

**STAGING *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*:  
AN INTERVIEW WITH FULYA PEKER  
ON  
*REQUIEM AETERNAM DEO*:  
A PLAY FOR EVERYONE & NOBODY**

Fulya Peker was born in Ankara, Turkey, where before leaving for New York City she graduated from Ankara State Conservatory with a BA in Drama. While there, she worked as a director and performer and her credits are extensive and include lead performances in plays by the Greeks, Goethe, Chekhov and Lorca. Her first book of poetry, *Umuda Uyanmak: Siirler* [Wake Up to Hope], was published in 1995 and her second, *Yuklem Kanamasi* [Verb Bleeding], is now under consideration.



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Since her arrival in New York City, she earned her MA in Theater, Literature, History, and Criticism, at Brooklyn College, CUNY. After graduating, Peker worked with two of the most prestigious theater companies in the world: Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater, and The Wooster Group. Recently, she performed in La Mama's 24 Hour Project, the Ontological-Hysteric Theater's Incubator Short Form series, and wrote, directed, and performed in the work *Inflected Gaze*, a multi-media short play in the Ontologichaos Project. In addition, she worked as a performer, curator and board member for the Turkish Literature organization Oyku Geceler [Story Nights]. She also works on translations and adaptations.

In spring of 2006, the Nietzsche Circle invited Peker to be a resident artist. She chose to begin her work with the Nietzsche Circle with one of the most daunting and formidable challenges possible—staging *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Aside from the not too well known French adaptation (long out of print and not translated) of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by one of Antonin Artaud's collaborator's, Jean-Louis Barrault, there have been few theatrical incarnations of Nietzsche's seminal work. An indication, considering the enormous degree of interest in the book and its influence on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of the exceeding difficulty if not fear of accomplishing such a task, of philosophy's antipathy towards the theater, or of theater's antipathy towards philosophy? In her daring, Peker seems to have done what others were unable to, though not through a strict adaptation of the work, but of a free interpretation which not only borrowed from other texts of Nietzsche's, but which completely restructured the original. Clearly, her grounding in poetics and her translation and adaptation work were instrumental in aiding her to create this work. For those unable to attend the production, they missed what George Hunka on his blog *Superfluities* called the "event of the spring" and what art critic Mark Daniel Cohen referred to as "nothing less than a serious minded work akin to high modernism—we have not seen this kind of work in decades." In finding such books as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the family library, Peker, with a unique theatrical perspective that embraces Eastern and Western practices, was clearly the one to do this, making *Requiem Aeternam Deo*, her New York directorial debut, into a ritualistic mass Nietzsche surely may have found admirable.

**NC:** Philosophers have been concerned with aesthetics since the very inception of philosophy, but Nietzsche is aligned with art generally more than any other philosopher. In an unpublished note, he specifically stated that his general task was “to show how life, philosophy, and art can have a deeper and familial relationship to each other, without philosophy becoming shallow and the life of the philosopher becoming untruthful.” What necessity is there for transposing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* into a play and staging it? Is there for you a specific relationship between philosophy and theater or with this text in particular?

**FP:** Who is an artist? And who is a philosopher? What is the "rule" for owning such titles? It is hard to differentiate or to draw borders between philosophy and art. They are provoked by the same desire: to ask and to observe, to know more. But this “knowing” does not necessarily indicate an intellectual-ism; it is more like a confrontation with the idea of not knowing.

I see drama as a form of philosophy, a higher form, if I may. In every valuable dramatic work there is an exploration of life itself and such exploration is closely related with the task of philosophy. For instance, some philosophical writings can be read as powerful monologues or conversations and the ancient oral philosophical tradition involves theatricality.

