

cfp: puppetry in the novel – novels in puppetry, workshop at the University of Erfurt in collaboration with the Waidspeicher Theatre as part of the Synergura 2024 festival. date: 9 June 2024

Puppetry and novels are close allies. Puppet theatre traditionally adapts novels; conversely, there are many novels and stories, for example by Theodor Storm, Harry Mulisch and Philip Roth, in which puppetry plays a leading role and even comes to stand for the aesthetics of the text itself. This connection will be explored in a one-day workshop organised by the Professorship of English Literature at the University of Erfurt in cooperation with the Waidspeicher Theatre. The workshop will take place on 9 June 2024 as part of the Waidspeicher Theatre's Synergura Festival (5-9 June 2024). The event is also part of the research project *Puppetry as a Model of Literature and Language in the 20th and 21st Century*. Synergura is one of the most relevant and innovative puppet theatre festivals in the German-speaking world, supported by Theater Waidspeicher, one of the most important puppet theatres. In addition to a series of academic talks, the planned workshop will also include a lecture or response organised by the Waidspeicher ensemble and a novel workshop with puppets.

Puppetry is a theatrical practice in which any material can become the figure of a human or non-human being. This figuration remains constantly visible, especially in so-called open play. In this way, puppet theatre is at least as similar to the printed text as it is to the principle of embodiment in human theatre. In addition, the person playing the figures in open theatre conveys the story to the audience and is therefore comparable to the narrator in a novel. Due to the free movement of the puppets, the spaces and times of the narrative can be explored much more freely in puppet theatre than in human theatre. Does puppet theatre perhaps have no interest in the three unities of drama theory and therefore adapts novels rather than dramas? It is arguable, but has not yet been examined in any detail, that the novel in puppet theatre can reflect on itself, i.e. its poetics as well as its politics, just as puppet theatre can become aware of itself, its possibilities for creation and development, in and through the novel.

We are looking for talks of 30 minutes in length. Conference languages are German and English. We address researchers from the various disciplines of literary studies including Comparative Literature as well as media, cultural and theatre studies but also practitioners, dramaturges and other experts in the field of puppet theatre. Please send us an abstract of your talk with 1000 to 2000 characters by 16 February 2024 to [kai.merten@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:kai.merten@uni-erfurt.de) and [medien@waidspeicher.de](mailto:medien@waidspeicher.de) (Sonja Keßner). A fund may become available to support travel expenses for young researchers.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Thematisation of puppet theatre in individual novels or national literatures (19th to 21st century)
- Puppet theatre as poetics of the novel (language, literature) in general
- Puppet theatre and the politics of the novel (identities, body images, violence, etc.)
- The role of the novel and novel adaptations in the history of puppet theatre (e.g. in the GDR)
- Novel(s) and the aesthetics of puppet theatre
- Analysis and significance of individual novel adaptations in puppet theatre