



## Projections of History: *Zeitgeist* and the Scenes of Imagination

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My Ph.D. thesis *Projections of History: 'Zeitgeist' and the Scenes of Imagination* seeks to trace ghosts: Why does a backstage tour in the National Theatre remind me of Great Britain after World War II? And how is the refurbishment of this theatre reconstructing the time of its grand opening? Why were scenographers in Weimar Berlin so interested in the notions of *zeit*? And how is a gay subculture constantly imaging a different future?

My thesis dealing with these questions is an investigation into the idea of *zeitgeist* as an experience that is actively negotiating memory, historical knowledge and imagination. In my dissertation *zeitgeist* serves as a figure of thought to investigate phenomena that negotiate past and current culture from a perspective of theatre historiography – from theatre buildings like the National Theatre on London's South Bank to scenographies in the Weimar Republic and performances by the gay subculture (Pride parades, *Angels in America*, etc.).

Fundamental to my understanding of the term *zeitgeist* is the dismantling of the word into its two parts: *zeit* and *geist* – time and ghost/spirit. This leads to Marvin Carlson's study *The Haunted Stage* that examines different examples in which one's own theatrical experience is haunted by memories. My conception of *zeitgeist* is an understanding of a cultural feeling that has the means to characterize a specific time frame of experiences that always approach history in an active, critical and multi-layered manner. Thus the engagement with the cultural and the individual memory constitutes experiences of and with culture in the here and now. In my Ph.D. thesis, I shall establish this approach by looking at the processes of imagination on the theatrical scene.

In addition to *zeitgeist*, I will introduce the German word *Fundus* into my research. The *Fundus* is the place in a theatre where props, costumes and parts of the sets are stored. There these remains await their afterlife: they could be re-used in the choir of a large opera production or in the studio production of an assistant director. This afterlife does not take into consideration how the object was used before; it might develop an entirely new meaning through its re-use. In my opinion, every theatre building can be understood as a *Fundus* of past imaginations that are always 'stored' to be negotiated and re-used again on stage. Thus, with *Fundus* I will locate what Tracy C. Davis and Diana Taylor write, in their own special ways, on *repertoire*.