While choosing texts to work on in theater, I look for a universal experience, an immediate journey, and a playful experiment. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was a very rare and rich source of material. Nietzsche asks questions that are sharp enough to provoke contemplation. His imagery is very powerful; he not only talks but moves, climbs, and crawls. There is a story, an experience, not a dictation. There is a shared journey, not a lesson. There is an experiment, not a remedy. The voyage between philosophy and drama in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* stimulated my mind for such transposition; I wanted the characters to come alive and to speak louder. In theater, when our body confronts with another body, all our senses are motivated, our organs recognize the existence of other organs, and we lose our luxury for postponing perceptions and considerations. We stay awake. We are there, one step away from the other; a breeze occurs while turning the pages of a book; in theater, it is breathing. I wanted to hear Zarathustra’s breathing. Through theater one may create new values, because there you have the chance to re-experience, re-shape, re-ask, re-cur eternally. That is why I put all my energy into this sacred realm. And Nietzsche’s text clearly desires to have bones and veins.

**NC:** The fusion of the eternal return with theater is intriguing, and of such a theater being ‘sacred.’ For Nietzsche, the sacred was of fundamental importance and one might say that his philosophy is an experiment in sacredness, that he is concerned with reconstituting what sacredness is in the epoch of the *requiem aeternam deo*. As he said in *Twilight of the Idols*, “The profoundest instinct of life, the instinct for the future of life, for the eternity of life, is in [the word Dionysus] experienced religiously—the actual road to life . . . as *the sacred road*” (II, Ancients, 4). What for you is the sacred?

**FP:** There is a circular momentum in and around, a transformation, a circle that revolves and rolls and spins. We try to reach a state of knowledge or explanation by knowing that there is no such resolution or definition in life. But we do and should struggle for it, without being caught up in nihilism; knowing but forgetting the existence of an abyss. However, sometimes the feeling of the eternal, the feeling of void, the feeling of not knowing sinks within us. Then one should allow oneself to experience the ecstasy of uncertainty. In the moments of “remembering” the void the only way to survive is through the will to create. Will lets us approach the circle, be a part of it; start revolving with it. Surely, it is dizzying. Man should learn to live with such woe; embrace it, as much as joy. I call this confronted and embraced circle “sacred.” So “not knowing” is where that which is beyond explanation starts, and with it creativity. Such awakening leads us to the sacred, which is a dance between the earth and its sublime branches.

Theater is a sacred ground in which to experience such confrontations. In theater we have to remember but we have to forget. Such processes evoke a sudden transformation of identity. For instance, an actor should be himself and become all possible identities at the same time. Such an idea signals the separation of one-self into multiple identities through “remembering” and then re-finding oneself and forgetting; it is an experience that is closely related with the eternal return and surely the “sacred.”

It is quite captivating to experiment with how sacred-ness acts upon cathartic experiences, to explore how man finds ways to confront and communicate with the unknown causes of eternal painful occurrences with pleasure. How can man entertain such a mysterious journey into the sacred? Sacred is an artistic term for me. What I wanted to tell was how I told it. I wanted to explore what the sacred is, and this exploration was the sacred itself. Such unity of the tool and task is hard to find.

**NC:** Was *Requiem Aeternam Deo* the original title of the play, or did you first refer to it by the actual title of the Nietzsche text on which it is based, whose subtitle, “A Book For Everyone and Nobody,” you chose to retain and paraphrase? Why *Requiem Aeternam Deo*?

**FP:** In the very beginning I chose to focus on two aspects of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which could be combined under one title. These were the death of God and the eternal return. First of all, something cannot die if it did not live once; second, if everything recurs eternally, god also recurs and dies eternally. It was very important to explore the death of God not as a declaration but as an experience. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a title sounded like a fixative to me, but the colors should blend and melt and fuse into each other. Hence, I started looking for a title that would recall the eternal death of God directly.



The Madman's monologue in *The Gay Science*, where we hear of the death of God for the first time, was one of the most thrilling monologues I have ever read. It became the prologue to my play immediately. Nietzsche named this monologue *requiem aeternam deo*. The idea of a *requiem* indicated musicality in the language, vocally and bodily, which suited my needs perfectly. Thus the title became *Requiem Aeternam Deo*.

