

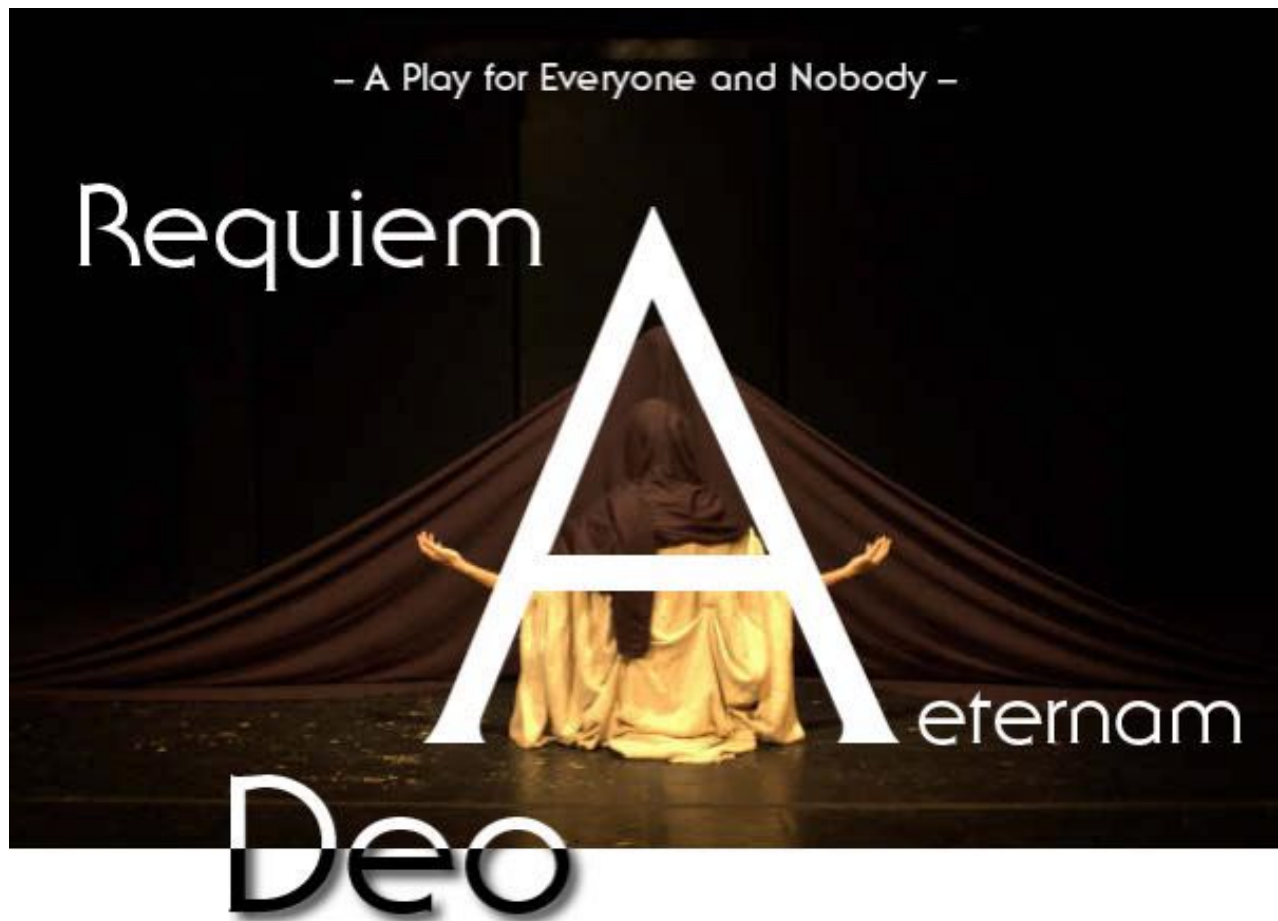
A Play for Everyone and Nobody
Requiem Aeternam Deo

by Fulya Peker

Based on Graham Parkes' Translation of
Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

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HYPERION:
ON THE FUTURE OF AESTHETICS



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Introduction

Mark Daniel Cohen



At the far end of the archetypal masque, where it joins the auto, we reach the point indicated by Nietzsche as the point of the birth of tragedy, where the revel of satyrs impinges on the appearance of a commanding god, and Dionysos is brought into line with Apollo. We may call this fourth cardinal point of drama the epiphany, the dramatic apocalypse or separation of the divine and the demonic, a point directly opposite the mime, which presents the simply human mixture. This point is the dramatic form of the point of epiphany . . .

—Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*

In art, there is a hierarchy of forms. There is a ranking of the manners of the imaginative comprehension, a structure to the structures of the mind. There are degrees to the formulations of the power of insight. This is inevitably so for there are no equivalents, no principles for equalizing alignments across the phase shifts that distinguish formal artistic modes. It as well goes without saying that nothing can guarantee the stability of ordering—the judgment of worth is dependent upon the need and warrants only a guarantee against circularity, but everything is conditional upon some assumed requirement, upon something without argument or proof, and such foundations shift with the sands.

However, from the standpoint of a given artistic objective, and in particular from that of a specific conception of the nature of insight itself, there are inescapably apparent fixities. To cast the gaze beyond the social, to look to the human predicament, to the conditions and exigencies that confront the individual purely for his criminality of being alive, there are forms of the endeavor that focus and better direct the incisive attention, that more profitably drive the beckoned thought. To commit the vertical delve, rather than the lateral inquiry along the swelling masses of a possibly soon to be extinct species, we are best served by art forms that seem intrinsic to the dark night of isolated contemplation, to the personal and lonely inquisition, to the moment of individual realization—to the seeking of the epiphany.

Drawing, the lyric poem, the drama as distinct from the narrative—these are among the art forms innate to the ruminations in the dimming. They are the manners most immediately and naturally at hand to those who seek answers in the night, in the absence of and distance from the communal distractions. They are innately tuned to bring the voice from afar, to dismiss the comforting delusions of the conventionally human.

And so there is a penetrating wisdom, a decorum of judgment, in the decision of Fulya Peker to transform *Also Sprach Zarathustra* into a drama for the stage. Beyond the obvious—the recommended artistic choice of Greek tragedy as the heightened form, the drama of characters with comet’s tails trailing into enigmatic depths, a call not to be forgotten even once Nietzsche shifted his focal length with *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* to isolate the human comedy and blur the tragic out of his field of vision, for the mystery of it all is never to be laid aside—there is the subtle: the aptness of the means she chose to adopt, given the artistic need of the enterprise.

It can be argued, and so I would argue it, that *Die Geburt der Tragödie* faltered because Nietzsche attempted to write two books at once: a philological work of sober scholarly credibility and—the matter clearly of greater interest to him and the residence of the greater virtues of the work—an explosion of oracular utterance. It is only the second that succeeds, and it does so magnificently, sufficiently to resound throughout the last and triumphant phase of his career, which despite all his attempts at good attitude remains tragic to its core. And it can be argued, and so I would argue it, that *Zarathustra* is a version of the work that *Die Geburt der Tragödie* should have been purified to be. In Nietzsche’s own characterization, *Zarathustra* is, in a sense, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*—sung: the initiating impulse, kept pure, transformed into art.

As an oracular work, a work of spontaneous revelation into secret recesses of knowledge, the impulses of which are accompanied by no reasoning or justification and are measured in worth not by their derivation but by their application, by the insight they prevail, *Zarathustra* is intrinsically a lyrical work—a poetic work in the sense of poetry as the most personal and profound confession of deep suspicions. Regardless of its expressed form, there is a poetic thought infusing it, a lyric rhythm of inference, an associative pulse of one thing leading to another, of implication that comes not of argumentation but of felt recognition.



Just as the semantic rhythm is the initiative of prose, and as the metrical rhythm is the initiative of epos, so the oracular rhythm seems to be the predominating initiative of lyric.

And so the apposite thought to transform *Zarathustra* into a drama—for as intrinsically a work of lyricism, of the harmonies of the spontaneous eruption of insight, so too it is native to the forms of similar aptitude. *Zarathustra* is inherently a conception of drama, for the lyrical imagination and drama are of a piece, both are automatic outgrowths of and voices for the epiphanic.



. . . the oracular associative process that we identified as one of the initiatives of lyric, and which corresponds to what we called the epiphany in drama.

The choice of drama over narrative necessarily compels a foreshortening of events, but that can be of no sensible concern, for the purpose of the functional unity of time and place intrinsic to the drama—regardless of the fictional “telling,” the events evidently take place in the theatre, under the focused ring of attention of the chorus that has become the audience, and in the time span in which the performance occurs—is not catharsis. It is the maintenance of tension, and a clean arc—a simple, single form (but then, all forms are single) of grip, crescendo, and release, uninterrupted by the distracting slippages of narrative refocusing of presumed time and place.

