failure and critique of German state theater pursued in the first half of the production. At the conclusion of the musical number on freedom, the refugee actors storm the stage and dance with the professional actors singing "Freiheit kann ein Gefühl sein," while barbed wire fences are pulled onto the stage, eventually enclosing them at the back of the stage. They then emerge from behind the fence and, in German and then English and other languages, recite the beginning passages from the text to the audience directly. This segment signals an attempt to begin the performance anew and brings the self-reflexive performative failures of the professional German ensemble into relief. It is followed by moments in which multiple participants share their background and narrate their flight and asylum cases. At this point in the production, the refugee actors take center stage, recite passages from Jelinek's text, and then counteract it through their presence and stories. However, the moment of autonomy does not last, as the speakers are interrupted when packages fall from above the stage. They contain plain cloth costumes with hoods that entirely cover the faces of the actors, who dutifully put them on. At this point, the professional ensemble returns to the stage and resumes the Jelinek recitation, this time via a multimedial postdramatic spectacle that

includes live music, singing, and simultaneous readings from the six professional actors while the technical team unzips the hoods of individual refugee actors, now all lying on the floor, and projects live video of the faces onto the back of the stage. Toward the end of the segment, as the six professional actors recite the final lines of *Die Schutzbefohlenen*, the refugee actors surround them and interrupt their performance, making gestures for help, until the six actors shout, in unison, "Wir können euch nicht helfen. Wir müssen euch spielen!" Here, the performance reduces the refugee actors to a signifier that serves the purpose of Stemann's self-reflexive through line—the refugee actors on stage are repeatedly employed to underscore the inability of the German ensemble to tell their story. Put differently, at this point Stemann appears to be "be courting the collision between his own sense of privilege and high artistic affectations and the irreducible presence of the refugees to the point of embarrassment" (Remshardt). These latter segments of the performance signal yet another failure by the actors to mediate the text without silencing the voices they are claiming to represent. The self-reflexive intervention into the text by including actual refugee voices only entangles Stemann and his ensemble further in the ethical issues already present in Jelinek's text. Felber notes that Stemann's self-reflexive focus on the professional ensemble "run[s] the risk of reproducing differentiations between 'us' and 'the others,' and thereby affirming the inclusions and exclusions, instead of deconstructing them" ("(Un)making Boundaries"). But the production does not merely run the risk of exclusion, I would argue; it perpetrates it: Stemann's attempts to deconstruct those very notions of exclusion ends up reproducing them on the stage.

Conclusions

Despite their divergent approaches, both Wieler's *Rechnitz* and Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* involve aesthetic and ethical decisions that ensnare the directors in Jelinek's critique. Two anecdotes from post-performance audience discussions of each production underscore these entanglements and the stakes of their co-authorial decision making. Given the emphases of Wieler's staging, it is perhaps not surprising that the production received a warm reception at a guest performance in Tel Aviv, Israel, on February 12 and 13, 2011. According to media reports, the audience, which included Holocaust survivors, applauded the performance and were reportedly positive during the post-performance discussion. Only one instance of critique was reported in

the press, when a Holocaust survivor asked Wieler whether the play was written for the victims or the perpetrators. Wieler was reportedly unable to offer a response other than "Der Text tut weh" ("Jelineks *Rechnitz* bewegt Pulikum in Israel"). As I hope to have shown, Wieler's production attempts to alleviate some of the text's painful provocation. He and dramaturge Julia Lochte's decisions temper the cognitive dissonance generated by Jelinek's *Rechnitz* and lend the performance a more reverential and sorrowful tone than that which can be found in the text. Even when the actors recite the most ironic, disorienting, and playful passages, the staging—the gestures, props, sets, clothing, and especially the tableaux that structure the performance—makes clear to the audience that they are witnessing a satirical presentation that is not to be trusted. Then, in the penultimate scene, the production creates a character whom the audience can trust, an emotionally torn and un-ironized Jelinek figure who laments her relationship to her homeland Austria, which has taken her (Jewish) father from her. Wieler's production reproduces much of the discomfort present in Jelinek's text, but it also alleviates some of Jelinek's provocation with satirical clarity and a kind of dramatic meta-catharsis.

Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*, on the other hand, follows a different metatheatrical organizing principle. The performance explicitly thematizes and ironizes its white male director's attempts to stage the text and include actual asylum seekers in the performance. Stemann's attempt to respond to the negative provocation of the text by involving actual refugees but continuing his previous principle of ironic self-reflexivity, however, creates a host of new problems, most obviously the performance's reproduction of racist clichés, which, however ironized, reveal ongoing exclusionary assumptions about whiteness as a default in German theater. In her description of the post-performance public discussion of *Die Schutzbefohlenen* at the Theatertreffen Berlin on May 1, 2015, Hanna Voss cites a young audience member's response that offers a compelling critique of Stemann's approach:

> Ich habe das Gefühl, das dreht sich alles um dich (*Steman ansprechend*) in dem Stück. Das sind deine Fragen, deine Phantasie zu Jelinek. [. . .] Also, ich würde sagen, ich fange nicht mit einem Text an, weil ich irgendeinen Text habe, sondern weil ich was verändern will. Weil wir in einer verschissen rassistischen Gesellschaft leben und sich das ändern muss. Und da reicht mir nicht, dass du deine Unsicherheiten so auslebst. (175–76)

Stemann, who so eagerly wanted to avoid the ethical pitfalls embedded in the negativity of Jelinek's indictment,[22] repeated many of them in his production, and the audience member's critique implies another route he could have taken that would have followed through more consistently on its moral impulse to include actual refugees and resist the hopelessness of Jelinek's text. As we have seen with Wieler's approach to *Rechnitz*, however, following this advice would have potentially given rise to other problems, in particular lessening the text's provocation and indictment of audience complicity.

The ethical entanglements that result from both Wieler and Stemann's approaches reveal the power of Jelinek's theater texts, which place directors and dramaturges and ensembles in an untenable position: the director and ensemble must decide to cut material, they are forced to make choices, and every choice leads to a new set of complications, just as every turn in Jelinek's texts leads to a new question. To stage, and thus to become a co-author, of a Jelinek text results in a kind of complicity. Thus understood, Jelinek's theater texts clearly fit within the framework of Pewny's *Theater des Prekären* in that the very term *precarious*, in her reading, indicates uncertainty and instability (35–36). No matter what move the director makes, they will encounter further uncertainties and problems because they will necessarily be attempting to find a solution for a text that does not offer any, or rather, as Jelinek states in her essay "In Mediengewittern," only pretends to offer them.[23] Jelinek's theater texts, in a sense, are a trap for readers and theater practitioners alike—at least for those in search of guidance or comfort. But they are also a productive challenge that have kept Jelinek performances at the forefront of the German-language theater scene for the past thirty years. In the midst of a (reported) resurgence of "dramatisches Drama" (Haas), an increased prominence of collective, devised documentary theater work (Cornish 144–70), and the long-overdue emergence of a so-called post-migrant theater that centers the voices of Germans and Austrians of color (Sharifi, "Multilingualism and Postmigrant Theater in Germany"), Jelinek's postdramatic theater texts continue to engender productive encounters and receive acclaim, arguably because they are so challenging and so radically open to different directorial approaches. Even though it may hurt to engage with Jelinek's texts and even though resistance may in the end be futile, the encounter is certainly a productive motor for theater practitioners and readers alike to interrogate "die Macht, die uns beherrscht" (Jelinek, "In Mediengewittern").

Morgan Koerner (PhD, University of Washington) is an Associate Professor of German at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. His research interests include contemporary German theater performances, comedy, disability studies, and theater and foreign language learning. He has published articles on theater and foreign-language learning, creative writing and parody as an approach to foreign-language literature, productions of theater texts by Elfriede Jelinek, and performances and films by Christoph Schlingensief.

Notes

1. In her prolific scholarship, Bärbel Lücke demonstrates the confluences between Jelinek's writing for the theater and Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction (see Lücke, "Die Bilder stürmen, die Wand hochgehen," "Elfriede Jelineks ästhetisches Verfahren und das Theater der Dekonstruktion," and *Elfriede Jelinek* 101–51).