With the new title, I felt freer to form a larger frame for the play. With his appearance as an observer amongst the audience and as a soothsayer on stage, the Madman, this Tiresias-like figure, represented an objective and detached viewpoint throughout the play. The title also helped me to handle the risk of ending up with a Zarathustra who is done, who is "the cracker of hard nuts." Zarathustra, the man with long speeches, who "speaks thus," by eliminating his name from the title, became a *bright* speck of dust in the same hourglass of existence that is turned upside down, with the rest of us. He is an awakened one who also has his own conflicts as a human being. Thus, Zarathustra's transformations became visible, as much as the different stages of suffering experienced by the other characters did. So, the title supported the blend and communion that I was trying to pursue. Eternal Requiem for God was for nobody and everyone: not *or* but *and*. . . Yes, but who is everyone? Nobody. . . Who is nobody then? Everyone. . .

**NC:** The event of God's recurring and dying eternally is also emphasized by Blanchot in *The Work of Fire*; it is not an answer or endpoint he notes, but an ongoing event or crisis which humanity must live with continuously. Aside from the title, how did you evoke the death of God and the eternal return in the play itself? How did you make it an *experience* for the spectators?

**FP:** Imagine a smoky and dusty darkness; the scent of sacred realms fills the air; hands are getting cold after a while, and even breathing becomes loud. . . In that darkness we hear various religious hymns, then the scream from the depths: “*GOD!*” . . . No answer comes. . . .

In the beginning of the play, I tried to invoke the feeling of a God in the audience, so that the trauma which bursts out of his death can also be felt, because only through such trauma can one overcome. As even the Last Pope says, “whoever loved and possessed him the most also lost him the most.” So the play should simultaneously be a lament, for it evokes the loss of a divine protector and this provokes fear; and a celebration, for it signals the freedom of human will, which is a relief for humanity. It is supposed to be a combination of laughter and tears, which is closely related with a Nietzschean way of digesting life. In a glimpse, I had to recall the idea of a God for atheists, and to kill that God for the pious; thus both sides could get ready for the sense of the earth. It was tough, because to be able to create that intense atmosphere, I had to go back and forth between those poles. . . Hence, I got disoriented myself many times throughout the process, which was a good sign.

The idea of the eternal return is personified primarily in the adder figure that bites Zarathustra. The scene appears once in the original work; in the play it occurs three times. Adder was played by the same actor, who appeared as the Child, who is symbolic of the creator of new values, and the Rope Dancer, who is symbolic of the herald of the lightning, who must perish. Every time Zarathustra moves back to his cave and confronts with his self and the earth, the adder bites him, and this is a poisonous awakening for Zarathustra. It is a painful awakening, but *an awakening*. The adder’s name in the play is “Vicious Circle.” Klossowski’s *Vicious Circle* was deeply inspiring for this choice. Such recurrence of the adder in the play is closely related with the eternal return and the struggle of human will.



I also tried to give a sense of the eternal return with the circular structure of the play. I started with the death of God and ended with the death of Will, which is a new God in a sense. When we forget the void, the eternal, we forget all other possible identities we have. We admit ourselves as “beings.” This poisonous form of will is a product of such “being,” which counteracts the notion of “becoming.” So, I did not want to reach a conclusion with the victory of mankind at the end, because I do not think that the Will is an end point. I see such arrogance nowadays that is caused by the will. Will is not a weapon to protect the ego—it is *the will to create*. “Willing is creating!” If one cannot create, will becomes dry and rotten, and one becomes the servant of the new arrogant god, “ego.” In the course of the play Zarathustra witnesses people who are Pious, then the Nihilists, finally the Followers. Zarathustra wants to see men who will, but the story does not end there. What to *do* with such willing? That is why at the end of the play we return to the beginning and the same lines that open the play close the play. Zarathustra goes on a journey again. This is an interpretation and an addition to the original story—will to power does not mean arrogance against the earth.

The act of going under, over, and across was another way of stimulating the idea of eternal wheel in the mind of the audience. Hence, I used the theater space generously, positioned the actors among the audience, instead of just on the stage. And I tried to use “below stage” as a new possibility. Actors could appear anytime anywhere; this created an appropriate disorientation. One has to move in one’s seat; if one always looks in one direction, one can miss the other perspectives and possibilities. There is audience interaction in the play, but not in a Brechtian sense. I tried to create a realm where the audience can feel or sense the characters closely, yet not be allowed to touch them. Like Gods: it is not permitted to touch, but just to feel. So there was neither a fourth wall nor alienation. The experiments of Artaud and Grotowski were inspiring sources while I was making my choices. Space is essential; as the madman says, “Are we not plunging continuously, upward, sideward, forward? Is there still any up or down?”