More to the purpose, as Peker evidently knows well, the transposition to drama is not an explication but a translation, and translations are reconceptualizations of the original works. (The more conventional idea of a translation is a concept without a definition. What readers normally expect when taking up a translation surpasseth understanding.) That Peker has, of necessity, escaped fidelity to the full roster of events and speeches in the original is no matter. Her purpose has been, and should have been, to obtain the point of the original, employing all the capabilities of her craft to re-render the point of the original for the theatre. Readers who want to know the details of *Zarathustra* as Nietzsche wrote it have no business here; they must learn German and read the book. Failing the will to do that, no one can help them.

More to the purpose still, Peker’s judgment in the selection of details to draw from the original is impeccable. She has reconceived and in reconceiving retained the tonalities of the original as well as the dramatic arc that exists in Nietzsche’s text, which is in many senses the most significant “image” in the original work, subtending the narrative flow and unifying the abundance of events and ultimate superfluity of speeches. (The most significant narrative plots always have, at their core, simple dramatic structures that are as much images of the meanings of the works as are any of the surface literary flourishes—in other words, plots are metaphors, if they are any good.) Most important, she has retained the original’s careful balance of oracular vision

and self-deflating humor, a complex tonality that reinvokes the impinging of the revel of the satyrs on the emergence of the mysterious revelation, closing the circle and returning us to “the point of the birth of tragedy”—the only point at which any Nietzschean drama can be complete.

It is an honor for *Hyperion* to publish the first act of Fulya Peker’s *Requiem Aeternam Deo*—an effort in its small way reflective of the honor she has done Nietzsche’s text with the creation of her work: the true purpose of a translation. The editors hope our gesture will promote further productions of her drama and help to create the possibility of more audiences having the chance of judging her creation, for judgment is how we all do honor to art—by wrestling with it, by grappling ourselves to it, not by interpreting it but by fighting to understand what is ultimately a work of the imagination that resists understanding, that does not bow or pander to its recipients but demands of them the most thorough increments of intimate engagement. This, too, is something Peker has accomplished—the achievement of a work, like its original model, that is hermetic in every best sense.

Please do yourselves the honor of reading the following portion of *Requiem Aeternam Deo*.



The lyric is the genre in which the poet, like the ironic writer, turns his back on the audience.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

ZARATHUSTRA
MADMAN
STILLEST HOUR – LIFE – SOLITUDE
ROPE DANCER – CHILD – ADDER
JESTER
KING
LAST POPE
BEGGAR
MAN BITTEN BY LEACH
UGLIEST MAN
SHADOW
CROWD – DISCIPLES
VOICE

I. PROLOGUE

[The center of the stage is covered with a large piece of elastic matte black fabric.

Stage right and left are tall dry branches.

Utter darkness.

Music commences: a blend of religious music (Christian, Jewish, Islamic, etc.) plays for one minute.

Suddenly, the music stops.

A deep sorrowful scream is heard from afar.]

MADMAN

GOD!!!! GOD!! GOD!

*[A sudden light comes from behind the audience and the Madman enters with a lantern in his hand.
His face is infused with terror.
He approaches the audience in a panic and stares into their eyes.]*

MADMAN

I seek God! I seek God!

Has he got lost!
Did he lose his way like a child!
Or is he hiding!
Is he afraid of us!
Has he gone on a voyage!
Emigrated!

Where is God? I will tell you! We have killed him! You and I! All of us are his murderers! But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving now? Where are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward and in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the grave diggers who are burying God? God too has his Hell; it is his love for human beings. Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. And we have killed him! It is of his pity for human beings that God has died.

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What sacred festivals shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods, simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.

I have come too early, my time is not yet! This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of man. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from

them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves.

[The Madman sits amongst the audience, then throws his lantern towards the stage.]

Immediate blackout.

The sound of glass shattering.]

II. ANNOUNCEMENT

[The sun slowly rises.]

A man, with his back to the audience, sits in the middle of the stage; slowly, he raises his hands as if in a gesture of worship and looks towards the sun.

It is “Zarathustra.”]

ZARATHUSTRA

Greetings great star! What would your happiness be, were it not for those whom you illumine! I am overburdened with my wisdom. Like the bee that has gathered too much honey, I need hands outstretched to receive it. For that I must descend into the depths: just as you do in the evening when you go down behind the sea and still bring light to the underworld, you over rich star! I must like you go under, as human beings call it, to whom I would go down. This is morning, my day is beginning: Rise up now, rise up. Behold! Zarathustra wants to become human again.