2. While works like *Wolken.Heim* (1988) already implied the need for the director as co-author, Jelinek's play *Ein Sportstück* made this emphasis explicit in its now-renowned opening stage direction: "Die Autorin gibt nicht viele Anweisungen, das hat sie inzwischen gelernt. Machen Sie was Sie wollen" (7).

3. "Ich habe eigentlich keine Veranlassung, woanders zu leben als daheim, wo die Menschenwurfgeräte stehen, aber da sind Regisseure und Schauspieler, und die wollen alle aufs Spielfeld einlaufen und mit sich selber werfen. Dort eingehen wollen sie nicht. Was habe ich ihnen schon zu bieten? Eine eigene Wurftechnik? Am Ende liegen doch nur immer ihre Körper dort unten." Jelinek, "Die Leere öffnen" 203.

4. Keenly aware of the importance of her public persona, Jelinek since the 1990s has increasingly included self-reflexive and ironic references to a Jelinek-like author figure in many of her theater texts.

5. Jelinek's later theater texts continue a strategy from her early writing: there is a clear connection between the "Gebrauchsanweisungen" to Jelinek's early novel *wir sind lockvögel, baby!*, which suggest that the reader take scissors to the text and rearrange it by their own whim, and her later imperatives to directors to do what they want.

6. This 2010 ORF recording of the guest performance of the staging at the 2010 Wiener Festwochen is available as an accompanying DVD in the 2015 translation *Rechnitz and The Merchant's Contracts*.

7. Many thanks to the Thalia Theater for providing access to a digital recording of the October 28, 2014 performance of *Die Schutzbefohlenen*.

8. The following summary of the atrocity at Rechnitz and its aftermath draws on articles and summaries from Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, eds., *"Die endlose Unschuldigkeit,"* especially the contributions from Kovacs, Manoschek, and Schenkermayr.

9. Buñuel's film is merely one of a long list of intertextual references and citations in *Rechnitz*, most of which Jelinek lists in "Danksagungen" on the final page of the text (205). For an in-depth exploration and interpretations of the citations and allusions in *Rechnitz*,

see Kallin; Lücke, "Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (der Würgeengel)*—Boten der (untoten) Geschichte"; Schenkermayr, "Waldmänner—Wild—Metamorphosen—Massaker."

10. After the conclusion of this segment, the set changes for a brief epilogue that adds to the confusion (195–205). Here, the "eigentlichen Akteure" (presumably the actual perpetrators of the Rechnitz massacre) have an equally associative conversation that draws heavily on citations from a real chatroom interaction between the "cannibal of Rotenburg," Armin Meiwes, and his victim. Kovacs, "'Nimm hin und iß mein Fleisch'" 304–8.

11. The music consists of eight bars from Carl Weber's overture to *Der Freischütz*, rearranged in different Muzak-like versions for the performance by Wolfgang Suida (Lochte 414).

13. Katja Bürkle and Steven Scharf are the two actors in their thirties; Hans Kremer, André Jung, and Hildegard Schmahl make up the older group.

14. Take for example the following passage from *Rechnitz*: "Was rede ich da. An ein Minimum von Befangenheit ist bei mir leider nicht zu denken, ich muß mich schon dermaßen anstrengen, mir alles zu merken, was ich berichten soll. Eine total von sich eingenommene Frau hat es mir eingetrichtert. Ein Glück, das sie Ihnen so unsympathisch ist! Ich habe mir eh nicht alles gemerkt" (78). Or the following passage in the first person, which contains a parenthetical joke about Jelinek's 2004 Nobel Prize in the middle of a discussion of the physics of firing a bullet: "hier steht etwas, das ich auf meinem Computer nicht abschreiben kann, es ist ein vau und eine runtergesetzte Null, ob die mich damit meinen, eine im Preis runtergesetzte Null? Dabei bin ich doch durch Preis eher raufgesetzt worden, nur merkt es keiner. Komisch . . ." (137).

15. For a more thorough summary of the timeline of the protests and other current events referenced by the text, see Reitani 57–60.

16. Stemann's production premiered on May 23, 2014, at the Festival Theater der Welt Mannheim as a collaboration between the *Thalia Theater Hamburg* and the *Festival Theater der Welt* but was then revamped for the premiere at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg on September 12, 2014, and received an invitation to the *Theatertreffen Berlin* in May 2015. The following analysis refers to a recording of the performance on October 28, 2014, at the Thalia Theater.