**NC:** You noted that *Requiem* should be simultaneously “a lament and a celebration . . . a combination of laughter and tears,” and that this is “closely related with a Nietzschean way of digesting life.” In this way of digesting life, is there a certain wisdom which you felt necessary to express, a degree of understanding perhaps lacking in today’s culture of self-indulgence and hedonism?

**FP:** Digesting is the key word here. We are eating quickly and the next round starts without us even digesting what we have just swallowed. This is how today’s world revolves. Digesting includes a certain type of transformation. Our organs are very selective and hard working. What we swallow is transformed before it is infused into the blood at the end. This is how I define catharsis also: “A painful and pleasurable transformation of pity and fear into wisdom.” But I have to note here transformation is not a total change. It is not a result—it is *a process*. What

infuses our blood is usually kept as a secret to the conscious mind. We may endure the rawness of humanity when we are ready to confront it and this leads us to recognition, which is an access to the satisfaction of our desire to know more. It comes and goes. This is not an illusion I am talking about; it is more like mass hallucination. “Perfect vision is agony. . . .”

**NC:** Generally, throughout the history of philosophy as well as religion, laughter has been scorned; it is viewed primarily as something negative and is disdained. With Nietzsche, laughter undergoes a transvaluation as perhaps never before in philosophy. *The Gay Science* is a book informed by laughter and exuberance and laughter is intrinsic to the teachings of Zarathustra. For him, wisdom must bring laughter with it or it is false; the lions he awaits must be “laughing lions”; and after the superior men have failed him, Zarathustra implores them in “The Song of Melancholy” to learn to laugh beyond themselves, to not forget to laugh, for laughter is one of the new highest modalities, if not the highest—one can even kill with laughter as you noted. Laughter has been canonized by Zarathustra. It is now holy. What is the significance of laughter for you?

**FP:** One should LAUGH! “This is funny, so I burst into laughter” is not my goal. “What did I just do, did I just laugh?”—this is what should happen, because while laughing one feels a tickle in the sea of the unconscious mind. Before you drown in that sea, usually a word or a phrase, a scream pulls you back; immediately after you lose the meaning or you think you gained one.

I would like to emphasize the idea of satire here, which is a very distinct form of theater. The Chinese word for satire, *Fengci*, explains the bitterness of the laughter that I am running after: “laughter with knives.” A certain way of overcoming pain. . . . Beckett touches such nerves, too. Such laughter is “a brief madness of happiness that only the greatest sufferer experiences.” Ecstatic it is, and not limited with implications or considerations or any kind of reasoning. It is the sexual response of the body to the growling that comes from under the earth just before an earthquake; a stroke that comes just before one “remembers” the void, the eternal, the recurrence. Or maybe just after that, I do not “remember” at this very moment . . . . But I know that one gets closer to the unknown most when one laughs.

**NC:** Kafka scholar Walter Sokel, an advisor to the Nietzsche Circle, noted that the interpenetration of tragedy and comedy is an ideal goal of the storyteller. In many instances throughout *Requiem*, I felt that you had achieved this affect to a stirring degree. It is a complex and sophisticated aesthetic achievement, which, however, was rarely achieved by the actors. When they did, it created an unnerving tension in my body for, simultaneously, I wanted to laugh and to weep. Is this an affect you deliberately sought to create in the spectators?

**FP:** Yes, the play has a sense of both tragedy and comedy, in other words the absurdity of realness. This absurdity evokes the vibration of laughter, which shreds the heart. I used comic

elements during some tragic episodes: the broken staff of the Last Pope was one of them. I especially tried this in the scenes between Zarathustra and the social figures, such as the King and the Voluntary Beggar. It is more possible to be overtaken by laughter when you are in public; privacy attracts secret tragic intentions more, I guess. Incongruous laughter for a tragic situation stimulates shame, which I wanted the audience to overcome. Many people told me afterwards that they held their laughter because they thought it would be inappropriate. There were audience members that laughed while others were almost crying, and once one of the audience members turned his back and criticized others for laughing during such “serious” moments. This was something that I wanted, such clashes between the audience members. This shows that the play itself becomes an experience. This was very crucial, because I wanted to carry the audience along with the actors into a level of knotted woe and joy, and the knots were quite tight . . . or it felt like they were.