*[Black out.
Scream of a bird.]*

VOICE

What is heavy? What is heaviest? I may take it upon me! And become well pleased with my strength! I can lower myself in order to hurt my haughtiness! I can let my folly shine forth in order to mock my wisdom! I can kneel down like a camel so that I would be well laden into the desert!

[Lights on.]

*Zarathustra is sitting in the middle of the stage staring into the darkness.
He is surrounded by Crowd Members.]*

CROWD MEMBERS

[Directly to audience.]

Pity is needed!
Lust is a sin!

Thou shalt kill thyself!
Thou shalt steal thyself away!

Please take what I have!
Please take what I am! Life will then bind me that much less.

Life is hard to bear!
Life is refuted!

What is good?
Life is only suffering!

[Zarathustra rises impatiently.]

ZARATHUSTRA

I teach you the Overhuman. The human is something that shall be overcome.
What have you done to overcome it?

Behold, I teach you the Overhuman! The Overhuman is the sense of the earth.
I beseech you my brothers, stay true to the earth and do not believe those who
talk of over-earthly hopes!

Behold, I teach you the Overhuman. What is the greatest you can experience?
It is the hour in which even happiness disgusts you and likewise your reason
and your virtue. The hour when you say: What good is my reason! What good
is my virtue! How tired I am of my good and my evil! Have you ever spoken
thus? Have you ever cried thus? Where is the lightning to lick you with its
tongue? Where is the madness with which you must be inoculated?

Behold, I teach you the Overhuman, it is this lightning, it is this madness!

CROWD 1

We've heard enough about the rope-dancer: now let us see him too!

CROWD 2

Let us see him too!

[The Rope Dancer walks across a tightrope above the audience and toward the stage. A Jester follows close behind.]

ZARATHUSTRA

The human is a rope fastened between beast and Overhuman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still. What is great in the human is that it is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in the human is that it is a going-over and going-under. I love those who do not know how to live except by going under, because they are those who go over and across. I love him who chastens his God because he loves his God. I love all those who are as heavy drops, falling singly from the dark clouds that hang over the human: they herald the coming of the lightning, and as heralds they also perish.

JESTER

On you go lame-foot. On you go, you lazy beast, smuggler, paleface! Else I shall tickle you with my heel! What are you doing here between towers? You belong in the tower, and should be locked up; you are blocking the way for one who is better than you!

[The Rope Dancer reaches the stage; falls with a scream.]

The Crowd collapses simultaneously.

Zarathustra carries the corpse and buries it under the fabric.]

JESTER

Go away from this town, Zarathustra. Too many people here hate you. You

are hated by the good and the righteous and they call you their enemy and despiser; you are hated by the believers of right belief, and they call you a danger to the multitude. It was lucky for you that they laughed at you: and you were talking just like a jester. It was lucky for you that you made company with the dead dog; by abasing yourself like that, you saved your own skin. But now go forth from this town—or tomorrow I shall jump over you, a living man over a dead one.

[Zarathustra remains on stage alone.]

The Madman, from his earlier position amongst the audience, addresses the person next to him.]

MADMAN

Zarathustra has become a gravedigger! For my own hands are too clean for this particular roast. Does Zarathustra want to rob the devil of his mouthful? On you go then! And good luck with your meal! If only devil were not a better thief than Zarathustra! He will steal them both, he will eat them both.

ZARATHUSTRA

Could it be possible! These people here in this town had as yet heard nothing of this yet, that God is dead!

*[Black out.
Scream of a bird.]*

III. OVERCOMING SHAME

[Zarathustra is alone in his cave.]

Behind him the Stillest Hour rises under the fabric as if a spirit.]

STILLEST HOUR

You know it Zarathustra?
You know it Zarathustra but you do not say it!

ZARATHUSTRA

Yes I know it, but I will not say it!

STILLEST HOUR

You will not Zarathustra? Can this be true? Do not hide yourself in your defiance!

ZARATHUSTRA

I did want to but how can I! Excuse me just from this! It is beyond my strength!

STILLEST HOUR

What do you matter Zarathustra! Speak your word and break!

ZARATHUSTRA

Ah, is it my word? Who am I? I wait for one more worthy; I am not even worth being broken by it.

STILLEST HOUR

What do you matter? You are not yet humble enough for me. Humility has the toughest hide.

