



Myth and Innovation Road

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ABSTRACT

This text is based on the speeches Theodoros Terzopoulos gave at the Istanbul Theatre Festival in 2017 and the Modern Drama Valley Festival in Shanghai in 2019. Terzopoulos, converted the issue he discussed in these speeches into a text titled "Myth and Innovation Road" in which he addresses how the myths upon which ancient Greek tragedies were fed can be interpreted in contemporary times. This text, reveals the philosophical and structural elements of Terzopoulos' understanding of acting, which he calls the biodynamic method, and also reveals his attitude as an artist: "uncovering new and more effective ways of humanizing the world".

Keywords: Dionysus, Heiner Müller, myths, memory, body



The cultural landscape has been reshaped; theatre has been homogenized and tends to lack fixed points of reference, roots, and national characteristics. Through its growing commercialization, the peculiarities of 20th century drama schools and playwrights have disappeared.

The fundamental principles of theatrical art have been eradicated, with others having been planted in their place to feed the ephemeral and cultivate oblivion. Many national theatres, festivals, and academies follow this trend.

Under these circumstances, one cannot speak of an avant-garde movement that has been born by a group of great creators under appropriate and favorable social and historical circumstances, except for individual cases, personal languages, and scenic idioms. The academic has been replaced by postmodernism, that serves the ephemeral, and, as such, fails to root and contribute to new fermentations.

I would like to talk about certain principles of myths that have tended to disappear in the era of globalization and neoliberalism. I will discuss myths as fertile material for the creation of a new language with a prospect that can penetrate the present and open up new horizons in the future, inviting us to discuss and reapproach the meaning of avant-garde.

Ancient myths have had a terrifying attraction for humans. They can cause people to drift completely in their orbit. This is why a need existed and still exists in Europe, to demystify myths and approach them through a rational perspective. Many times, myths have been used as a crutch upon which national identities rely. This persistence was and still remains dangerous. If one were to cut myths from their dark roots, no one would be able to use their astonishing energy as a resource for the future, and inevitably, an abomination would be created. Such an abomination is fascism.

Myths are dangerous, because they belong to the world of the unfathomable and strange; at the same time, however, they are a passage in this world. Through myths, one gains access to the dark side of things. Myths stimulate horror because they reveal an unruly, violent element culture cannot tame. Myths are the nightmares of humanity, but humans are born from these nightmares. Nightmares are the homeland of humanity, and the dimension of the uncertain and unfamiliar, and they perform a key role in human life.

A common reaction to such questions has always been the attempt to smooth the tensions and difficulties brought about by what is unfamiliar through humanistic techniques designed to embellish the human experience. But by bringing everything to one's own measures, humans basically deny what is not human and renounce the indecipherable, dark, and hidden aspects of life, instead promoting what is familiar, through the processes of humanization and beautification. Humans try with perpetually futile movements to fill, overcome, and eliminate

the gaps, hiding them under a multitude of references and metaphors, while trying indirectly to interpret the unfathomable. However, the nightmares keep the gaps open and refuse to tame the unfathomable.

Various theories have been articulated in the past in an effort to conceal the gap, thus creating a universal image of a world predestinated toward human welfare, and promoting teleological delusions. Those who create find freedom studying the depths of myths. They practice, searching for the unfamiliar, and for what they don't understand, and try to understand. They look for unpredictability, the unusual and the paradox. They offer their body at the sanctuary of the Unfamiliar, where they place constant questions and many dilemmas.

The aesthetic of performance derives from the dynamic relationship the body has with Myth, Time, and Memory. Through this relationship, the fundamental ontological question "of what is it about" arises. Of course, this is a question that does not allow for definite answers, instead constantly activating those who create in the direction of an ever deeper investigation into the root of sounds, words, and the multiple dimensions of the human enigma. Myths should not only be appreciated for their narrative and symbolic function in relation to an inconceivable reality, but also for the way they immediately reveal that which the body and soul hide.

Myth comes closer to humans, and is presented as a form of memory, and this decisive turn inward reveals rich supplies of internal energy and a series of psychosomatic functions. The body and the voice are transformed into a common place of memory: Myths require not stories to be told but memories to be reconstructed. The body gets into a state of transgression and reversion to the unconscious, both in the individual and collective dimensions, speaking or rather yelling in a new language, while trying to reconstruct a new Myth.

Thanks to the mediation of its mythical protagonist, Dionysus, the transition from myth to memory is deeply engraved in the body and soul of those who create, who seeks the energetic components of the body and, through them, their origin, memories, and visions. Moreover, no vision can exist without this knowledge that should be sought out in the veins, blood, and energy of each person, that has many forms, and that is inexhaustible.

Heiner Muller said that myths are the machines to which more new machines can be attached and transferred energy until its speed increases to the point at which the cycle of civilization explodes – and I would add to explode the cycle of barbarism.

In today's period of transition, we are witnessing many destructive changes at different levels, and the thoughts of several creators more than ever are open to exploring new ways of investigating the gaps that threaten humanity and new interpretations of the dogmatic barren convictions that have brought the world to the brink of destruction and de-humanized human beings. Devising a new psychophysical and somatic-centric philosophy that will resist the

barren academic and postmodern perceptions of body and mind, body and soul, myth and discourse, Nominal and Anonymous, and semiotic and symbolic, will be necessary to inaugurate a new philosophical space from where a harmonious coupling of opposites can be triggered.

May humanity focus on a new way of life narration by interpreting life not in terms of a precisely predetermined myth, that meets the ambitions of a small number of elite, but in terms that are designed to uncover new, and more effective ways of humanizing the world.

Neoliberalism does not pursue a creative encounter between the body and the world, between memory and time, or be myth and speech. The rupture with time, and within time, is the internal bleeding and reconstruction of the Myth.

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