**NC:** Your use of music in the play was sparse but concentrated and powerful. It opened with a medley of religious hymns and it closed with a song based on Zarathustra’s Roundelay from “The Second Dance Song,” which is a recurring motif throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. How did you arrive at making this segment into a song, which Mahler used as well in his 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony?

**FP:** Music. Yes. Singing and dancing are key words in the original work. Words are like notes: an actor may hold the word longer or shorter, piano or forte, vibrato or staccato and make music out of it; when the body joins this music, it becomes very tasty for our hungry existence. That is why I was very miserly in using recorded music during the play; I wanted to experience the music that is in the very body of mankind: footsteps, breathing, screams, exclamations, etc. I tried to keep the Nietzschean language, the dithyrambic melodies as much as possible. I think “The Second Dance Song” is a moment of sharp awakening and recognition; it tells how woe and joy are chained together and how man thirsts for eternity; it tells of the tragedy with laughter, and thus *sings* Zarathustra, the grape vine. The song has twelve lines and it is closely related with “the twelve bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our being. . . ” I used a very old eastern folk song, which my grandmother whispered in my ear when I was a child, as the basic melody, which has ripe and sad curves in it; sang *a cappella*, it became a sacred choral hymn at the end.

**NC:** Dance and dancing are central motifs throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, evocations of the Dionysian dimension of Nietzsche’s text. While your play was thoroughly informed by movement, expressed in particular by Zarathustra as well as Life, Solitude, and the Stillest Hour, it contained no explicit dancing—why? Was this a deliberate choice?

**FP:** I did not use any cliché dance figures. The Dionysian expression of the sacred is there already in our bodies. It is a heat. When we hear a word or a phrase, not only our minds but also our

bodies are tempted to respond to it, but we do not express such gestures in daily life. When we expand it and express it, therein lays a dance for me, if I may call it dance. A more primitive form maybe, one that is close to earth, a dance without forms and rules; convolutions in the body that are created by the emotional states of our becoming; the reverberation of our perceptions, outbursts of our immediate thoughts. The aesthetic pleasure of perceiving a body fluttering in the void may remind us of our organic postures. But sure, there is a choreography that lies under it. I chose the movements and expressions that fit the concept of the play and its earth-full requirements.



The veins and nerves are like branches; we grow in all directions, and stand still. . . Our connection to the earth is our feet. How strong and light are our steps? What do we step on? One should be closely bounded to the earth; one should feel the center of gravity. On the other hand there are various branches in the upper part of our body. . . Hands are the most special to me; they are the tip of the branches, which move constantly. . . They tell everything. . . All these images were significant sources for creating movement. At the end, the arms and hands of the actors unite with the branches as their own earth-full veins.

**NC:** In “By the Tree on the Mountainside” Zarathustra compares man to a tree noting that “the more he strives upwards into height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthwards, downwards, into the dark, the depths—into evil.” As one of the principal images from the natural world in the text, it was extremely fitting that you used branches in your *mise-en-scene*. At the end of the play, the actors lovingly embraced the branches, which previously framed the stage, as they sang the roundelay, “O man take care.” It was simultaneously a sensual and ritualistic scene. What were you seeking to evoke with your use of the branches?



**FP:** Earth—"Overhuman is the sense of the earth." When this idea first came to my mind I was not thinking about that section though. When I remembered it afterwards, I rejoiced for coming to a parallel understanding by following my own instincts. This was very encouraging. As I mentioned before, our veins are our branches, our nerves are our branches; we are rooted to the ground and we rise upward, higher and higher. What was I trying to evoke? The forgotten, the lost, the hidden, the sacred. . . It is the human that is a part of the universe. Such unity moves my veins and nerves; such unity can let us live with the transformation of our bodies through the winters and springs of our existence and yet still grow upwards and downwards. It is "becoming." I am not a nature person, but I am earth-full. It is not up there what we seek, but *down here*. Sensual it is, because it is fertile, because it is ecstatic. Have you ever danced with branches?

