

Thus Spake Zarathustra

wrote Friedrich Nietzsche in 1885, his mind falling to ruin

I trace and retrace my footsteps, bend
to examine the smear
on bone-weary cobblestone.

It's the dwarf again! Crouched on my shoulder,
the creature
sometimes resembling a mole.
I cock my ear and it whispers: "Tell them: You
shall be as gods!"

I had discovered the way
far from the cowards, the crowds
on my mountain up high. "Say it
more clearly," it murmurs, dwarf-anima
outside myself. "Lamefoot!
Make yourself known."

Where are the trumpets, the cymbals?
Where is the welcoming cry? Had I not
hiked down the stone path, prophet
of fire and ice? "We will
not listen," they tell me.
"Grasshoppers and hail
have ruined our crops."

Above the lung-colored rooftops
the turrets and gables and
framework of timber, steps my rival
in black-and-gold glee. High
over the market he dances
on spider-precarious thread..
They gasp, they
applaud, the traitors.
Plebeians!
In love with diversion!

In a twinkling he leaves
me, bells on his fool's cap. Already
he saunters very high up
into the path
of the rope-dancing rival. My anima

spins, turns and twirls. Now
he is I. How quickly the coat turns
jester, the yellow of motley cloth!
The crowd's going wild; my rival
hesitates, wavers. He's losing his head!
I am the *Übermensch*,
 one who leaps over.

Now the dwarf
leaps over the dancer,
surefooted, nimble and quick.
The rival's balancing pole
slips through his fingers; he bellows,
he shrieks
 his falling.

Villagers
scatter in terror. The desolate
hobble of stone, where I trace
and retrace my footsteps.
Was it arrogance? *Übermut*?
I desired
 to love, to enlighten.

Up steepening path I carry
the heart-broken body: a dancer, once!
Where the road forks, I seize
from my shoulder the mole-dwarf
 anima. Kill.

I have severed myself from myself.
Neither in hell nor out of it
I am no more
than a madman.
 A fluttering banner.
 A fool.