ZARATHUSTRA

What has the hide of my humility not already endured! I dwell at the foot of my heights: how high are my summits? No one has yet told me. But my valleys I know well.

STILLEST HOUR

Oh Zarathustra, whoever has to move mountains also moves valleys and

lowlands.

ZARATHUSTRA

My words have yet to move a mountain, and what I talked of did not reach human beings. I did indeed go to human beings, but I have not yet arrived among them.

STILLEST HOUR

What do you know of that! The dew falls upon the grass when the night is most silent.

ZARATHUSTRA

They mocked me when I found my own way and went it; and in truth my feet trembled at that time. And thus they spoke to me: You have unlearned the way, and now you are unlearning how to walk!

STILLEST HOUR

What does their mockery matter! You are one who has unlearned obeying; now shall you command! Do you not know who is most needed by all? The one who commands great things. To accomplish great things is difficult: but more difficult is to command great things. That is what is most unpardonable in you; you have the power, and you do not want to rule.

ZARATHUSTRA

I lack the lion's voice for commanding.

STILLEST HOUR

It is the stillest words that bring on the storm. O Zarathustra, you shall go as a shadow of that which must come; thus will you command and commanding lead the way.

ZARATHUSTRA

I am ashamed.

STILLEST HOUR

You must yet become a child without shame. The pride of your youth is still upon you, for you became young quite late: but whoever wants to become a child must yet overcome his youth. Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe, but you are not ripe for your fruits.

[Life vanishes like a vapor into the very ground.]

An Adder slithers toward Zarathustra from under the fabric.

His naked torso becomes visible . . .

His legs are still covered as if he is a part of the fabric.

He reaches for Zarathustra and bites him.

Zarathustra screams and growls.]

ZARATHUSTRA

Oh no...You have not yet accepted my thanks, you vicious circle! You woke me at the right time; my way is still long.

ADDER

Your way will be short. My poison is deadly.

ZARATHUSTRA

When did a dragon die from the poison of a snake? But take your poison back! You are not rich enough to bestow it on me.

[Black out.]

The Adder disappears beneath the fabric.

Scream of a bird.]

IV. TEACHING

[Zarathustra begins his teaching.]

The Disciples sit with their backs to the audience.

During the teaching, the Disciple's arms are stretched out like tree branches, and they rise gradually.]

ZARATHUSTRA

One day you will cry: everything is false! There are feelings that want to kill the solitary. If they do not succeed, well, then they themselves must die! But are you capable of being a murderer?

DISCIPLE 1

Speak to us Zarathustra! Speak to us more.

ZARATHUSTRA

At one time I too cast my delusion beyond the human, like all believers in a world behind. The work of a suffering and tortured God the world seemed to me then.

DISCIPLE 2

The work of a suffering and tortured God!

ZARATHUSTRA

Good and evil and pleasure and pain and I and Thou—colored smoke they seemed to me before creative eyes. To look away from himself was what the creator wanted—so he created the world. This world, eternally imperfect, image of an eternal contradiction—a drunken pleasure for its imperfect creator:—thus the world once seemed to me.

DISCIPLE 1

A drunken pleasure for its imperfect creator.

ZARATHUSTRA

Thus I too once cast my delusion beyond human, like all believers in a world behind. Beyond the human in truth? Ah, brothers, this God that I created was humans' work and—madness, just like all Gods! Human he was, and just a meager piece of human and 'I.'

DISCIPLE 2

Not from beyond did he come to us!

ZARATHUSTRA

Suffering it was and incapacity—that is what created all worlds behind; and that brief madness of happiness which only the greatest sufferer experiences.

DISCIPLE 1

Suffering it was and incapacity; that is what created all Gods and worlds behind!

ZARATHUSTRA

Dead are all Gods now, we want the Overhuman to live.

DISCIPLE 2

To live.

ZARATHUSTRA

Not around the inventors of new noise but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; inaudibly it revolves.

DISCIPLE 1

New values!

ZARATHUSTRA

Once one said “God” when one looked upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say: “Overhuman.”

DISCIPLE 2

Overhuman!

ZARATHUSTRA

God is a supposition. Could you create God? Then do not speak to me of any Gods! But you could surely create the Overhuman.

DISCIPLE 1

God is a supposition!

ZARATHUSTRA

But I would that your supposing might be limited by what is thinkable. Could you then think of God? What you have called world that shall be created only by you, your reason, your image, your will, your love it shall itself become! If there were Gods, how could I stand not to be a God! Therefore there are no Gods.