**NC:** Of the four dreams which Zarathustra has, did anything in particular about the second dream, wherein Zarathustra is "a guardian of tombs in a lonely mountain-castle of death," appeal to you and compel you to enact it over the others?

**FP:** It was a great opportunity to schedule a meeting for Dionysus and Apollo. . . Originally I tried to enter into Zarathustra's dreams with children, children talking about grave diggers. I tried to create juxtaposition with such appearance. Through some revisions, the image of Zarathustra in that scene finally became the grave digger and the dead in the same body. That scene was a painting for me. When I considered the rising intensity that trembles behind the stillness of the whole canvas—that scene should be the most chaotic, most disruptive one. It is like a sharp brush-stroke from Goya in a Munch painting. . . That scene happens between Zarathustra's disgust and his overcoming of the great loathing, through wisdom. It is a moment when we see the raw, subconscious mind of Zarathustra for the first time, because a man can delude himself quite easily, even when he is alone, but not in dreams. The dream starts with Zarathustra yelling the

name of God: "God, who carries his ashes up the mountain!" It is a very critical moment in the play, because this is the first time we witness Zarathustra calling the dead God. That is why he wakes up from the dream not only horrified, but also motivated to continue his journey. So we "call God whatever contradicted and hurt us," and in his dream Zarathustra does the same, because of the trauma of disgust he is captured by. Fortunately it was just a dream!



**NC:** Your work is not an adaptation but a free interpretation or transformation of the original text, while you use parts from other Nietzsche texts as well. What is unusual, if not perhaps transgressive though is that your play is based primarily on the fourth book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Aside from Paul Loeb and Philip Pothen if not very few others, the fourth book is generally discounted by most Nietzsche scholars as not part of the original work. What significance does the fourth book hold for you both in relation to your choice as a playwright and to Nietzsche's work itself?

**FP:** Ah, now you are touching my wound. The book of no-body. . . To deny the fourth book for me is the "revenge on the witness." It is a confirmation of the circularity in the original work. It was my favorite part because there we get the chance to see how humanity responds to the sense of the earth, the teachings of Zarathustra. Men come to Zarathustra, they will it thus, but are they doing it because they believe in themselves or they believe in the teachings of a new messiah? It reveals and shows us what *not* to do while interpreting Zarathustra's teachings. It is almost like a

guide book for the whole work. Such denial of the fourth book feeds the political and social misinterpretations of Zarathustra even now in our very century.

We see Zarathustra's disappointments throughout the original work; but in the fourth book, there is a stronger disappointment: he meets with the Superior Humans when expecting the Overhumans. So there is also recognition for Zarathustra, that he has to go on and become human again and again and again, that this was just a beginning, not an end for his journey. It would be ignoring the three transformations of the human: camel, lion and child, because the third book ends in the middle of the desert where the lion and the dragon wrestle. No . . . no . . . three times no . . . This would be unfair. There are children yet to come. Is it possible to hear the requiem without visiting Zarathustra's cave and having dinner with him? Is it possible to hear the question of the eternal return that we need to ask without walking towards the mountains with him? Is it possible to overcome pity if we cannot see Zarathustra's encounter with his shadow?

Other than dramatic attractiveness, I give great importance to the fourth book for the sake of embracing the idea of being nobody as well as being everyone. In terms of structural and literal differences that occur, I can understand analyzing this book separately, but to ignore it, I can not understand. There is a strong change in his style, surely. Shakespeare makes such structural changes in his plays, too, and the Greeks were of course masters of this: public and private scenes were separated in the way the characters spoke and the measure of lines were changing through such shifts in the environment. I observed this in the fourth book, too. Yes, I can also see that it is like a satyr play. But the ones who study Greek tragedy would know; satyr plays were important forms of criticism that the poets were turning against themselves. A noble act... And I see in the fourth part how Zarathustra has the chance to observe the results of his teaching. I ask you how can I ignore a sentence like, "He had to die, he saw with eyes that saw everything, he saw the depths and the grounds of the human", especially in a play whose name is *Requiem Aeternam Deo*? It was not a linear structure, but a circular one. There should be no end point to this play because one should not be *but become*. We go on until the next time the rock rolls down from the mountains. I did not want to see a victory but a struggle at the end since victory is temporary but the struggle goes on. The bell-strokes of our experience . . . echoes . . . But are we capable of enduring such result-less-ness . . . ?

