

POST-MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRIAN
THEATRE: PROJECTS AGAINST FORGETTING

Submitted by Bernadette Joan Cronin, to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines contemporary responses by Austrian theatre makers from the free theatre sector, that is, those working outside of the state theatre establishment, to the outcome of what came to be known as ‘the big lie’ on which Austrian national identity was built following liberation from German rule by the Allied forces in 1945. The ensuing problem for the post-war generations of having to claim a past that was buried under the carefully constructed official version of history but mediated through the silence of their parents and grandparents – shaping their (inner) lives – and possibilities for representing such experience through the medium of theatre are core issues explored in this study. The main focus of the dissertation is analysis of a selection of three pieces of theatre produced by two free theatre companies in Austria, *Auf der Suche nach Jakob / Searching for Jacob / Szukajac Jakuba*, and *Pola*, both by the Projekttheater Studio based in Vienna, and *Speaking Stones: images, voices... fragments... from that which comes after* by Theater Asou in Graz, Styria. Apart from contextualization of the central thematic concerns of the selected pieces of theatre within the historical events of 20th century Austria, and discussion of the theoretical framework within which the pieces are analysed, this study also offers a consideration of the phenomenon of the free theatre sector in contemporary Austria as a complement and an alternative to the state theatre sector, its roots and development since the post WWII period through to the early 21st century. Interviews with theatre artists, arts administrators and a Holocaust eye witness are also drawn upon to investigate how free theatre can provide a medium through which memory-work, the subtleties of damage and the inexpressible, and the difficult task of claiming the past can be explored.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	7
Chapter One:	
Part One: Thematic Context	13
Part Two: The Other Theatre.....	33
Chapter Two:	
Theoretical Context.....	79
Chapter Three:	
A ‘Ghost Building’ within a ‘Host Building’ – <i>Speaking Stones: images, voices, fragments “from that which comes after”</i>	111
Chapter Four:	
‘Traces of the story-teller’ – <i>Auf der Suche nach Jakob, In search of Jacob, Szukajac Jakuba</i>	161
Chapter Five:	
Performing the Literary Text / the Literary Text as Performer – <i>Pola</i>	190
Conclusion.....	206
Appendices - a selection of interviews	215
Bibliography.....	253

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (IMAGES) AND ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

Images:

Fig. 3.1. Entrance to the Roman caves, die Römer Höhlen, of Aflenz.....	127
Fig. 3.2. Bank of the river Sulm, Aflenz.....	128
Fig. 3.3 Inside the Roman caves	129
Fig. 3.4. Concentration Camp prisoners before transportation to their deaths.....	130
Fig. 3.5. A prisoner beaten to death in the Roman caves	131
Fig. 3.6. Colour coding for the various categories of prisoner.....	133
Fig. 3.7. The Nazis' death cart – der Totenkarren.....	134
Fig.3.8. Image of anonymous woman carved on the wall of the cave.....	135
Fig. 3.9. Photograph of the photograph of the death cart.....	137
Fig. 3.10. Passageway leading to the performance space in the Roman quarry.....	140
Fig. 3.11. The performance space.....	141

DVDs:

Speaking Stones: images, voices, fragments ... “from that which comes after”
(Theater Asou, Graz)

Auf der Suche nach Jakob / Searching for Jacob / Szukajac Jacuba (Projekt Theater Studio, Vienna)

Pola (Projekt Theater Studio, Vienna)

INCLUSION OF PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED PAPER:

Chapter Four of this dissertation includes material that has been adapted from a previously published article in the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 18,

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