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Theatre of War.

Strategies of presenting war in German and Israeli theatre after 1945

The history of European theatre is marked by traces of war. Since the beginnings of political theatre in ancient Greece war reappeared again and again as a subject for addressing commonly shared or vividly discussed understandings of how society should be constructed and interact with its own citizens as with the enemy. War exposes the given order of any society as threatened by collective violence and based on collective violence at the same time. Theatre serves as a place of creating, reaffirming and questioning ideas of society via a collaborative experience.

The PhD-project undertakes it to elaborate how German and Israeli theatre after the Second World War deal with the double experience of war, which threatens a society with the violent destruction of its given order, and proposes and sets up a new social order in violence, to be the given one from now on. This search for the social and political meaning of theatrical presentations of war is intrinsically tied to the problem of how to present war as such or any historical war limited by the possibilities of theatre. The borders of (theatrical) imagination are at stake when it comes to war in theatre. The images have to be analysed which are presented to (re)present war on stage, to tell about war during a time span and at a place where war has to stay absent, an abyss behind theatre's presentations of war. Therefore, as well the changes have to be analysed those images of war undergo in various re-presentations and reviews, when in differing political and social circumstances (nearly) the same images appear to speak about different wars.

The potentiality of political theatre in modern democracies, though both societies in focus are formed by extremely different social terms and conditions, shall be looked on from the perspective of the most extreme form of collective social interaction – war. War can be understood as a possibility of political action carrying every conflict to extremes; thus, war appears as a subject of public discourse about the potentialities of political actions in a modern

democracy challenging its constitution as no other subject does. The project's aim is to analyse how this special challenge of war to a modern western society marks its war presentations in theatre understood as a part of the civilian public discourse of this society. Theatrical presentations of war might be able to tell about the potentiality of a political theatre, about what 'political theatre' could be.