**NC:** The notion of madness recurs throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the original text and in your play, Zarathustra states that "there is always a bit of madness in reason," that one "must be inoculated with madness," that happiness is a "brief madness" and that, amongst a myriad other things, the Overhuman is "this madness, it is this lightning." What do you make of this? What significance do you think madness has in relation to the work and the overall constellation of whatever the Overhuman might be?

**FP:** Madness. Yes. There are some tricky words repeated throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and they can be misinterpreted quite easily. One must be careful enough to distinguish between the various usages of the same word in different contexts. Will, belief, war and madness are some of the most crucial instances of such words.

Zarathustra uses the word *madness* many times, both in a critical way and in a way that is attractive. Madness he calls the preaching of the pious, he calls love madness, he calls revenge madness, he calls Overhuman madness. While he talks about the ones who call themselves the good, he says: "I wish their madness were called truth or loyalty or justice: but they have their virtue in order to live long, and in wretched contentment" (TSZ, 1st book, On the Pale Criminal). There are different kinds of madness throughout the work. What I used in the play specifically is the madness of love, of life, of the Overhuman. Revenge and war are also madness for Zarathustra, so if one fails to make the distinction, Nietzsche may become a babysitter to Hitler!

Overhuman is a teaching, not a classification. It is a way of recognition and sensation that man has to gain. "I teach you the Overhuman," Zarathustra says. It is the objectification of a sensation. Overhuman is overcoming the weakness that blockaded humanity and that blindfolded the ears of man. As Zarathustra declares, we should hear with our eyes too. One should overcome oneself and such an awakening is related with the idea of a lightning, which creates the sublime. This correlation between the sublime and lightning was made by Longinus. Such lightning would move one "out of oneself" and pause judgment momentarily. So for a short period of time there is only the sense that is there and it is the sense of the earth. Such lack of reason is the brief moment of madness, and happiness. That moment is in other words the moment of "remembering"—remembering the void, as I mentioned before; then comes the sound, the thunder. Do you think such brightness would blind us, or is it the only way for us to "really" experience what is beyond explanation . . . ?

**NC:** In a fragment from the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche sets at antipodes the scientific versus the religious and situates himself with the "scientific spirits versus the religious God-inventing spirits" yet, he had what he referred to as a "god-creating" instinct, too. In another fragment, he confessed that "many new gods are still possible" and that in himself, "in whom the religious—that is god-*creating* instinct becomes active from time to time, and at inopportune moments—how varied, how different the divine manifests itself on each occasion!" I cite these passages because I want to discuss the scene from the play wherein Zarathustra confronts the Ugly Man, which I think was one of the most fascinating scenes. Why does Zarathustra experience shame before the Ugly Man? What do you make of the fact that Zarathustra is critical of this figure that killed God?

**FP:** "Indeed I pity you, but I cannot look at you. . . I shudder at the sight of you." (*Oedipus Rex*) Zarathustra, the godless one, feels ashamed of seeing the murderer of God, whose existence is a supposition. But why does he feel shame instead of celebrating this victorious act of the ugliest man?

It was a catastrophic scene. The Ugly Man is the most tragic figure in the play: "He had to die . . . I wanted to take revenge or not live myself. . ." In these lines the *hybris* that imprisons one in darkness, echoes very clearly. . .

In the previous scenes, Zarathustra criticizes God for being angry at humanity and taking revenge on his creatures for turning out badly. Then we observe the rage of the Ugly Man who takes revenge on the witness; he kills God, who is created by man. . . In both cases, the creator takes revenge on the creation, because the creation does not fulfill the demands of its creator and becomes a failure. Such disappointing reversals of creations can be accepted as *peripeteia* [reversal], and *anagnorisis* [recognition] leads the creators into pathos.

