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SPECIAL ISSUE ON WALTER BENJAMIN

GUEST EDITOR
Rainer Nägele

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The Word Wolke—If It Is One.
Werner Hamacher

Abstract. Walter Benjamin’s theoretical linguistic considerations of the “Doctrine of Likeness” and the project “On the Mimetic Capacity” were formulated in close—not only close in time—connection with the recording of Berlin Childhood Around Nineteen Hundred, to which “Berlin Chronicle” a year earlier, in the Spring of 1932, had served as a prelude. It cannot be doubted that Benjamin’s memoirs represent the impetus as well as the explication, extrapolation and fulfillment of the program that his theoretical writings formulate. But the memoirs are, at the same time, its radicalization. And that comes across most clearly when this doctrine of mimesis is condensed in the function of the word cloud. For the word cloud is just that site in which the divergent elements of Benjamin’s text step into the ether of their likeness, as Worte steps into Wolke. But it becomes this site at the price of likeness with itself. (WH)