DISCIPLE 2

God is a supposition!

ZARATHUSTRA

But who could drink down the anguish of this supposition without dying? God

is a thought that makes all that is straight crooked and all that stands twist and turn. Creating—that is the great redemption from suffering, and life's becoming lighter. But that the creator may be, that itself requires suffering and much transformation. Away from God and Gods my will has lured me: what would there be to create if Gods existed! The beauty of the Overhuman came to me as a shadow. What are the Gods to me now!

DISCIPLE 2

Away from Gods!

ZARATHUSTRA

We should consider any day lost, on which we have not danced once! And we should call any truth false that has not been accompanied by one burst of laughter! Human society is an experiment and not a contract!

Now I am light, now I am flying, now I see myself beneath myself, now a God dances through me. I should only believe in a God who knew how to dance.

DISCIPLE 2

Let us fly like you Zarathustra!

ZARATHUSTRA

Whoever wants to learn how to fly must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance...one cannot fly into flying!

DISCIPLE 1

We believe in you Zarathustra! We believe!

ZARATHUSTRA

You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what does Zarathustra matter? You are my believers; but what do any believers matter? I am a railing by the torrent: grasp me, whosoever can! Your crutch, however, I am not! Now I bid

you lose me and find yourselves. With my tears go into your isolation! I love him who wants to create beyond himself and thereby perishes.

DISCIPLE 2

Show us the way Zarathustra!

ZARATHUSTRA

Willing is creating. And only for the sake of creating you shall learn. This is just my way: where is yours? You ask me the way...the way does not exist...

[Disciples collapse.]

Black out.

Scream of a bird.]

V. DISTORTION OF TEACHING

[In front of the stage a Child appears.]

The Child and Zarathustra mirror each other throughout the Child's dialogue.]

CHILD

O, Zarathustra! Look at yourself in the mirror!
It is not yourself that you saw there. . . But a Devil's grimace and mocking laughter. Your teaching is in danger. Your enemies have grown powerful and have distorted the image of your teaching. They want to know whether Zarathustra is still alive.

[The Child climbs under the fabric.]

Zarathustra looks far away.

He sits still during the entire scene as if in a trance.

The Madman rises from his seat and approaches Zarathustra.]

MADMAN

We have become too weary to die; now are we still awake and live on—in burial chambers! We have indeed harvested: but why all our fruits turn rotten and brown? Our wine has turned to poison, and evil eye has scorched our fields and hearths yellow. Dry have we all become; and should fire fall on us, we are scattered like ashes: and even fire itself we have made weary. All our wells have dried up, and even the sea has retreated. All ground wants to tear open, but the depths do not want to devour!

I saw a great mournfulness come over humankind. The best became weary of their works. A teaching went forth and a belief along with it: “All is empty, all is the same, all has been!” And from all hills it echoed again:

[Echo is heard from afar: “All is empty, all is the same, all has been!”]

The Madman exits.

The Jester enters and tries to provoke Zarathustra.]

JESTER

Here is Hell for solitaires’ thoughts: here great thoughts are boiled alive and then cooked down small. Here all great feelings decay: here only tiny skin and bone feelings are allowed to rattle! Do you not already smell the slaughterhouses and soup kitchen of the spirit? Do you not see souls hanging there like limp and filthy rags? Spit upon the city of flattened souls and narrow beasts, of sharpened eyes and sticky fingers upon the city of importunate, those who are shameless, the scrawlers and bawlers, overheatedly ambitious: where everything putrid and of ill repute, lusting and dusking, overrated and ulcerated and conspiratorial festers together: spit upon this city and turn back! Here, there is nothing to be made better, nothing to be made worse.

[The Disciples rise as a Crowd and talk directly to the audience.]

CROWD

Who is Zarathustra to us?

What shall we call him?

Is he a promiser? Or a fulfiller?

An inheritor? An autumn?
Or a ploughshare?

A physician?
Or one who has convalesced?

Is he a poet?
Or a truthful man?

A liberator? Or a subduer? A good man?
Or an evil one?

JESTER

[Imitating a hunchback.]

Even the people are learning from him and coming to believe in his teaching: but in order for them to believe him completely, one thing more is needed. He must first persuade us cripples too! The blind he must cure and the lame make to walk again; and from the one who has too much on his shoulders, he must well take a little away—that I think, would be the right way to make the cripples believe in Zarathustra!