17. The performance had premiered on May 23, 2014, as a cooperation between the Festival Theater der Welt in Mannheim and the Thalia Theater Hamburg. For that initial production, Stemann had engaged a group of approximately twenty extras to play the role of refugees. In a discussion with the audience on the second night of the performance, Stemann noted that only half of the extras were asylum seekers (Voss 166, 168). For the premiere at the Thalia Theater on September 13, 2014, the chorus consisted entirely of asylum seekers (Voss 174).

18. Stemann has stated in multiple interviews that this was a moral decision on his part. For instance, in 2015 he said, "Mir war wichtig, dass ich nicht wieder die Leute ausgrenze, von deren Ausgrenzung erzählt wird. Deswegen holten wir die Menschen auf die Bühne, die auch betroffen sind" (Bryantseva).

19. The tableau appears at the conclusion of this passage: "Achtung, die Menschenwürde kommt jetzt auch, da kommt sie!, machen Sie ein Foto, schnell, bevor sie wieder weg ist!" (26).

20. For a summary and critique of the arguments used by white German theater practitioners to defend blackface even as late as the early 2010s, see Lemmle. For a historical perspective of race and representation in postwar German theater and the creation of the antiracist advocacy group Bühnenwatch in 2012, see Sharifi, "'Wir wollten ein Zeichen setzen'"; Layne and Stewart.

21. When Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* was shown at the Theatertreffen in Berlin on May 1, 2015, Wagner Carvalho, the artistic director of the Ballhaus Naunystraße, left the Schillertheater in protest during the blackface sequence and made a public statement accusing the production and the Berliner Theatertreffen of racism (Voss 175).

22. In an interview, Stemann speaks of the "traps" that lie in wait for the directorial team vis-à-vis *Die Schutzbefohlenen*: "Wie schafft man es, dass die Flüchtlinge auf der Bühne nicht vorgeführt oder bevormundet werden, dass sie mehr sind als ein Bild? Wichtig ist, sich der Fallen bewusst zu sein, von denen man dabei umstellt ist. Ich habe ich mich schrittweise rangetastet. Und dieses Rantasten ist der Verlauf der Inszenierung" (Wildermann).

23. "Man versteht, im Gegensatz zum braven Fernsehsprecher, kein Wort, aber aus dieser Vielstimmigkeit, die scheinbar alles erklärt, bevor noch gefragt wurde, werden plötzlich nichts als Fragen, noch viel mehr Fragen, obwohl eben scheinbar nur Antworten gegeben werden." Jelinek, "In Mediengewittern."

Works Cited

Aeberhard, Simon. "Diskurskonkurs: Mit dem Theater gegen das Theater für ein anderes Theater (*Bambiland*)." *Elfriede Jelinek: Provokationen der Kunst*, edited by Uta Degner and Christa Gürtler, De Gruyter, 2021, pp. 51–76.

Banoun, Bernard. "Komik und Komödie in einigen Stücken Elfriede Jelineks." *Komik in der österreichischen Literatur*, edited by Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, Johann Sonnleitner, and Klaus Zeyringer, ESV, 1996, pp. 285–99.

Bryantseva, Daria. "Stemann: 'Was ist der Wert des Lebens?'" *dw.com*. 1 May 2015, https://www.dw.com/de/stemann-was-ist-der-wert-des-lebens/a-18419734.

Cha, Kyung-Ho. "Die literarische Darstellung der Flüchtlinge und die Kritik des medialen Menschenrechtsdiskurses in Elfriede Jelineks *Die Schutzbefohlenen*." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Germanistenverbandes*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2016, pp. 358–69.

Cornish, Matthew. *Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater after 1989*. U of Michigan P, 2017.

Degner, Uta. "Biographische Aspekte und künstlerische Kontexte." *Jelinek-Handbuch*, edited by Pia Janke, 2nd ed., Metzler, 2024, pp. 3–11.

Die Schutzbefohlenen. Directed by Nicolas Stemann, 28 October 2014, Thalia Theater, Thalia Theater Videoabteilung, Archive Number 1845.