We know that "not with wrath, but with laughter does one kill." Thus it is pitiful to kill God with wrath—only laughter may wipe away the darkness of unconfident and insecure hearts still trembling with the figure of a God who is "angry and pitying and over importunate. . ." Zarathustra agrees neither with God nor with the Ugly Man for taking revenge. . . Wrath and revenge are not the ways. Thus, such murder can be observed as the Ugly Man's *ate* [ruin, folly, delusion], and it evokes shame in Zarathustra.

**NC:** In an era of increasing monotheistic religious fundamentalism, this play seems especially important and timely. Why is the notion of the death of God important to you and why do you think it necessary for such a work to be presented now?

**FP:** First of all one must understand why gods existed—therein lays the answer to their death. Yes, unfortunately, if fortune exists, we are going backwards. "Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?" What is more dangerous is that now, there is not pure blind belief, but Will to Belief! Now there is man who wills, who wills to turn off the lights for the sake of not only other-earthly hopes, but also political ones. Or is it just because of saving energy that we have to stay in darkness, for the sake of reducing expenditures! Now, I ask a simple question with this play: If god exists, would it not be the greatest sin to define it? If god exists, would it be possible for us to define such a powerful occurrence with words? Hence, such religious definitions are nothing but blasphemy.



From another perspective, such books can be considered as philosophical and historical accounts that let us explore the creativity of mankind. If only messiahs were as modest as Zarathustra and did not welcome the believers and followers for the sake of continuity.

“I should only believe in a God who knew how to dance.” Have you ever danced with God? All gods would dance if we could understand that they are there for laughter, not torture. And I would like to enjoy the sensual energy that lies beyond my definitions. I am a part of the cosmos. That is why I am not saying I can stop an earthquake, but I am also not saying that there are no earthquakes in ‘heaven’. “Human society is an experiment and not a contract.” I am experimenting and thus I am becoming. . .

**NC:** How do you think *Requiem Aeternam Deo* would be received in Turkey, which seems to be moving further and further away from the vision of Atatürk and regressing into Islamicist resurgence?

**FP:** Actually, I would love to present it there, of course. It is hard to guess the possible response right now. I have to try it to see what would happen. It also depends on which group I will present it to. There are still powerful minds that struggle with such regression in Turkey. It is an absorbent country. My natives are very open to such sensibility about the earth, and eastern movements of the body. So it would be easier to meditate on the “sense of the earth.” But the death of God . . . I am not sure. I can lose my chance for being a president in the upcoming elections, if I do so . . . !

**NC:** What is the future of *Requiem Aeternam Deo*? Are there any site specific places you find would be suitable for performing the play?

**FP:** Well, it is supposed to be *aeternam* indeed. This is not related with divine issues but with financial ones. My breath smells of hope. . . “Do not worry, just rest and tomorrow morning you will feel better!” I have intentions to join festivals in Europe, next year maybe. Germany can be a nice place to recur for Zarathustra, or the East can be an exciting journey for celebrating the rising of the great midday . . . Who knows. But one thing I know is that this is one of those projects that I can work on over and over again, and again, and again. Sure it will recur sooner or later. I am not done with it.

**NC:** What other projects are you working on? What can we expect from Fulya Peker in the future?

**FP:** I never stop really. Since I was 14 I’ve had a fire in my belly that boils my veins. Romantic? Idealist? Let’s call it *exuberance*. . . I continue digging the performance fields, trying to ride the raw vision I have about theater into the jungle.

I have a documentary theater project, a composition on animal and human senses, which includes some movement and moving images. I have existentialists that I have to fight and dance with and some more expressionistic entanglements. “There is something new about my hands. . .” Another big project will be an oratorio. I am seeking grants for it. I will be performing in some upcoming projects. I am continuously in search for artists to work with, masters to learn more from, works to release, and financial support to gain that will let me articulate and share my journey.

And in the meantime, I say a sacred yes, once more and innumerable times more, for the play of creating. . .