ZARATHUSTRA

Shatter; shatter

CROWD

Ah where is there yet a sea in which we can drown!

Pious! Let us become Pious again!!
Let us become as little children again and say “Dear God!”

But, for a father God does not take good enough care of his children: human fathers do far better.

He is too old! He does not take care of his children at all any more.

But does he have any children!

No one can prove it if he does not prove it himself!
For a long time I have wanted him to prove it thoroughly for once!

Prove it? As if he had ever proved anything! Proof is hard for him...he thinks it is so important that we should believe him!

Yes! Yes! Belief makes him saved, belief in him! That's so much the way with old people. It is that way for us too!

JESTER

[Imitating a pious man.]

Just let the world be the world! Do not lift even a finger against it! Let him who wants to strangle people and stab them and strip them and flay them; do not lift even a finger against it! From this will they yet learn to renounce world. And your own reason—that shall you yourself throttle and strangle; for it is reason of this world—therefore will you yourself learn to renounce the world. Whoever learns much will unlearn all violent desiring... nothing thou shalt not desire!

[The Jester exits.]

*Zarathustra remains perfectly still. Pain is visible on his face.
Only the audience can hear him.]*

ZARATHUSTRA

Shatter; shatter...

CROWD

Why did we take any ways! It is all the same!

Nothing is worth while! Ye shall not will!

Wherefore to live? All is vanity! Living—that is threshing straw; living—that is consuming oneself in free and yet not becoming warm. All is vanity!

The world itself is a filthy monster...

[Finally, Zarathustra breaks the chains of stillness and shouts.]

The others suddenly stop talking and look at him.]

ZARATHUSTRA

SHATTER!

You have called God whatever contradicted and hurt you. O humankind! You wondrous thing! You noise in dark lanes! I am stung all over by poisonous flies, especially those who call themselves “the good.” The gravediggers dig up illness for themselves. Under old ruins lurk evil vapors...

*[Black out.
Scream of a bird.]*

VI. OVERCOMING DISGUST

[All the characters sit in front of a big door upstage. Their backs to the audience.]

Zarathustra roams around in his cave alone. Frustrated.]

ZARATHUSTRA

Disgust, disgust, disgust! The great loathing for the human being! Eternally it recurs...the human being....Ah the human being recurs eternally! The small human being...Ah! Disgust, disgust, disgust...Woe to me!

[He sits down finally; calms himself.]

O solitude you are my home! Too long have I lived wild in wild! Now just threaten me with your finger, as mothers threaten, now smile to me, as mothers smile! O Solitude! You are my home! How blissfully and tenderly your voice talks to me! We do not question each other! We do not complain to each other! We go openly with each other through open doors! With you it is open and clear and even the hours here run by on lighter feet. For in the dark, time weighs more heavily than in the light. One should live upon mountains. With blissful nostrils I again breathe mountain-freedom! Redeemed is my nose at last from the smell of all humankind!

[Solitude rises under the fabric. Sitting, she embraces Zarathustra like a mother. The tableau is reminiscent of the pieta.]

Zarathustra leans against her, putting his weight onto her.

From within the fabric, she touches his hair gently.]

SOLITUDE

O Zarathustra, I know all: and that among the many you were lonelier, you singular one, than ever you were with me! Loneliness is one thing, solitude is another: that you have learned now! And that among human beings you will always be wild and strange: wild and strange even when they love you: for they want to be treated gently by everything!

[Zarathustra sleeps and Solitude disappears under the fabric.

Dream begins. Surreal vision.

The lines of Disciples are heard during the dream.]

ZARATHUSTRA

GOD! Who carries his ashes up the mountain? GOD! GOD! God! Who carries his ashes up the mountain?

*[Characters rise one by one.
They represent earthly and grotesque figures.]*

Are you not yourself the wind with the shrill whistling that tears open the gates of the Castle of death?

Are you not yourself a coffin full of colorful wickedness and masks of life?

[The characters hover over Zarathustra, their arms rising up and down as they howl, hiss, shriek, and emit wind sounds.

The Madman, who is standing center backstage with his back to the audience, opens his arms like Jesus on the cross.]

Like a thousand peals of child's laughter Zarathustra comes into all death chambers, laughing!

A child's laughter will ever well up out of coffins now a wind will ever come

victoriously to all death-weariness.

You will frighten and over throw the gravediggers with your laughter.