Dürbeck, Gabriele. "Ideologiekritik im postdramatischen Theater: Thirza Brunckens Uraufführung von Elfriede Jelineks *Stecken, Stab, und Stangl*." *Gegenwartsliteratur*, vol. 5, 2006, pp. 102–23.

———. "'Machen Sie, was Sie wollen': Zum Verhältnis von Autorin und Regietheater in den Inszenierungen von Elfriede Jelineks *Raststätte* (Castorf), *Ein Sportstück* (Schleef), und *Das Werk* (Stemann)." *Elfriede Jelinek: Stücke für oder gegen das Theater?*, edited by Inge Arteel and Heidy Margrit Müller, VWK, 2008, pp. 107–22.

Felber, Silke. "*Die Schutzbefohlenen*." *Jelinek-Handbuch*, edited by Pia Janke, 2nd ed., Metzler, 2024, pp. 258–62.

———. *Traveling Gestures: Jelineks Theater der (Tragödien)Durchquerung*. transcript, 2023.

———. "(Un)making Boundaries: Representing Elfriede Jelinek's *Charges (The Supplicants)." Critical Stages / Scènes Critiques*, vol. 14, 2016, https://www.critical-stages.org/14/unmaking-boundaries-representing-elfriede-jelineks-charges-the-supplicants/.

Felber, Silke, and Teresa Kovacs. "Schwarm und Schwelle: Migrationsbewegungen in Elfriede Jelineks *Die Schutzbefohlenen*." *Transit: A Journal of Travel, Migration, and Multiculturalism in the German-Speaking World*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–15, https://transit.berkeley.edu/2015/felber_kovacs/.

Haas, Birgit. *Pläydoyer für ein dramatisches Drama*. Passagen, 2007.

Haß, Ulrike. "'Na dann viel Spaß!' Serien der Paradoxa, Komik und Humor bei Jelinek." Janke and Schenkermayr, pp. 361–74.

Hentschel, Ingrid. "Welt- und Wortgeflecht: Strategien der Komik im Theater Elfriede Jelineks." Janke and Schenkermayr, pp. 420–34.

Honneger, Gitta. "Greifvogel: I am a Bird of Prey: In Conversation with Elfriede Jelinek." *Three Plays*: *Rechnitz. The Merchant's Contracts. Charges*, by Elfriede Jelinek, translated by Gitta Honneger, Seagull, 2019, pp. 510–58.

———. "Staging Memory: The Drama Inside the Language of Elfriede Jelinek." *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp. 285–306.

Husser, Irene. *Elfriede Jelineks Theater Des (Post-)Politischen: Agonistik der Gegenwartsliteratur*. de Gruyter, 2023.

Janke, Pia. "'Herrschsucht, ja, haben wir': Die Täter in Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 242–54.

Janke, Pia, and Christian Schenkermayr, eds. *Komik und Subversion—Ideologiekritische Strategien*. Praesens, 2020.

Janke, Pia, Teresa Kovacs, and Christian Schenkermayr, eds. *"Die endlose Unschuldigkeit": Elfriede Jelineks Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*. Praesens, 2010.

Jelinek, Elfriede. "Die Leere öffnen: Für, über Jossi Wieler." *Jossi Wieler—Theater*, edited by Hajo Kurzenberger, Alexandra Verlag, 2011, pp. 103–24.

———. *Die Schutzbefohlenen. Wut. Unseres*. Rowohlt, 2018.

———. "'Diese falsche und verlogene Unschuldigkeit Österreichs ist wirklich immer mein Thema gewesen': Elfriede Jelinek im Gespräch mit Pia Janke." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 17–23.

———. *Drei Theaterstücke: Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns. Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel). Über Tiere*. Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2009.

———. *Ein Sportstück*. Rowohlt, 1998.

———. "In Mediengewittern." https://original.elfriedejelinek.com/fblitz.html, 2003.

Stecken, Stab und Stangl. Raststätte. Wolken.Heim. Neue Theaterstücke. Rowohlt, 1997.

———. *wir sind lockvögel, baby!* Rowohlt, 1988.

"Jelineks *Rechnitz* bewegt Publikum in Israel: Nach über zwei Stunden Geschwätz der Täter kommen endlich auch die Opfer zu Wort." *news.de*. dpa, 14 February 2011, Accessed 2 June 2015.

Jürs-Munby, Karen. "Agon, Conflict, and Dissent: Elfriede Jelinek's *Ein Sportstück* and Its Stagings by Einar Schleef and Just a Must Theatre." *Austrian Studies*, vol. 22, 2014, pp. 9–25.

———. "Gedanken zum Ernst der Komik in Jelinek-Inszierungen." Janke and Schenkermayr, pp. 409–19.

———. "The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's Sprachflächen." *Performance Research*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2009, pp. 46–56.

Kallin, Britta. "Intertextualities in Elfriede Jelinek's *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*: Luis Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*, the Bible, and T. S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men.'" *Glossen*, vol. 33, 2011, https://blogs.dickinson.edu/glossen/archive/most-recent-issue-glossen-332011/britta-kallin-glossen-33/.

Kovacs, Teresa. "Chronik der Ereignisse." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 28–44.

———. "'Nimm hin und iß mein Fleisch': Zum Kannibalismusmotiv im Epilog von Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 289–309.

Kricsfalusi, Beatrix. "Zeugenschaft, Performanz und Öffentlichkeit in *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*." *Ereignis Literatur: Institutionelle Dispositive der Performativität von Texten*, edited by Csongor Lörinc, transcript, 2011, pp. 467–88.

Kurzenberger, Hajo. "Der sanfte Aufklärer: Das Bild des Regisseurs Jossi Wieler im Theater-Diskurs." *Jossi Wieler—Theater*, edited by Hajo Kurzenberger, Alexandra Verlag, 2011, pp. 9–42.

Layne, Priscilla, and Lizzie Stewart. "Racialisation and Contemporary German Theatre." *The Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Race*, edited by Tiziania Morosetti and Osita Okagbue, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 39–60.

Lemmle, Julia. "Kann es rassistisch sein, wenn ich es nicht rassistisch meine? Weißsein, Theater, und die Normalität rassistischer Darstellung." *Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Heimatkunde. Migrationspolitisches Portal*, 2012, https://heimatkunde.boell.de/de/2012/06/18/kann-es-denn-rassistisch-sein-wenn-ich-es-nicht-rassistisch-meine-weisssein-theater-und. Accessed 24 February 2024.

Lochte, Julia. "Totschweigen oder die Kunst des Berichtens: Zu Jossi Wielers Uraufführungsinszenierung von Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* an den Münchner Kammerspielen." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 411–25.

Lücke, Bärbel. "Die Bilder stürmen, die Wand hochgehen: Die (un)toten Prinzessinnen der Zeitgeschichte und Dichtung schreiben die Philosophie Platons, die Mythologie der Griechen und die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit fort. Eine dekonstruktivistische Analyse von Elfriede Jelineks *Prinzessinnendramen Der Tod und das Mädchen IV. Jackie* und *Der Tod und das Mädchen V. Die Wand.*" *Literatur für Leser*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2004, pp. 22–41.

———. *Elfriede Jelinek*. Wilhelm Fink, 2008.

———. "Elfriede Jelineks ästhetisches Verfahren und das Theater der Dekonstruktion: Von *Bambiland/Babel* über *Parsifal (Laß o Welt o Schreck laß nach)* (für Christoph Schlingensiefs *Area 7)* zum *Königinnendrama Urlike Maria Stuart*." *Elfriede Jelinek: "Ich will kein Theater." Mediale überschreitungen*, edited by Pia Janke, Praesens, 2007, pp. 61–85.

———. "Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (der Würgeengel)*—Boten der (untoten) Geschichte." *Jelinek[Jahr]Buch 2010*, Elfriede Jelinek-Forschungszentrum, 2010, pp. 33–98.

———. *Zur Ästhetik von Aktualität und Serialität in den Addenda-Stücken Elfriede Jelineks zu Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns, Über Tiere, Kein Licht, Die Schutzbefohlenen*. Praesens, 2017.

Manoschek, Walter. "Rechnitz, März 1945. Taten und Täter." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 51–67.

Meister, Monika. "Jelineks Botenbericht und das Orgiastische: Anmerkungen zum Text *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 278–88.