[The characters enclose Zarathustra in their arms while the Madman remains with his arms open like Jesus.]

Life laughs wildly from under the fabric.

The big door suddenly opens, bright light fills the stage. All characters run backstage through the door, laughing.]

LIFE

[Whispers.]

Of them you dream, gravediggers: this is your heaviest dream! But just as you awake from them and came to yourself, so shall they awake from themselves—and come to you!

[Zarathustra awakes horrified; he stares out and beyond. . .]

*Life rises from under the fabric as if the earth is shaking.
Life supports Zarathustra, who is splayed on her, back to back.*

Life first prevails, then Zarathustra.]

ZARATHUSTRA

Into your eye I looked of late, O life! And into the unfathomable I seemed then to be sinking.

LIFE

So runs the talk of all fishes. What they do not fathom is unfathomable. But changeable am I only and wild and in all things a woman, and not a virtuous one. Even though you men call me The Profound or The Loyal, The Eternal, The Mysterious.

ZARATHUSTRA

The Incredible! From the ground up I love only life and most of all I hate her!
I am fond of Wisdom and often too fond: that is because she reminds me so
much of Life!

LIFE

Who is this Wisdom?

ZARATHUSTRA

Ah yes now! Wisdom! One thirsts after her and is never sated, one looks
through veils, one grabs through nets.

LIFE

Is she beautiful?

ZARATHUSTRA

How should I know! Changeable she is and stubborn; I have often seen her
bite her lip and drag her comb against the grain of her hair. Perhaps she is
wicked and false, and a female in every way, but she speaks ill of herself,
precisely then is she most seductive. She is a woman and always loves only a
warrior.

LIFE

But of whom are you talking? Perhaps of me?

[She laughs and disappears under the fabric.]

Zarathustra collapses.

The Adder comes closer and closer to Zarathustra from under the fabric.

His naked torso becomes visible.

His legs are still covered as if he is a part of the black fabric.

He reaches and bites Zarathustra.

Zarathustra screams and growls.]

ZARATHUSTRA

Oh no...You have not yet accepted my thanks, you vicious circle! You woke me at the right time; my way is still long.

ADDER

Your way will be short. My poison is deadly.

ZARATHUSTRA

When did a dragon die from the poison of a snake? But take your poison back! You are not rich enough to bestow it on me.

[Black out.

The Adder disappears under the fabric.

Scream of need.]

VII. CONFRONTATION

[The Madman enters and sits next to Zarathustra.]

MADMAN

All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, world is without meaning, knowing chokes.

ZARATHUSTRA

Welcome! You soothsayer of the great weariness!

MADMAN

O Zarathustra, you have been up here for the longest time—in a short time your boat shall sit on dry land no more!

ZARATHUSTRA

Am I sitting on dry land?

MADMAN

The waves around your mountain are rising higher and higher, the waves of great need and sorrow: soon they will lift up your boat and carry you away. Do you still hear nothing? Is there not a rushing and roaring from out of depths?

[They listen.]

The scream of need is heard from afar.]

ZARATHUSTRA

You proclaimer of ill tidings! That is a cry of need and the cry of a human being. But what does humans' need matter to me! My ultimate sin that has been saved for me [*recognizes*]*—perhaps you know what it is called?*

MADMAN

Pity! O Zarathustra, I come that I might seduce you to your ultimate sin! Do you hear, do you hear, Zarathustra? The cry is meant for you, it is calling you. Come, come, come, it is time, it is high time.

[Scream of need.]

ZARATHUSTRA

And who is it that is calling for me?

MADMAN

But surely you know! What are you hiding from yourself?

O Zarathustra! You do not stand there like one whose happiness sets him

spinning, you will have to dance in order not to collapse!

Happiness! How could one ever find happiness among such recluses and solitaries! All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, no seeking avails...

[Exits.]

ZARATHUSTRA

I will, I desire, I love, for that reason alone I laud life! Here laugh, laugh, my bright and wholesome wickedness! From high mountains throw down your glittering scorn-laughter! With your glittering, bait for me the most beautiful human fishes! On out, on out! Bite, my fishing-rod, into the belly of all black sorrow! On out, on out, my eye! Unclouded silence! Laughing lions must come! Dying will I give human beings my richest gift.

[Black out.
Scream of need.]

END OF EXCERPT OF PLAY

The author has chosen to publish only a portion of the play. If interested in producing or directing the play, write to the author, Fulya Peker, at: catharsist@gmail.com

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