Meyer, Imke. "Kulturkritik und Postmoderne: Elfriede Jelineks früher Roman *Michael*." *Gegenwartsliteratur*, vol. 5, 2006, pp. 1–24.

Naqvi, Fatima. "Elfriede Jelinek's Post-Dramatic Stress Disorder: Analysis of a Programmatic Agression." *Gegenwartsliteratur*, vol. 5, 2006, pp. 74–101.

Pelka, Artur. "'Gerade wenn es besonders ernst wird, muß man besonders komisch werden.'Die Un-Komik im Theater Elfriede Jelineks." *Politik und Ethik der Komik*, edited by Susanne Kaul and Oliver Kohns, Wilhelm Fink, 2012, pp. 113–123.

Pewny, Katharina. *Das Drama des Prekären. Über die Wiederkehr der Ethik in Theater und Performance*. transcript, 2011.

Pye, Gillian. *Approaches to Comedy in German Drama*. Edwin Mellen, 2002.

Reitani, Luigi. "Dass uns Recht geschieht, darum beten wir: Elfriede Jelineks *Die Schutzbefohlenen*." *Jelinek[Jahr]Buch 2014–15, Elfriede Jelinek-Forschungszentrum*, edited by Pia Janke, Praesens, 2015, pp. 55–71.

Remshardt, Ralf. "Fugitive Performance: Nicolas Stemann's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* and the Medial Matrix of Refugee Theater." *Critical Stages / Scènes Critiques*, vol. 14, 2016, https://www.critical-stages.org/14/fugitive-performance-nicolas-stemanns-die-schutzbefohlenen-and-the-medial-matrix-of-refugee-theatre/.

Schenkermayr, Christian. "Auf die Sprache einprügeln, bis sie die Wahrheit preisgibt. Sprachkomik im Werk Elfriede Jelineks." Janke and Schenkermayr, pp. 230–243.

———. "Die Lichtfield-Debatte. Chronik der medialen Kontroverse." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 74–90.

———. "Waldmänner—Wild—Metamorphosen—Massaker. Über das Jagdmotiv und die *Freischütz*-Zitate in Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*." Janke, Kovacs, and Schenkermayr, pp. 255–276.

Sharifi, Azadeh. "Multilingualism and Postmigrant Theater in Germany." *Modern Drama*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2018, pp. 328–351.

———. "'Wir wollten ein Zeichen setzen': Performance and Protest by Minorities in German Theatre." *Performance Paradigm*, vol. 14, 2018, pp. 45–63.

Stemann, Nicolas. "Das ist mir sowas von egal! Wie kann man machen sollen, was man will?—Über die Paradoxie, Elfriede Jelienks Theatertexte zu inszenieren." *Stets das Ihre: Elfriede Jelinek, Arbeitsbuch 2006*, edited by Brigitte Landes, Theater der Zeit, 2006, pp. 62–68.

Vennemann, Aline. "Zwischen Postdramatik und Postdokumentarismus: Peter Wagner, Elfriede Jelinek und das Dokumentartheater." *Etudes germaniques*, vol. 54, 2014, pp. 25–37.

Voss, Hanna. "Doing Refugee in Nicolas Stemanns *Die Schutzbefohlenen* zwischen Ästhetik und Institution." *Flucht—Migration—Theater: Dokumente und Positionen*, edited by Birgit Peter, V&R unipress, 2017, pp. 165–76.

Wieler, Jossi, director. *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*. Written by Elfriede Jelinek. Production of the Münchner Kammerspiele, Vienna Festival, 2010, ORF, 2010, DVD.

Wildermann, Patrick. "Nicolas Stemann eröffnet Theatertreffen: 'Habt ihr einen Schaden?'" *Tagesspiegel*, 29 April 2015, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/habt-ihr-einen-schaden-3623530.html.

Wilkinson, Jane. "Dialogicity, Monologicity, and the Crisis of Hospitality in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen*." *Austrian Studies*, vol. 26, 2018, pp. 91–105.

Wissert, Julia. "Was würden wir atmen, wenn weiße Menschen nicht die Luft erfunden hätten?" *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen*, edited by Elisa Liepsch, Julian Warner, and Matthias Pees, transcript, 2018, pp. 244–60.